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Scaling Influencer Marketing Globally

Contents

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1.

Why Go Global with your Influencers?

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Whether or not your e-commerce is global, your influencer program should be.

Though the western world has long been a big player in the e-commerce universe, statistics show that its share has been declining. In fact, according to Statista, e-commerce sales from the US is expected to decline from 22% in 2015 to 17% by 2020. Globalization is a key pillar to any major e-commerce operation. But in order to promote share of voice and create exciting levels of buzz and growth, many marketers have had to think locally too – and influencer marketing is one of the most cost-efficient way to expand localized marketing rapidly and to effectively connect with local consumers.

If you're a retailer with a global footprint, one with major growth ambitions, one priming to enter new markets, or simply one who wants to raise their brand awareness everywhere – even in markets that they don't have a presence in yet – we want to share some key learnings to help you employ global influencer marketing to drive that growth.

2.

Global Influencer Marketing Goals

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Be mindful of the goals of your global influencer program

We're going to start by stating the painfully obvious – always launch your programs with your goals in mind. For many performance-based influencer programs, it's easy to point to click or revenue-based goals. From our experience, this is typically where most global influencer programs start. However, over the course of time, many evolve to other goals. It's therefore important to remain flexible. Don't be too slavishly attached to the original goals you've identified. You'll learn things along the way and other goals may arise in importance. Here are a few other primary and secondary purposes fulfilled by a global influencer program that may not immediately be obvious:

Clicks and Revenue　　　　**SEO**　　　　**Engagement**　　　　**Content**

The Multi-purpose Program

Clicks and Revenue. This one's a no-brainer. You tap into influencers' networks to drive clicks into your site in the hopes of earning revenue from that influencer's audience. Remember - influencers are seldom the "last click" on the conversion path – many play a far more important role introducing or influencing an eventual purchase. Only rewarding them on "last click" may not make economic sense for them, so always consider alternative payout models that may make better sense to them.

SEO. Though it's unclear whether Google uses [social signals](#) as a factor to its ranking, inbound links have always figured prominently as a ranking factor. Inbound links could occur through straightforward social posts, or through the influencers' blogs. And the larger your influencers' engaged audiences are, the higher likelihood that they will share that linked post, further helping with SEO.

Engagement. Though we don't advocate using vanity metrics like Likes and Shares for your performance-driven influencer campaigns, vanity metrics show engagement, which is a far better KPI than "reach" or "size of audience" particularly for branding-focused influencer programs. "Likes" and "Shares" are also a good predictor to the potential popularity of the image – and thus becomes a valuable metric if you're leveraging your influencer program to meet content goals...

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The Multi-purpose Program

Content. With the rise of visual-oriented social channels like Pinterest and Instagram, a brand can rapidly expand their repository of localized assets through their global influencer program. Think about it – many of your influencers strive to make as visually-impactful a post as possible to encourage virality and engagement – and these are the same qualities you look for in the imagery of your website, ads, catalog or email campaign.

But can content really be a goal for your influencer campaign? Read on...

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3.

Content as a Goal?

**What does having content as a goal even mean?**

I know, it sounds confusing and perhaps out of left field. But consider this:

One of Mediarails' large clients was interested in rapidly expanding their global influencer footprint, and naturally enough, started with revenue goals in mind.

Over time, they realized that their global influencers were producing a far more valuable asset: global content that could be leveraged on other channels to drive even greater global conversions.

Ultimately, by repurposing their influencer's imagery on other channels such as their website, they found that this user-generated content was actually moving the needle on some unexpected metrics such as email click thru rate and website conversion rates. As an added benefit, sourcing content from their influencer program significantly cut down on their production costs!

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When it Comes to Content, Globalization Is Your Friend
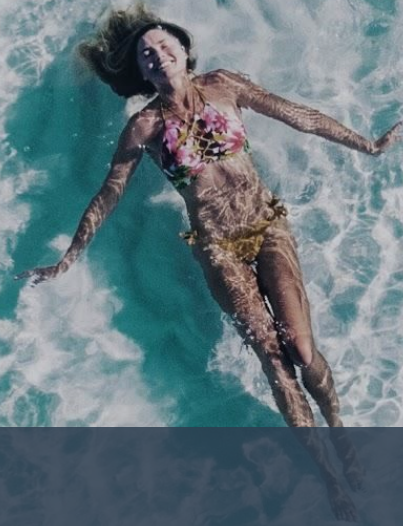
Global economics plays a role too

One of our client's Filipino influencers has over a million followers, travels globally, and charges about $400 a post with imagery. A comparable influencer from New York might cost over 10x as much!

