



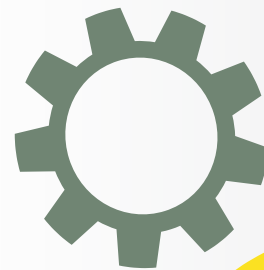
THE PR OFFICE

[PRO]



HOW CHARITIES CAN WORK WITH SOCIAL INFLUENCERS

ALEX GOLDUP
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
COMMUNITY AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT

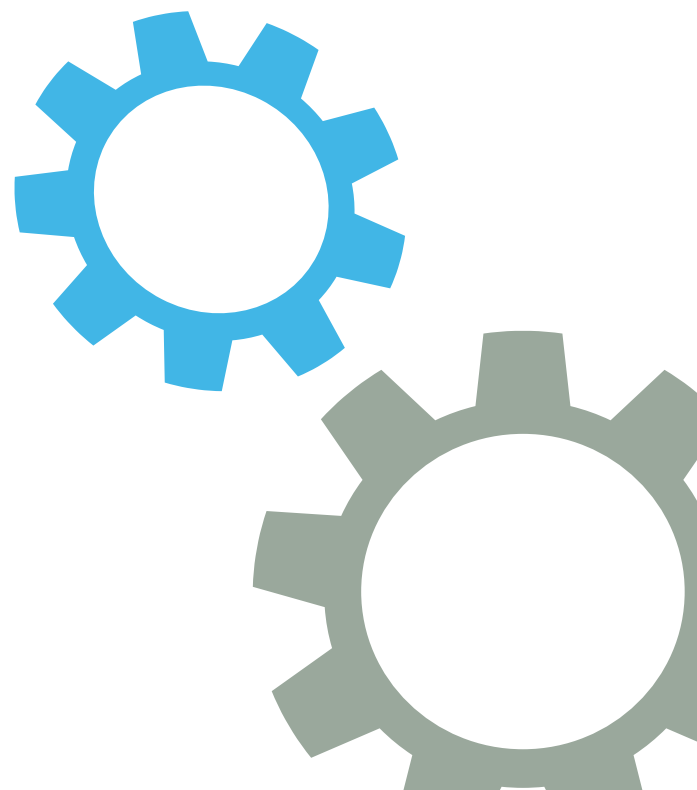




These tips were originally published on The Fundraiser, the website offering practical advice and insight for charity fundraising professionals www.charitychoice.co.uk/the-fundraiser

In recent years, social influencer marketing has gone from being a fringe marketing tactic to a core part of the communications toolkit used by a wide variety of big name brands to drive awareness, encourage engagement and build their bottom line. Where consumer brands have led, charities have arguably been slower to follow. Relatively few charities – certainly outside the larger, well-known names – are using social influencers in an integrated and sustained way and, as a consequence, are missing a golden opportunity to increase the visibility of their cause and impact in an authentic and, in many cases, cost-effective way. But how can charities find and approach social influencers? What are the risks and possible pitfalls? What does success look like?

This tip sheet explores these fundamental questions and provides straightforward advice to help charities work more effectively with social influencers.



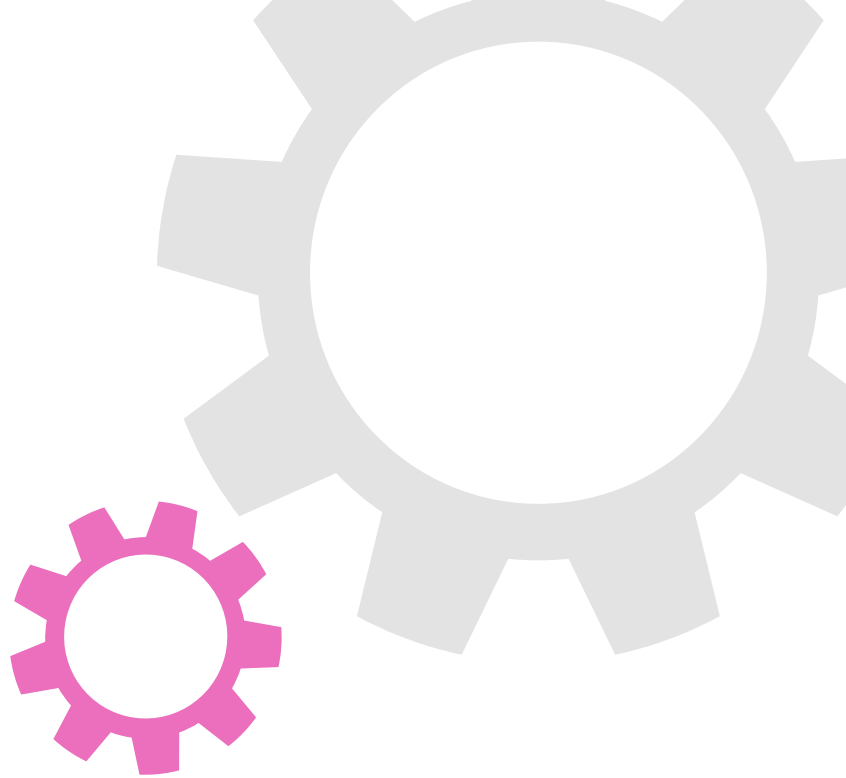
WHAT IS SOCIAL INFLUENCER MARKETING?

Social influencer marketing involves brands and organisations gaining exposure through people – or ‘influencers’ – who have large numbers of online followers on major social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat.

