



Social Influencer Outreach – For HIV Programs Reaching At-Risk Populations Online

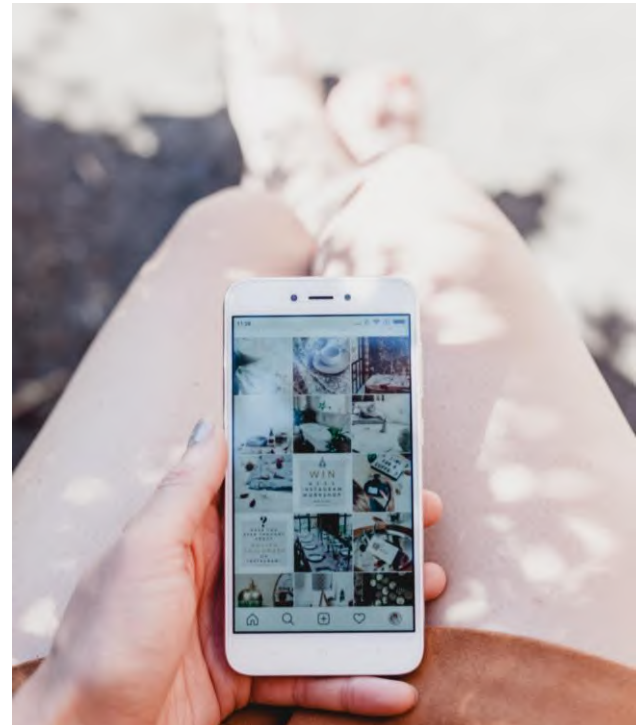
LINKAGES | March 2019

Summary

Social influencer outreach involves partnering with a popular person, brand, or campaign with an established online following to promote a product, service, or cause. Today, the most prominent “influencers” are social media influencers, or people who have established credibility among their followers and whose opinions can sway or inspire others (learn more on [Hootsuite](#)). Influencers’ impact is determined by many factors, including their reach (the number of followers) and level of engagement with followers. Social media influencers are typically skilled content creators and post attractive content, engage with followers through stories and comments, and may also produce videos or written blogs—all of which can be used to promote an HIV program’s services and to educate people about HIV. The audiences reached using this approach are usually younger people who are active users of social media and dating apps and who may be at risk for HIV for reasons that include multiple sex partners or engaging in transactional sex. The success of social influencer outreach depends on the type of influencers engaged and how their creative vision complements the brand of the HIV program.

HIV programs should use influencer-based outreach in combination with other online outreach approaches, such as social network outreach and social profile outreach (see figure below). Each has benefits and drawbacks. Social influencers tend to have broader reach but lower engagement than is possible through one-on-one online outreach (social network outreach). And though social network outreach is suitable for people who need more assistance or would like to interact with a person, social profile outreach (such as online ads) does not involve human interaction and may be better for people who prefer self-navigation and privacy. Social influencer outreach can be a suitable option for either type of audience, because influencers can decide how much individual support they provide.

See how this approach fits in a program planning cycle for HIV programs in [LINKAGES Going Online Vision](#).



Today, it’s common to follow people or brands on social media that have a virtual value to us. This regular engagement makes them influential.

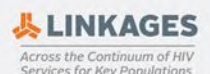
Purpose

- Contributes to finding new HIV cases by reaching at-risk populations and those who have not been reached by previous approaches
- Helps to explain complex topics for broad audiences
- Establishes brand identity and trust among a broader audience
- Helps communicate and deliver an HIV program’s messages in creative ways that engage audiences



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Illustrative Implementation Steps