For many global brands, this opens up tons of options. You no longer need to rely on local resources to produce great content. When you consider the powerful potential of a global network of content producers, the business possibilities are far greater.

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A Brief Detour into the Virtues of Influencer-Generated Content

User generated content unfairly gets a bad rap

For the longest time, brands were wary of the quality of user-generated content.

With the advances in mobile camera technology, from improved resolution to the wide range of filters, amateur photographers can produce some really professional-looking stuff. Not only that, the content they produce often feels very authentic. Professional photographers, of course, have years of theory, technique and practice behind their work, but the influencer universe can yield some striking, unorthodox results as well.

The images shown here represent a sample of fashion shots created by one of our clients' global influencer network – many of them were repurposed for other channels.

If your global influencer network is producing some beautiful, high impact imagery, you should consider initiating a process to start curating content assets derived from your influencer program for reuse in other initiatives.

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Leveraging Influencer Content Assets

For one of our clients, their influencer program yielded dramatic savings in their content production costs – producing up to 50% of the required content assets they needed for their marketing.

But naturally, don't assume that you can just take these assets and repurpose them without permission! If content production is a component of your influencer program, then make sure you obtain legal permissions to reuse them as part of your partner recruitment PO.

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Channels for Repurposing

Here are some examples of ways our clients have leveraged assets from their global influencer network, along with the influencers' stories themselves, in assisting in their multi-channel marketing campaigns.

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On-Site

E-Commerce Merchandising. Every product that was pulled from the client's global influencer program was tagged as an "Insider Pic", and a link to the influencer's social page or blog featured in the product page.
For one of our clients, the conversion rate of traffic who passed through these influencer-heavy product pages was 15% higher versus regular traffic.

Email

Owned Social

Featured Content. The influencer-generated assets were also a wellspring of inspiration for the client's email campaigns and social media feed. Influencers don't only provide inspiring photography, but also provide interesting storylines that could be used to inject more novelty and authenticity in a brand's email campaigns and social posts.

Managing Your Global Influencer Program Expectations

By knowing all your goals, you can properly assess the right expectations of your program

Global expansion can be daunting, and you may run into some trouble showing how influencers are driving direct revenue. However, once you recognize the secondary effects of your program, it changes the way you position the program and set expectations with the rest of the organization. That's why it's important to understand that your global influencer program may actually be driving multiple, synergistic goals such as content production savings, particularly for either universal or more localized channel marketing efforts.

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4.

How to Build a Global Influencer Program

Building a global influencer program requires workflows that scale across borders

In this section, we'll focus on the workflows required to roll out an influencer program for a global retailer. Nonetheless, the workflow below can be adapted to work for any vertical (e.g. for a travel brand, you probably don't need to ship sample products to the influencer)

Discover   **Reach Out**   **Negotiate**   **Ship/Post**   **Monitor & Audit**   **Learn & Repeat**

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Step 1
Discover

So, how do you find global influencers? And how do you discover them rapidly, efficiently and without doing manual searches that expend a lot of your team's time? Here are a few ideas:

Social Listening. There's a plethora of social listening tools that are in wide use out there. Maybe your social or PR team already uses one. Mediarails by Impact does feature its own social listening tools that can be leveraged to find influencers relevant to your category and brand. You can set various criteria, and even locate influencers that your competitors use!

Buy Lists. There are many options you can use to purchase lists of influencer prospects, such as Pub Discovery, Custom and more. You can also automate the building of lists off of influencer solutions such as Mediarails, which automates the crawling and influencer discovery process.

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Screening in Foreign Languages

You don't need to be a polyglot to screen globally

It's a natural question – how do you screen videos, blogs and influencer posts written in a foreign language? Maybe your high school Spanish will get you by on screening a few influencers, but what about that Japanese Youtuber, that Polish blog or that Dutch influencer post? Fortunately, tools like Google Translate, though not perfect, are often good enough to give your screeners a sense of what your recruits are saying and help you decide whether the influencer is a fit or not. And videos?

