

# Influencer Marketing Success Stories

How 13 companies are activating advocates  
and influencers to promote their brands.



CASE STUDY COLLECTION

## Contents at a Glance

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
<b>BOOSTING BRAND AWARENESS</b>	2
Forbes Digital	2
<b>FOSTERING THIRD-PARTY CREDIBILITY</b>	4
Altium Limited	4
PrintingForLess.com	6
PRWeb	8
Ocean City, Maryland Department of Tourism	9
<b>INTRODUCING NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES</b>	12
Shel Horowitz	12
Virgin America	13
T-Mobile USA	15
<b>INCREASING SALES</b>	18
American Dairy Association Mideast	18
Hewlett-Packard	20
Coconut Bliss	22
Rob Sickler Salon and Spa	24
<b>IMPROVING CUSTOMER RELATIONS</b>	26
SAP	26
<b>TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED</b>	29
<b>IT'S YOUR TURN ...</b>	32
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b>	33
<b>ABOUT MARKETINGPROFS</b>	33

## FOSTERING THIRD-PARTY CREDIBILITY

A whopping 58% of U.S. adults—and a full 78% of Internet users—say they go online to research products and services, according to the 2010 Online Product Research Report by Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project. More than simply seeking company-sponsored information, these searchers are looking for independent opinions and peer reviews to guide their purchases. If you want to influence this purchasing behavior there’s plenty you can do to motivate users to provide testimonials, share their brand experiences and generate third-party credibility.



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### Altium Limited

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Authenticity reigns, so when inviting influencers to test-drive and comment on your products, make it clear that you value their public feedback, be it positive or negative.

**Company:** Headquartered in Sydney with operations worldwide, Altium Limited produces software and tools for designing electronics. Its solutions are used across a wide range of industries including telecommunications, automotive, aerospace, defense, medicine, science, and consumer electronics.

**Challenge:** As is common in the engineering sector, Altium typically relies on traditional media outlets and trade shows to generate awareness for its products. However, over the last few years they have seen many of these venues fall victim to the troubled economy. To make matters worse, when the company recently reached out to the survivors in the trade press—in hopes of raising awareness for its NanoBoard 3000 technology—no one really took any interest. Willing to try something new but unsure where to start, the company turned to Portland, Ore.-based McClenahan Bruer Communications to generate buzz around the product in the North American marketplace.

**Solution:** McClenahan Bruer had seen survey after survey name “peer validation” the most important deciding factor when engineers were in the market for new tools. Accordingly, the firm set out to identify citizen journalists from the engineering field who would be interested in reviewing the product. Despite being told that this demographic does not actively participate in social media, the firm’s research found that those who do blog and tweet tend to make very passionate statements about the products they use.

The firm began monitoring the web for terms related to electronics and embedded systems design, the Altium brand and product names, and competitor brand and product names in order to identify those engineering “naturals” who were already talking about technical products online and had a fair following.

## FOSTERING THIRD-PARTY CREDIBILITY



Just received a @NanoBoard 3000 from @Altium - brainstorming on a fun project to show it off.  
3:51 PM Apr 28th via web



Nanoboard 3K arrived from @altium. Amazed at the quality and the sheer amount of toys on board. MIDI,SPDIF,USB,SVGA to name a few...  
3:00 PM Apr 28th via web

In the process, Senior Counsel for McClenahan Bruer Jeff Hardison notes, some measures of individual influence didn't always tell the whole story. "We may have overlooked a number of potential testers if we had only looked at their follower counts on Twitter. An engineer might only have 10 followers on Twitter, but when you dig deeper, you might find that they have a big blog following or huge connection base on LinkedIn. So we had to get to know them all on a more personal level," he said.

In the end, the firm settled on a list of 20 engineering opinion makers and got in touch with them via email, LinkedIn, or Twitter to see if they'd like to test out the Altium NanoBoard 3000 and provide feedback—positive or negative. This last point was important, on the one hand, because the Altium CEO is very keen on transparency, but also because it set the reviewers at ease to hear that the company wanted to hear both the good and the bad.

The company then sent each individual a NanoBoard—at a cost of \$500 a piece—and reinforced that the reviewers had complete freedom to say whatever they felt about the product.

**Results:** Around 80% of the reviewers mentioned the product online as soon as they received it, some including photos. Around half of them went on to use the product (it's highly technical, so there was a bit of a learning curve involved) and write up a review. Typically, they used Twitter to announce that they had received the product and blogs to publish their reviews.

These blog reviews in turn attracted the attention of the traditional trade media resulting in another 8 high-profile reviews of the NanoBoard 3000, a number of additional mentions in trade publications, as well as consistent inclusion in roundup coverage of related products.

The majority of reviews have been positive, though one engineer did complain about the partner software included. Interestingly, that post led directly to a sale from a reader who mentioned that the rest of the review was compelling enough to purchase!

Other feedback suggests that the campaign helped foster goodwill, with users commending the company for its open and transparent approach.

In addition, one reviewer contacted the company to request that two of his contacts – both engineers at Apple, a company that Altium's sales department had never been able to crack – also review the product, thus offering the company valuable visibility within a potentially huge account. "By making these personal

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connections, we were able to find out more about other influencers out there who would be interested in reviewing the product,” Hardison said.

Recognizing here the power of networking and offline word-of-mouth, McClenahan Bruer has since begun visiting engineering clubs across North America, sharing the product with club members and soliciting additional user feedback and reviews.

### Business Lessons Learned

- Build buzz through independent product reviews.
- Spend time identifying and developing relationships with “peers” who are active in social media and have sizable networks of influence.
- Maintain transparency, allow for both positive and negative responses, and prepare yourself (or your client) in advance for a punch.
- Don’t forget about offline networking and community engagement.



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## PrintingForLess.com

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Giving customers creative license to tout your products and services can deepen existing loyalties while stimulating word-of-mouth interest.

**Company:** Founded in 1996, PrintingForLess.com provides high quality commercial color printing in the short- to medium-run printing market.

**Challenge:** PrintingForLess.com has always maintained a focus on excellent customer service. As a result, they receive 50 or more letters a month thanking individual employees for their quality of service and level of responsiveness. While they certainly welcomed the appreciation, the company felt it could—and should—do more to leverage the love and demonstrate to potential customers why they ought to give PrintingForLess.com a try. Of course the key was to avoid coming off as too self-promotional, on the one hand, or just plain boring, on the other.

**Solution:** The company began contacting customers who sent in unsolicited “thank you” letters and asked if they’d be interested in participating in a video project. Those who expressed an interest were sent a package that included a Flip camcorder, copies of the letters they had originally mailed (in case they