



The Power of Local Influencers For Shopping Centres

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Influencer marketing is both an incredibly powerful way to drive traffic to your shopping centre and much cheaper than people realise. Over the last 15 years, here at Cunning Plan, we've mastered how to find and utilise influencers, often for just the price of a free meal!

If you do your research and follow the suggestions in this document, you can employ an influencer strategy to grow your online presence tenfold and increase awareness of what is happening in your shopping centre, which translates into a higher footfall – vital in a struggling retail landscape.

So read on to learn how to find local influencers, the best ways to manage and pay them, the metrics that matter and our list of mistakes to avoid. We've even supplied examples of influencers in action, so you get a real feel for how to make this work for your shopping centre.

What is an Influencer?

When people speak about influencers, their minds automatically drift to thinking about Molly Mae or Kim K, but influencers come in many shapes and sizes. Most importantly, they can influence the audience of any size brand, regardless of their sector, it's just a case of looking around. Before we talk about micro influencers (and even nano-influencers), who will be ideal for your shopping centre, let's look at what a typical influencer looks like.

An influencer is someone who:

- **Can affect the behaviour of a group of people by expressing their opinion on a subject or product**
- **Has a following that is engaged with their content, usually in a specific field, in which they are seen as an expert or someone to be trusted**

They typically focus on a specific niche or industry, such as fashion, beauty, fitness, travel, technology, or lifestyle and the successful ones will have built a genuine connection with their audience. At a local level, this niche could be a particular group (like local Mums) or a geographical base.

Now, estimates suggest one sponsored post from David Beckham will set you back at least \$300,000, but then he does have a following of over 86 million! What we are looking for in an influencer is a following that is targeted to our needs - a micro or nano-influencer.



The typical definition of a micro-influencer is anyone that has a following between 10,000 and 100,000, although most would now class anyone below 10,000 as a nano-influencer. What is incredibly important is that the micro-influencer and nano-influencer will have built trust with their audience so that any messaging they put out about you will come across as an authentic endorsement.

In a world that is increasingly aware (and tired) of celebrity endorsements in advertising, the micro-influencer that has a genuine connection with their audience can cut through the noise and raise the profile of your shopping centre in the right way.

So, having explained what a micro-influencer is, let's look at why you should choose one for your shopping centre.



Why Choose an Influencer for a Shopping Centre?

Working with a social media influencer can be a very efficient way to reach a highly engaged and well-targeted audience. The right influencer will act as an advocate for your scheme and help inform customers about the offering from an authentic and impartial point of view that they are more likely to listen to.



1) Audience Growth

Some people will never follow a business account, let alone one for a shopping centre, so getting to them can be a challenge. An influencer with the right audience can provide a way to reach a large, and crucially, highly engaged audience that will take action on the influencer's recommendations.

We're not necessarily saying you need to find the people with the biggest audience (more on that later [\(LINK\)](#), but an influencer can give you access to people you just can't get to via normal social accounts.

2) Authenticity & Trust

As customers continue to seek more honest and authentic relationships with brands, an influencer can take this to the next level, providing an entirely objective view of your scheme. When they post a positive experience, recommend a store or share a product, it comes with a layer of trust and credibility that is hard to achieve when posting on the shopping centre's own channel.

3) Highly Targeted

Good influencers will usually have a specific niche, whether that is a particular audience demographic or location - this can be a very effective way to get to your ideal customers. By carefully selecting an influencer whose audience aligns with your own you can deliver well-targeted campaigns about specific stores or venues whilst keeping broader marketing to the main channels.



4) Engaging Content Creation

Even though you might be a dab hand with the iPhone camera app - an influencer will come at content from a different angle. They'll likely be happy being in front of the camera, they'll take great pictures and video and come up with ideas you hadn't thought of that will engage their (and ultimately your) audience. You can even ask them to take extra images or videos for you to use on your channels. Although this may come at an extra cost, it is often a fraction of the price of a videographer or photographer.

5) Events Promotion

Influencers are a great way to cover your events and promotional campaigns. Invite them along to the first day to try it out and recommend it to their audience. If you're running a competition, get them to show their audience how to enter. Getting the influencer to play the role of 'visitor' and showing the process can be a great way to get more people to follow.

