

Developing Social Selling Influence: An Archetypal Examination of Content Strategies and Influence Tactics

By James M. Barry and John T. Gironda

This research utilizes a mixed-method study to examine the role of content marketing and influence tactics in establishing social influence for sales personnel engaged in social networking. From content evaluations of leading social media influencers, cluster variates and survey instruments were derived in search of a behavioral structure that represents the inspirational appeal and consultation style of leading social influencers. A k-means cluster analysis was then conducted using measurements of inspiration, entertainment value, tactical guidance, credibility, empathy and engagement generosity as the cluster variate. A four solution cluster resulted from both a self-administered survey of 171 leading social influencers as well as from author examinations of the influencer's content. Both support a two tiered typology epitomized by the type of inspirational appeal (impassioned or envisioned) and consultation style (engaging or enlightening) exhibited by the influencer. Cluster solutions suggest that sales personnel can best grow their social influence as *Edu-tainers* (impassioned inspiration and enlightening consultation), *Motivators* (impassioned inspiration and engaging consultation), *Strategists* (envisioned inspiration and enlightening consultation) or *Mentors* (envisioned inspiration and engaging consultation).

Research is now emerging on the impact content marketing has on a sales professional's social network influence that is often attributed to their perceived thought leadership among social media communities targeted as sales prospects. Fueling this attention is a migration of selling mindsets away from interruptive, opportunistic and non-permissive sales messaging. Aspiring thought leaders are instead letting social content do their talking by exploiting the potential of long-form posts and videos published on YouTube, Google+, and LinkedIn's content platform, as well as branded websites. As the sales professional's trail of trustworthy content begins to shape perceptions, they can earn a top-of-mind reputation for making a difference while boosting the strategic visibility and brand recognition of their respective firms.

Why successful content marketing strategies pave the way specifically for lead generation and relationship building is well documented (Albee, 2015; Dragon, 2012; Halligan and Shah, 2014). In effect, trails of content that resonate with audience interests enable

sales professionals to demonstrate their relevant expertise while earning them an invite by potential prospects to showcase their subject matter authority. In so doing, they can better position themselves to escort potential prospects through their buying journey. Over time, a routine release of this problem solving content through social media channels will influence the prospect's perception of the sales professional as someone they know, like and trust.

New challenges in social selling emerge, however, in an age of growing infobesity and attention deficit. Witness the more than 1 million members now publishing on LinkedIn's content platform (Roth, 2015) as well as the 1 billion websites capable of hosting blogs (Woollaston, 2014). Lacking the entertainment value offered by celebrities, sales professionals have the daunting task of breaking through social noise with content worthy of reaching their potential prospects' news feeds. For many, this requires a continuous stream of idea rich content perceived as timely, reliable and useful to prospects in search of a community thought leader. (Barry, 2015a).

Evidence is now mounting that content marketers have indeed applied the concept of thought leadership as a goal to consider in creating content marketing strategies. Social Media Examiner found that 54% of their 5000+ surveyed marketers identified the 'establishment of

James M. Barry (DBA, Nova Southeastern University), Associate Professor of Marketing, Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, FL, jmbarry@nova.edu)

John T. Gironda (Ph.D., Florida Atlantic University), Associate Professor of Marketing, Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, FL, jgironda@nova.edu)

thought leadership’ as a major benefit derived from their social media marketing efforts (Stelzner, 2016, p. 17). Similarly, a study of 740 B2B marketers, identified the thought leadership aspect of social influence as the second most important reason why businesses engage in content marketing. Moreover, half identified thought leadership as one of their top 3 content marketing goals (Schulze, 2013).

But despite the growing popularity of content intended for authority recognition, little research has been devoted to the subject. Lacking are models depicting the content strategies and influence tactics that predict a sales professional’s widespread recognition across social networks as the ‘go-to’ advisor. This paucity of research stems from the limited scholarly attention given to social selling and the influence of content marketing on thought leadership development. Moreover, despite the metrics available for measuring social influence, the degree to which social influence is attributed to thought leadership (as opposed to infatuation with stardom, sensationalism and passion indulgence) remains unknown.

As explained further, examinations by this study’s authors and others suggest that social influence is impacted by a myriad of thought leadership factors associated with a sales professional’s influence style and content attributes. Besides content usefulness, for example, the manner in which aspirant thought leaders leverage their relationship capital, while consulting and inspiring their target audiences through effective communications, has much to do with a sales professional’s influence on a targeted community.

Finally, the modeling of social influence is challenged by researchers lacking operationalized constructs and nomological structures that effectively capture the richness of this construct and its proposed determinants. Like many studies in this nascent stage, researchers often revert to deductive reasoning-based topologies or inductive reasoning-based taxonomies as a way to explore initial frameworks of understanding (Hair, *et al.*, 2006, p. 567).

The intent of this research is to gain more insights into the complex interplay of social influence determinants through a topological examination. Using cluster analysis for its partitioning ability, archetypes of

successful influencers are examined for distinguishing characteristics using a well-conceptualized cluster variate as the basis for clustering. Relationships revealed within each cluster can then provide more clarity on the personality and content styles surrounding social influence. In so doing, this study contributes to the social influence literature in the following ways:

1. Sales professionals will see the multiple routes to achieving social influence that best suits their personality and content expertise.
2. Researchers will gain insights from the underlying dimensions of the examined typology for deriving a model of social influence or thought leadership.