The influencer can rely on YouTube's Video Manager to generate subtitles across a number of supported languages, which can also be taken to Google Translate.
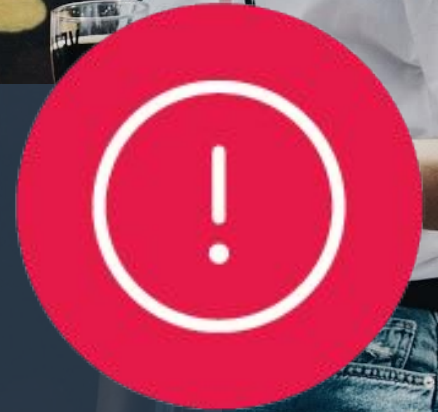
Step 2
Reach Out

When you're dealing with such a vast pool of global influencer prospects, your outreach processes need to scale.

Ask First/Screen Later

Ask yourself – how much time would you want to spend screening prospects upfront versus later? At Mediarails, we advocate an "ask first/screen later" approach in order to scale. If you're looking at a potential influencer with tens of thousands of followers with a pretty decent follower engagement rate, go ahead and email them first to even see if they are interested.

It's simple math.

If you are using a partner automation tool like Mediarails, then the "ask" step takes a few seconds. If you take a screen first/ask later approach and it takes you 3 minutes to screen an influencer, then screening a thousand influencers will take 3K minutes! That's about 50 person-hours! That's just not worth the effort!

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Step 2
Reach Out

However, if it takes you 6 seconds to send out a request, then asking a thousand influencers takes about 100 minutes. If 200 of those influencers respond, then screening those 200 at 3 minutes each will only take 600 minutes – not 3,000 minutes! That's 10 hours of work, and you end up saving 40 hours overall!

The level of effort decreases dramatically with an "ask first/screen later" approach. This approach allowed one of our advertisers to manage the recruitment of 3K influencers with just a headcount of 2!

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Design a Screening Process that Works for Your Brand

Uninviting the unsavory

With an "ask first/screen later" approach, you may be worried about inadvertently inviting unsavory characters into your program, such as someone who posts a lot of offensive or salacious content. Fortunately, there will always be ways to get out of that during the screening process. Set proper expectations about your post-invitation qualification process in the "ask" stage and then train your recruitment team with common talking points to gently reject influencers who do not pass your vetting process.

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Here are some examples of emails you can send:

Rationale for Rejection Brand fit	Rationale for Rejection Budget
Hi {{first_name}}, Thank you again for applying to Brand Program {{program_name}}. Upon further review of your {{instagram_URL}}, we have have had quite a lot of interest in our program and found other accounts who are a better fit for what we're looking for. We thank you again for your interest, and wish you well on your endeavors! Best,	Hi {{first_name}}, Thank you again for applying to Brand Program {{program_name}}. Unfortunately, we had a lot more responses than anticipated, and we are currently out of budget for this campaign. We thank you again, and will reach out to you on the next opportunity!. Best,

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Design a Screening Process that Works for Your Brand

For more cautious brands

Some brands will naturally shirk at the idea of sending an email to a potentially problematic influencer, and may choose to adopt a "screen first/ask later" approach. That's all right too, but it will obviously not be as scalable. You can always adopt a lightweight screening process first to reject some obviously questionable influencers, and, after asking, reserve heavier, more time-consuming screening activities after interested influencers respond. Once again, adapt your process based on what your brand is willing to tolerate.

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Triage new   All Prospects   All Prospect Brands

| 1 pending | 139,150 New | 3,510 qualified | 152 contacted | 11 second contact | 1 third contact | 259 converted | 6,210 rejected | 3 existing |

Load View

OOTD - Apparel ▼   Review mode   Columns ∨   Save View ∨   Tools ∨   New Prospect

Filters: Topics is #ootd ✕   Primary Contact Email is not blank ✕   Stage is not rejected ✕   ✚ Add filter

