

HOW TO CHOOSE QUALITY INFLUENCERS EVERY TIME (AND NOT LOSE MONEY)



This post is everything you need to know about how to choose quality influencers. So if you want to work with influencers on YouTube, blogs, Twitter and Instagram, you're in the right place.

Keep reading...

When my new client confided that she spent \$50,000 on influencer marketing and got nothing for it, I wasn't shocked.

No new traffic, no conversions, no sales. NADA.

When I asked her why she lost money, she said the influencers she'd hired didn't work out. (Well, she didn't hire them, an influencer platform she hired did).

As it turns out, it only took a couple of minutes to see the influencers weren't a good fit for her.

The reality is:

She's not alone.

And this is influencer marketing's dirty little secret: **Many marketers lose money.** The reason, according to a recent **Econsultancy study**, is marketers struggle with identifying the right influencers.

They don't know how to choose influencers who are a good fit for their brand and business.

Astoundingly, 73% of respondents said that it was their biggest challenge. My client is one of them.

Since influencers are the crux of influencer marketing, this is a monumental problem.

Consequently, selecting the right influencers is the make-or-break of any campaign so you must do this right or you risk losing a lot of money.

So WHAT are marketers doing wrong?

They make the mistake of choosing influencers based on audience size.

So the question is:

HOW do you choose the right influencers? HOW do you choose quality influencers who are good for your brand?

WHAT'S INFLUENCER MARKETING? IS IT EFFECTIVE?

It's really simple:

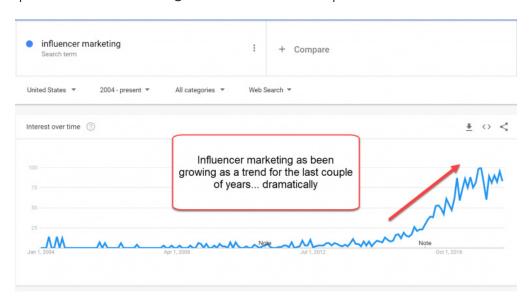
Influencer marketing is working with key individuals who have already built the audience you want to reach (your target market). They are key people to know because they hold sway over their followers.

So:

Once you find who your target market follows, you orient your marketing around those influencers. Unlike advertising, which is disruptive and intrusive, influencer marketing is suggestive and persuasive.

But that being said, effectiveness is what really counts and that's why businesses have been piling into it.

As a result, it explains the massive surge of interest in the topic:



Make sense?

It's a faster and more efficient way to reach your target audience. Here's data that underscores why it's become a "thing":

60% of consumers consult blogs and social media on their mobile devices prior to shopping. **(source)** 77% of consumers read online reviews before they buy. **(source)**

85% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. (source)

Now you know why entrepreneurs, small business, and big brands are using it.

WHO QUALIFIES AS AN INFLUENCER?

These are ten types of influencers who create content online:

- 1. Celebrities
- 2. Journalists
- 3. Authors
- 4. Bloggers and blog editors
- 5. Podcasters
- 6. Social media personalities (Platform specific: YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Pinterest)
- 7. Event producers
- 8. Academic researchers
- 9. Analysts
- 10. Authorities (Practitioners: Doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges)

Content can be broken down into two basic types: short form and long form.

Short-form content is content they post on social media.

The benefit is ephemeral because the lifespan of content there can be measured in hours, even minutes.

Here one minute, gone the next.

Long-form content is when an influencer writes about you on their blog or talks about you on video. The benefits are long-lasting. Each mention (and link) passes some authority from their website to yours, so you get SEO juice.

Remember Tim Ferriss of the 4 Hour Work Week? He advocates long-form content.

The added advantage is that people can find content that your influencers create – even years later.

Many of my clients, like HP did this and they continue to benefit.



HOW TO GET STARTED WITH INFLUENCERS

The influencer marketing community is a little confusing. Some people say, "only work with Instagram influencers" other people say, the best results are with "micro influencers." Some say, "real" influencers are people you should "never have to pay" but others say, "pay-for-play" is the only way to go.

What I've learned by working with influencers since 2008 is that when you see a new industry explode into a gold rush (like influencer marketing), 90% of the information online is contradictory bull crap.

You either figure it out on your own or hire someone to help you. Additionally, you should do your research too. Don't just trust me or another expert.

You can lose a lot of money through influencer marketing, usually, by hiring some service you found online to do the work for you.