CONCEPTUALIZING SOCIAL INFLUENCE FROM EXPLORATORY EXAMINATIONS

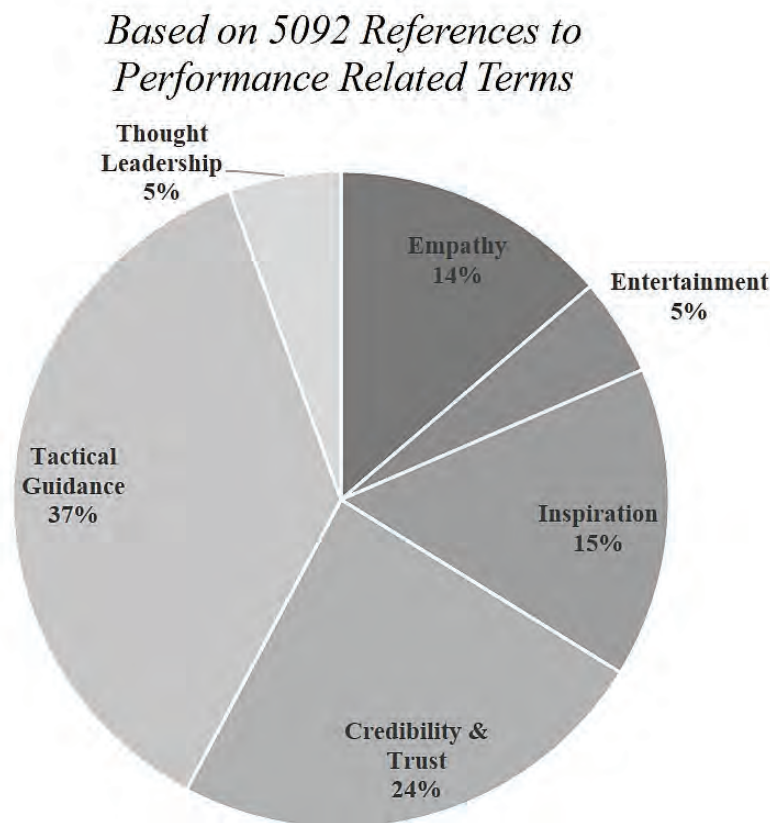
In deriving a cluster variate for discerning the qualities of social influencers, an examination is first made of the content attributes associated with the highest performers. Sampled populations are restricted to those qualified by the authors as digital and social media educators. This group is selected as a proxy for sales professionals because of their high thought leadership orientation. The high social influence of groups such as TV hosts, music performers, popular bloggers, pundits, model entrepreneurs and life coaches can be attributed to factors other than thought leadership (e.g., celebrity stardom), which is why these groups were not used. The source of cluster variate candidates is taken from an examination of the:

1. Hierarchical grouping of superlatives, accolades or other relevant descriptors used in LinkedIn recommendations to describe the top social media educators.
2. Content attributes and engagement tactics of top social media educators as reviewed by the authors.
3. Management literature on influence tactics and consultation styles.
4. Content characteristics reported or proposed by leading content marketing practitioners.

Construct Dimensions Derived from LinkedIn Recommendation Commentary

To help in the conceptualization of social influence, we first examined the recommendations gathered from LinkedIn profiles for the top 100 social media educators. Individuals were selected from a rank ordering of their influence as measured by their Klout, Kred and Klear scores. From the 1998 total recommendations, 5092 references to key terms were recorded as relevant to each influencer's notable attributes. The terms were synthesized into higher order dimensions detailed in Table I. From the original list of accolades and attributes used to describe the influencer, 88 low level groupings resulted from the combinations of synonyms. A higher level grouping of 19 attributes were then compiled as inductively derived dimensions subsequently consolidated into the following constructs: thought leadership (outcome), empathy, inspiration, entertainment, credibility and trust, and tactical guidance. A distribution of all 5092 referenced terms across each construct is summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Distribution of Social Influencer Attribute



Practitioner Perspectives on Content Attributes

This higher order word classification derived from LinkedIn recommendations resonates with concepts proposed by many leading content marketing practitioners as summarized in Table II. A recurring theme of these practitioners is the creation of quality content that is enlightening, educational, engaging, entertaining, empowering, enriching and inspirational. These content attributes cover both the *thought* and *leadership* aspects of social influence in the following way:

1. *Thoughts* are conveyed from useful content that not only *educates*, but *informs* targeted audiences of trends to observe and ideas to embrace that will improve their practice while preparing them for change.

Table I: Classification of Keywords in Social Influencer LinkedIn Recommendations

Construct	Dimension	Attributes Listing in LinkedIn Recommendations	No. of Mentions ¹⁾	Construct	Dimension	Attributes Listing in LinkedIn Recommendations	No. of Mentions ¹⁾
Empathy (699 mentions, 14% of total)	Responsiveness (376 mentions)	Engag (e, ing)	181	Tactical Guidance (1868 mentions, 37% of total)	Education (511)	Advice	95
		Approachable, Accessible, Personable	80			Coach	95
		Genero (us, osity) w/Sharing Knowledge	67			Mentor (ing)	69
		Responsive	23			Educat (e, or, ion)	67
		Collaborat (or, ive)	20			Help (ful, to understand)	45
	Empathy (5)	Empathy, Always There	5			Clari (ty, fies), Articulate, Simplifies	33
		Personal, Likeable	114			Teacher, Taught	32
		Kind	48			Guid (e, ance)	30
		Car (es, ing)	41			Communicator	20
	Warmth (323 mentions)	Friendly, Warm	33			Train (ing, er), Instruct (ion, or)	25
		Nice	32		Workable Advice & Decision Aids (194)	Tips, Tools	74
		Thoughtful, Sensitiv (e, ity), Considerate,	29			Practical	44
		Warm	12			Tactic (s, al), Actionable Steps/Tools	33
		Compassion (ate)	9			Useful, Relevant, Timely (Content, Tools)	23
		Big Heart	5			Results-Orient (ed, ation)	12
	Entertainment (244 mentions, 5% of total)	Entertain (ing)	51			Techniques (tactical oriented), Shows how to..., Sheds light on...	8
		Stories, Storytell (er, ing)	10		Insightfulness (1155)	Creativ (e, ity)	209
		Fun (100)	100			Genious, Smart (est), Bright (est), Brilliant, Sharp	208
		Humor (62)	62			Strateg (y, ic)	152
Inspiration (779 mentions, 15% of total)	Allure (21)	Captivating	12			Insight (ful)	135
		Charm (ing)	9			Informati (on, ve), Wealth of...	60
	Charisma (42)	Personality	29			Vision (ary)	59
		Charisma (tic)	13			Innovati (on, ve)	51
		Positive Attitude (Outlook), Upbeat	64			Ideas	41
		Motivat (e, ing), Encourag (e, ing), Can Do	60			Fresh (insights, perspective, approach, ideas)	29
	Encouragement (165 mentions)	Entrepreneur (ial, ship), Enterprising	28			Intell (ect, igent, igation), Acumen	28
		Evangelis (t, ism)	13			Cutting Edge, Forerunner, Forefront, Forward Thinking	26
	Enthusiasm (481)	Energ (y, etic)	150			Out-of-Box Thinking, Original, Unique	61
		Passion (ate)	136			Pioneer, Trailblazer	20
		Enthusias (tic, ism)	118			Perspective, Views (His or Her)	17
		Contagious, Infectious	43			Trend (s, setter), Pulse, Prophetic, Futurist	17
	Inspiration (91)	Dynamic	34			Big Picture	13
		Inspir (e, ational)	91			Wisdom	12
Credibility & Trust (1220 mentions, 24% of total)	Benevolent Trust (72)	Genuine (interest), Best Interests	72			Interesting	9
		Expert (ise)	333	Thought Leadership (281 mentions, 6% of total)	Leadership (148)	Enlighten (ing)	8
	Competence (990)	Knowledg (e, able), Depth of...	307			Thought Provoking	8
		Skill(s, ed)	187		Trusted Advice (91)	Leader (ship, industry leader) [except "thought leader"]	124
		Understand (s, ing), Deep...	111			Connector, Networker	24
		Savvy	35			Thought Leader (ship)	43
		Competency	17			Go to (person/resource)	22
	Integrity (158)	Integrity, Honest (y), Ethical, Trustworthy	98			Trusted Advis (or, er)	13
		Authentic (ity)	23			Guru	25
		Sincer (e, ity), Earnest	20			Authority	19
		Transparen (t, cy), Open (ly, ness), Candor	17			Master (mind)	12

