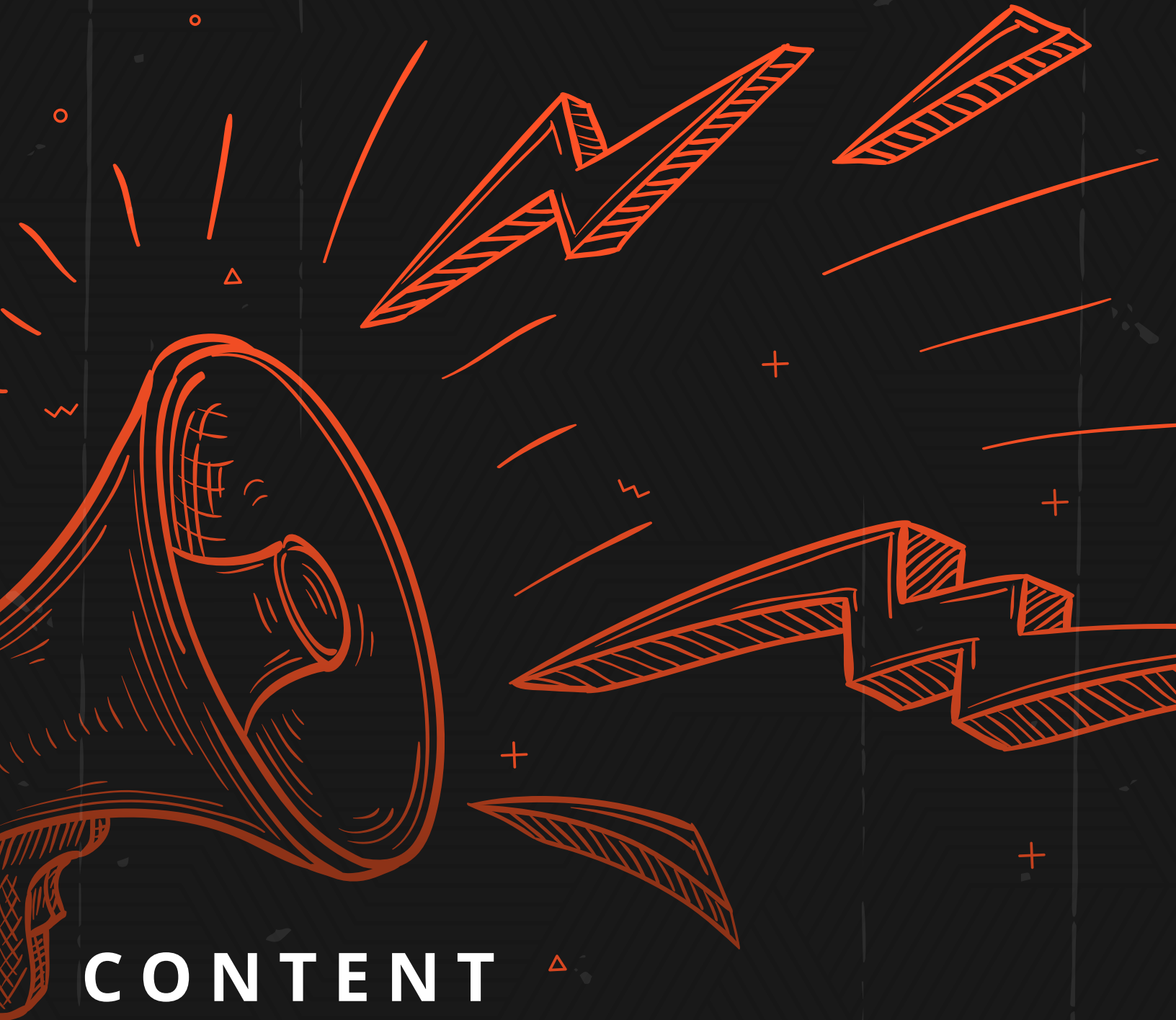


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CONTENT

AMPLIFICATION



## IN 2018, AMAZON'S ALEXA LOST HER VOICE.

With the help of their in-house creative team and London advertising agency, Lucky Generals, Amazon deftly used paid, owned and earned channels to create buzz and drive Amazon Echo sales. The result—a great example of a multi-faceted content amplification strategy and a win for Amazon.