Matched 3,563 of 149,297 items

Actions	NAME i	SOURCE i	STAGE i	TOPICS	SOCIAL AUDIENCE i ▼	PRIMARY CONTACT EMAIL i	MEDIA PROPERTY URLS
☐	Smiley	MR Social Discovery	New	#ootd	13,011,327	tom@smiley.com	facebook.com/Smiley facebook.com/SmileyDe facebook.com/SmileyIt
☐	americanstyle	MR Social Discovery	qualified	#ootd	7,898,134	igamericanstyle@gmail.com	instagram.com/americanstyle
☐	I Love Shopping.	MR Social Discovery	New	#ootd	3,443,786	info@iloveshoppingstore.com	facebook.com/StoreloveShopping
☐	mensfashions	MR Social Discovery	New	#ootd	1,834,068	mensfashionsig@gmail.com	instagram.com/mensfashions
☐	fashionactive	MR Social Discovery	New	#ootd	1,666,715	fashionactivepromo@gmail.com	instagram.com/fashionactive
☐	nakdfashion	MR Social Discovery	New	#ootd	1,663,371	Hello@na-kd.com	instagram.com/nakdfashion
☐	Airydress	MR Social Discovery	New	#ootd	1,653,799	service@airydress.com	facebook.com/airydeals
☐	Vitrine Outlet	MR Social Discovery	new	#ootd	1,312,095	contato@vitrineoutlet.com.br	facebook.com/outletvitrine
☐	IndiaRush	MR Social Discovery	new	#ootd	1,105,264	anjali.dixit@indiarush.com	facebook.com/indiarush
☐	Simo_Ventura	MR Social Discovery	new	#ootd	1,096,976	commerciale@simonaventura.it	twitter.com/Simo_Ventura
☐	ANAM	MR Social Discovery	New	#ootd	1,079,335	an.am@hotmail.com	facebook.com/anammakeup
☐	Tina Shop	MR Social Discovery	New	#ootd	1,060,331	admin@tina.shop	facebook.com/tina2012.vn

Need a Hand?

How do you reduce the effort of writing email to just a few seconds? Through marketing automation of course! There are tools that allow you to build segmented lists, and craft dynamic emails tailored to each partner segment. This lets you send thousands of personalized recruitment emails to your influencers, saving you a massive amount of time!
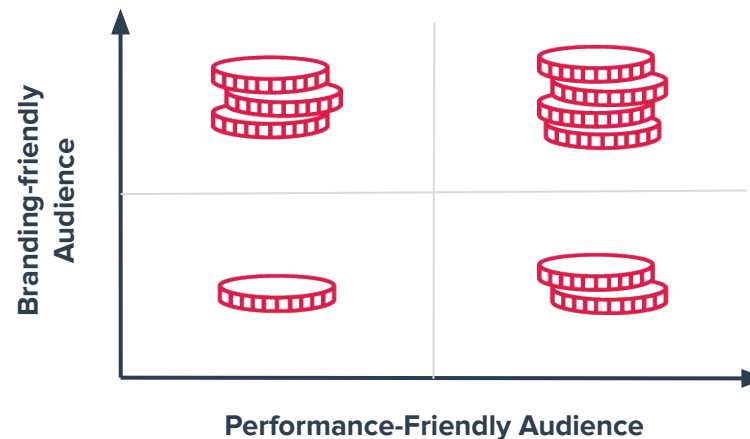
Step 3
Negotiate

Interested influencers will respond to your recruitment email with an offer. How do you evaluate them?

You hear back from one of your influencers. "Hey, we'll do 3 Facebook posts and 2 Instagram post for $500." How do you make the decision?

Here are a number of factors to consider.

Alignment with your goals. Sometimes, you have a stronger performance-focus for your influencer program. You expect it to drive more converting traffic to your site. You'll want to recruit influencers who have large, engaged followings on more click-friendly social tools like blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. Some brands will have a greater branding-focus, and will gravitate towards influencers on more image/video-focus social tools that happen to be less click-friendly, like Snap or Instagram. And sometimes you'll want both. Naturally, as you dial-up your performance or branding-focus, the more expensive it gets.