1) Number of times the word(s) appears in LinkedIn recommendations cited for top 100 social media influencers

2. *Leadership*, as explained further, is attained from these leading ideas and educational tips as well as from the influence tactics that strike the right *inspirational* appeal while promoting a consultation style resonant with prospective buyers.

Table II: Literature Review of Quality Content Marketing

		Inspirational Appeal				Content Usefulness (Tactical Guidance)		
		Excite the Mind	Excite the Emotions		Excite the Mind & Emotions			
		Consultative Style						
	Engage	Enlighten	Empower	Entertain	Inspire	Inform	Educate	Enrich
Albrice (2015)	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Borges (2010)		✓		✓			✓	
Bosomworth (2014)			Convince	✓	✓		✓	
Bullas (2012)				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Castleberry (2012)	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
King Gordon (2013)		Provoke Thought			✓		✓	
Krakoff (2012)	✓			✓			✓	✓
Peters (2015)	✓				✓	✓		
Pulizzi (2014)	✓			Amuse		✓		
Stahl (2013)	✓		Encourage Action	✓			✓	
Verdino (2015)	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	

DEFINING A CLUSTER VARIATE

Selecting Constructs from Content Attributes

Tactical Guidance. An examination of content posted in the blogs, videos and micro-blog links of the top 414 digital and social media educators concluded that top influencers do in fact devote much of their content to educating and informing their targeted audiences. Top influencers routinely provide the following:

- *Evaluation and recommendation of decision aids* – assessments of mobile apps, social networks and business software tools.
- *Tips on business tool application* – tips on applying social network technologies, hosting campaigns or getting started on new platforms.
- *Tutorial instruction on near-term tactics* – instruction on boosting content attraction, growing audience influence or applying engagement tactics. A great deal of this content was observed

in recorded webinars and eBooks referenced as primers, instructional workshop guides, playbooks, tutorials and cheat sheets.

Although no scholarly research to date examines the impact that education and information have on social influence building, a study of attorney blog posts found the most engaging content of attorneys to be tactically helpful (Barry, 2015b). The study reviewed content posted by personal injury attorneys having the most LinkedIn endorsements. Of the top 100 posts, as measured by likes and shares, 89% were classified as insightful (40%), instructional (17%), or helpful in decision making (32%). The remaining 11% were emotional in nature.

Consistent with these results and the classifications displayed in Table I, the role of tactical guidance is included in the cluster variate as a construct having dimensions of 1) best practice insightfulness, 2) instruction, and 3) decision aiding evaluations.

Credibility and Trust. An examination of the LinkedIn recommendation commentary shown in Table I shows that 24% of the laudable terms relate to trust and credibility. This would suggest that a sizable number of influencers are credited with providing more than just helpful tips. Advice provided by the aspiring influencer must be vetted for subject matter competency, candor and a genuine interest in the follower's success. The role of trust is widely discussed in practitioner books on content marketing. According to Burg (2005), "All things being equal, people will do business with and refer business to, those people they *know, like and trust*" (p. xiii).

Commitment-trust theory and relationship marketing research suggests that the construct has three dimensions: competence, benevolence and integrity (Ganesan, 1994; Mayer *et al.*, 1995; Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002; Xie and Peng, 2009) with integrity often associated with honesty and candid response (Dowell *et al.*, 2013) and competence associated with ability (Clark *et al.*, 2010).

Credibility is a construct related to trust. Stacks and Watson (2007) claim "credibility is dependent on the trust between parties, which is highly correlated with both reputation and relationship" (p. 69). In this sense, "credibility is the confidence that message receivers have in the accuracy and truthfulness of the message" as well as the "believability of a communicator" (Rawlins, 2007, p.6). This implied outcome of trust along with a greater relevance to social messaging suggests that message credibility represents a more appropriate choice for our cluster variate than the more multi-dimensional integrity dimension of trust. Left out of the trust construct for this cluster variate consideration is the role of benevolence. Its close correlation to empathy (Balliet *et al.*, 2008; Miller, 2009; Myyry and Helkama, 2001), however, suggests that benevolence is adequately represented by the empathy construct added as a candidate to the cluster variate.

