

# Episode 19 – Influencer’s Guide to Talent Management Agencies

**Karan:** [00:00:00]

You're killing your social game and the deals are coming in left, right and centre. You might have been approached by a talent agency to sign you. [00:01:00] Or perhaps you're starting to put out feelers with agencies.

With the global influencer marketing industry valued at over \$21 billion in 2023, and get this, a projected \$69 billion by 2029, it's no surprise that influencer talent agencies and managers are popping up all over the place.

Operating a successful talent agency is not just about having an in-depth knowledge of the influencer marketing industry. It's also about having a keen eye for legal and risk management, compliance obligations, sales and marketing strategies, and the ability to build great relationship with your talent, agencies and brands. Did I also mention being a gun negotiator? Because that is a must. [00:02:00] An influencer, talent agency requires all aspects of running a business, not just one aspect.

So how will you know that an agency will be a good fit for you? As the:

- Founder of three successful influencer talent agencies, each of which have been acquired;
- the owner of a social media, e-commerce and intellectual property law firm that's been operating 10 years;
- an in demand industry consultant to talent agencies and brands globally via [The Business Of Influence](#); and
- the Inaugural Co-Vice-Chair of the Australian Influencer Marketing Council -



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I know my way around talent agencies, the industry and what good alignment looks like!

Today I'm going to give you my hot tips for when you're starting discussions with a talent agency, because for every great one out there, [00:03:00] there's a bunch more without the proven experience that's needed to push your influencer career forward with those nice juicy deals to deliver the sweet cash that you want in your pocket.

Let's start out by looking at the different types of talent agencies, because these span all facets of the creative industry. So, you want to find one that's a great match for the type of creator you are. We're going to have a look at the top four most relevant agencies for influencers:

- 1. UGC Creator Agencies:** These agencies represent creators who specialise in generating UGC, user generated content, typically for digital platforms. They focus solely on talent who are **UGC Creators**.
- 2. Influencer Agencies:** These agencies are dedicated to influencers who have significant following on [00:04:00] social media platforms. These agencies will manage the brand collaborations, endorsements, #sponcon. They focus on leveraging the influencer's audience reach and engagement for marketing purposes.
- 3. Speaker Agencies:** These agencies represent individuals who excel in public speaking, such as keynote speakers, motivational speakers, and subject matter experts. Speaker agencies may cross sell content opportunities for their speakers to leverage the speaker's audience on behalf of their client. And finally, at number four, we can look at
- 4. Hybrid Agencies:** and these agencies represent talent across multiple spaces. So it might be influencers, UGC creators, speakers, and more. Hybrid [00:05:00] agencies can be beneficial in today's integrated media landscape, because the lines between these different creative fields and influencers are becoming increasingly blurred. What I mean by this is that you might have a creator that's cast in a TV show. They might also be booked as a public speaker and engage in influencer marketing simultaneously, so the creator diversification is happening. There's a lot more activities for an

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agency to consider, so therefore their specialisation and client base is wider to cover off all of these elements.

Of course, there's different types of agencies such as modeling, acting, music, sports, voiceover, literary, like the list is fairly long and I mentioned this.

So you can see how important that first you find an agency type that will best suit [00:06:00] where you are now and where you see yourself in the future.

Once you've narrowed down the type of agency you think you'd like to work with, you're going to need to gather some information. You'll be able to do the legwork on some of these things yourself, plus there'll be questions you can ask the agency.

I'm going to guide you on the things you need to consider before signing a talent agency agreement in a separate episode very soon. [If you want to know when that episode drops, sign up to our newsletter.](#) I'll put the link in the show notes.

For today, we're going to segment the questions you need to ask into three sections.

1. **Self-Research** - These are the questions that you can, or the things that you can investigate yourself. Next, we're going to look at
2. **Direct Inquiry** - These are the questions you should be asking the talent agency directly. And then finally, [00:07:00] there's the
3. **Third Party Questions** - These are questions you might be able to ask current or former clients of the agency, industry experts, or other relevant people. So, you might know another creator that's signed to that agency, so they could be a really good person to chat to about their experience with the agency that you're considering.

Let's start now with the **Self-Research** questions.