Leading up to the Super Bowl, over one million users who asked Alexa for her Super Bowl prediction heard her cough. A peculiar thing for Alexa to do (and users thought so too, taking to Twitter to ask if she was okay). But after Amazon's 90-second spot aired during the Super Bowl, everything made sense.

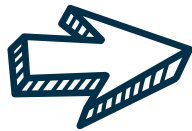
In the spot, the familiar voice of Alexa was replaced with four celebrity voices, including rapper Cardi B and celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay. In addition to this multi-million-dollar piece of advertising, Amazon shared the story on their social media platforms with over 100 pieces of content. The ad was such a hit that outlets like USA Today and the New York Post told the tale. In the end:

- The 90-second spot was the most viewed ad on YouTube for 2018 with over 50 million views
- The stunt earned 500 million impressions through earned media
- The campaign was mentioned 720,000 times on Twitter in the first week
- Amazon Echo sales increased 300 percent

You may not have \$15 million to spend on a Super Bowl commercial, but the same principles of amplifying your content across owned, paid, earned and shared channels apply to you too, no matter your budget.

# WHAT IS CONTENT AMPLIFICATION?

Content amplification is exactly what it sounds like: it's magnifying the reach and impact of the content you create. Because no matter how amazing your message is, if your target audience doesn't see it, you won't get results. Simple as that.



**THERE ARE FOUR  
DIFFERENT WAYS YOU  
CAN GET YOUR  
CONTENT SEEN AND  
HEARD**



## **OWNED MEDIA:**

These are media channels that belong to your company or that you control, including such things as your website, social media profiles or newsletters.

## **PAID MEDIA:**

These are channels that can reach your target audience, but you have to pay for the access, such as digital ads, native advertising, or content syndication. It can also include influencer marketing.

## **EARNED MEDIA:**

This is literally priceless (as in you can't pay for it). It's getting journalists and other influencers to share your message with their audience—whether in print, broadcast, or online news publications. It can also extend to less-traditional media (such as blogs and podcasts).

## **SHARED MEDIA:**

These are the social media channels that don't belong to your brand.

*Each channel alone is good; **all four together is great.** The most successful content amplification efforts (like Amazon's) typically employ a combination of the four.*

## WHY BOTHER AMPLIFYING YOUR CONTENT?

It should go without saying that you want your content to reach its intended audience. However, “build it and they will come” doesn’t work in this age of 24-hour news cycles and social media overload.

### 80/20 CONTENT RULE:



Spend 80% of your time promoting content

and only 20% creating it.



The thinking on content says that you should spend 20 percent of your time creating content, and the other 80 percent of your time promoting it. In other words, it’s better to create less content and focus your time instead on promoting those pieces through a combination of paid, owned, earned, and shared media channels.

As [Andy Crestodina](#), co-founder of Orbit Media says, “It’s not the best content that wins. It’s the best promoted content that wins.”

## AVOIDING THE CONTENT BLACK HOLE

If all you do is post content and move on to the next project, it will be lost in the vast sea of information. “Content supply is exponentially exploding while content demand is flat,” explains [Mark Schaefer](#), author of *The Content Code*. (Schaefer’s blog is considered one of the top marketing blogs globally— which means he knows what he’s talking about!)

Schaefer calls this “content shock”.

While the same number of people are searching for content, far more people are producing an exponentially greater amount of content. That means your content has to compete with an ever-growing pool of other great (and not-so-great) content, all vying for attention.

Schaefer says that “we are moving to a situation where amplification arguably matters more than the quality of content.”

However, amplification is not permission to bombard your audiences with similar-sounding messages or repeatedly show them the same content everywhere they go. That practice can result in follower fatigue or unsubscribes—and won’t help you get the engagement or results you’re hoping for.

# CREATING CONTENT THAT MOVES

The first part of any successful content amplification strategy is creating the right quality of content. If done properly, one piece of quality content can take on a life of its own and reach your targeted audiences and beyond.