An examination of the content reviewed for the top 414 digital and social media educators concluded that the perceived credibility of an influencer has a number of dimensions related to message credibility as well as the ability/competence dimension of trust. Among the notable distinctions we determined of top influencer content as it relates to content credibility are the following:

- *Reliance on academic soundness* – the academic rigor applied in validating points of view. Some routinely reference theory-backed concepts and the testimonies of widely acclaimed experts. Evidence of this rigor is often shown in cited references and well-studied frameworks representing their proposed concepts.
- *Empirically backed claims* – routine reference to industry reports and statistically derived points of interest obtained from surveys and well-vetted research. Care is often taken to validate their claims through explanations of sampling and study methods used in their published reports.
- *Factually-based, sound journalism* – influencer abides to rules of journalism (e.g., objective reporting). Key points in blog posts, presentations and articles demonstrate adherence to factually sound points of view often supported by hyperlinks to original source data. Their employment of emotionally stirred content and partisan perspectives would be seen as uncharacteristic.

Adding the ability/competence dimension of trust to this cluster variate candidate is supported by the LinkedIn recommendations shown in Table I. Nearly 20% of the terms referencing the social influencer's qualities related to their competence or in-depth subject matter expertise. Such terms resonate with evaluations made of top influencer content especially as it relates to their abilities in providing visionary insights or prescribing successful business models. The following observations were made of top influencer content as it relates to ability/competence:

- *Distinguishable subject matter expertise* – widespread recognition as industry spokespeople as highlighted in online keynote speaking introductions, published bios and podcast introductions. The recognized authority ranges from expertise in business segments (e.g., non-profits, small business services, specific industries, etc.) to specific social content objectives (e.g., expertise in branding, crowdfunding, web traffic, lead generation, engagement tactics, etc.).

- *Market foresight and trend validator* – content offers visionary insights through market forecasting, predictions of relevant market disruptions and shedding light on emerging business opportunities and challenges. Credibility of claimed business projections can be inferred from the social proof garnered across content pieces reflecting the influencer's vision.
- *Foremost technocrat* – recognition for technical acumen as evidence by presentations, white papers and webinars showcasing an expertise in SEO, social network platform adoption, mobile usage and social CRM design. Many are routinely featured in online expert panels and lectures as spokes-people for technology updates including the qualification of risky business tool adoption.
- *Authority on best practice adoption* – heavy orientation of top influencer blogs, podcasts and videos towards best-in-class examples of new business ideas. Evidence of their expert perspectives can be seen in the high social proof garnered from topics like "...effective ways to... must have's...measuring results of...why you should...what you need...and mistakes to avoid..."
- *Rationale for improved business frameworks* – routinely prescribes essentials for adopting new business models, enterprise-wide strategies, cultural mindsets, marketing practices or business infrastructures. The justification for adoption often includes client proof-of-concepts, research validation and the acknowledged reputation of the influencer. Meaningful strategic insights can be gleaned from the influencer's content engagement, book popularity and business concept references.
- *Reputation as a long-term growth strategist* – high orientation to boosting organizational success. Topics often include suggestions for market leadership, enterprise growth, improved profitability and positioning for future competitiveness. Evidence of influencer expertise in this area is often reflected in LinkedIn skill endorsements, social proof and guest speaking introductions.

Selecting Constructs from Influence Tactics

Besides the relationship capital accrued to social influencers from a history of imparting trustworthy tactical guidance, leadership research suggests that the attainment of social influence prominence is largely dependent on influence tactics defined here as actions taken to change the attitudes, beliefs or behavior of followers (van Knippenberg *et al.*, 1999). According to intra-organizational influence theory, when influencers (e.g., managers) possess little formal control, their success is largely dependent on how the influencer uses certain influence tactics (Wichmann *et al.*, 2016; Yukl and Falbe, 1990). Much like the downward influence tactics prescribed for a superior dealing with subordinates, an aspiring social influencer is challenged with having to continually raise the enthusiasm of followers while earning their commitment to stay connected.

A number of empirical studies have demonstrated that soft influence tactics such as *inspirational appeals* and *consultation* have been especially effective for charismatic and transformational leaders charged with articulating a compelling vision of the future (Chong, 2014; Falbe and Yukl, 1992; Hinkin and Schriesheim, 1990; Lian and Tui, 2012; Wichmann *et al.*, 2016; Yukl and Tracey, 1992). Yukl and Falbe (1990), in fact, determined that inspirational appeal and consultation were the most frequently used in downward influence tactics (Lee and Salleh, 2008). Inspirational appeals, in this case, arouse a follower's emotions and gain their commitment by appealing to their values and ideals (Yukl, 2002). Consultation, as explained further in reference to empathy, involves the enlisting of follower participation through their feedback and ideas.

Inspirational appeals. The positive effect that inspirational appeals can have on thought leadership is supported by the LinkedIn recommendations. Terms associated with inspiration, enthusiasm, encouragement and charisma represent 15% of the total relevant accolades used to describe top social influencers. Where these social influencers can especially leverage their inspirational appeal is through the enthusiasm generated from emotional content. In their studies of how inspirational appeals are instrumental with transformational leaders, Yukl (2002) and Cable

and Judge (2003) reference how these leaders often “communicate with vivid imagery and symbols in a way that generates enthusiasm” (p. 64).

- *Heartfelt reactions to life changing lessons* – the sharing of life changing advice often stemming from the influencer’s own successes. Evidence is gleaned from their audiences’ comments on content posts and live event recordings (e.g., virtual summits).
- *Emotionally charged messaging* – messaging that boosts self-esteem with compelling devotionals and “can do” messaging. Their motivational undertones are conveyed in taglines, themes and concluding points. Many routinely quote role models that impart profound words of wisdom while periodically injecting their own personal touch through topical metaphors displayed in quotes, photography and visual art.
- *Heartbreak-to-Triumph Narratives* –integration of personal stories into their content. These stories often involve emotionally straining depictions of how the influencer overcame obstacles in their personal life or enterprising endeavors. The narratives of encouragement are especially visible in staged performances that lend themselves to heartfelt storytelling (e.g., TED talks) and image intensive social platforms like Instagram and Google+. Some have a reputation for routinely releasing emotionally straining content intended to strike an emotional chord.

