

How to Reach B2B Buyers with Influencer Marketing in 2020

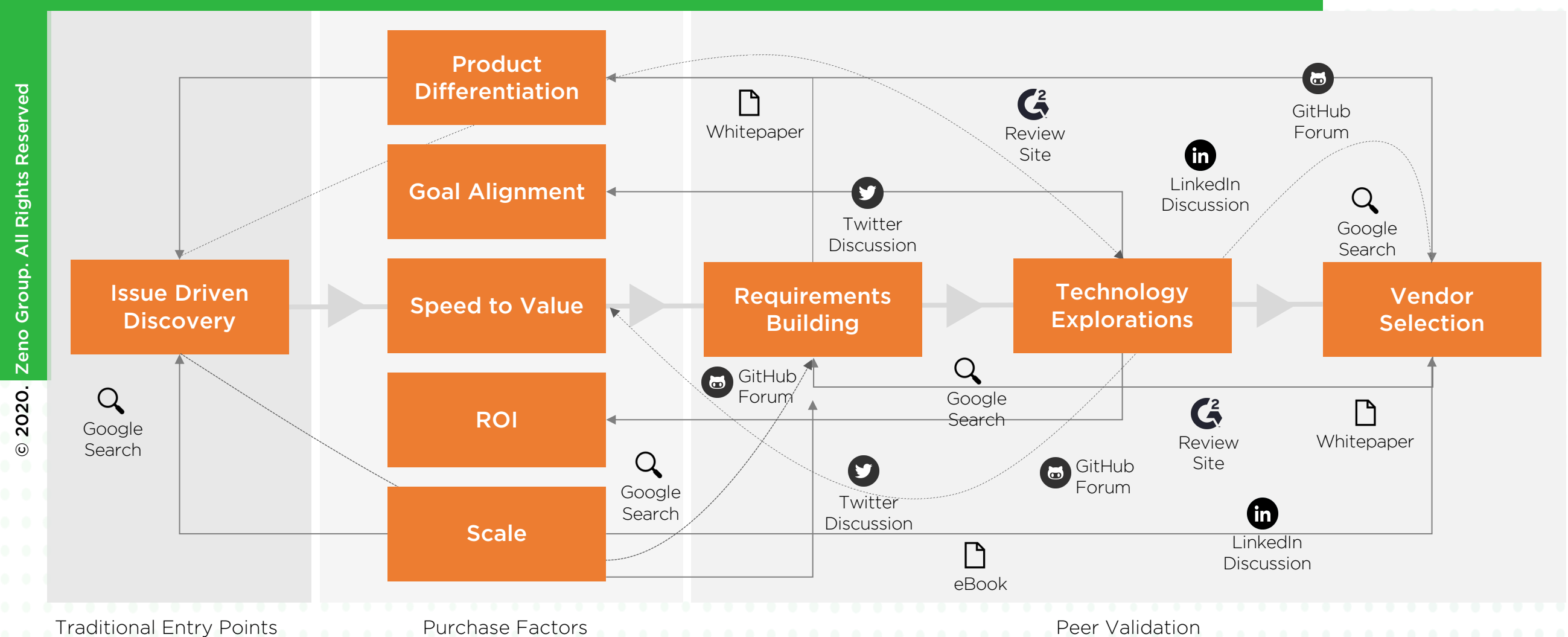
A STRATEGIC AND ACTIONABLE APPROACH TO REACHING B2B AUDIENCES

The B2B Buyer's Journey Is Dynamic and Unpredictable

There is rarely a single point that prompts a buyer to make a decision – which is why it's crucial to connect at several touchpoints

The B2B buyer's journey doesn't play out in any kind of predictable, linear order. Instead, buyers weave in and out through a typical B2B purchase, revisiting each of the below buying phases multiple times during their journey. This presents a huge opportunity for marketers. Every entry point and purchase factor can directionally inform an editorial and content strategy. Additionally, third-party validation can reinforce purchase decision-making and accelerate the buying cycle. In this context, third-party validation is influencer marketing.