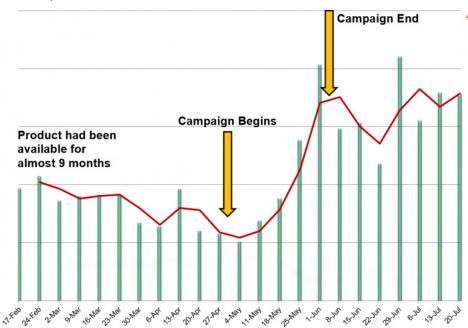
That's why you only work with big-time content creators on YouTube. Or is it why you don't work with big-time content creators?

No one agrees really, so I always use my own method to choose influencers. As a result, I've designed and run influencer programs for Fortune 500 companies like HP. In some cases, like HPE, the influencer programs I designed are still going strong.

So what's my secret?

I choose influencers who are relevant.

Because of that, my campaigns generate ROI:



I haven't changed how I choose influencers since I began working with influencers in 2008. About the only thing I do differently is I use better CTAs and a UTM to track conversions:

Success Measures: Call to Action

100% of the influencer content contained the specified call to action, linking to the page

 Inbound links from 16 more sites with millions of monthly unique readers whom was not reaching on the same level.

Yes, I understand:

You've read unsatisfying articles about how to choose quality influencers before.

But I in this post I show you the exact steps I use to actually find, assess, and select them.

I just tell you what I do and how I do it. I don't hold anything back.



SO... HOW DO YOU FIND QUALITY INFLUENCERS?

Everyone seems to invent their own rules and techniques for finding influencers, but here's what I know works:

- 1. Look in your own "backyard." (If you are a new brand without a following, skip to #2) Sift through your social media channels and your blog. Check and see who's commenting and sharing your content. Sometimes these people are influencers. If an influencer is engaging with your content, then they are already tapped into your target audience. Also, they're already predisposed to your brand, which saves time trying to persuade them to work with you. Mention can help you find influencers in your own network.
- 2. Use Google to leverage other people's work. By searching for posts like the "Top Ten Fashion Bloggers," "Top 25 SEO Experts," or whatever your niche is, you'll find lists of influencers (it's also free!).
- 3. Do hashtag searches on social media and using online tools.
- 4. Influencer platforms speed up your search but be careful of spending money on them. Most platforms and tools DON'T vet the influencers for fake followers, so you'll need to do that yourself (see Step 4).
- 5. Search YouTube to find video content creators.
- 6. Ask for referrals. Once you are connected with about a dozen influencers, ask them to refer other influencers. This is one of the best ways to find high-quality people.

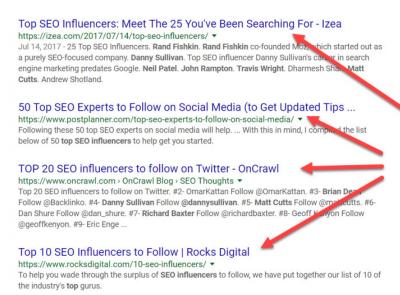
FINDING INFLUENCERS METHOD #2: GOOGLE

Let's say you're looking for SEO influencers.

Here's how you do it:

- 1. Go to Google
- 2. Enter into the search bar something like "Top SEO Influencers" of "Best SEO Influencers"
- 3. Search and scroll through the lists of influencers
- 4. Find influencers who look good

You'll get results like this:

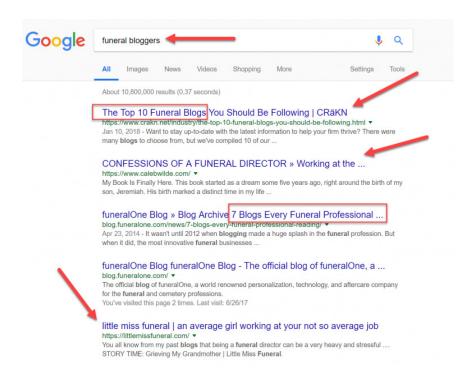


Shazam! It took all of two seconds. The best part is other people have done the heavy lifting for you by publishing these lists.

And, you're right, SEO is an easy topic and gets a lot of attention, so how well does this work for less popular topics? You can search for those too.

Let's say you work in the funeral industry and you want to find influencers in your niche...

Type into the search bar "funeral bloggers," hit search and see what pops up:



Okay, that's easy.

Not only did you find influencers, but you found some who create long-form content.