Social-Interactive Engagement for Empathy Building.

As shown in Table II, social-interactive engagement is routinely mentioned by content marketers as an essential element of social influence building. A number of social analytics platforms like Kred and Klear show high correlations between the engagement scores of social media participants and their social influence. The scoring mechanisms consider a level of influence outreach, or generosity in sharing information, as well as the friendliness that influencers exhibit when actively conversing with their followers.

This emphasis on engagement is consistent with intra-organizational influence theory and its manifestation in soft influence tactics like *consultation*, defined here

as the participative approach in which followers are encouraged to contribute and suggest improvements (Yukl, 2002; Yukl and Tracey, 1992). Leadership research on the use of consultation with subordinates has found that consultation increases decision acceptance (Charbonneau, 2004). Moreover, a study disclosed in the Harvard Business Review (Musselwhite and Plouffe, 2012) points out that leaders who exercise this consultation style rely on reciprocity, engaging support and personal relationships to influence others.

In similar fashion, the aspiring social influencer that invites follower feedback and the crowd sourcing of their ideas is likely to benefit from follower loyalty. This concern for follower input and participation can impart a perception of the influencer being empathetic. According to renowned digital analyst, Brian Solis, “effective engagement is inspired by *empathy* that develops simply by being human” (Solis, 2013, p. 161). Influencers who demonstrate a willingness to respond and act on their follower’s behalf are then likely to be credited for their caring and individualized attention to followers (Parasuraman *et al.* 1988).

Although definitions of empathy vary widely, most acknowledge both a cognitive or affective (emotional and compassionate) dimension. The cognitive aspect of empathy implies that an influencer is able to put themselves in the follower’s place and see their perspective. The affective dimension refers to the influencer’s capacity to respond with an appropriate emotion to a follower’s situation often to the point of mirroring what the follower is feeling. In one respect, affective empathy “refers to compassion or benevolence, which denotes kindness or goodwill on the part of both partners” (Ndubisi, 2004, p. 75). Both the affective and cognitive aspects were identified as notable attributes of leading social influencers. A review of the top 414 digital and social media educators revealed the following:

- *Demonstration of affective empathy* – noticeable reputation for being an advocate of their audiences’ passions. Both their content and engagement dialogs suggest that they are emotionally invested in their followers. A genuine care and compassion for others’ problems is often exhibited in online chats, Google+ hangout interviews and thoughtful feedback on

social networks. Their expressions of concern can also be implied through personalized responses and explanation clarity in comment responses.

- *Demonstration of audience centricity (cognitive empathy)* – noticeable reputation as being an audience engaged host. They openly invite audiences to share personal stories and perspectives. Many show an innate ability to draw out what others want to discuss in chats and audience fielded questions. Further evidence of this cognitive empathy can be gleaned from the influencer's periodically fielding audience questions and setting agendas around audience requests.
- *Demonstration of perspective taking (cognitive empathy)* – noticeable reputation for representing an audience voice. They actively tune into how audiences feel about certain subjects while demonstrating active listening abilities in their podcast and chat Q&As. Their perspectives are often captured in slogans and taglines espoused by the community.

Taking into account both the cognitive and affective aspects of empathy, Table I shows that words associated with empathy account for 14% of laudable phrases used in LinkedIn recommendations. Moreover, a sizeable number of the mentioned accolades reference the social influencer's benevolence (having genuine or best interests at heart), a closely related construct to empathy. This supports the notion that followers will not only appreciate the opportunity to be involved in an influencer's search for ideas, they are likely to trust the influencer who best represents their interests.

Entertainment Value. Few would debate the impact entertainment has on creating social influence even for the most serious of professions. An examination of the most followed Twitter personalities shows 7 of the top 10 and a majority of the top 100 to be sports, music, comic or other entertainers. Leading social media marketing practitioners listed in Table II advocate the use of humor, storytelling, or other forms of entertainment in content intended to engage target audiences. An argument could therefore be made that even the most passionate approach to engagement and insightful content could easily lose its luster unless the aspiring social influencer

attempts to stimulate the attention of followers with some form of playful amusement.

Humor in particular has a profound impact on attracting and engaging followers. In a study of 3315 re-casted television ads garnering over 50,000 views on YouTube, Barry and Hale (2013) found 95% involved some form of entertainment. Nearly two-thirds of the entertaining content was intended to be humorous. The rest included serious entertainment depicted in theatrical performances, heartfelt storytelling and astonishment.

An examination of terms used in LinkedIn recommendations found that 5% included references to the influencer being bold, witty, captivating, vibrant, fun, sarcastic, authentic, ebullient and affable. These terms adequately reflect our own examination of the top 414 digital and social media educators. Observations were made of the following upon reviewing their staged performances, recorded broadcasts and social profiles:

- *Witnessed laughter* – invariably resort to wit, jokes and other forms of humor as a way to energize their audiences. Their impact on entertaining followers can be observed from the audience laughter response at stage performances (e.g., TED talks, virtual summits, etc.) or through live conversation media (e.g., Google+ Hangouts, live streaming, etc.) and content commentary (e.g., audience responses to postings).
- *Comic reputation* – known for being fun, vivacious or witty. This can be observed from their bios, LinkedIn recommendations and recordings of their speaking engagement gigs. Their ability to entertain audiences ranges from being outrageously provocative to displaying a lighthearted side through mild mockery, quirky revelations or cuteness.
- *Perceived entertainment persona* – An expressed intent to entertain audiences is often shown in an influencer's amusing profiles, props, content posting engagement and personal profile imagery. Some regularly distinguish themselves with caricatures, unconventional attire, satire or provocative eye catchers. Their presentations are expected to be highly energetic and marked by amusing anecdotes, funny imagery and cultural icons.