- 1. Learn who influences your audience:** Use online surveys, focus groups, and social media mapping to learn which influencers are relevant to your audiences. Marketing companies and online tools now also offer automated options to find relevant influencers (for example see [Upfluence](#) or [Affable](#)). List potential influencers and categorize them by their number of followers, level of engagement, type of followers, and content (use LINKAGES' [social media mapping approach](#)). Follow these influencers on social media to judge their potential value to the program. With community members or other audience members, prioritize a list of influencers to engage in the program and prepare some simple talking points to introduce your program to them and gauge their interest.
- 2. Engage priority influencers:** Reach out to influencers through informal chat/direct messages or through their business email or phone number, which can commonly be found in their bio. For popular influencers, celebrities, and brands, it may be useful to contact their manager, public relations staff, or other connections. Introduce the HIV program, mention why you thought the influencer would be an ideal voice for the cause, and offer a few options for how he or she can be engaged. Sincere compliments and being open about your ability to pay influencers or provide other benefits may help initially. For long-term collaborations, meet with the influencer to develop a shared sense of ownership of the cause you're promoting.
- 3. Plan content and promotion strategy:** Develop simple guidance for influencers' messaging on HIV and the campaign, design collateral that can be used in their promotions (such as frames, sample educational and promotional material, stickers, and hashtags), and prepare unique links influencers can use to ask their followers to act. These actions might include clicking links to a website where people can assess their HIV risk, book appointments for HIV services, or talk to program staff. Remember that most influencers are not HIV experts; consider preparing a set of pre-approved, technically accurate responses to frequently asked questions that influencers can refer to or integrate into their promotions. Depending on the relationship between the influencer and the HIV program, and any donor requirements, the program may need to review and approve content before it is posted. Discuss this with your donor agency and set expectations with influencers.
- 4. Promote HIV services through influencers:** Unless you are asked for support, generally it's best to let influencers decide how to engage their followers and promote the campaign. Typically, promotion will entail a series of public posts on their social media feed, live video, Instagram Stories (which last for 24 hours), or long-form content such as a video or written blog. Messages may include key information about the HIV campaign or a call-to-action to uptake services with a link to the program's website where followers can access those services. Influencers can reinforce and clarify messages by engaging with followers through comments, direct message chats, re-postings, polls, and "ask me" questions.
- 5. Monitor and follow up with influencers:** Keep an eye on all influencer promotions and take screenshots of the content posted. Use a repost app—available on Google Play and Apple's App Store—to download full posts/videos from influencers and repost on the program's HIV campaign page, remembering to credit the influencers. With the unique link provided, monitor results of influencer promotions, including the number of people at high risk for HIV (based on risk assessment) who were reached and the number of appointments for HIV services booked. Collect data from facilities or use an online reservation system to track uptake of services and aggregate HIV case-finding. Encourage and congratulate influencers on successful promotions, inform them of their results, and discuss any improvements needed. Use results to prioritize future engagements.

Types of influencers



Gate-keeper

People with access to a network of people such as through a closed Facebook group who may also moderate membership and content posted to the group to keep members engaged.



Social media influencer

Popular people on social media who post audience- or topic-specific content (with more than 10,000 followers). Can influence others because of their authenticity, style, attractiveness, and valued perspectives.



Celebrity

People who are generally very popular in society because of their high exposure in media, movies, or politics and may also have a large following on social media.



Brands & other campaigns

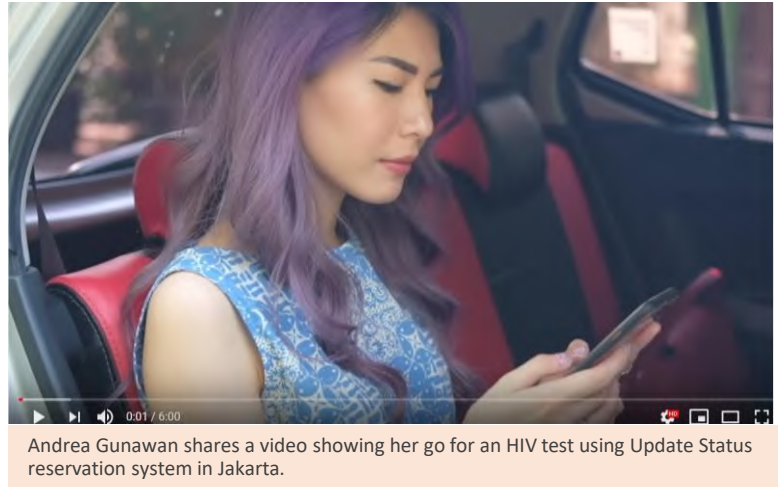
Consumer brands and social campaigns with loyal supporters and customers who follow their official social media pages.

