



How to Become a Leadership Influencer

Evolving through the power of expertise, authority and trust.

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You're probably sick of hearing about influencers these days and how all it takes to become one is amassing a relevant social following, whether that's at a micro-level of a few thousand social followers or fans in the millions. However, marketing yourself to simply gather a large number of followers actually isn't (or, at least, doesn't have to be) the misguided quest for superficial Internet stardom it may seem like. Frankly, it's those questionable connotations that make business executives and leaders more attracted to another, seemingly more professional status; rather than "social influencers," executives now strive to be "thought leaders."

On the one hand, there can be a massive chasm between the two. The agenda for most "influencers" might just be to tempt you into shopping at a particular boutique, for which they'll receive compensation or free products themselves (#ad). The job of a "thought leader," meanwhile, is to create a paradigm shift that earns them respect and positive reputation. But viewed another way, the line is becoming increasingly blurred. Influencers are more educated and skilled than ever before, while thought leaders have become, in some cases, blatant promoters of their own companies and brands.

Somewhere in between, we're witnessing the evolution of a new leadership breed and its ability to drive meaningful dialogue at a macro level. Enter the leadership influencer.

What Is a Leadership Influencer?

A leadership influencer is an executive who has, through a proven track record, triumphed in business and now motivates and inspires others to create similar success through the sharing of knowledge, attitude, philosophy and strategy. The leadership influencer uses channels such as news or topical publications and social media strategies to accomplish this. While nearly anyone can purchase Instagram followers or pose as an industry thought leader, being a true leadership influencer requires a special skill that isn't easy to come by. Namely....

The Power and Commitment to Inspire

Even if you consider yourself a passionate communicator and are confident in your writing and speaking capabilities, you likely face the obstacles of time constraints; unfamiliarity with platforms (e.g. you might publish inspiring material on your blog or LinkedIn profile, but do you know how to get your thoughts in front of a national publication's audience?); impatience (leadership influence takes more effort than a stab in the dark; uncertainty about what to say (you know your thoughts, but how do you explain them efficiently?); or lack of confidence.

Here's the truth that everyone needs to hear: We all have something to say and share. It doesn't matter if you're starting out as an intern or the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Your experiences define you and the perspective you gain from it is perspective that you, and only you, have the ability to share. These narratives are not only powerful, but begin to authentically position you as a leader who can motivate and inspire.

A Critical First Step

If you don't yet publish anywhere, pick a platform today (LinkedIn or Medium is a great place to start) and just start writing about something. Stuck? Try one of these three topics:

- What's your favorite quote and why?
- What has been one of the biggest challenges of your career, and how did you overcome it?
- Who has been your favorite client to work with and why?

If that first question resonated, you might devise an angle like: "Why This [Insert Author's] Quote Has Helped Me [Insert Lessons or Takeaways]." So, if you picked Abraham Lincoln, it could read: "My Favorite Abraham Lincoln Quote Is a Daily Reminder About Integrity." Or: "This Abraham Lincoln Quote Has Reminded Me About the Importance of Honesty for 19 Years."

To Influence, or Not to Influence

Ultimately, you'll be able to streamline this process of fleshing out ideas and then start using the same approach with your niche and industry expertise. As a leadership influencer, you're the expert and the authority. All the knowledge is already there, but it requires you to completely eviscerate your comfort zone. After all, do you want to leave a content footprint, or do you want to leave a legacy? You decide.

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