Here are just a few techniques to help you create attention-grabbing content:

## BUILD A SKYSCRAPER

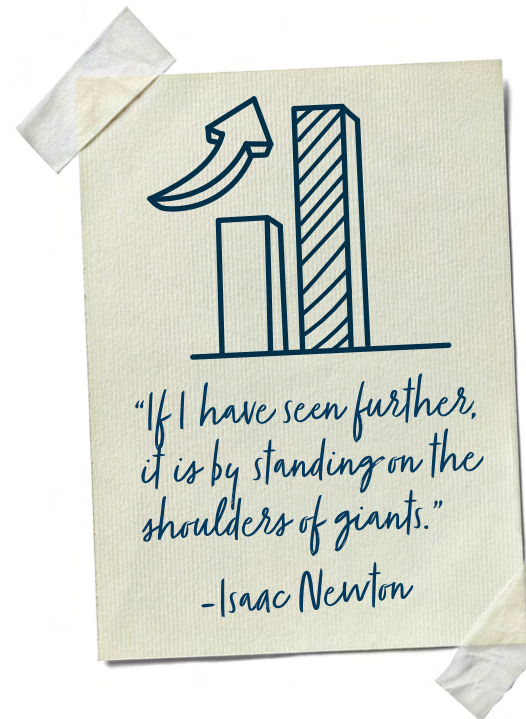
The skyscraper technique involves building on others' work to reach even loftier heights.

You can build your own content skyscraper by digging into the content of competitors or related industries. Use Google Trends to find trending topics and search to see what comes up with those keywords.

You can also use paid tools like Ahrefs or BuzzSumo to discover your competitors' most shared content, or search the most popular content per topic.

Avoid plagiarizing content but don't be afraid to "stand on the shoulders" of your competitors—incorporate the best ideas and execution examples and use that to kick start your efforts.

Don't forget to look at your own content as well! Which pieces had the most views? The highest engagement? This can help you understand what works specifically with your audience and use the best parts of past content to create something even better.



If you're building a skyscraper from your own content, Brian Dean, founder of SEO training blog [Backlinko.com](https://backlinko.com), suggests some easy ways to do it:

- **1. Bring it up to date:** Update statistics, facts, examples, and anecdotes so they are timely and relevant to your audience.
- **2. Make it visually appealing:** Include graphics, images, or videos that are shareable and will grab attention.
- **3. Add bonus insights:** Add another tip to an existing list or combine two lighter-weight pieces to create a larger, more comprehensive one.

## GO LONG

Because of their depth, long form pieces (like whitepapers) can help you build credibility, authority, and readership. These longer pieces are valuable to people interested in the topic and paint your company or organization as a thought leader on a given subject.

Expanding on existing blog posts or combining smaller pieces into a single, longer format piece is always easier than writing content from scratch. They also provide an opportunity to foster a deeper interest in your topic or product. That's why you'll almost always see whitepapers offered during the consideration stage of the buyer's journey—when people know they need to solve a problem.

## SHORTEN IT

Though we've just finished extolling the virtues of lengthening your content, the fact is that sometimes the opposite is true: less is more. Lengthy pieces can be intimidating, and even if someone downloads it, they may never read the full thing.

When you break a meaty hunk of content into bite sized pieces, you get:



- Multiple pieces to promote (with minimal effort)
- A lighter commitment piece—perfect for people earlier in the buying process



For example, if your paper has four tips, write a teaser blog about one of those tips and then link to the paper and the other three tips at the end.

Or go really short and pull a quote from the paper—a little nugget of wisdom to share with your audience. Tweet the quote or create a graphic for social media that is eye-catching and use that to promote the content on your social channels.

## MIX IT UP

Making your message visual is more important than ever. Unless your story or post has an interesting visual element, you risk getting lost in the content black hole. Visuals are critical for social media, but journalists are also begging for multimedia content, so help your message stand out with some eye candy. Try [Canva](#) or [Desygner](#) if you need a great free tool for whipping up social media images.

If you want to incorporate video but are thinking you don't have the time, budget or skills, there's some great tools out there like [Lumen5](#), [Wave.Video](#) or [Rawshorts](#), that are low cost and make creating videos incredibly easy.