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- You want to have a look at how long has the company been in business. Are you starting out as a foundation talent with a new agency or joining an agency that has plenty of proven experience on the board? You can check out this information by searching the company's website, check Google reviews, social media channels and so on.
- What does the agency's current mix of talent look like? Are their creators similar to yourself or where you would like to see yourself?
- Has the agency worked on campaigns that you would like to be considered for? Check out [00:08:00] the agency's brag book which will usually be on their website, social media or both. This one's important because communication is really important
- Does the agency have a professional looking website that clearly features their talent, makes them easy to contact via phone and email? Does their team look experienced? Check their bios. Is the website easy to navigate with great information plus any relevant website legal documentation?

Once you've done this bit of groundwork, this bit of research yourself, and you're happy to look at the agency a little bit further. These are the **Direct Inquiry** questions that you can ask.

It's great if you can get on the phone and have a chat, but I understand not everyone likes that method of communication. So you need to be careful how you frame this because you want to start building a respectful and professional relationship with a prospective agency. They [00:09:00] are going to be interviewing you as much as you interview them.

So treat these questions with respect, when you ask them.

- You want to know how many influencers is each manager responsible for. Are you going to be one of very many? Or does that agency have a low manager to influencer ratio that's going to give you more attention and more opportunity? There's lots of agencies out there that have hundreds, if not thousands of talent on their



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books, and they will not get the attention they need to push their career forward.

- What is the experience of the talent manager? How much relevant experience does that talent manager that would potentially be assigned to you have? Are you being paired with a manager that's learning the ropes? Or are you being paired with someone who is a seasoned and experienced professional? You also need to consider what's your experience in the market. If you're a newbie and you're just [00:10:00] breaking in and getting into the agency space, it's not reasonable to expect that you're going to have the highest performing ratio or best performing talent manager assigned to you. So, you need to be mindful of where you sit in the space as well as the prospective talent manager that you'll be working with.
- You can ask about the primary verticals that the agency is signing the most brand deals in. So, is the agency working across campaigns in your niche? Now you should have already established this through some of your own research, but just have a chat to the agency about that as well.
- You're going to want to know what the communication process looks like in terms of setting revenue goals and a strategic plan, checking informally and informally on progress against these objectives.
- Is there any opportunity to present to the agency team in person or via Zoom? You know - to lift your profile, to tell your story and make a deeper connection with the agency team that is [00:11:00] going to be pitching you into brands.
- Do they have a creator showcase where brands can meet you in person? Some agencies round up their interesting, new, best performing talent and put on events where they invite brands in to meet them.

*I've got a tip here for: you listen to [Episode 9 Are You Ready for a Talent Manager? to listen to Kylie Green of the Lime Agency](#) discuss her communication and pitching process. What you need to know about the agency's pitching process can be covered off in these questions.*

The logo consists of four black circles arranged in a 2x2 grid, with the top two circles overlapping. To the right of the circles, the text "The Business Of Influence" is written in a bold, sans-serif font, with "The Business" on the top line and "Of Influence" on the bottom line.

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- You want to know if the agency's proactively pitching brands or only responding reactively to brand inquiries. So, are they just waiting to receive inbound inquiries or are they going out there and putting you in the market?
  - So what is the agency's process for securing work for you? What does that outreach and follow up look like?
  - Are they creating bespoke pitches for [00:12:00] all the talent? Or is the agency simply pitching in their entire roster or a big chunk of it to a brand inquiry?
  - And do they understand how to upsell campaigns to secure more money for you? There is so much money left on the table when managers do not understand that upsell process where they can bundle in content to bring value to the brand, value to the agency, as well as value to you as the creator.

If you haven't done so, listen in to [50 Ways to Upsell your Influencer Campaign](#). Again, I'll link that episode for you in the show notes.

- Ask the agency if there is a minimum earnings quota. Regardless of what the agency says, yes there is. If you are not generating a good income for the agency, they're really not going to want to continue to represent you. However, it's still a good idea to ask if there is a [00:13:00] minimum revenue target that's going to be specified in their agency agreement because some agencies are quite forward in putting that number to paper.
- Continuing on with the questions that you need to discuss with a prospective agency, you want to ask them what does a campaign management process look like from start to finish? How experienced are they at negotiating contracts? Will they consult with you during that negotiation process? Is there any project management software used to manage the campaign deliverables between you and the agency? In other words, what are they going to do to help you keep organised and on top of your obligations? And will it be clear who is responsible for what during the deliverables of a campaign and just generally within the relationship?