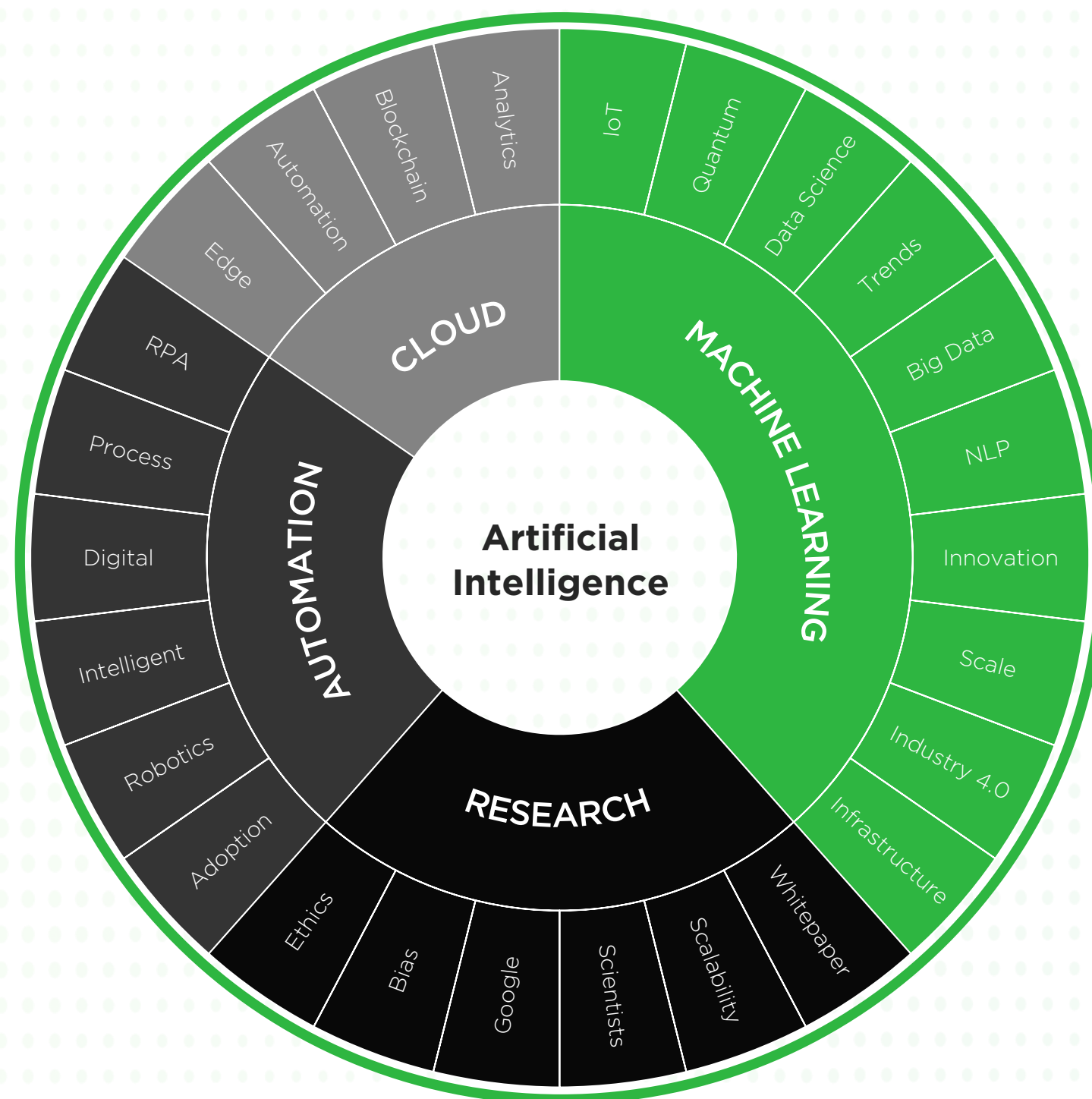
Research



What's Top of Mind for B2B and IT Decision-Makers

Before marketing to decision-makers, it's critical to first understand what they care about, right now

According to research from Adobe in 2019, 47 percent of decision-makers said artificial intelligence and security were top concerns for their business. To validate these topics, we built an audience panel of 15,000 IT decision-makers and performed conversation analyses to validate the research. The data we collected suggests that both artificial intelligence and security are topics of conversation. The below visualizations uncover the specific topics decision-makers are talking about on social media.