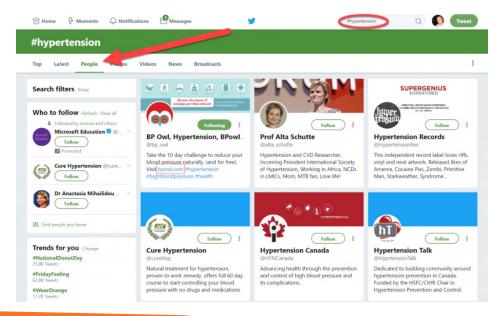
FINDING INFLUENCERS METHOD #3: HASHTAG SEARCH

Twitter is a great platform to find influencers quickly using hashtags. You can find leaders in any industry because many use Twitter to promote their content, so it's a natural place to look.

Let's say I'm looking for influencers who cover hypertension and high blood pressure. Search for those keywords.

Here's how to do it:

- 1. Go to Twitter and find the search tab at the top
- 2. Enter your hashtag in the search tab (example #hypertension)
- 3. Search for people and you'll see a lot of influencers and companies pop up
- 4. Scroll through until you find some who look good

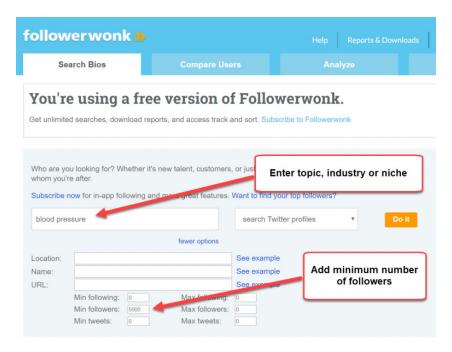


The only drawback to searching on Twitter is search results aren't sortable.

Pro tip: Many marketers skip this and use a tool like Followerwonk.

Here's how to do it:

- 1. Go to Followerwonk and click on the Search Bios tab
- 2. Click "more options" for the advanced search options
- 3. Enter your topic, industry or niche into the search field. Be specific and delve into your topic. Rather than something general like "health," I searched "blood pressure" which is more specific. (Bonus Tip: Add "+ Blogger" if you're looking for influencers who create long-form content)
- 4. Enter a minimum number of followers (start with 100,000 for most industries but if you want to seek out micro influencers you can start with a few as 1,000)



Now you'll have a list of people who are likely influential within the niche. They're sorted by the size of their followings.

This is important:

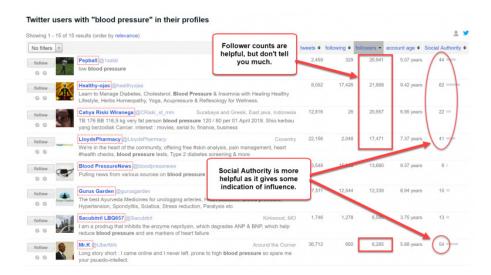
DON'T be fooled into thinking more followers means more influence.

It's easy to get lots of followers and some influencers buy them. Also, most followers never see the majority of the content the influencer produces on social media because of the algorithms.

So, look closely at the Social Authority column.

This number combines followers with other metrics such as the number of tweets and influence of the followers.

Low authority means the account is less likely to engage the followers and drive traffic, so look for accounts with higher authority.



Unfortunately, Social Authority isn't enough, though.

Click on the accounts that look interesting and dig deeper. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do they post content regularly?
- Is their content high quality?
- Are they sharing content across other social platforms?
- Do they interact with their followers?

When you've found some good candidates, look to see if they've created Twitter lists because influencers often follow other influencers and build lists of them.

I've found some great influencers this way.

When you find some you like, add them to your list.

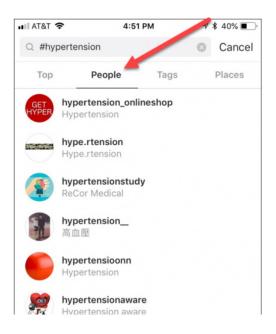
Bonus tip: Followerwonk allows you to export the list into Excel. Pretty nice, huh!



Next, let's search on Instagram.

Here's how you do it:

- 1. Got to Instagram and find the search tab at the top
- 2. Enter your hashtag in the search tab (ex: #hypertension)
- 3. Search for people and you'll see a lot of influencers and companies pop up
- 4. Scroll through and find some who look good



Like Twitter, Instagram is clumsy for search so use the influencer platform below to make things easier.