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- Here's a big one: you want to know what is the process for being paid for your work. A typical arrangement is that the brand will pay the agency and then the agency will pay you less their [00:14:00] commission and any fees. So you need to ask:
  - when will you be paid? For example, how long after the agency is paid will you be paid? Are the payment cycles weekly, fortnightly, monthly or some other frequency?
  - What is the agency commission rate? This can vary between 10 – 25%
  - Does the agency charge brands any additional fees such as admin fees? These are not uncommon, and they can be a flat fee or a percentage of the contract value.
  - And will they be charging you any fees other than a commission fee? These types of fees could include a retainer fee, booking fee, marketing promotion, termination fees, cancellation fees. There's a range of fees and we've got to cover off these in detail in a future episode, because already I'm feeling like this episode is a bumper one.

Now we've got a couple of more points we're going to cover off in the questions that you need to ask the agency directly. [00:15:00]

- You will want to know whether you'll be signing an exclusive or a non-exclusive contract. Understanding whether the agency will be expecting to sign you exclusively or otherwise is important. This will affect the way they market you, which will affect the volume of campaigns. So, the money that you can earn, the commission and other fees you'll pay. We'll break down the differences between exclusive and non-exclusive agreements in a dedicated episode really soon.
- And to round out our questions that you'll be discussing with a prospective agency. You want to have a chat to them about whether they can give you an expectation of the number of campaigns you'd be likely to be engaged for over a year. Now the nature of influencer marketing means that there might be, and very likely will be,



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seasonal peaks in your work. So there might be some quiet periods in between the really boom times. [00:16:00] And there'll be other factors that will determine the quality and quantity of work that you're offered, so it will be difficult for most agencies to forecast this accurately. Especially if they are signing you as new talent to the agency.

Some other reasons that will impact the amount of work you're booked for might include that you're not easy and professional to work with, because they're not going to want to put you forward for campaigns. If you suffer some sort of reputational damage, there could be a loss of interest in you. Or potentially if the quality or performance of your channels declines.

In any case, it's good to raise the volume of campaigns as a discussion point for a transparent conversation around setting expectations. You've got a respected agent that comes back to you and says, "Hey, look, Karan, you're new to the agency. We're not sure what we can expect. Let's go through the process and we'll review with you in one month and three months or three months and six [00:17:00] months". I'd be pretty happy with that honest and transparent response.

We're going to move into those **Third-Party** questions now. If you have been referred to an agency through a recommendation by another creator, that's great. Fantastic! You can ask all of these questions or they're obviously coming to you because the agency is doing a really great job for them. If you haven't, you might like to take the extra steps to suss out the agency a little more by chatting to some of the current or former talent, industry experts, or some other relevant person.

Things you want to learn about:

- is that person's experience with the agency? Were there any standout positives or negatives?
- You might want to talk about the agency effectiveness. Were they really effective in securing meaningful opportunities and partnerships for you?





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- What was their communication like? Were they communicative and supportive throughout the term that [00:18:00] you're working together?
- Talk about payments. You know, were there any issues regarding payments, commission rates or hidden fees? Were they transparent about their fee structure?
- Talk about contract terms and flexibility. Were the contract terms fair and flexible? Were you able to negotiate terms that suited your needs?
- Maybe talk about conflict resolution. How did that agency handle any conflicts or challenges that arose during the collaboration?
- You could potentially talk about the agency's network and connections. Was it beneficial to enhancing your professional opportunities?
- Maybe look at other areas such as professional development. So did the agency offer any support for your professional development, such as training or networking opportunities?
- Did they make recommendations as to how you can improve your impact as a creator, influencer, UGC, whatever you want to call it? How did [00:19:00] they look beyond booking campaigns to make sure that you were fully optimised to create great brand relationships, great engagement and earn the cash.
- If the person you're speaking with is no longer with the agency, ask why? What were the reasons for ending the partnership? Would you consider working with them again? Flat out ask them, would they recommend the agency to other influencers? Why or why not?

Signing with an agency is a big step in your career as a professional influencer. It's a moment to be celebrated you good thing! I love it when creators are moving through this space and building their career and they do have that agency representation. It's a great milestone in your career. Be diligent in your enquiries before you make a decision to sign with the



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agency and you will set yourself and the agency team that you work with up [00:20:00] for success.

You can check the show notes and links, and find all the episode resources at [thebusinessofinfluence.com/ep19](https://thebusinessofinfluence.com/ep19).

Until next week, stay creative!

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