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Step 3
Negotiate

For one of our clients, they decided to place greater emphasis on performance, and far less on branding. They came up with a payment model that looked like the following:
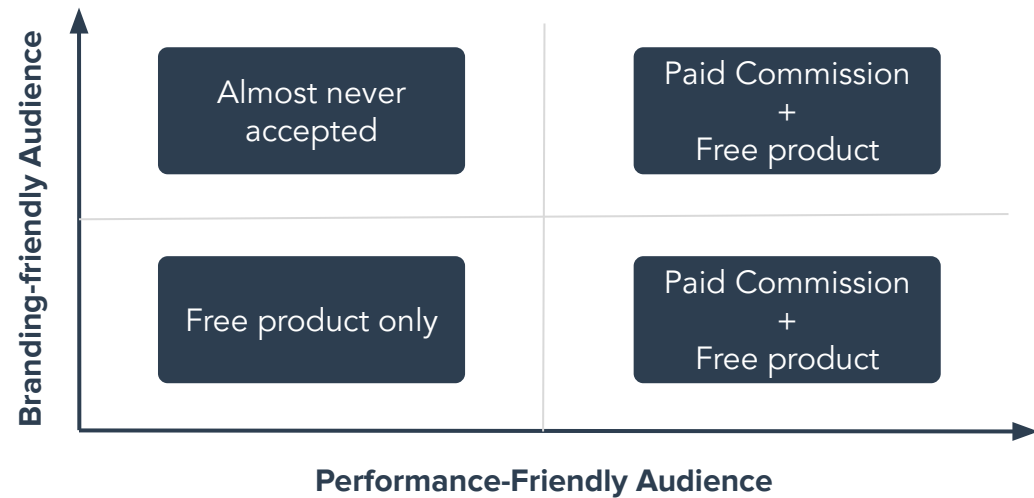
This client mostly focused on performance goals:

- They tended to pay more (and provide the product for free) for influencers with large audiences on click-friendly social networks like Facebook. They created tiered criteria for paying more as audience size rose in magnitude, and naturally spent more negotiation time for the largest of prospective influencers.

- For smaller, up-and-coming performance-oriented influencers, they only offered the free product. A cookie-cutter take-it-or-leave-it deal was used for these influencers so that the negotiation process remained as scalable as possible.

Step 3
Negotiate

Other criteria you may consider for negotiating...

Agency-represented. Some influencers may respond by pulling in their agency (either a talent or PR agency). This will always incur significantly more cost. For one of our clients, when influencers brought in their agency reps, they were automatically rejected, because the client found that these influencers were always far more expensive than they were willing to pay for.

E-Commerce friendly influencer. One easy thing to look out for is whether the influencer with a large following is actually pushing products out, or if they are mostly posting about themselves. If these influencers aren't in the habit of pushing out #ad or #sponsored posts, then they may not be a good fit for your influencer program.

Content Buy vs Media Buy? Depending on your program goals, and the price they come back with, sometimes you want to just pay a smaller or less expensive influencer because of the great content they produce. Maybe they've got impeccable style, incredible sense of photographic balance and color, and have an intuitive sense on how to position the product in novel and appealing ways. It might make sense for you to decide – "Am I paying this influencer for the content they're producing, or for the media coverage I'm getting (or both?) "

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Step 3
Negotiate

Payment Terms. We generally don't advise a payment per post unless you are doing a content buy. If you're doing a media buy, you will want to negotiate some sort of performance-based payment (such as a commission-based payout for driving a conversion), or a participation bonus (a fixed payment if the influencer click appears along a customer's path to conversion). You can even use a model that uses a blend of both fixed and variable commissioning to incentivize your influencers.