For charities, the aim is normally to encourage these influencers to discuss, highlight or find another way to encourage support for a particular campaign or cause by featuring them in their social media posts. When executed successfully, the results in terms of exposure can be enormous.

Influencers who reach tens of millions of followers are at the extreme end of the spectrum, but even many of the less stratospherically popular influencers reach an audience that outmatches some of the UK’s major metropolitan newspapers.

Sometimes the exposure will be on a paid-for basis (of which more shortly!), but often – and in particular for influencers for whom the charity has an obvious synergy – no money changes hands.



HOW CAN SOCIAL INFLUENCER MARKETING SUPPORT FUNDRAISING?

Used alongside the usual range of tried and tested marketing and PR channels, supportive and enthusiastic social influencers can provide a valuable added dimension that can increase reach and engagement with a fundraising campaign, particular among a younger Generation X or Millennial demographic who, in general, are more likely to follow and trust social media personalities.

The opportunities for engagement are endless – perhaps you could invite a social media influencer to visit your charity facility and speak to staff and beneficiaries? Perhaps you could entice them by organising a special event or giving an exclusive tour? Why not invite them on a visit to see your work in action?

Seeing is believing and, by giving them first-hand exposure to your work, they will be much more likely to support your fundraising in more direct ways – by sharing a video about your work with their followers on YouTube, perhaps, or by tweeting a link to your campaign page.

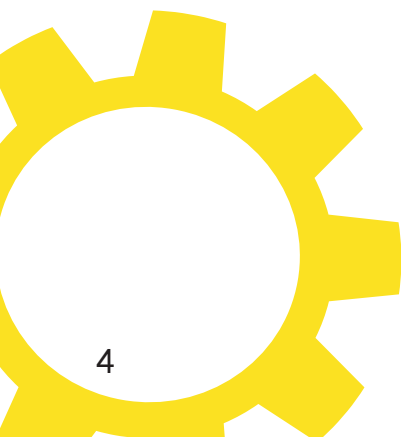
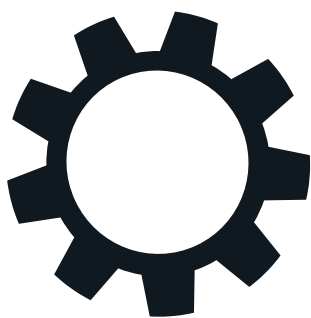


IDENTIFYING AND APPROACHING INFLUENCERS?

So you've decided that social influencer engagement is the missing link in your campaign strategy, but what next? Who do you approach and how? The trick is to find links and synergies that make it more likely that an influencer will respond to and engage with your work. For example, if you are a charity that supports children with serious illnesses, an obvious target might be a parent vlogger who posts regularly about the trials and tribulations of family life. Equally, if you are a performing arts charity, a figure from the worlds of music, stage or screen might be a better bet.

Once you've identified your target influencers, you need to find a way to approach them and engage them with your work. There is no one size fits all approach. Some prefer to be approached through their agents, if they have them, whereas others might respond better to a direct approach. Sometimes this will be obvious just by looking at their blog or social media profile, other times you might just need to try both approaches and see which works best. Either way, make sure you are clear about your 'ask', specify what you want them to do, and really talk up the aspects that you think will resonate with them and their followers. Will there be particularly good picture and video opportunities? Say so! Is there something unique that you can invite them to see and share with their followers? Say so again!

Remember that social media influencers are not journalists and, as a general rule of thumb, will not thank you for treating them as such. Avoid sending them press releases and think about whether there are other, better ways of appealing to their digital sensibilities. A vlogger, for example, might respond better to a filmed invitation with one of your beneficiaries, than to a plain text email.



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Social influencer marketing is an exciting opportunity for charities, however there are things to consider before jumping in feet first. It's good to be clear at the outset about whether you can or should make budget available to pay social influencers for exposure.

The paid approach is not without its supporters, as it does guarantee exposure and can involve a level of editorial control that you would not normally have where no money changes hands. However, carefully consider the possible disadvantages. Paid-for posts now need to be clearly labelled as such, and therefore can appear less authentic and have less impact than non-paid for posts. More significantly, donors and supporters may question whether this is an appropriate use of a charity's money.

You may be able to make a good case that it is – and indeed some charities have – but you can expect to be asked the question!



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SOCIAL

Don't let the hard questions put you off. The fact remains that social influencer marketing is a hugely exciting, and in many cases still untapped, opportunity for charities to boost the reach and results of their fundraising campaign.

The right person on social media, carefully targeted and creatively engaged, can increase your awareness, help raise vital funds, and ultimately help your charity to make an even bigger difference. So, what are you waiting for?



NEED MORE HELP?

We hope that even the smallest charities will feel emboldened to work with social influencers who align with their values, will be sympathetic to their cause, and can help them reach new audiences. If you need a bit of guidance to go in the right direction, or would just like to have an informal chat, I would be only too happy to hear from you.

Please drop me a note at agoldup@theproffice.com



ABOUT US

THE PR OFFICE ^{PRO}

From behaviour change campaigns and advocacy, to fundraising appeals and special awareness days, our dedicated community and not-for-profit team has experience of delivering a wide variety of communications projects and campaigns for charities and community organisations, large and small, local and national.

We're passionate about the not-for-profit sector. Several of our team has a background as charity trustees, others have worked in-house, and many volunteer their time at good causes of their choice. We understand its unique pressures and challenges, and have the contacts and expertise to get people talking about and supporting you.

Find out more at www.theproffice.com

Social media icons on front page designed by Freepik at www.flaticon.com