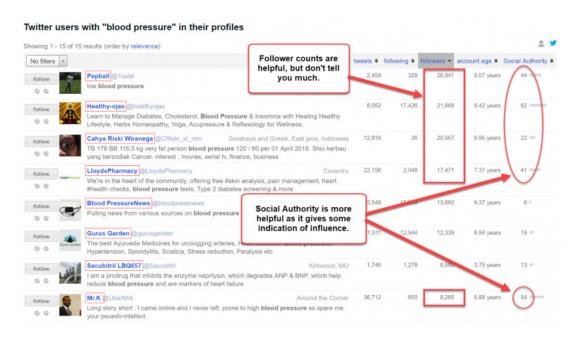
FINDING INFLUENCERS METHOD #4: INFLUENCER MARKETING PLATFORMS

Scrunch is an influencer platform that's simple and easy to use.

Here's how you do it:

- 1. Log into Scrunch and find the search tab at the top (upper left)
- 2. Enter your hashtag in the search box (example: #hypertension)
- 3. Search and a list of candidates will pop up
- 4. Scroll through the list and find some who look good.

Now, you'll notice that Scrunch provides a bunch of helpful data including which social media channels they are on like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook:

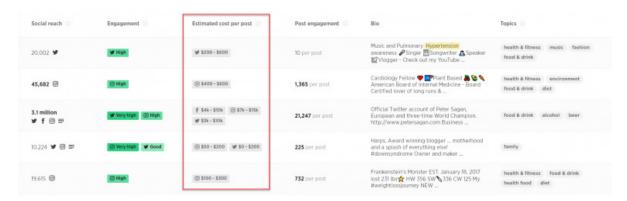


Pay attention to their engagement stats. These tell you how active the followers are.

Remember:

The more engagement the better.

Correspondingly, you also get stats like the size of their audience, profile description and estimated cost per post:



Even so, dig deeper into their engagement stats, especially on Instagram.

It's one of your key metrics for choosing quality influencers, so don't overlook it.

Do this by using Phlanx's nifty Influencer Engagement Calculator.

Here's how you do it:

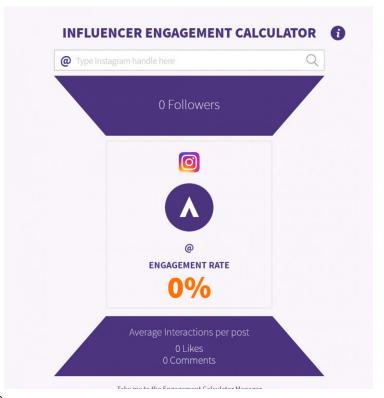
- 1. Log into Phlanx
- 2. Choose "Engagement Calculator" at the top
- Enter the Instagram handle
- 4. Push search
- 5. Analyze the results

What is good engagement?

Just to be clear, quality engagement partly depends on the number of followers an influencer has. Generally, the larger the audience the less engagement you will see because of the algorithms.

So, to keep things simple, use these industry benchmarks as a guide:

- Less than 1% = low engagement rate
- Between 1% and 3.5% = average/good engagement rate
- Between 3.5% and 6% = high engagement rate
- Above 6% = very high engagement rate



BUT WHAT IF YOU REALLY WANT TO FIND VIDEO INFLUENCERS (VLOGGERS)?

Here's a real-world example from one of my clients.

He has a health supplement that helps maintain healthy blood pressure.

Now, statistics prove many people would rather watch a video than read a blog post, especially if the topic is complicated.

And high blood pressure is kinda complicated, right?

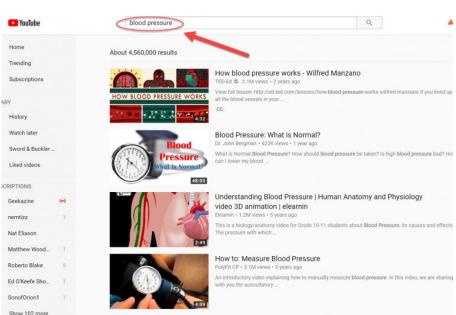
Therefore, arranging for some quality influencers to review my client's blood pressure supplement will not only drive awareness to his brand but traffic to his sales page.

So to get started, **YouTube** is my first stop.

This time I'll use the search term "blood pressure" because its less technical sounding than "hypertension" but feel free to experiment.