These four factors will help you calibrate what price you're willing to tolerate during the negotiation process.
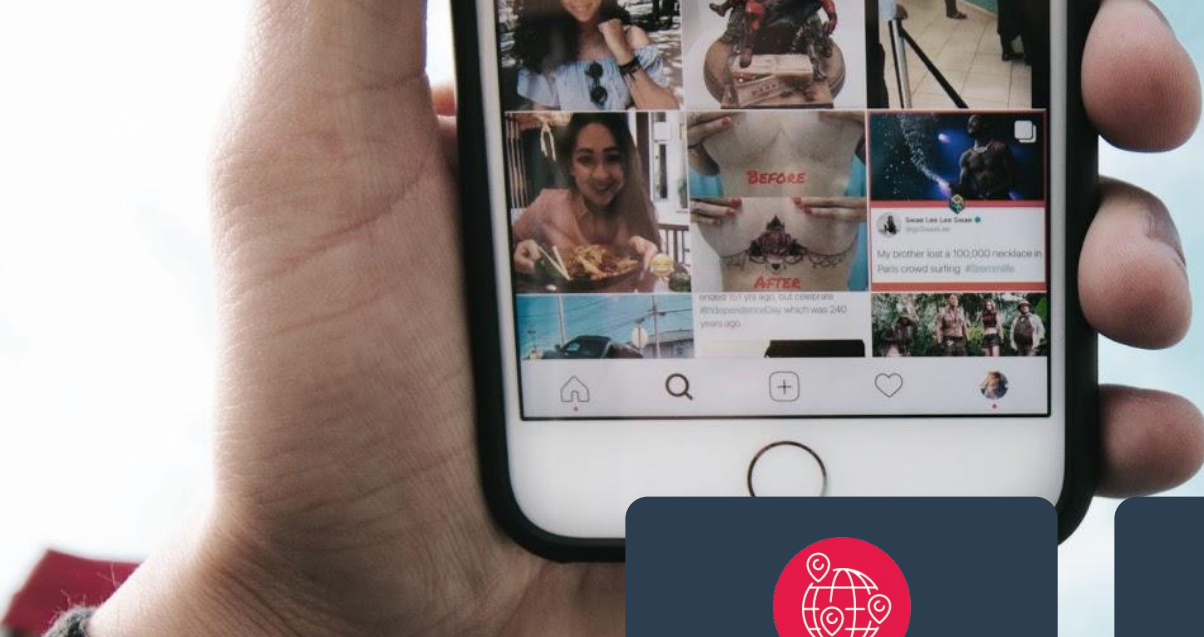
A Case Study in Global Recruiting

To give you a sense of the operational scale possible for a large global influencer recruitment program, here's how one of our client did it...

Recruit Anywhere

Our client could support a global e-commerce business, so decided to impose no geographical limits to the influencers they recruited with the exception of more culturally-sensitive markets like MENA.

2K Touches per Week

Leveraging Mediarails, they automated recruitment outreach to "discover" influencers that seemed relevant to one of their product lines and a fit to their brand. About 2K emails were sent per week!

~30K Reached ~3K Recruited

They cast a very wide net, reaching out to over 30K potential influencers. Of the influencers who expressed interest, about ~3K made it through the vetting process and were successfully recruited into the program.

Though this client was an early pioneer among global influencer programs, in remains, to date, among the largest global influencer programs in the industry.

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Step 4
Ship and Post

After you've agreed on a contract, then comes the hard operational stuff. Here are some of the challenges for global retailers (though a number of these challenges are relevant for other verticals too):

Time to post. When shipping to global markets, be very cognizant that shipping to many places in the world take 3 to 8 weeks. This is particularly challenging when you want to leverage influencers to post on new products that are rolling out. For apparel, there are stylistic and seasonal considerations by this time lag, especially as you are releasing for the spring or fall collections.

Legal framework. Yes, you've hammered out a solid contract with your global influencer, but are those contracts really enforceable? What if your foreign influencer fails to meet their contractual obligations? Are you really going to hire a legal team to pursue them abroad? Almost everyone will simply cut their losses and run, so be prepared to experience this unfortunate problem every once in a while and not to obsess over it. In fact, a number of our clients have decided that having contracts with their global influencers was not necessary and simply did away with them.

Step 4
Ship and Post

Processing costs. When shipping sample products, you may have to pay export or customs tax to your global influencer. Research this in advance. Most of the time, it shouldn't make a large impact. Every so often, it may result in a relationship that exceeds your willingness to pay.

Step 4
Ship and Post

Overall, know that you will end up making some bad deals in your global influencer program despite your screening process. You send the shipment, they sign for the product and runs – without posting.

You may feel that you need to protect yourself against this. From our experience, this is often perceived as a far larger problem that it actually turns out to be. For one of our clients, for example, the "bad deal rate" was only 2% – which, on the whole, translated to only a negligible monetary loss.

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There are a few ways to mitigate the risks of global influencer expansion

Pay with a reputable clearing house. You can certainly leverage Paypal, which has smaller transaction fees and can support just about every unrestricted major market in the world, though certain markets impose certain restrictions. Paypal also advocates for the buyer – so if problems arise, buyers know they will be protected.

Using Mediarails in conjunction with Radius by Impact, is also another option. Radius allows for the transfer of funds from advertiser to influencer partner, anywhere in the world, and payment can be tied to very specific events, such as when they post.