Why Influencer Marketing Is Important for Tech Brands

It's a proven tactic for consumer brands, but there are notable differences in successfully leveraging influencer marketing for B2B

B2B buyers don't click on a link, go to a website, add "data center" to a shopping cart, check out and call it a day. They spend countless hours Googling information, asking colleagues for feedback and recommendations, participating in online discussions on LinkedIn and Twitter, reading whitepapers, and watching videos. And they do all of this in no logical order for as long as 12-18 months, or the length of a typical sales cycle, according to CSO Insights.

These long cycles are major obstacles for marketers, but the challenges don't stop there. According to Forbes, B2B buyers get as far as two-thirds through the journey before they reach out to a software provider, and that's only if the software meets the minimum technical requirements.

This audience is not easy to reach and controlling the narrative they're exposed to is even more challenging. They are sophisticated, well-educated and extremely skeptical about all things marketing. They dislike salespeople, rarely read press releases or company websites, and they often avoid any type of direct interaction with a business until they decide it's time.

The most effective way to overcome this skepticism is by influencing their decisions through trusted third parties — influencers.

90% of business decision-makers start the buying process by researching opinions from industry experts. (Source: Harvard Business Review)

84% of CEOs and VPs use social media to make purchasing decisions. (Source IDC)

“ Influencer marketing for B2B companies should not be viewed as a campaign with a finite beginning and ending. It must be the core fabric of how we tell stories, build awareness and drive demand across all digital platforms, all the time.

Gabriel Carrejo
Head of Social Marketing
Automation Anywhere

“ The B2B space is cluttered with corporate messaging and sales pitches. Influencer marketing is crucial to break through that clutter and reach targeted audiences with third-party validation. It humanizes brand storytelling by providing an outside perspective of trusted voices in the marketplace.

Ryan Mahoney
Director of Industries Marketing
Salesforce

Organic Influencer Engagement is Table Stakes for B2B Brands

As decision-makers weave in and out of the buying phases, this becomes an opportunity for influencer engagement

Branded content in social media doesn't work like it used to. B2B buyers aren't only busy, but there's also a lack of trust when brands shout marketing messages from the rooftops. They want content to be a utility and help them do their jobs more effectively. They crave relevancy.

B2B marketers must start thinking outside the box if they want to reach their audiences with impactful content. There's no better way to achieve this than through organic influencer engagement.



Identify the most relevant influencers

This is the most important step and it shouldn't be overlooked. It's critical to use data analysis to validate which influencers can drive the most impact for your business.

Data points such as reference (if the influencers are mentioned or referenced by the media or other influencers), relevance (if they're leaders on the topic or category), resonance (when they post content), are their audiences engaging with it and reach (how large their social community is) can be used to validate the right influencers to engage with.



Build influencer listening panel

The internet moves fast, and social media has accelerated how quickly attention shifts from one topic to another. Because of this, it's important for B2B marketers to know exactly what is and is not relevant to influencers on any given day.

Tracking conversations, sharing patterns, media consumption and trending topics is the next step in organic influencer engagement.



Real-time influencer engagement

Real-time influencer engagement means more than just a retweet, follow or a like. It's about making the influencer the hero of the story and giving them credit for their point of view.

At the same time, it serves as an opportunity to provide unique context on the topics that are important to your business. It's a form of thought leadership but letting influencers take the lead, supplemented with a creative digital asset.