Here's how:

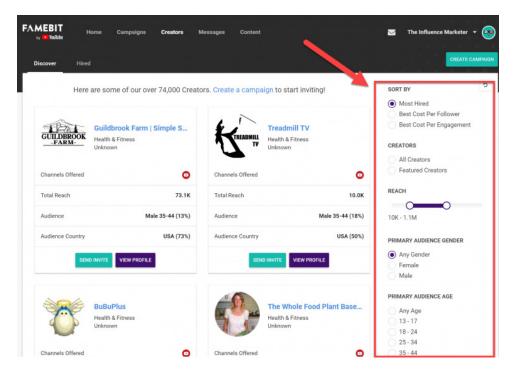
- Got to YouTube
- 2. Enter your search term (keyword) into the search bar
- 3. Search and scroll through the influencers
- 4. Find some who look good



Another way to search for video influencers, especially on YouTube, is to use an influencer marekting platform called **Famebit.**

Here's how you do it:

- 1. Log into Famebit
- 2. Choose your niche and other criteria on the right side of the page
- 3. Search and scroll through the influencers
- 4. Find some who look good





HOW TO CHOOSE QUALITY INFLUENCERS (EVERY TIME)

This is the exact method I use to assess and choose quality influencers for all of my Fortune 500 clients like HP, Dell, TIME and Adobe.

But that's not all:

You can use it to find influencers for any entrepreneur or small business.

Yes, that's right:

It works for brands of all sizes, industries, and niches.

Next, as I show you how to find and choose quality influencers, let's assume I have no existing list, no connections to leverage, NADA.

I'm starting from scratch.

STEP ONE: KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH

Ever host a great party where everyone had a great time? Well, I bet it didn't happen by accident.

You planned it out ahead of time and made sure you had enough snacks, food, and drinks so your guests would stay. I'll bet you gave your place the once-over with a vacuum too, right?

And you didn't invite random people either. You chose your guests so everyone could relax, have great conversations and a terrific time. And you probably left some people off your invite list! It's the same idea with influencers. Have a good idea of who you would like to invite into your world, your brand.

And something else:

Have a clear idea of what you want to get by working with them.

Start by asking yourself these key questions:

- Want more traffic to your website?
- Raise awareness about your brand?
- Get reviews of your product?
- Generate leads?
- Make sales?

Be sure to have a clear idea of what you want before you start. You'll see the payoff in your ROI.

STEP TWO: DOUBLE DOWN ON "CONGRUENCE"

This is where the rubber meets the road.

When you get this right, everything else falls into place so you must understand what congruence is and why it's important.

With that said:

Congruence is the idea of agreement or of a coming together, harmony.

It how you choose influencers who are relevant to your brand and it's is far more important than how many followers they have.

If you don't get this right, you'll choose the wrong influencers and lose money.

When looking over the influencers you find, ask yourself these questions:

#1: Do they regularly cover topics that are relevant to you?

For example:

If you are selling a health supplement, does the influencer post about health topics? What health topics does she focus on? How often does she post about that topic?

It's not enough that she posts about health, the specific topics must be congruent with your business and product.

For example:

If your product is a blood pressure supplement and the influencer you are looking at is in the health niche but only posts about being gluten-free and digestive health, then his content is not congruent.

#2: Is their audience your target market?

Gender, age range, socio-economic, and interests are all important to know.

For example:

If your target market is middle-aged women who are interested in digestive help, make sure the influencer attracts that audience.

Take a careful look at who their followers are on their social media channels.

#3: Is the influencer authentic?

Does the influencer post about the topic because they are passionate about it? Do they really care about it?

You can tell by the quality of the content they publish.

Another way to tell is by the kind of engagement they get from their followers.

#4: Look at their sponsored content.

Does the influencer position other brands in a positive light without seeming overly promotional?

This is important.

Look carefully at how they incorporate sponsored content into their posts.

#5: Do they publish content on a regular basis?

Influencers who post on a regular schedule keep their audience engaged.

If it's sporadic, they're less likely to keep the followers engaged.

#6: Do they publish quality content?

Do they write well?

Do they express themselves well on video or podcast?

Are the photos and videos they create of high quality?

Ask yourself this:

Would you be proud to have your product promoted by them?

#7: How engaged is the audience? Does the content resonate with their followers?

Do the followers react to the content by liking, sharing and commenting on it?

Do they react by asking questions, getting into conversations?

These all show that the content is interesting and engaging.

STEP THREE: LOOK AT THE INFLUENCER'S CONTENT REALLY CAREFULLY

I'll show you using an example:

Let's say I have a fictional product, a new health supplement that helps maintain healthy blood pressure and heart health.