6) Tenant Engagement & Venue Support

They can also be a great way to support specific venues in your scheme. When a new venue is opening, invite them to a sneak peek tour and add them to the opening guest list. They need content for their audience too, so if you have a great story, you may be able to get this without any cost at all. It's also a great way to demonstrate how you support the brands in your scheme by sending in influencers to support their stores.



Case Study - Driving footfall

Barons Quay - That Mummy Eats - 11.5K followers

Challenge - Barons Quay is a leisure and shopping destination in Northwich, Cheshire. They were looking at ways to reach a wider, family orientated audience.

Solution - We collaborated with local 'Mum' influencer @themummythateats (11.5K followers) to increase brand awareness for Barons Quay and the tenants. She visited with her family and made a reel showing Wildwood and the tasty menu options, which generated lots of positive comments about people wanting to visit and even influenced another influencer to go the day after! The reel reached 5.6K with 155 likes, all of them being a very targeted local audience.



How to Find an Influencer



Before we look at what makes a good influencer, let's look at how to find an influencer for a shopping centre. Some people will approach you to offer themselves as potential influencers, so we will cover how to vet these people in the next section, but most of the time you will need to proactively find an influencer yourself. Here is the guide on how to find an influencer for a shopping centre.

Finding the right influencer or creator involves a strategic approach to ensure alignment with your target audience and brand values. The best place to start is having a look at who your competitors have worked with and find similar accounts - but make sure they are local to your shopping centre. Another idea is to look at who other local businesses or brands have worked with too, it's not a crime to use the same ones, especially if they have driven good results.

Another way is to explore relevant hashtags, keywords and location-based searches. For shopping centres, as they must be local, the most effective way is to search through the location tag as this will almost guarantee that they have a targeted audience in the local area.

Tip: You can ask to see a breakdown of their audience demographics before agreeing to work with them to clarify this.

How to Select a Good Influencer

Whether you are researching influencers or they approach you, you'll need to decide if they are right for your scheme. Here are our key tips to help you select the right influencer for your shopping centre.

1) Conflict of views

Politics has its place on social media, so you must be careful who you work with as you wouldn't want their views to be reflected as your own, especially if they are conflicting. Millennials, and especially Gen Z care about social issues and can be sceptical of brands so it's important to consider this as you don't want to send wrong or mixed messages, as a shopping centre the goal is to stay impartial.

Start checking this a few weeks before putting the agreement in place, the best place to view this is on their feed posts but also their stories, these tend to reveal a little more of their personalities!



2) Lack of Engagement

Total followers is not key, engagement is. This will help us pick influencers that have built a community and not just unengaged followers.

- Pick one of their posts 'reviewing' or promoting a product
- Add the total number of likes and comments under these posts and divide by the total number of followers
- Then multiply the result by 100
- Do this for at least 10 posts
- A healthy rate would be over 1% and a really good rate would be 3%+

$$\frac{35}{1,000} \text{ (Likes and comments)} \quad \text{(Followers)} \quad \times 100 = 3.5\%$$

A good engagement rate is dependent on the size of the influencer's following. Micro-influencers should have a higher engagement rate than macro-influencers (100,000-1 million followers) and celebrities, as their followings are more niche. When looking at engagement, focus on their branded posts, if they have any, because you want to see how your posts will perform with their audience.

3) Bots

You need to check that their followers are authentic, usually by scrolling through their followers you can tell if the accounts are real or fake. Do they have a community? Are people engaged with them beyond a quick comment? A lot of times it's fairly easy to tell if the influencer's engagement isn't real.



4) Follow Loops

Has the influencer got too many influencer groupies? They might not have bots following them, but they might be stuck in a cycle of influencers supporting influencers. This is great to help towards engagement and awareness, however, they must have 'actual' followers too who are engaging with their content. The only way to look for this is to look at the comments on their posts and take a look at the people's accounts who comment.

5) Too Many Branded Posts

Too many branded posts are a BIG red flag! If the influencer is just sell, sell, sell then the audience won't be able to trust them because it will be hard to distinguish whether it's the truth or if they are just doing it for the money. Bloggers and influencers who are specifically known for their product reviews and recommendations are an exception to this rule because their followers specifically go to them to make purchases.

6) They are Not Responsive

Once you've identified them and got the ball rolling, it's best to contact them via DM's and email, as not everyone communicates the same way. Most influencers and creators are amazing at collaborating, but sometimes they can be too busy and don't communicate as efficiently as you need them to.

