

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair wearing a light-colored beret and a peach-colored sweater, seen from behind as she holds a camera up to her eye. In the background, another woman with dark hair is sitting on a white sofa in a bright, sunlit room with large windows and hanging plants.

# The Ultimate Guide to Micro-influencer Marketing

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At Sway Group, we've spent years developing exceptional influencer marketing and social strategies for brands and agencies. While high-profile influencers with followers in the millions tend to attract the most media attention, we've seen firsthand how bigger isn't always better when it comes to driving real consumer engagement and action. In this guide, we'll explain why and how so-called "micro-influencers" can be the best partners for engaging your target audience with influencer marketing.

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# Influencer Marketing **in a Nutshell**

Consumer trust in advertising has **reached an all-time low**: most of us have learned to tune out traditional sales pitches and skip past commercials in favor of reviews and recommendations from our peers, social networks, and industry experts. As a result, influencer marketing has emerged as a highly successful strategy for reaching today's consumers of all ages and interests.

Influencer marketing is the art and science of brands collaborating with digital content creators, leveraging creator influence and credibility to market products or services.

Some of the benefits of influencer marketing:

- Builds trust with your audience
- Increases brand awareness and affinity
- Overcomes ad and algorithm barriers
- Boosts targeted reach and engagement
- Drives specific consumer actions

Whether you're hoping to spread awareness for your company's latest product, drive traffic to a certain web page or video, boost sales, or start a social conversation, influencer marketing is a powerful strategy for achieving your KPIs (key performance indicators).



@sherrajanielle



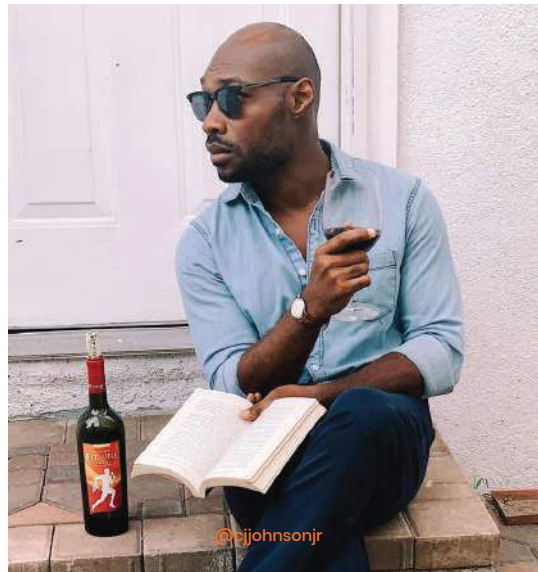
@styleanthropy

# The Rise of **the Micro-Influencer**

A concept known as micro-influencer marketing has been getting a lot of press in the last year or so (although at our agency, we've been embracing this strategy from our inception!). Micro-influencers — defined as individuals with smaller, but highly engaged followings on social media — are increasingly showing superiority over high-profile influencers when it comes to cost-effective, results-driven marketing campaigns.



@beingeconomical



@cjohnsonjr



@thehonestshruth

[instagram.com/thehonestshruth](https://www.instagram.com/thehonestshruth)

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## What is a **Micro-Influencer**?

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The definition of the term micro-influencer can vary greatly depending on who you ask. Here at Sway Group, we define a micro-influencer as an individual with between 10,000 – 90,000 followers on any given social platform. Within this category, we break down influencers into different micro tiers for pricing purposes: micro 1 (10K – 30K), micro 2 (31K – 60K), and micro 3 (61K – 90K). Influencers with between 1–10,000 followers are referred to as nano influencers.

The 10K Baseline: At Sway Group, the reason we use 10,000 followers as the baseline for our micro-influencer definition has to do with Instagram's current functionality. Once an Instagram influencer has a business account with 10,000 followers, they gain access to the [Swipe Up feature in Instagram Stories](#). While nano-influencers (those with under 10K followers) are limited to a single link in their bio or links sent via direct message, micro-influencers can drive action by encouraging audiences to "swipe up for details" within their story content.

## Prioritizing Fit Over Follow: Avoid Influencer Marketing's Biggest Blunder

It seems like the best social media creators to hire for any given influencer marketing campaign would be the celebrity-level influencers with follower counts in the millions. After all, the bigger the audience, the wider the reach, the better the impact – right?

A Kardashian-level influencer can certainly seem tempting, but it turns out that high-profile creators aren't actually the best fit for most brands. For one thing, they're very expensive. If you have a sky's-the-limit budget, that won't be a problem, but most brands don't want to invest tens or hundreds of thousands into a single post.

More critically, their engagement is rarely as high as their follower counts. Generally, as an influencer's follower count rises, their [rate of engagement decreases](#). While big-name influencers offer a tempting amount of star power, those with smaller follower counts often have more active and loyal audiences.

In other words, a large number of followers isn't really tied to how well a message will be received. In fact, macro influencer endorsements are more frequently tuned out because consumers don't identify with the creator the way they do with more relatable accounts. Today's consumers, particularly millennials, aren't easily swayed by celebrities. In [a survey of US millennial internet users from Roth Capital Partners](#), the vast majority of respondents, 78%, either had a negative view of celebrity-level endorsements or were indifferent to the practice with regard to making a purchase.