My research tells me that my target market is middle-aged people (male and female) between the ages of 35 and 65.

It's a broad range which gives me a lot of flexibility for selecting influencers.

But, because my product is a health supplement, it makes sense for me to choose influencers who are authorities and have credentials.

In the health space, authorities are doctors, chiropractors, nurses, and other health practitioners.

My plan is to assemble about a dozen influencers who cover the topic of hypertension, high blood pressure.

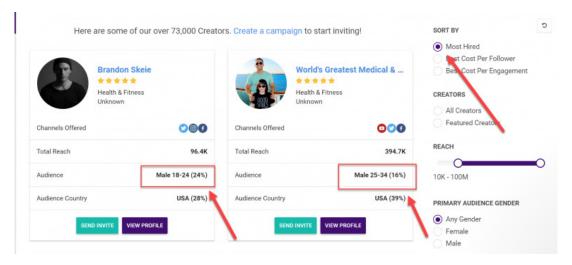
Once I do this, I can expand my search to include other influencers who are regular people and who suffer from hypertension as part of their life and health experience.

Next, let's review my goals... I have two that I want to accomplish:

- 1. First, my product is new so I need to build awareness for my brand and my product. Influencers help me do this by creating long-form content that informs, educates and drives targeted traffic to my site. Their backlinks also boost my site's SEO so people can find my product through organic search.
- 2. Second, I want to drive traffic to the sales page on my website. I want to make sales. For this to happen, I need to get influencers to review and talk about my product to get people interested and excited.

I'll start my search for video influencers (vloggers) on Famebit.

Here's what I find in the health and fitness category:

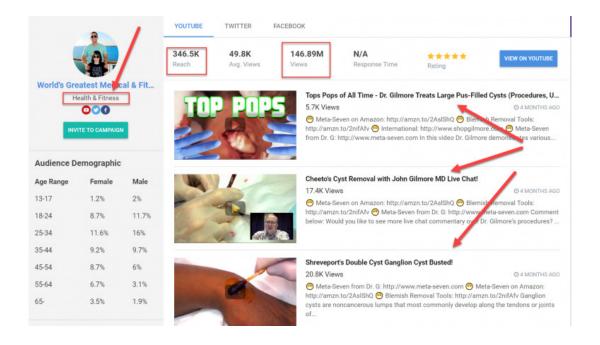


I check out the "most hired" YouTubers in the health niche. You can see, their largest audience segments are males between the ages of 18-24 – that's below my target market's age range.

I'm also looking for men and women.

Yet I'm curious about the content creator on the right, so I take a closer look at his channel.

Quickly, I can see he's not a good fit for me:



His videos are click bait videos about popping zits! Kinda nasty.

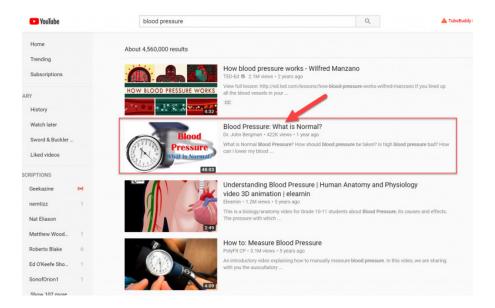
It doesn't matter that his videos have over 140 million views.

The content is incongruent, not relevant and the audience is clearly not my target market.

I like to search by keyword, so I go back to the influencers I found on YouTube.

Some of them looked promising when I searched under "blood pressure."

Here's what comes up when I use that search term:



There's a lot to choose from but the second result catches my eye because it's by a doctor, an authority.

He explains what high blood pressure is and what is considered normal.

I watch the video.

It's by a man named Dr. Bergman and the video is one of his lectures.

After watching it, I can tell it's:

- Detailed and packed with valuable information and
- Obviously high quality.
- After watching a good portion of it, I can tell this man is knowledgeable.

The video has over 400,000 views so it has been watched by many people.

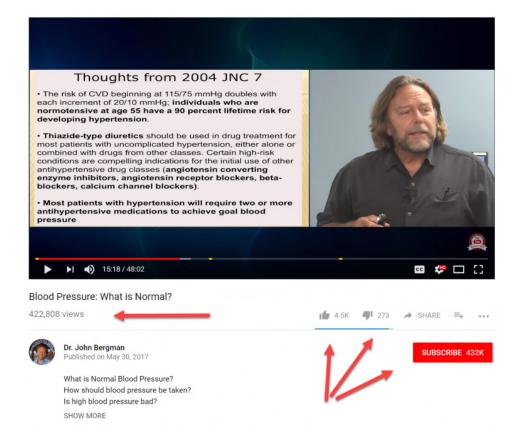
Its also received over 4,000 likes with plenty of comments – all signs that his content has good engagement and resonates with his audience.