7) Understand the Influencer

Make sure that you understand the audience of the influencer and who you are targeting, you should be looking at their demographic, interests and preferences so that your messaging can be tailored and resonate for the campaign. Also, this way an influencer won't be put off working with you and shouldn't disagree with anything you propose.

It could also be that your account is not as much of a priority for them, which is another red flag, as this could cause huge delays in your campaign. If you want your campaign done in a timely fashion, you're going to want to work with good communicators who send their posts to you for approval and post at the time needed.

Managing an Influencer

Selecting an influencer is only the start, now you've got to manage the relationship to ensure you get the best value from them. Transparency, honesty and clear communication are the top three attributes to maintain a healthy influencer relationship, and then the rest can follow.



The first thing you need to do is write a clear brief. Do not just let them take full creative control because nine times out of ten you will not get what you want. Set clear objectives and clearly define your campaign KPIs so they can understand and align their content accordingly. However, you should still work collaboratively with them to encourage creativity as they know their audience best and if you're too tight with rules it could have the opposite effect, resulting in a bad performance. The brief should include everything we'll discuss below.

Define the Deliverables

Whether it's a specific number of posts, video content, promotions or products to be included, agree on this at the start. Make sure that the content guidelines are discussed and that they clearly understand the brand message you're trying to portray.

Establish a Process

Design a process for the content to be approved to ensure that the work aligns with your brand image and meets your guidelines, and don't be afraid to provide constructive feedback if it's necessary - you are paying for a service after all!



Payment Terms

You need to make sure that payment terms are decided on to maintain a positive relationship and try to keep the payments prompt when the correct work has been completed. This will contribute to a smooth collaboration and build trust between you both. We cover how a shopping centre should pay an influencer in the next section.

It can be tricky at first, but once you have a clear system in place for influencer management, building a mutually beneficial relationship for your campaigns should be a lot easier - AND be reflected in the big numbers from your campaign results.

How Much Should I Pay an Influencer?

Paying influencers can be done in various ways, and the payment depends on factors such as the influencer's following, engagement, and the goals of your campaign. Most influencers will have a rate card which you should request before agreeing to work with them. It's also not unreasonable to ask to see analytics from previous collaborations, because this could support negotiation in prices. For an influencer with 3k-10K followers you'd typically be looking to be pay £30-150 per post, and influencers with 10K-50K followers could charge around £150-£500 per post.

If you're working with an influencer with under 10K followers, the payment could be a free meal at one of the venues, or a voucher for a store of their choice.

Here's our top three payment options:

1) Flat fee

Set a fixed amount to pay the influencer for the campaign and the deliverables included within, this could be a one-off payment or a set fee for an ongoing partnership.

To determine how much you should be paying an influencer relies heavily on their engagement rate and number of followers. Ultimately, the higher their engagement rate, the higher they can charge. For example, if they have 100k+ followers with an engagement rate of 2%+ they could be charging anywhere from £1,000 for a single post. We would encourage you not to work with anyone who just has a high number of followers, but a low engagement rate as engagement rate is the most important metric.

2) Per post

Pay the influencer for the number and type of posts they create, this usually works best for short-term campaigns or one-off pieces.

3) Product Exchange

Instead of paying the influencer, you could provide the influencer with free products, services or vouchers in exchange for content. This usually works very well with micro-influencers e.g. you could offer them a day out at the shopping centre and pay for a meal, coffee and a voucher for a shop of their choice.

Remember, when determining how to pay an influencer it's important to consider the influencer's value, the scope of the campaign and most importantly your budget. The best influencer relationships are honest and transparent, especially if you are planning a long-term contract with them. Make sure it's clear for both parties the agreed costs and what is expected before agreeing to anything.



Example Influencer Posts for a Shopping Centre

Hopefully, we've helped you understand the impact an influencer could have on a shopping centre, so now let us look at different types of posts that you should consider using them for.

Product reviews

Getting your influencer to do product reviews is a great way to boost a shopping centre's overall credibility. Positive influencer reviews often prompt their dedicated audience to visit and make purchases. This leads to an increase in footfall and adds a unique appeal to the shopping centre, which then encourages more potential customers to buy and explore the area that the customer perhaps wouldn't have thought to visit before. Overall, this gives them a valuable reason to go.