[“The best kind of influencer marketing feels like a helpful hint from a friend, not an ad slogan shared by a celebrity spokesperson.”](#)

-- Tiffany Romero, President, Influencer Management, Sway Group



## Micro-Influencers Offer **Personal Touch, Specific Focus**



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Micro-Influencers use their platform to **create communities and build personal connections** with the people who follow them

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Micro-influencers use their platform to create communities and build personal connections with the people who follow them. They are more likely to share personal stories and images, offer candid insight into their lives, and engage with followers via comments or direct message.

Not only do micro-influencers come across as more down to earth, they can speak to the specialized topics they know their followers are interested in. Many modern creators focus on niche topics, from gluten-free baking to weightlifting. Within these categories and subcategories, influencers' stories, images, and shared experiences shine through with the **authenticity that consumers respond to**.

When people care about not only the content that is being published but also the creator (and they feel like the content creator cares about them), they're much more likely to engage each time a new post or Story pops up in their feeds. Micro-influencers provide the **genuine recommendations** that consumers are seeking; their endorsements come with the credibility built up from a social connection.

Plus, while nearly all accounts on Instagram have some level of spam followers or followers who are no longer active on the platform, fewer followers on a micro-influencer's account means fewer spam accounts and non-engaging followers.

## Celebrity-Level Influencer = **Celebrity-Level Scandal & Cost**



There's no way around it: big-name influencers are more prone to big scandals. The 2019 college cheating scandal, Fyre festival debacle, and YouTube stars like Logan Paul getting into hot water all showcase how quickly online creator partnerships can turn into a **brand PR nightmare**.

**Micro-influencers** simply don't attract the same potentially negative attention as the macro accounts. Of course, that doesn't mean that a micro-influencer is impervious to scandal, but it's less likely that any missteps they make are going to be front page news.

Another advantage to micro-influencers is that they are less expensive than celebrities. Macro influencers can have fees starting with four figures and moving up from there. For the price of a single post from a macro influencer, you could activate several micro-influencers (maybe even multiple times!) for your brand – and their audiences are likely far more targeted and primed for engagement.

## How to Partner **with Micro-Influencers**

Now that you understand the why of micro-influencers, let's talk about the how — how to find them, and how to move forward with a partnership.

Do it yourself. Once you're ready to run a campaign with micro-influencers, there are several ways to search social media platforms to find the right people:



- Reach out to influencers you've worked with in the past. If you know somebody in or aligned with the vertical you're looking for, ask them for recommendations. They will likely be able to point you in a good direction to start your search.
- Identify a few hashtags that fit within the particular vertical you want to reach. Looking through hashtags gives you quick access to a multitude of influencers, and may lead to someone who's perfect for your campaign.
- Once you find an account you like, look at who they follow. A quality influencer will follow other quality influencers.
- Use a platform like **CreatorIQ** (Sway Group's data partner) to search for influencers in your niche.

If you are looking to activate a large number of influencers, working with an agency can save time spent on research, recruitment, negotiations, activation, payment, and more — but it's certainly possible to manage this process in-house. Once you've identified influencers who are actively looking for projects, are a good contextual fit for your brand, and are interested in the job...it's time to agree on a price and specific deliverables.

For more details on negotiating influencer contracts and developing campaign briefs, refer to our blog post "**Create a Winning Influencer Marketing Strategy that Drives Sales.**"





# Use an influencer and content marketing agency like **Sway Group**.

Our diverse [influencer network](#) and proprietary dashboard technology means that we can easily identify and activate the best influencers for a campaign.



- The Sway Network includes a wide range of micro-influencers across all verticals. Our [influencer marketing campaigns](#) are second to none, thanks to our hands-on approach and industry expertise. Want to see our work in action? Take a look at some of our [case studies](#) and [clients](#).
- From research to recruitment to reporting, we masterfully handle any – or every – aspect of your micro influencer program. We evaluate your business needs, campaign KPIs, and target consumer mindset in order to deliver successful micro-influencer media strategies to our clients.
- Our skilled Quality Assurance team checks all content before it goes live to make sure each piece of content meets your qualifications.
- Likes, views, clicks, comments, tweets, hashtags, repins, shares: we analyze every engagement metric for in-depth campaign ROI. Our data-driven focus combined with industry know-how means we have the expertise you need for micro-influencer marketing success.

## Niche Targeting **That's Anything But Micro**



As you plan out your micro-influencer campaign, keep in mind that micro influencers often excel at creating content around a specific topic: food, DIY, parenting, fashion, beauty, and lifestyle are all popular niches.

Sometimes these followings and niches might be larger, such as these Sway Network [Instagram accounts sharing recipes and food content](#), and other times might be smaller and tightly focused on a narrow topic of interest. Either way, micro-influencers offer far more targeting capabilities than macro-level accounts with sprawling audience numbers.