Dr. Bergman also has 432,000 subscribers to his channel which is a large subscriber base.

But that's a nice to have at this point.

Keep in mind:

I'm focused on congruency and relevance rather than audience size.



But since Dr. Bergman looks like a good influencer, I might as well dig deeper and look closely at his audience.

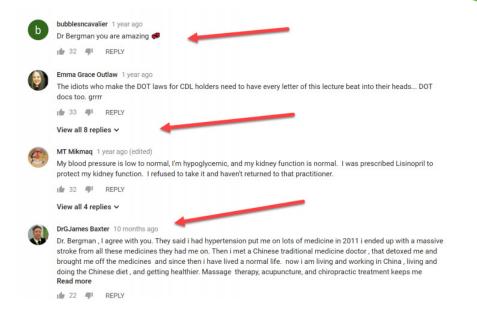
Let's start by reading some of the comments on the video I found...

They're mainly positive with the occasional comment about some product to try (which is normal) along with a few negative comments posted by trolls (also normal).

Timing:

Most of the comments were posted a year ago when the video was published, but some newer ones have been added which means people continue to find and watch the video.

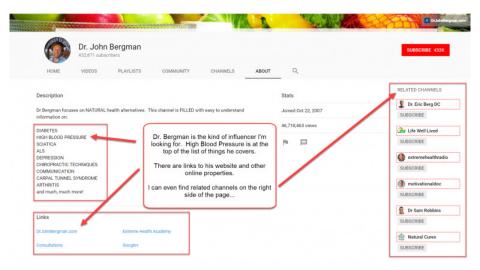
This is all good.



Next, let's take a closer look at his YouTube channel.

It's clean, professional and includes lots of content about health and healthy living — all relevant to my target market.

The next step is to click on the About tab on his YouTube channel to learn more about him and the topics he's passionate about.



This is great! Dr. Bergman lists the topics he's passionate about and high blood pressure ranks near the top of his list.

As an influencer, he's looking promising.

On his page, there are also some links to his other online properties including his website. YouTube also gives me some related channels of more influencers who are related.

I'll be sure to look at these more closely.

Now:

Let's check out Dr. Bergman's website...The About page on Dr. Bergman's website (screenshot below) provides a lot of useful information.

It gives me some ideas about how I might approach him when I decide to reach out.

For example:

He is into archery and sailing, two activities I like to do too.

No matter what, you should note down personal details like these when you can find them. They help you to appeal to the influencer on a personal level when emailing them to introduce yourself.



At the bottom of Dr. Bergman's About page, I find links to his social channels.

I can check those to learn more about his audience and the engagement he gets on them.

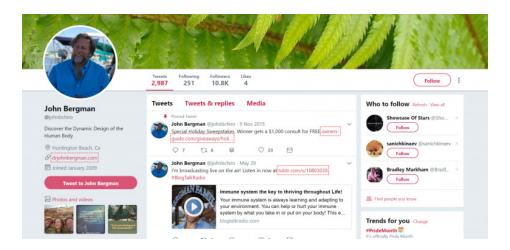
I've already looked at his YouTube channel, so let's look at the others:



I'll start with his Twitter page.

It's up to date, although there's a pinned Tweet from a few years ago at the top (2015).

I might gently remind him about that when I reach out.

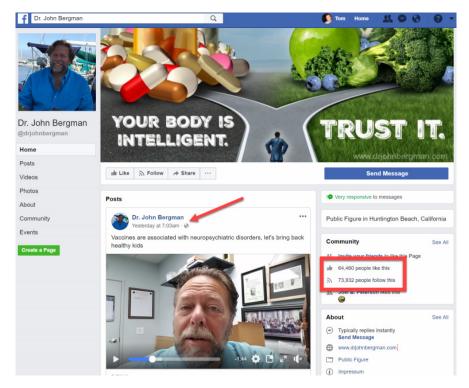


Unfortunately, his Pinterest page isn't up to date so that's not going to be much use.

It's a shame because Pinterest is a good site for content discovery for months, even years later. Also, he also has a Google Plus page but that's a dead social platform and not much use, so I'll skip over it.

Finally, Bergman has a Facebook page which he keeps updated and where he has over 73,000 followers.