Contests and Giveaways

Influencers add a personal touch to giveaways by creating engaging content to showcase the product/service up for grabs. When people see an influencer they trust using and endorsing the product, it builds immediate credibility and trust. This not only encourages more participation and traction in the giveaway but also establishes a genuine connection between your brand and the influencer's audience. It's a win-win for everyone as the brand gains exposure, the influencer engages their audience, and participants get a chance to experience and enjoy the product/service.

Reel Subject Ideas

A great way to utilise an influencer is to have them produce collaborative reels. These are perfect for engagement, so here are a few examples of ones you might consider.

- Seasonal fashion hauls / New In- E.g 'Retail summer hauls'
- The best foodie spots in <insert shopping centre name>
- Come and spend a day with me in <insert shopping centre name>



Case Study - Increasing Centre Awareness

The Sidings - Exploring London - 384K followers

Challenge - The Sidings is a major leisure scheme in Waterloo Station, London who wanted to increase the awareness of the scheme and what it offered.

Solution - We collaborated with London influencer @exploringlondon (384K followers), she created vlog style videos for us to locate the centre and what there is to do when you arrive, plus some other local attractions too. With this style of reel, she has managed to reach 400K+ accounts.



exploringlondon and sidingswaterloo
Original audio

exploringlondon Here's how to spend a wholesome day with the family at Waterloo with 5 things to keep you and the little one's entertained this summer! 🥰

1. @black_sheep_coffee to start your day with breakfast and coffee at @sidingswaterloo
2. @nuttyscientistslondon pop up for interactive learning for the kids, £10 for kids and free for adults (they're back this weekend: Friday to Sun!) at @sidingswaterloo
3. Leake Street Graffiti Tunnel (FREE)
4. @londoneye and @jubilee_gardens (FREE)
5. @nandosuk brand new store at @sidingswaterloo

Share this with someone who's looking for a wholesome day out and save this for your next visit!

#sidingswaterloo #waterloo #waterloostation #blacksheepcoffee #londoneye #nandos #thingstodoinlondon #thingstodowithkids

Edited · 29 w

wearetheasamoahs I've been meaning to go to the science pop up...and that nandos looks snazzy

29 w 3 likes Reply

— View replies (3)

exploringlondon This Nando's has features that NO OTHER

Liked by sidingswaterloo and 4,038 others
31 July 2023

Add a comment... Post

10 myths about influencers

Hopefully, we've helped explain why you should choose a micro-influencer for a shopping centre, but let's end with some of the myths about using influencers and why they are simply not true!

1) They are only for big brands

Increasingly they are more important to smaller brands or local entities like shopping centres, than they are to larger ones, as they are a great way to grow an authentic audience

2) They cost a lot of money

Most of the micro-influencers we've worked with simply get a free meal! Many do it for enjoyment and for those that do get paid, it's a matter of earning an easy hundred pounds at most. If you get creative, it's unlikely to cost anything

3) They need a massive following

The size of the following is a secondary metric, the engagement level is far more important. Someone with only 5,000 followers who are genuinely engaged is worth more than 100,000 passive followers

4) People don't trust influencers talking about a product or service

Whilst there is an increasing distrust of celebrity endorsement, micro and nano-influencers cut through this issue by having a small and engaged community that trusts the messages they put out.



5) You need to pay an agency to get them

Emma Chamberlain might have an agent but local and micro-influencers can be contacted directly. They should be easy to communicate with, if they are not, then you shouldn't work with them.

6) All traffic is good traffic

People assume if the influencer is driving high volumes of traffic then all is good, but there is such a thing as bad traffic. So check out the audience of your influencer, it needs to match yours

8) It is a fad that will soon go away like Google Plus!

The truth is, influencer marketing has been around for decades, it's just now on social media. Previously it was in magazines, placed in films and on TV. In the past we might have called them advocates, but they all still have the same principles.

9) They don't deliver measurable results

Quite the opposite, due to the nature of modern social media tracking, you can understand the influence on your marketing greater than most other efforts that you do. You can see the traffic they send, the engagement level of the audience and ultimately the increase it drives in your audience.

10) They only reach a younger audience

This is a particular worry for shopping centres but it's not true. As with all marketing, you find the influencers on the platforms that are right for your audience, so if you are looking to find an older demographic, look for an influencer that has strong engagement on Facebook or YouTube.

So there you have it, our guide to using micro-influencers for shopping centre marketing. It's a powerful tool in your marketing strategy that should work alongside your traditional and digital marketing efforts to expand your reach and grow footfall.