Thanks to the wide variety of niches represented by micro-influencers, brands have ample opportunities to connect with audiences who are perfectly suited for their product or service. A few partnership examples include:

- A healthy-living/fitness influencer sharing the various ways they use a yogurt brand to make green smoothies and post-workout recovery snacks.
- A fashion influencer creating a mood board that highlights items from a clothing brand.
- A crafting influencer sharing how-steps for a custom DIY project that incorporates messaging around a craft store brand along with purchase checklists.
- A spice brand partnering with a food/cooking influencer to share holiday baking recipes and gifting inspiration.

# Developing a Creative Campaign



Whether you're targeting a highly specific demographic with micro-influencers or aiming for more general consumer awareness, your influencer campaign should serve your ideal customer through compelling storytelling.

Find a fit for your product or service within a story that feels like an organic topic for the influencer and is timely and useful for the audience. A shoe brand could be featured within a conversation about must-haves for travel, a sparkling wine could be the highlight of a post focused on entertaining and recipes, packing lists or decorating tutorials could accompany these topics for long-lasting value and reach.

A good content angle not only helps influencers do what they do best, it adds substance and authenticity to what could otherwise be a stale sales message that misses the mark. Your brand is the what, and your angle is the how. How can micro-influencers bring you into their existing conversations? A great angle never feels like a commercial break: it's a seamless extension of an influencer's regular content.



## QUICK TIP

By investing some effort up front to your campaign content approach, you're much more likely to get the results you need.

# The Importance of Diversity

Does influencer marketing have a **diversity problem**? Some certainly think so: from **pushback on highly-publicized influencer trips** to **outrage over tone-deaf advertisements**, people are speaking out on the need for influencer outreach to better represent the increasingly diverse world we live in today.

Diversity incorporates all of the elements that make individuals unique from one another, including but not limited to sexual orientation, ethnicity, skin color, gender, body type, socio-economic status, physical abilities, religious beliefs, and more.

In sum, diversity is the range of human differences, and unfortunately many past influencer marketing campaigns have not been very good at reflecting these differences.

Show consumers that you care about underrepresentation with the people you choose to portray in your outreach, your visual content, and your overall offerings. As Pepsi learned the hard way, just because an influencer is a major presence with a lot of followers, it doesn't mean their voice is right for your specific brand or cause.

Of course, the importance of diversity in influencer marketing goes beyond avoidance of consumer backlash. At Sway Group, we advise our clients to make diversity an integral part of their campaign planning, particularly if they're looking to attract millennials or Gen Z – not because it's the politically correct thing to do, but because representation tells a more powerful brand story.



## What do **Micro-Influencers Cost?**



It's impossible to provide specific pricing information for influencers as a whole; sponsored content can be anywhere from \$100 to \$1M per post, depending on a number of factors (but mostly audience size and content deliverables).

There are some ballpark estimates online for various platforms. In [this article from WebFX](#), a number of pricing possibilities are listed, including:

- A Facebook influencer with 10,000 followers could charge \$250 per post
- An Instagram influencer with 10,000 followers could charge \$100 per post
- A Twitter influencer with 10,000 followers could charge \$20 per post
- Influencers who base their prices on engagement could charge \$250 to \$750 per 1000 engagement, on average

At Sway Group, our pricing takes into account the scope of the campaign, creative angles and guidance, the engagement and reach of included influencers, the platforms used, influencer communication and management, quality assurance services, reporting and analytics, and more. Our best-in-class content consistently yields up to 3x the industry engagement rate, and we offer guaranteed social minimums as well as paid media boosting options.

## Extending Your **Micro-Influencer Investment**



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Once you've made an investment in influencer-created content, **it benefits you to make it work as hard as possible.**

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Brands often continue to promote influencer posts once the campaign has ended, but there are lots of options for extending content beyond additional social shares.


Consider the ways you might repurpose that amazing blog post: could it be included in a newsletter, or mentioned on a podcast? How about a particularly compelling influencer graphic; would it work on your brand website or as part of a paid advertisement?

When you repurpose content, you're not only improving your ROI, you're building repetition. By continually adding touchpoints with your target market, you'll increase credibility — and ultimately, drive more engagements and sales.

Remember that content versatility is dependent on usage rights! If you want to be able to repurpose influencer content, make sure commercial rights are confirmed and approved by both parties in the contract.

## The Final Word

Sway Group is a full-service agency, meaning that we are much more than a DIY influencer platform or an agency that simply manages influencer recruitment and payment. We evaluate your business needs, campaign KPIs, and target consumer mindset in order to develop a spectrum of media strategies that will deliver the results you need. Social engagement minimums are guaranteed, with real-time performance metrics, handpicked talent and data-driven insights.



When you partner with us, you get a full team of passionate experts who manage every aspect of your program.

While we've covered the basics for executing a strong micro-influencer marketing campaign, there are obviously many additional details and possibilities that can be customized to your specific brand goals. We've been doing this work for over a decade, and we'd love the chance to share our expertise with you.

**Give us a call** to learn more about how to reach your ideal audience through micro influencers, and start getting the kind of engagement that turns prospects into loyalists.