Consider bulk shipments and extended programs. Once an influencer has established trust, good rapport and a sterling reputation with you, you can start sending them products in bulk along with longer-term contracts. For example, instead of sending out $40 in goods for 3 posts over the next 30 days, you can instead send them $500 worth of goods, and extend the contract to 20 posts over the next 3 months.

Break a few glasses. For large-scale programs, you're going for velocity, not perfection. So psychologically prepare yourself for a few bad deals – they are bound to take place. After all, you're trying to achieve a 90% to 95% success rate with just 5% of the effort that a top-heavy process attempting to hit an unattainable 100% success rate would have taken.

Step 5
Monitor
and Audit

Whether your program is domestic or global, monitoring and auditing your influencers is a must-do activity.

At the ground level, you need to keep track of whether your influencers receive the shipped package and post in a timely manner. Here are some things you should look for.

Did they post all the products sent? This will naturally depend on the nature of your contract. But you'll obviously want to screen and make sure that your influencers' posts contain the products you shipped them.

Is the creative good? If your influencer program has content production as one of its goals, then you'll want to start scanning posts to identify assets you would like to repurpose for other channels. Advertisers should also continuously keep an eye out for influencers who post consistently good creative – you may want to adjust their contracts to add a content reuse clause if it's not a standard part of your contracts.

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Step 5
Monitor
and Audit

Are they FTC-compliant? Regardless of where your influencers reside, they may have followers in the US. The FTC requires influencers to disclose the paid nature of their posts, usually with an #ad or #sponsored hashtag. Brands may be liable if their influencers don't comply, so you'll want to establish the right monitoring processes to guarantee this.

QA tracking. Any successful influencer program requires proper tracking so you can accurately capture metrics that you care about. There may be a slight learning curve for your influencers, but you'll especially want to monitor your newest influencers for proper tagging of their outbound links. Fortunately, it's in the influencers' best interest to tag posts correctly anyway, to prove that they are adding value to your program and, more importantly, to get paid out properly if they are contracted under certain payout models (such as participation bonuses).

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Simplify Your Tracking Instructions

Always apply the K.I.S.S. principle

We highly recommend dramatically simplifying the instructions you provide to influencers for tracking links. Being too ambitious with requiring product and channel-specific tracking links may turn into a logistical nightmare for your program. You'll want to remember the K.I.S.S. principle and keep it simple. Boil it all down to one or just a few click through URLs. Influencers will misinterpret your instructions if they get too complicated.

Trust us – we've experienced it a number of times!

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Step 5
Monitor
and Audit

There are two layers of tracking that you may want to monitor related to your global influencer program based on your original goals.

Track conversions and incrementality. This one is a pretty straightforward feature in Google Analytics or other web analytics platforms. How many conversions are directly attributable to a click from one of your influencers' post? But last click attribution is often not a good way to measure the incremental value of influencers – so you may use more advanced multi-touch attribution models from tools like Impact's Altitude to measure the impact of your influencers.

Track the performance of your user generated content. If you are sourcing content from your influencers, we recommend you also roll out processes to capture and measure the impact that these user-generated assets are delivering on your other channels.

This lets you measure the value of "influencer-assisted" audience segments from their assets contribution when being repurposed on other channels such as email marketing or organic social.