Data-informed creative content

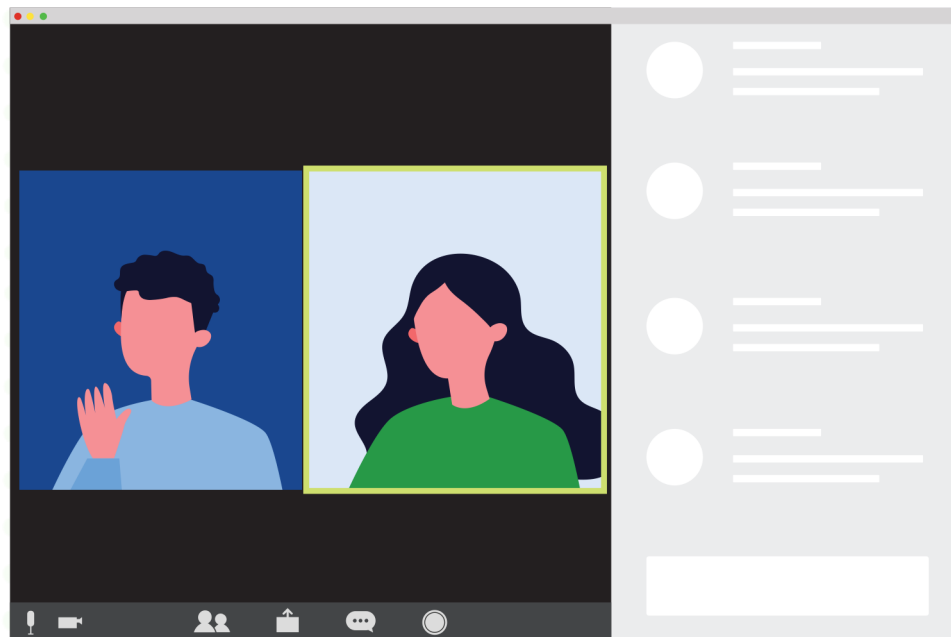
The path to brand relevancy relies on participating in relevant industry conversations, maintaining a unique point of view and acquiring third-party validation that reinforces that perspective.

One of the staples in organic influencer engagement is listening to trending topics, creating real-time digital assets based on those topics and using branded channels to distribute that content into the marketplace.

Campaign-Based Paid Influencer Marketing Reaches Untapped Audiences

Paid influencer campaigns guarantee content will reach a desired audience and deliver business value at the same time

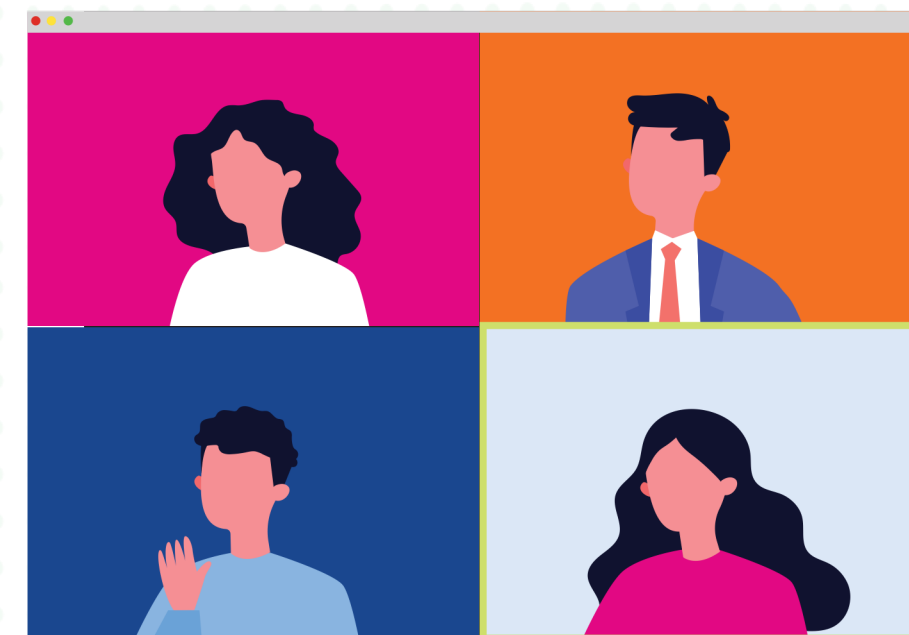
With the recent challenges of COVID-19, technology companies are having to cancel customer and industry events, which is crippling their sales pipeline. Below are four ways to activate influencers virtually and still generate the same business impact, if not more.