Speaker icon) Social Influencer Outreach – For HIV Programs Reaching At-Risk Populations Online

Paying Influencers

Influencers' support to HIV programs should be valued and resourced appropriately. HIV programs should be frank about their ability to pay influencers and the kinds of payment arrangements that are available. The appropriate mechanism of payment and the cost will depend on several factors:

- **The influencer's reach and engagement**, which will be reflected in their pay expectations. You can start by asking influencers for their price list and examples of payments from previous similar promotions and arrangements.
- **The match between the influencer and HIV brand** and the influencer's interest in supporting the cause. When possible, HIV programs should leverage their nonprofit status and the nature of their social cause to negotiate a reduced rate or pro-bono promotion.
- **The kinds of tasks they are asked to perform**, some of which are described below. Influencers can perform all or some of these roles and may ask to be paid commensurately.
- **Local laws and customs** can determine appropriate payment methods and determine disclosure requirements for paid promotions such as the [United States Federal Trade Commission guidelines](#).



"I like promoting Update Status because it's easy for my followers to use. I also like feeling like I am part of the team and get support from them when I need it."
Andrea Gunawan, Influencer (Indonesia)



Influencer paid for posting

Influencers amplify the program's message to their followers. Payment can be made through a performance-based incentive or paid per post.



Influencer paid for advice

Influencers advise the HIV program on brand development and understanding audiences. Payment may involve a consultancy.



Influencer paid for content

Influencers develop interesting and audience-relevant content. They can be paid through a consultancy or paid by deliverable.



Security and Maintaining Image

Influencers can amplify your message but also your vulnerabilities. Examples of this include reaching unintended audiences who may want to do harm to your beneficiaries or program or misrepresent your campaign. Here are some tips to more securely engage influencers.

1. Engage trustworthy influencers who respect your guidance about messaging on HIV and have bought in to the goal of your program.
2. Use several influencers and employ other online outreach methods to avoid a situation where one or a few influencers control the entire brand image of the HIV campaign.
3. Keep an open line of communication between the program and influencer to address issues quickly.
4. Ensure that your influencer liaison has the scope and time to manage these issues and support influencers.
5. Suggest that influencers note on their profile that their opinions may not reflect the HIV program.
6. Miscommunication or brand image issues arising from influencers usually can be resolved through proactive communication; however, as a last resort, the program might need to disassociate from an influencer or issue a statement to clarify the program's stance.

Jakarta Case Study

About Update Status

UpdateStatus.id is a simple website that allows people to assess their risk for HIV and book appointments for HIV services in Jakarta. Update Status was developed by the LINKAGES project in Indonesia to broaden outreach and better meet the preferences of people at risk for HIV who could be reached online. The risk assessment is just six simple questions that help clients understand if they should consider seeking HIV testing or support for HIV treatment (for people living with HIV). The appointment booking tool includes the option to book a full range of HIV services from 10 clinics in Jakarta including public, nongovernmental organization, and private options. LINKAGES manages several online outreach and marketing channels for Update Status—engaging social media influencers, developing online and social media ad campaigns, and managing a team of online community-based supporters who help clients learn about and use the website.



“My followers ask me, ‘Why are you so concerned about HIV issues?’ The answer is simple: I want to save as many lives as possible through the information I share, and I think everyone should join forces.”