With tools like these you can quickly turn that old paper or article into a video and include it with your pitch. Or use those PowerPoint skills to turn your paper into a presentation and post on SlideShare where it can be easily found.



# Pro tip:

Social networks like to keep people on their site, and they'll reward your posts if you help them do that. For example, if you're posting on Facebook, upload your video on Facebook instead of linking off to YouTube.

Similarly, you can keep LinkedIn happy by directing readers to a slide deck you host on LinkedIn's SlideShare platform.




# OWNED

Now that you've got your killer content, it's time to get it out there. The easiest and best place to start is to promote through the channels you own—your website and social media accounts. Here are some things to keep in mind as you prep those snappy social posts:

## AVOID REPEAT

This may seem counterintuitive when trying to amplify your content but sharing the same post over and over can cause follower fatigue (and may get you flagged as a spammer).

Try highlighting a different point or quote in each post or promotion. Tease your audience with a variety of tidbits. This practice may also help you reach the people who saw your earlier posts but chose not to take action.



Twitter penalizes anyone who posts the same content and messages through multiple accounts.

*Don't try that trick.*

## PICK YOUR POSTS

This may seem counterintuitive again, as this whole guide is about amplifying your content, but resist the temptation to promote every single piece of content you create. Choose the best of the best. This will build credibility and teach your followers to pay attention when you post.

## SPEAK TO YOUR AUDIENCE

Long before you create your content you should have a crystal-clear idea of who you're writing for. This should extend to your amplification efforts too.

- Know where your audience goes for advice or insights and promote your content there
- Speak the language of your audience—vocabulary and tone—in your promotion

## CHOOSE THE MESSAGE FOR THE MEDIUM

Tailor your promotion for the medium it's going on:



**Twitter**—Get visual. Tweets with images get more shares, likes, and clicks. If you're stretched for character count, you can fit a few more on an attached visual.



**Instagram**—It may be all about the visuals, but don't forget to use your words. Only the first two lines of your caption appear in the feed so make sure you put all the good stuff right up front.



**Facebook**—Video is king but keep it short and self-explanatory as 85% of videos are watched with the sound off.



**Your website**—Get other people to link to your content. These backlinks will build authority by demonstrating the credibility of your content to the search engines.



**YouTube**—Customize your thumbnails. They should complement the titles of your video. Clickbait might seem a good idea at the time, but never mislead your audience.

If your content is relevant, original, and most importantly, searchable, you're well on your way to getting the engagement you're looking for.

### PRO TIP:



Text on images and PDF documents that are included on websites or in social media posts aren't visible to search engines like Google. There are two things you should do:

- Make sure your key text is also directly in the body of your social posts and web content to ensure it is searchable
- Use alt text. Not only will you be participating in web accessibility, but alt text can add to image SEO. Be descriptive without packing it full of spammy keywords

# PAID

Sometimes your reach through owned and earned channels isn't enough to hit your objectives. That's when you need to leverage some paid channels. But don't think of this as a last resort—you will make the biggest splash if you strategically combine paid efforts with owned and earned efforts.

## FACEBOOK

Facebook offers fine-tuned targeting of their 2.8 billion monthly users, usually at a reasonable cost. You can target a granular audience using the wealth of demographic and psychographic data (personality traits, values, interests, lifestyle) that Facebook has on their users. Facebook makes it easy to create ads, test alternate versions or boost an existing post. You can also control costs by setting a budget for each campaign.