1:1 Topical-Based Interviews

Pre-recorded or live conversations between influencers and executives or subject-matter experts discussing technology, trends and predictions.

Content can be cut into smaller digital assets for distribution on brand channels and given to influencers to share. Promote with paid.



Virtual Panel Discussions

Pre-recorded or live conversations between a group of influencers, partners and executives discussing trending business topics of the day.

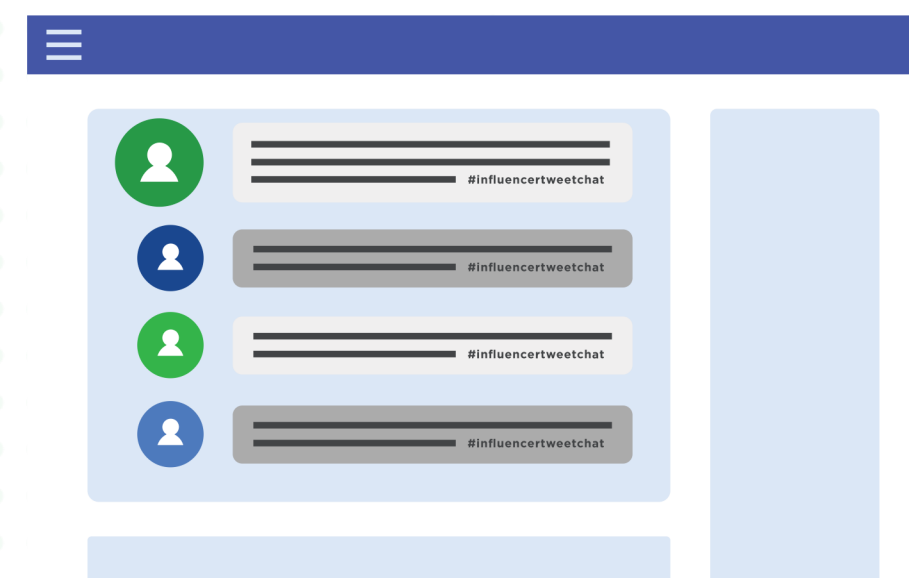
Content can be cut into smaller digital assets for distribution on brand channels and given to influencers to share. Promote with paid.



Collaborative Content

Co-creation of a long-form digital assets where influencers will provide unique perspectives on a topic or trend. Tech experts or Executives write an introduction or conclusion.

Content can be gated or can be cut into smaller digital assets for distribution on brand channels and given to influencers to share. Promote with paid.



Social Chat Activation

Enlist influencers to moderate and participate in planned chats about a specific topic or trend in technology.