Final Cluster Variate Selection. Despite the paucity of research devoted to factors driving social influence, an exploratory evaluation of top influencer content, coupled with some commitment-trust and influence theory support, suggests that social influence is largely determined by the helpfulness of content distributed by the aspiring influencer along with their perceived trustworthiness and use of soft influence tactics. This leads us to the following variables selected as cluster variates:

- Tactical guidance
- Thought leadership credibility/trustworthiness
- Soft influence tactics
 - o Inspirational appeals
 - o Empathy
 - o Engagement generosity
 - o Entertainment value

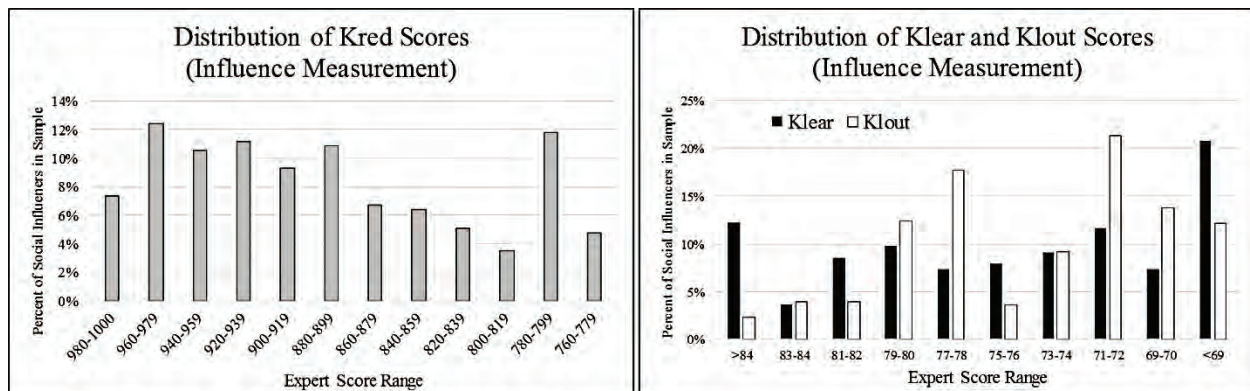
METHODOLOGY

Dyadic Approach to Cluster Examination

Using the 6 variables selected for the cluster variate as a basis for evaluation, two studies were performed in search of archetypes representing top social influences. One study included an examination of leading *influencer* perceptions from a self-administered questionnaire. The other side of the dyad included examinations of influencer content and engagement tactics as observed from author perceptions as *follower* proxies.

Sampling. Test candidates were selected from an exploratory sample of 414 digital and social media educators derived from three social media analytics tools: Klout, Kred and Klear. Klout and Klear scores for expert level influence ranged from 67 and above as prescribed for a range of influence considered “expert”. Kred scores had numerical values ranging from 760 to 998. Shown in Figure 2 is a distribution of influence scores for the qualified candidates.

Figure 2: Distribution of Klout, Kred and Klear Influence Scores

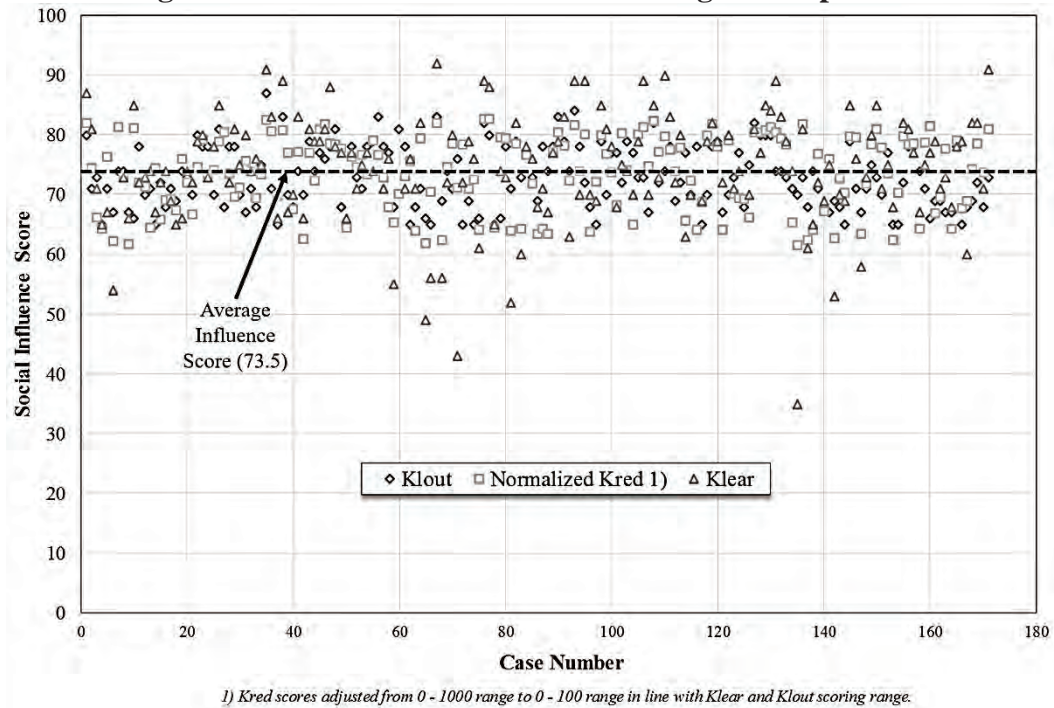


In order to maintain sample homogeneity and legitimacy, the selection of candidates was restricted to those having at least 100 endorsements in LinkedIn for social media related skills. Excluded from the list were individuals whose high influence in social media circles stemmed primarily from TV celebrity exposure, motivational selling, digital technology advocacy or popular life style blogging topics. The intent here was to use a sample reflective of thought leadership in social media and content marketing usage. Also excluded were those exploiting the social media analytics with excessive engagement tactics that lacked meaningful content contributions.

