

# Digital influencer marketing

By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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The IAB SA is hosting its next insight webinar tomorrow, 30 July at 11am on Zoom, featuring speakers Stéphane Rogovsky, Pierre Cassuto, Siya Metane and Aqeelah Harron-Ally on the topic of digital influencer marketing...

Here, Rogovsky, founder and CEO at R-Squared and council lead of the IAB SA Digital Influencer Council, Cassuto, CMO of the social-media influencer platform Humanz globally and CEO for its African operations, Metane, better known in the music industry as 'Slikour', CEO of SlikourOnLife and Harron-Ally, modest-dressing blogger (Fashion Breed), social media influencer and stylist, share some key insights and a bit about what they're going to be sharing in their presentations...

## What is the key theme or message of your talk?

**Rogovsky:** Using influencers to drive results in a post-lockdown world.

**Cassuto:** Identifying real 'influencers' and measuring the ROI of influencer marketing campaigns successfully and consistently is extremely difficult. The core reason is that definitions for both of these concepts are fluid and interpretations still differ.

**Metane:** People + stories = influencers

**Harron-Ally:** The world has changed for a long, long time. Adaptation is key, but it can be a good thing in the long-term.

## Talk us through some of your key insights on the subject.

**Rogovsky:** What is influencer marketing? How does it differentiate from celebrity advertising? The need for brands to reconnect with their audience, and the increased relatability and resonance that influencers have with their audience as a consequence of Covid-19.



Aqeelah Harron-Ally, Pierre Cassuto, Stéphane Rogovsky and Siya Metane



Stéphane Rogovsky named as top industry player for 2019 in Influencer Marketing Top 50 list  
R-Squared SA 13 Jan 2020



**Cassuto:** People typically refer to one of three practices when speaking about influencer marketing: a) paying people with large social media followings to post branded content, as a replacement for traditional publishers and broadcasters; b) commissioning online content creators to produce branded content, as a replacement for traditional creatives; c) exchanging thoughts and ideas with leaders within communities, as a replacement for traditional research and strategy consultants. There is then an expectation that doing any or all of these successfully will result in 'influence' but without consensus on how it's defined or measured.

People also tend to equate 'high social media following' and 'influence', but influence is contextual, relative to a specific group over a specific matter and sometimes even at a specific time. Being an influencer is a role that someone takes on at a specific place and time, on the back of a position they have earned based on their perceived expertise, character and interactions with the community in question. So, an influencer could in theory mean anybody, depending on the context that you have in mind or the community you want to influence.

Each social network, platform and agency tends to have their own definition and interpretation not only for both of these concepts but also metrics: reach, impressions, opportunities to see, engagement, etc. can all mean different things depending on who you ask. As a result, comparing proposals or reports from campaign to campaign or partner to partner is nearly impossible for a marketer today.



## The impact of Covid-19 on influencer marketing

Humanz 19 May 2020



**Metane:** The power of influencers. Using the right influencers for the right purpose/objective. It's more than just the number of followers but the truth of the narrative and how it's curated to create relevance.

Brands need to identify what their objectives are, their audience and if their truth resonates with the narrative of that influencer. The agency needs to strategically select influencers that will bring the clients' objectives to life, as authentic as possible to build that real connection with their audience.

**Harron-Ally:** Topic one: adapting fully to the pandemic and accepting it. This will cover accepting that the pandemic as a long-term situation with long-term effects, to finding ways to keep your brand relevant in this time. Using this time to stay connected with your audience through home-DIY product innovation, digital product innovation, collaboration with free education. Also explore ways of providing escapism. It will also discuss honesty with advertising partners. Topic two: screen time and engagement are up right now, but do viewers have money? Here we will explore ways to use this to your advantage.

■ **What one main call to action would you advise brands to take at this time?**

**Rogovsky:** Keep the communication flowing with your audience, even if you cannot trade. Influencers can bring the authentic, personal and human message that your audience needs during these challenging times. Covid-19 is a human crisis, and personalised and human communication is essential.