## LINKEDIN

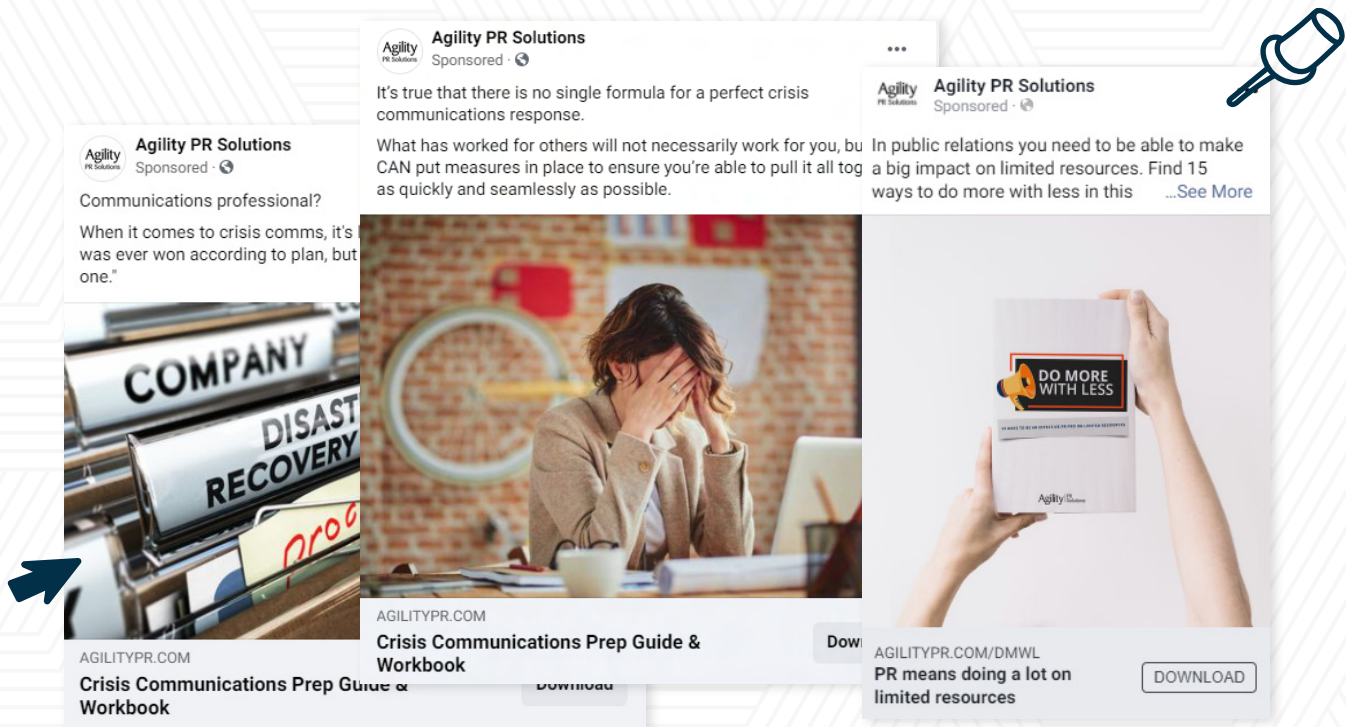
LinkedIn is a great place to amplify content, especially for B2B companies. The ability to target people based on job role or industry means it's easy to focus your promotion on decision makers or specific organizations. That's important because LinkedIn ads can be quite expensive (they recommend a daily spend of at least \$100 for each campaign).

## TWITTER

Twitter offers various methods of paid amplification, including promoted tweets, promoted accounts, and promoted trends, all of which are shown to users depending on their interaction with the platform (such as past keyword searches). Promoted tweets can be engaged with in the exact same way regular tweets can, but the money behind them may get your message in front of eyes that normally wouldn't see it. With Twitter, you choose the budget (daily, total campaign, or by ad group) with no minimum spend, but keep in mind that it's an auction system.

## INSTAGRAM

Instagram's parent company is Facebook, which means you get all the benefits of Facebook's targeting options and tools when promoting your content in stories or posts. You can set a campaign budget, daily budget and bid strategy with Instagram, allowing you to manage your goals on a \$10 budget or a \$10,000 budget. Remember, Instagram is a visual platform so make sure you're producing beautiful, eye-catching content.



## PAID PLACEMENT

Go where the eyeballs already are. Rather than trying to build your own audience from scratch, find out where your audience goes to get their news and insights and look for paid opportunities there. It may be ad space but also look at more exclusive options like sponsored content that goes to their social followers or email subscribers. Look for media kits from related news websites or industry associations to see what options may be available. Keep in mind that you can likely negotiate a better deal than the posted rates.