From the original sample of 414 thought leaders used in the authors' exploratory evaluations, a questionnaire was developed on topics related to influence tactics and content usefulness. Following three sets of reminders, a total of 171 completed responses were collected via an email link to SurveyGizmo. Based on an available 405 email addresses

from LinkedIn invites, the collection of completed responses amounted to a 42% effective response rate. The range of all respondent's expert influence scores shown in Figure 3 fits within the boundaries of what qualifies as expert level (e.g., top 1% of those skilled in digital, social media and content marketing). All candidates qualified for at least 2 of the 3 expert influence scores (Kred, Klear and Klout).

Figure 3: Distribution of Influence Scoring for Respondents



Measure Development for Self-Administered Influencer Test

Reliability of Scales. Since no scales have been developed in this nascent field of study, we developed and pre-tested a set of questions along the lines of the construct dimensions listed in Table I. Sample questions were based on:

1. the credit given social influencers by their followers after consuming their content;
2. the type of advice social influencers believe they are giving to followers when constructing in-depth content;
3. appeals made to the heart or mind when constructing in-depth content and presenting to audiences; and

4. audience engagement tactics and depth of thought given when replying to community comments or engaging in expert panels.

Using Cronbach's alpha, questionnaire items based on 7-point Likert scales were measured for internal consistency and reliability. In addition, engagement generosity was measured from Kred's 12-point outreach score. This social analytic metric measures the influencer's propensity to share other people's content forward. Following removal of items where reliability improved after deletion, a total of 24 items were selected for factor analysis based on Cronbach alphas equaling or exceeding 0.7. Shown in Appendix A is the resulting list of scale questions along with the scale reliability measured for each construct.

Validity of Scales. The remaining scale of 24 items was then examined for convergent and discriminant

validity starting with exploratory factor analysis to verify that the items used in a scale were tapping the same construct. The factors' capability of explaining the amount of variation was considered in determining the number of factors to be retained. As recommended by Hair, *et al.*, (2006). Only factors with an Eigenvalue > 1.0 were retained.

The factor analysis yielded a 6 factor solution, which accounted for 61% of the explained variance. As shown in Table III, factor loadings on each indicator are high in absolute value (e.g., most are well above 0.500) and relative to loadings on other indicators. This shows high uni-dimensionality and discriminate validity.

Measure Development for 'Author as Follower' Content Examination

Reliability of Scales. To provide a more robust evaluation of social influence, we examined the same constructs from content reviews and observations of the influencer's social media behaviors in order to represent the follower's side of the dyad. This additional method allows a potentially richer and less favorably skewed insight into social influencer perceptions than what can be expected from an influencer's review of themselves. Moreover, the author insights permit a broader range of comparative performance in which to base an evaluation.

Using the same sample of 171 influencers, we split evaluations across authors using the scales shown in Appendix B. The context of these scale items were derived from exploratory observations made of the top 414 digital and social media educators. Using Cronbach's alpha, questionnaire items based on 7-point semantic-differential scorings were measured for internal consistency and reliability. All 21 items plus the Kred outreach score were retained for factor analysis based on Cronbach alphas equaling or exceeding 0.7. Shown in Appendix A is the resulting list of scale questions along with the scale reliability measured for each construct.

Validity of Scales. The 21-item scale and outreach measure was then examined for convergent and discriminant validity. The factor analysis yielded a 6 factor solution, which accounted for 80% of the explained variance. As shown in Table IV, factor

loadings on each indicator are high in absolute value (e.g., all well above 0.500) and relative to loadings on other indicators. This shows high uni-dimensionality and discriminate validity.

K-Means Cluster Analysis

Using the 6-variable cluster variate for typology constructions of social influencer archetypes, a K-means cluster analysis was performed for both the influencer self-administered test and the author/follower content examination. This non-hierarchical cluster scheme "implicitly minimizes the variance within each cluster" (Punj and Stewart, 1983, p. 143). Four clusters were selected for the tests based on the following:

1. Selections greater than 4 clusters for both samples showed at least one indistinguishable cluster and significantly low distances between final cluster centers.
2. Fewer than 4 clusters showed only slightly improved results in cluster center distances and cluster distinction; however, as explained by Hair *et al.*, this reduction in clusters sacrifices homogeneity. i.e., Member observations within cluster become increasingly heterogeneous within reductions in the number of clusters.

Shown in Table V are the K-means results for both samples when set for a 4-cluster solution. Based on the distances between final cluster centers and high variable value distinctions across cluster, an evaluation of archetypes is proposed from these cluster results.

RESULTS

Examination of Cluster Results

Beginning with results from the influencer's self-administered survey, Table V shows noticeable differences across clusters in values assigned to emotional-based influence tactics. Specifically, 2 clusters show higher than average values on entertainment value and inspiration. The very high value added to empathy on one of these clusters suggests an archetype that is highly motivational in nature. The choice of this 'motivator' moniker is further supported by the very low values given to credibility and tactical guidance. These *motivators* essentially earn their social influence

Table III: Factor Analysis Results for Social Influencer Sample

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.746	18.986	18.986	3.917	15.668	15.668
2	4.295	17.180	36.165	3.026	12.105	27.773
3	1.993	7.972	44.137	2.794	11.176	38.949
4	1.715	6.859	50.996	2.779	11.115	50.064
5	1.344	5.375	56.371	1.425	5.701	55.766
6	1.191	4.765	61.137	1.343	5.371	61.137
Rotated Component Matrix^a						
	Component					
	Guidance	Credibility	Inspiration	Entertainment	Engagement	Empathy
Guidance1	0.787	0.010	-0.102	0.003	-0.049	-0.124
Guidance2	0.805	-0.116	0.093	-0.066	0.059	-0.170
Guidance3	0.855	0.054	0.026	0.010	0.041	-0.069
Guidance4	0.665	0.069	0.019	-0.048	0.195	0.028
Guidance5	0.676	0.241	0.182	0.022	-0.202	0.149
Guidance6	0.586	0.221	-0.032	0.122	0.278	0.095
Guidance7	0.622	0.271	0.026	0.001	-0.029	0.261
Credible1	0.352	0.728	-0.022	-0.087	0.125	0.101
Credible2	0.035	0.797	-0.020	-0.044	0.045	-0.176
Credible3	0.155	0.665	0.112	-0.036	-0.033	-0.034
Credible4	0.054	0.710	-0.305	0.000	-0.031	-0.051
Inspire1	0.129	0.060	0.810	-0.061	0.186	0.088
Inspire2	0.190	-0.092	0.617	0.089	0.055	-0.210
Inspire3	0.039	-0.457	0.559	0.237	0.007	0.158
Inspire4	-0.176	-0.045	0.636	0.149	-0.096	0.100
Inspire5	-0.099	-0.175	0.538	0.058	0.272	-0.452
Inspire6	0.156	-0.040	0.433	0.340	0.537	0.166
Entertain1	0.012	-0.041	0.052	0.849	0.086	0.012
Entertain2	0.024	-0.304	0.153	0.561	0.226	-0.270
Entertain3	0.022	-0.008	0.485	0.540	-0.065	0.154
Entertain4	-0.065	-0.036	-0.003	0.835	0.090	-0.109
Entertain5	0.006	-0.053	0.162	0.607	-0.217	0.389
Engagement	0.097	0.051	0.054	0.030	0.803	0.040
Generosity						
Empathy	-0.027	-0.251	0.096	-0.004	0.255	0.698
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						
a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.						