**Cassuto:** Question what is being presented to you and how it is being calculated. Define explicitly and upfront how you will measure success and equate your ROI. Create and test a theory of how you will build your own influence within specific communities.

**Metane:** Understand your target audience's social climate and offer a solution that caters to their direct needs, considering what is currently happening in the world. Be relatable, be relevant and don't just do it because it's a quick reach scheme.

**Harron-Ally:** Continue to explore ways to adapt and get creative in order to stay relevant. Look at what other brands are doing to keep their names out there, and also ask yourself as a consumer what do you want to see, what is irritating you, what has helped you, etc. It's still going to be stories and emotions that sell your product, not forced advertising.

■ **The digital economy is changing at such a rapid rate, especially given the current global crisis. Comment on its impact of content on the digital economy in context of your talk.**

**Rogovsky:** Whether rich or poor, famous or infamous or in a relationship or not, influencers and their audience are now all in the same boat. They too are isolated and miss going out, travelling and seeing their friends and family. Covid-19

created a level of relatability between influencers and their audience that was never reached before. This relatability is a key driver of resonance. At R-Squared we have seen a significant increase of influencer marketing activity and more meaningful conversations happening between influencers and their audience.

**Cassuto:** The rules that apply to influencers apply to brands too. Building brand equity is akin to building trust, by demonstrating competence and character and your track record of interactions with communities around you. The beauty of influencer marketing, when done successfully, is that you are putting money directly back in the pockets of your customers, fans or leaders of communities you are involved with.



### #IABInsightSeries: Digital influencer marketing in the spotlight

Juanita Pienaar 6 Dec 2019



**Metane:** There has never been a more important time to understand the social climate of the influencer's audience. Over 60% of South Africans are on the internet daily looking for narratives from people who can give them hope, joy, information and companionship. The human need for assertiveness is at its highest. Brands need to use this opportunity to fill these gaps but can only do it if they understand the social nuances to identify influencers that tell narratives that fill the current consumer void.

**Harron-Ally:** It has resulted in jobs being cancelled and less frequent overall, rates being reduced, narratives and approaches changing, and many cheeky requests for a lot of work at a very low price.

■ **At this time of crisis – please share one key learning that you have personally (or professionally) taken on board, that you believe will assist others to navigate the future of work as we (are getting to) know it.**

**Rogovsky:** Extreme agility and open communication.

“ Whether our clients, partners or the target audience, people need to engage and are keener to connect at a human level, which eventually creates a much stronger bond between all parties. From a process point of view, every day brings new challenges, and an extreme level of agility is required to understand the clients' reality, needs and challenges, with the operational, economical and reputational reality of the company. True partnerships and work to find practical compromises is the only way forward. ”

**Cassuto:** Be clear and explicit on your values and beliefs as an individual or organisation. The world is getting more polarised and less tolerant of nuance, neutrality or passivity. People will try to force you to choose sides. Think in terms of the legacy you want to build, not just your short-term risk.

**Metane:** We are all affected by the pandemic. We're in a different time now and you need the right people in your team, that are agile, believe in the vision of the business and want to be a part of your journey towards creating the new world post-Covid-19.



### Blogging success: Find ways to add value to the lives of others

Juanita Pienaar 26 Nov 2018



**Harron-Ally:** Stare this pandemic right in the face and take it head-on. Realise that you cannot go on the way things were before. You cannot use your old tone, your previous budget, your typical approach, even if your brand is an essential item. You may even find you were fine in the beginning for months and are only experiencing the harder times now. That's normal too, as the economy changes and moves in waves these days, and you need to learn how to ride these waves and

prepare for the unexpected.

*The IAB SA has taken its Insight Series, in partnership with Everlytic, GetSmarter, a 2U Inc. brand and Bizcommunity, online to provide 60 minutes of insights, featuring fellow and future industry leaders, on subjects selected by IAB members and the industry at large to make better digital decisions. To register for tomorrow's event, [click here](#). If you're unable to attend, note that post-event presentation videos are uploaded to the IAB member portal to access ongoing.*

## ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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