Again, audience size is not my first point of consideration, it's nice to have.



The doctor's Instagram page is updated although he doesn't have a large audience there (compared to his other social channels) and his engagement seems lower.

But since I'm looking for long-form content at this stage, that isn't a concern.

Remember, Instagram has other uses including searching for other influencers.

One way to do this is look over who Dr. Bergman follows and who follows him back.

STEP FOUR: CHECK FOR FAKE FOLLOWERS

Fake followers are a big problem.

Some influencers buy them to pump up their audience numbers to attract brands into doing business with them.

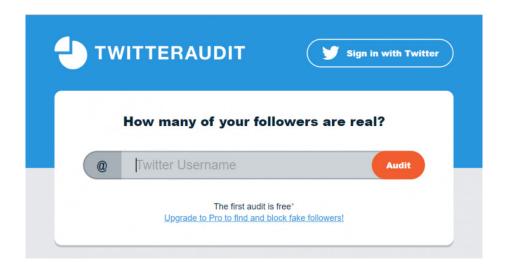
Because it's so common, you must check every influencer.

So here are the tools I use to check for fake followers.

For Twitter use Twitter Audit

Here's how you do it:

- 1. Go to Twitter Audit
- 2. Enter the Twitter handle into the search bar.
- 3. Hit the "Audit" button
- 4. Review the findings

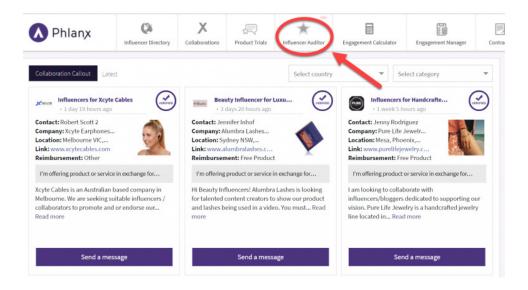


For Instagram, use Phlanx

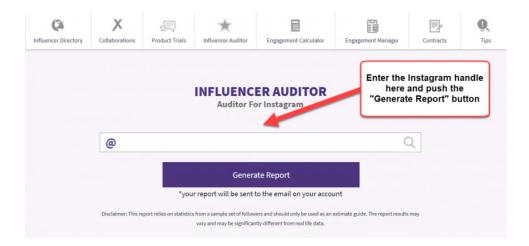
Here's to use it:

- 1. Log into Phlanx
- 2. Choose "Influencer Audit" at the top
- 3. Enter the Instagram handle
- 4. Push the Generate Report button

Once you log in, here's what the Phlanx page looks like:



Once you click on "Influence Auditor"... just enter the Instagram handle you want to check and press search:



Be on the lookout because Phlanx will send a report to you by email.

Another tool I use to check Instagram accounts is Socialblade.

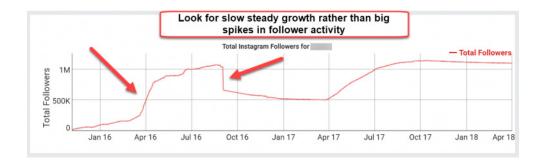
Here's how you do it:

- 1. Got to Socialblade.com
- 2. Choose the social platform you want to check at the top (you have a bunch of choices)
- 3. Enter the channel or feed name
- 4. Push the Search button



For Instagram accounts, scroll down the page until you find a graph.

If you see activity like this, its a sign the account is buying followers:



Use Socialblade to find fake followers on YouTube too.

Look for steady growth over time.

Now, just know:

Some movement up or down is normal but sharp spikes as you can see in the image above are suspicious and a good indication fake followers are being bought.

One of the problems with buying fake followers is that they will sometimes drop off (as in the chart above).

IS HE A QUALITY INFLUENCER FOR ME?

After looking closely at Dr. Bergman's content on his social channels, I can tell he's an influencer I'd like to work with.

- He reaches my target market
- The content is relevant and congruent with my product
- Audience engagement is good
- His content is high quality

Following this method, just repeat the process and you'll find and choose high-quality influencers every time.

As the saying goes, "practice makes perfect." So as you get more comfortable, this process becomes second nature so you won't even think about it.

This took all of 5 minutes to do.

HERE'S THE NEXT STEP

Now I want to turn it over to you:

Which influencers are you going to find and choose first?

Are you going to start working with Instagram influencers first?

Or maybe you want to identify some YouTube content creators.

Either way, let me know by leaving a comment below right now.