## CONTENT SYNDICATION

Content syndication is the process of publishing and promoting original content, such as articles, blogs, and videos, on third-party websites. The best content syndication networks have large, established audiences, and recommend relevant content to site visitors. Some syndication networks are free to publish on like Medium or LinkedIn Slideshare. Others like Outbrain, Taboola or industry-specific networks like TechTarget for IT charge for content amplification but many also provide a lead guarantee—meaning they'll keep promoting your content until you hit your goals.

# WHERE PAID MEETS EARNED: THE GREY AREA THAT IS INFLUENCERS

An influencer is an individual who can affect the actions of others. The idea that an influencer must have hundreds of thousands or millions of followers or be an expert or celebrity has gone by the wayside. It's no longer about the number or the title, it's about the level of engagement this person has with their audience.

Someone who is influential with your target audience can open the door and welcome you into the group or shut it firmly in your face. To find influencers, you can use a media contact database, media monitoring tools, or social analysis techniques to identify individuals who reach the audience you want to reach—whether they are journalists or social media influencers.

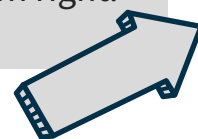
This is where the line can become fuzzy because journalists are influencers but not all influencers are journalists. And while influencer marketing falls into the paid category, there are ways to recruit influencers (journalists or not) that would fall under earned media.

## Why influencers?

If you want to successfully amplify your content outside of your owned channels (without relying entirely on paid placements and ads) you need to engage with influencers.

Of course, you think your content is great, but when it's recommended by someone not in your organization, someone the audience trusts and respects, it carries much more weight.

On the next page you'll find three ways influencers can help you amplify your content, according to [Jay Baer](#), entrepreneur, best-selling author, and influencer in his own right:



## EXPAND YOUR REACH

Your ideal influencers should have a base of followers that they engage with regularly, and those followers should look a lot like your target audience. If you can convince the influencer that your content will be interesting to their audience, and get them to share it, you can get a warm introduction to a whole new audience.

## GIVE CREDIBILITY TO YOUR WORK

The best influencers are considered experts on your industry or subject matter. If these influencers engage with your content (either by sharing or commenting) it gives your work more credibility. By linking to or contributing to your content, the influencer is suggesting to their followers that your content is credible—because they are vouching for it.

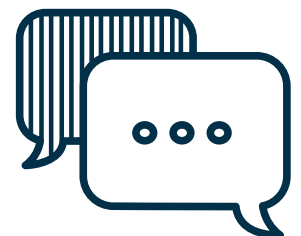
This can be especially useful if your brand or company is facing a crisis. In the face of bad PR, your influencers can be invaluable surrogates who can speak in an unbiased way about your brand.

## HELP YOU CREATE BETTER CONTENT

Consider asking influencers for quotes or having them contribute a piece to your company blog. Getting an influencer's name attached to your content, whether on the byline or in the body, will boost its value. Being featured does more than just improve your content, it also helps your influencer gain more recognition and authority. It's a win-win. Influencers may also be willing to provide advice on what content to create or insights into the mind of your audience. Take the feedback seriously.

Agility PR Solutions has a media database, monitoring tools and advanced services to help you identify and analyze your top influencers. You can also check out our list of top influencers.

*Talk to us if you need help...*



# EARNED

Now, as we said at the beginning of this guide, earned media is priceless. We can't mention the media though without also mentioning the rise in fake news and misinformation, or the fact that trust in the media is waning among the public. Despite this downward trend, the majority of the North American population still believes that the media acts with good intentions.

There are a lot of great reasons why earned media will help you amplify your content:

- Credibility/authority of the outlet sharing your message
- Being put in front of an audience you might not otherwise reach
- Wider circulation and reach than your owned channels
- Possibility for backlinks to your website to boost SEO
- Building relationships with potential brand advocates

Earned media usually comes about through media relations—building relationships with contacts in the media who will share your stories with their audiences. Part of that is pitching. There are a lot of resources out there on how to pitch, how not to pitch, the difference between pitching broadcast and print journalists and much more.