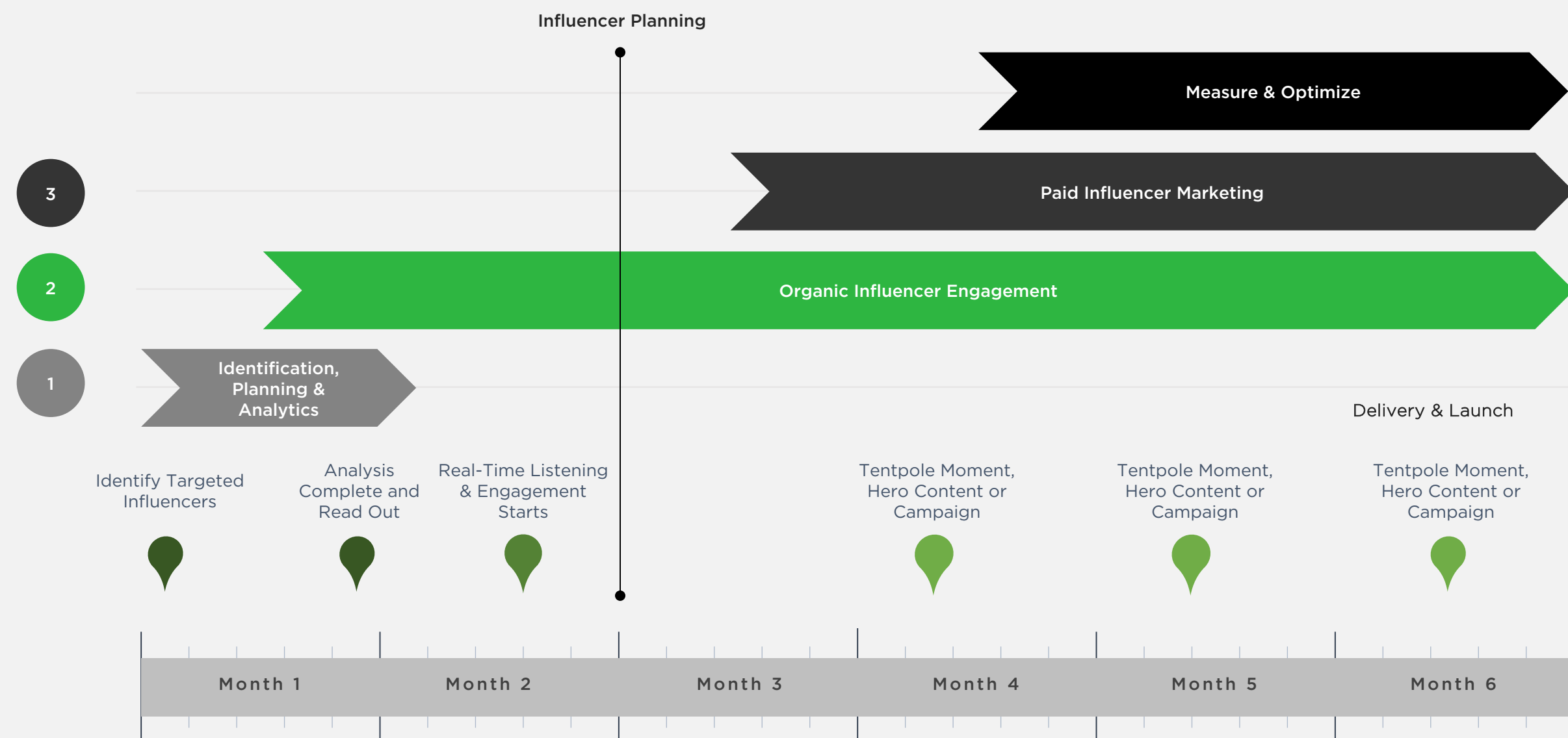
Seed all questions with participating influencers, ensuring they have an adequate and timely response. Provide influencers with digital assets for them to share. Promote with paid.

How It All Comes Together

The integration between branded events, paid influencer activation and the consistent drumbeat of organic influencer engagement is the path to achieving and maintaining brand relevance.

Organic engagement + paid activation = better together

Branded content doesn't work the way it used to. Influencers aren't attracted to marketing messages and will typically ignore them on social media. Organic influencer engagement means creating digital assets (animated videos, infographics, storytelling videos) based on data-informed influencer conversations and distributing that creative content into the marketplace. And since influencers will only go so far in helping brands to tell their stories, paid activation programs are critical for tentpole moments such as product launches, events or specific campaigns.



Showing Business Value With Data

Measuring just impressions and engagement doesn't quantify large investments into robust influencer marketing programs

The pressure is on. Marketing leaders across all sector are demanding to see ROI in their investments before funding new and existing marketing and communication programs. Below are four areas of metrics that can be measured and tied back to business value.

Demand Generation Indicators

Providing influencers with trackable links allows brands to measure how impactful influencers are in supporting product launches, events and other tentpole moments.

Share of Audience Attention

Capturing attention requires brands to first build a quantifiable target audience (e.g. IT decision-makers, data scientists, CIOs) and measuring their level of attention with the brand and campaign assets (including mentions, shares and clicks).

Potential Reach & Engagement

This is the most common way to measure influencer programs, and while many consider it just vanity metrics, it's a good indicator of how well content is received by influencers during organic engagement activities.

Brand & Product Visibility in Google Search

Tracking third-party influencer content and how it ranks in Google ensures brands own the real estate in search-engine results for targeted keywords and topics, especially from 3rd party influencers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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Thank You!