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Step 5
Monitor
and Audit
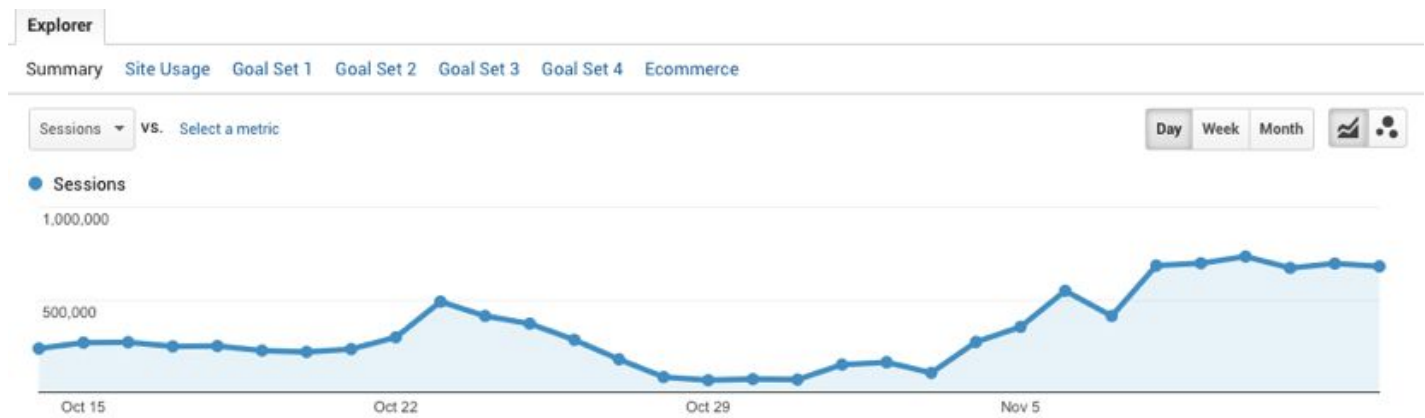
Create an influencer-engaged segment in GA, and assign a specific code associated with influencer-created content (utm_content for social media posts, a utm_source for direct, and so forth)

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Step 6
Learn and
Repeat

That's it! You'll have to repeat this process a few times before getting the hang of it, but you're well on your way to a solid global influencer program. Throughout this process, you'll want to have a multi-layer approach to how you monitor and manage your influencers on an ongoing basis:

If results are okay, then re-engage. You should always stay on top of the influencers you like working with, to ensure that they remain engaged. For new influencers, you'll likely start with a probationary period of short duration media buys – say bi-weekly. You'll validate to see if they posted or not. You'll check the quality of their creative. If you like what you see, then you'll re-engage them to do more. Over time, you'll build out a pool of reliable, trustworthy influencers.

Treat exceptional influencers as insiders. Your influencer program will have some performance or content superstars. You'll want to cement your relationship with them. You can engage in longer-term contracts with more favorable terms. For instance, moving them from a 2-post, $500/post relationship that requires monthly renewal to a 20-post, $350/post year-long relationship. Many of them will appreciate longer-term contracts and will accept a lower per-post fee.

Step 6
Learn and
Repeat

Find Your Friendlies. You'll have Insiders in your network who will also be natural advocates to your brand. You may have such a good relationship with them, that they will amplify your content on their own initiative, or if you ask them nicely. Let's say you're running a special survey or running a global sweepstakes – ask your friendlies to participate in the announcement's amplification. Friendlies will willingly share, re-tweet or promote your microsite for free.

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5.

Your Marketing Professor Was Wrong

Spray and Pray DOES Work

You won't find many marketing textbooks advocating the spray-and-pray approach, but in the case of rapid, global expansion of your influencer program, there are benefits to taking a systematic spray-and-pray approach.
The key idea here is systematic.

There are over 1MM influencers in the US and Europe alone. Most brands invest heavily only on the very top echelon of this pyramid. This concentrated over-focus on the top means extended recruitment and negotiation cycles for brands competing for influencer royalty. This is the wrong approach.

Many brands would fare better by looking at arbitrage opportunities — influencers who are below-the-radar, but provide outsized value from the perspective of the goals you set for your program: be it performance, content, SEO, branding & engagement or other. Always be true to your goals, and go fishing in blue ocean, not red.

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Conclusion: Scale Your Influencer Program Globally In 6 Simple Steps

1. **Discover.** Cast your net far and wide using listening tools and lists

2. **Reach out.** Whenever you can, ask first and screen later.

3. **Negotiate.** Pay on the basis of all your program goals

4. **Ship & Post.** Deal with logistical and legal complexities, but don't be too discouraged by bad deals.

5. **Monitor & Audit.** Audit your program, not just on directly driven revenue, but on assists as well.

6. **Learn and Repeat.** Adopt a multi-layer approach to your influencers over time

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About Mediarails

Mediarails is a CRM and Growth platform that lets performance marketers (including affiliate managers and influencer marketers) discover and recruit new digital media partners, engage existing ones through messaging automation tools, and manage it all automatically, allowing them to eliminate the tedious work and focus on higher value-add activities like building new partner relationships, deepening existing ones and growing the company's bottom line.

Contact **sales@mediarails.com** or visit mediarails.com to learn more!

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