We won't get into pitching or the best way to go about relationship building here (because it's a guide unto itself); instead, we'll direct you to some of our favorite resources on the topic:

- [Don't be a #PRFail: 5 common pitch fumbles to avoid](#)
- [How PR can take advantage of podcasts—without having to produce one](#)
- [Secrets to pitching broadcast \(according to a former broadcast journalist\)](#)
- [6 tips for establishing media relationships that will get you coverage](#)
- [PR Subject Lines that Get a Yes \[webinar\]](#)



## THE FUTURE OF EARNED MEDIA

Journalism has changed. Fewer journalists are working in newsrooms, while the number of digital-native and freelance journalists has increased.

But for every journalist, there are three PR professionals.

In the webinar, “PR Forecasting: Breaking down the need-to-know trends of 2021”, our panelists addressed this 3:1 ratio and how it’s impacting the PR industry.

Sarah Tourville, CEO and Founder of Media Frenzy Global, describes her agency’s strategic approach to a media world that is starting to want ready-to-go content:

“We are spending a lot of our time writing byline articles much more than we used to. There are some real positives of that, it means that you have a 95 percent chance of getting that coverage because you’re writing the content. So, what we try and do, and this really comes out of the workshops we run with clients, is we develop those points of view ahead of knowing exactly what that journalist is writing about. We have these points of view and we put them in a contact bank and keep track of what’s happening in the media, so that we’re able to have this content that we can place fairly easily.”

- Sarah Tourville

Another panelist, Athony LaFauce, Principal at Clyde Group and an adjunct professor at The American University in Washington, D.C., sees this 3:1 ratio reflected in the classroom, with waiting lists for PR and empty seats in journalism.

Fifteen years ago, he never would have thought he'd be teaching the next generation of PR professionals paid media, but now it's necessary to prepare his students to be the communicators of the future.

“Getting [my students] to think more like reporters is a really hard thing to do because the likelihood of them actually interacting with reporters is going to get less and less. It's more and more about editorial submissions.”



# SHARED

You may be asking why we would include this in our overall amplification strategy since it's not owned or controlled by a brand, but don't overlook it! Shared media is a powerful player in the content amplification game and can be an affordable and authentic way of getting your content to an eager and interested audience.

Shared media largely refers to the social media channels of other people and the stuff they say about you on them. You may not be able to control how people use their channels to talk about your brand (if they even are), but it is possible to include user-generated content (UGC) in your amplification strategy. There are ways of encouraging people to share their own content about your brand—for free.

## USER-GENERATED CONTENT

First, off what is user-generated content? It's content that a real, breathing person created and it's on the rise. Cloudinary found that 58 percent of respondents created more content in 2020 than they did in 2019, including video and written reviews.

UGC looks different on every platform. On Twitter, it's a retweet, quote tweet, use of a hashtag or handle that doesn't belong to the person doing the actions. On Instagram, it could be a picture, reel, or story of someone using a product or service that they were not paid to endorse. On YouTube, it may be an unboxing video, or a makeup tutorial using specific products. It could also be a review on sites like Yelp.

Without paying these users, how can you encourage them to share authentically about your brand?

### STEP 1:

In the words of Andrew Richardson,  
*"make your product or service something that is worth talking about."*

Okay, let's assume that's done.

## STEP 2:

Consider some of the following strategies/incentives:

- Hashtags (especially on Twitter and Instagram)
- Contests
- Rewards (such as coupon codes, special offers, gift cards)
- Questions/quizzes



## STEP 3: *Share it!*

Put that UGC on your owned channels and show your audience that you're terrific (and not because you say so, but because others say so). UGC is a great tool to have in your communications toolbox as it's often considered to be more authentic, trustworthy, and reliable than brand-created content.



## IN SUMMARY

- A good content amplification strategy will use a combination of earned, owned, paid, and shared channels.
- Before you amplify, you need to start with content that will resonate with your audience. Whether you build a skyscraper from existing content, or splinter one piece into many smaller ones—always keep your audience in mind.
- When promoting on owned channels like your website or social platforms, make sure your message and approach fit the medium.
- Influencers and journalists are key to gaining that elusive earned media. Use a media database or monitoring tools to identify influencers and journalists to expand your reach and build better content.
- Leverage paid channels to extend your reach and get in front of hard-to-find audiences.
- Encourage UGC by having a great product or service and offering incentives. Where appropriate, incorporate UGC into your communications strategy.