

# Blog Till You Drop: Influencers as Brand Champions

**Author :** Jeff Foster

**Date :** September 6, 2015



## How to Turn Bloggers (and Other Influencers) Into Your Brand Champions

**Influencer marketing** is one of the most effective ways to drive sales and grow your brand online.

That's because people tend to trust bloggers they follow more than they trust you or your marketing. So, bloggers and other **influencers** can have a huge impact on your potential customers.

However, getting bloggers to become your **brand** champions takes much more than a casual email: You need to take a structured approach to building a long-term relationship. The following nine steps should have you well on your way.

### 1. Identify your audience

Before you dive into any blogger outreach initiative, you need to know your target audience: Who is it that you're trying to sell to? Create personas that clearly identify the key characteristics of your potential customers so you can determine the best ways to influence them.

For instance, if you're selling mountain bikes, are you targeting teens, their parents, fitness enthusiasts, or mountain-biking professionals?

This step may seem basic, but it's surprising how many marketers forget about it.

### 2. Find the right bloggers

Now that you know who your audience is, it's time to decide which **bloggers** you want to target. One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to reach out indiscriminately; instead, you need to know whether a **blogger** is the right match for your brand and your **marketing** objectives. Otherwise, your efforts will have been in vain.

Start by searching for potential bloggers. You can go about doing so in many ways, but using a site such as mine ([Tomoson](#)) makes it easier. Then, narrow down your list: Look at key factors

such as the size of the blogger's audience, the relevance of the subject matter to you, and how much conversation they generate with their readers.

### 3. Create a real relationship

Good blogger outreach is all about creating relationships. Take the time to become the **bloggers'** friend, join the community they've created, and start to build trust. Some bloggers start out with a deep suspicion of **marketers** and their motives, so you need to work hard to create an authentic connection.

Don't just play at establishing a relationship: You need to be genuine and develop a real interest in them. Honesty and transparency are essential; otherwise, you're wasting your time—and theirs.

### 4. Help bloggers to grow

Once your relationship with a **blogger** starts to click, strengthen it further by promoting what they do. Ultimately, every **blogger** wants to grow their readership, so if you help them to do so you'll start to get some real traction.

If you already have a strong **social media** presence, use it to publicize their blog. **Tweet** out their blog posts and refer to their content on your own corporate blog. Don't just confine yourself to online promotion: Tell your colleagues about them, and even mention them if you speak at conferences.

### 5. Understand what motivates each blogger

As your relationship with a **blogger** progresses, it's time to start turning them into a brand champion. First, you need to understand what motivates them.

Some **bloggers** earn their living from blogging—and expect to be paid. That doesn't mean they're a hired gun. They'll still speak their own mind, but they want to be compensated for their efforts.

Many other **bloggers** do it because they are passionate about and believe in what they are saying. They want the opportunity to share their experiences, become involved, and express their opinions. These **bloggers** cannot be bought. You have to earn their support.

### 6. Make an offer that matters

Once you understand a **blogger's** motivation, you're in a position to offer something meaningful. Again, that something may be monetary—but don't assume that's the case. You can offer many other things that are just as valuable. To start with, you can give bloggers high-quality content that they can use; just make sure it's not a blatant **product** pitch.

Alternatively, give them preferred access to your company—invitations to corporate events,

interviews with executives, product previews, and more. By making them part of the process, you give them the opportunity to learn about your product and become invested in it.

## 7. Show respect

Successful relationships are built on mutual respect. Respect bloggers, and they'll respect you. Of course, you need to take care of the little things, such as thanking them when they talk about you on their **blog**, and giving them positive feedback on other things that they write. But respect is much more than that. You need to show you truly value the relationship, and that you're not just using it to achieve your goals.

Here's a simple example. It's tempting to give bloggers flashy, expensive gifts to "thank" them for their efforts. For many **bloggers**, though, that just cheapens the relationship. Again, it comes back to understanding a **blogger's** motivations: If they want to be valued for what they think and write, it's a big mistake to "pay" them with lavish gifts.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with product samples or giveaways for their readers—but [don't cross the line](#).

## 8. Live up to your commitments

As you continue to work with a **blogger**, you need to maintain their trust. That means doing what you say you'll do. Don't make commitments that you can't deliver on, or you run the risk of turning a brand champion into an implacable enemy. At best, you'll lose everything you worked so hard to achieve, and at worst you'll get a lot of negative publicity.

## 9. Keep working on the relationship

Don't treat **blogger** outreach as part of a single campaign. You've worked hard to get to this point, so it would be a complete waste to throw everything away after one success.

Even if you don't need anything from **bloggers**, engage with them on a regular basis. Don't waste their time, but do let them know that they're still important. Continue to share information with them from time to time, and keep promoting what they do.

That way, the next time you need them, they'll be there for you.