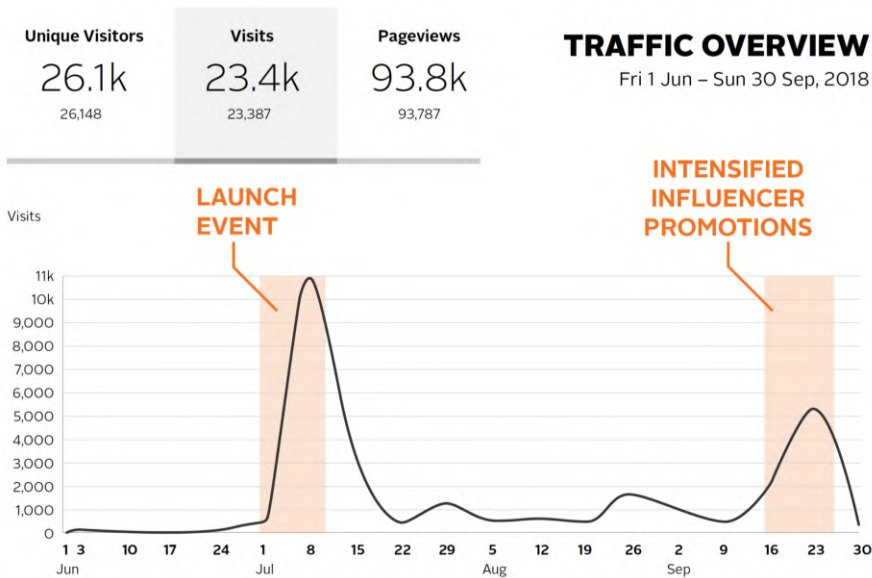
Rory Asyari, MertoTV (Indonesia)



Attendees at the Update Status launch event on 8 July 2018 engage their followers to complete the 3 steps: 1) Go to the website to assess risk, 2) book appointment at clinic, and 3) show up for HIV services.

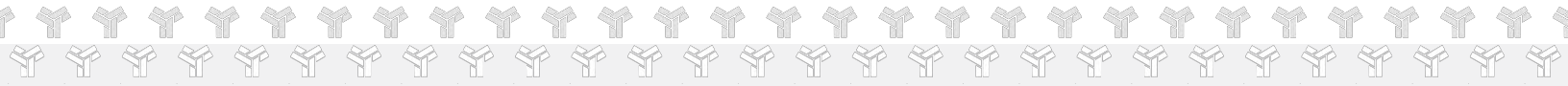
Results

- 26,000+ unique visitors on Update Status
- 11,840 completed risk assessments
- 4,840 were assessed to be high-risk HIV negative and 191 were PLHIV
- 2,626 of the high-risk HIV-negative people were reached by influencers alone
- 59 HIV service appointments booked from influencer promotions
- 58% increase in HIV case-finding among Update Status clinics in Q4 of FY18 during the time of influencer promotions
- Influencers helped establish the Update Status brand among audiences



Update Status website traffic from June to September 2018 showing impact of a launch event with social media influencers (held 8 July 2018) and intensified influencer promotions in late September 2018.

This technical brief is part of LINKAGES' vision for going online to accelerate the impact of HIV programs.



About us

We are the [LINKAGES project](#)—a global HIV project focusing on key and priority populations most affected by HIV. As of 2018, LINKAGES supports HIV programs in 30 countries across the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia through more than 150 awards to community service organizations (CSOs) and partnerships with governments and the private sector. Our goal is to accelerate the ability of partner governments, community-led CSOs, and private-sector providers to plan, deliver, and optimize comprehensive HIV prevention, care, and treatment services to reduce HIV transmission among people at risk for HIV and help those who are HIV positive to live longer. LINKAGES is the largest global project dedicated to key populations and is led by FHI 360 in partnership with IntraHealth International, Pact, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[Going Online](#) represents LINKAGES' approach for online HIV outreach and service delivery. Going Online seeks to broaden inclusion in HIV services to previously unreached populations, improve targeting and efficiency, and provide differentiated options for how people can receive HIV services and information in ways that meet their preferences. Programs using this approach focus outreach efforts on populations at risk of HIV which can include young people who are dating, having multiple sex partners, and may have transactional sex (which includes, but is not exclusive to, key and other priority populations).

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