Table IV: Factor Analysis Results for Follower Observation Sample

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.585	29.932	29.932	6.585	29.932	29.932
2	4.112	18.691	48.623	4.112	18.691	48.623
3	3.000	13.635	62.258	3.000	13.635	62.258
4	1.668	7.580	69.838	1.668	7.580	69.838
5	1.244	5.656	75.494	1.244	5.656	75.494
6	0.979	4.449	79.943	0.979	4.449	79.943
Rotated Component Matrix^a						
	Component					
	Credibility	Empathy	Entertainment	Guidance	Inspiration	Engagement
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility1	0.878	0.034	0.028	0.003	-0.020	-0.045
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility2	0.809	-0.128	-0.052	0.097	-0.109	-0.003
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility3	0.840	0.039	0.091	0.190	-0.024	-0.009
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility4	0.788	-0.062	-0.042	0.086	-0.146	0.170
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility5	0.800	0.095	-0.004	-0.152	-0.122	-0.021
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility6	0.655	-0.137	-0.029	-0.012	-0.024	0.575
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility7	0.655	-0.146	-0.142	-0.176	-0.050	0.466
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility8	0.650	-0.096	0.008	-0.041	-0.069	0.520
ThoughtLeadershipCredibility9	0.686	-0.114	-0.126	0.182	-0.063	-0.029
Empathy1	-0.070	0.907	0.093	-0.049	0.253	-0.022
Empathy2	-0.081	0.907	0.132	-0.086	0.203	-0.079
Empathy3	-0.029	0.903	0.156	-0.089	0.217	-0.050
Entertainment1	-0.059	0.102	0.931	0.115	0.190	0.044
Entertainment3	-0.001	0.138	0.921	0.041	0.170	-0.033
Entertainment2	-0.045	0.133	0.917	0.133	0.179	0.027
TacticalGuidance2	0.081	-0.069	0.100	0.942	0.011	0.049
TacticalGuidance3	0.049	-0.075	0.085	0.924	0.009	0.009
TacticalGuidance1	0.071	-0.054	0.076	0.900	-0.042	0.050
Inspiration2	-0.141	0.259	0.213	0.014	0.867	-0.102
Inspiration1	-0.093	0.309	0.218	-0.002	0.865	-0.084
Inspiration3	-0.200	0.197	0.194	-0.035	0.838	-0.143
Engagement Generosity	0.020	0.021	-0.059	-0.133	0.191	-0.700
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.						

more by pumping up their audiences with inspirational messaging and an energetic style than tutoring their followers with valid instruction.

The other emotionally-based archetype scores high on entertainment value, average on validated tactics and very low on empathy. This profile represents what practitioners often refer to as an *edu-tainer*. Social influence is gained by performing often through comic wit and compelling stories. Using their entertaining

platforms to teach, less attention is spent on individual responsiveness and audience empathy.

On the low-emotion side, the first 2 clusters shown in Table V distinguish themselves mainly on empathy. Having both low empathy and inspirational appeal, but high credibility, suggests that the first archetype resembles that of an *analyst*. Their primary focus is to provide visionary updates and strategic insights. Having validated themselves as credible authorities, they need

Table V: K-Means Cluster Analysis Results for Influencer and Follower Samples

Final Cluster Centers (Social Influencer Sample)				
Classification	Analyst	Mentor	Motivator	Eduainer
Inspiration ¹	3.4 Low	4.3 Average	4.9 High	4.6 Somewhat High
Entertainment Value ¹	3.5 Very Low	4.3 Somewhat Low	5.1 High	5.2 High
Tactical Guidance ¹	5.6 Average	6.2 High	5.0 Low	5.9 Average
Credibility ¹	5.9 High	5.7 Somewhat High	3.9 Very Low	5.4 Average
Empathy ¹	2.9 Very Low	5.5 Very High	5.4 Very High	2.6 Very Low
Engagement Generosity ²	8.4 Somewhat Low	9.2 Somewhat High	8.8 Average	8.9 Average

1) Based on Likert values (7 = highest)
2) Based on Kred Outreach score with maximum of 12

Distances between Final Cluster Centers				
Cluster	Analyst	Mentor	Motivator	Eduainer
Analyst		3.035	3.983	2.265
Mentor	3.035		2.528	3.173
Motivator	3.983	2.528		3.337
Eduainer	2.265	3.173	3.337	

No. of Cluster Cases		
Cluster	Analyst	36
	Mentor	48
	Motivator	33
	Eduainer	44
Valid Cases		161
Missing		10

Final Cluster Centers (Authors as Followers Sample)				
Classification	Analyst	Mentor	Motivator	Eduainer
Inspiration ¹	2.5 Low	4.6 Somewhat High	5.5 Very High	4.2 Average
Entertainment Value ¹	2.3 Very Low	3.1 Low	5.2 Very High	4.8 High
Tactical Guidance ¹	4.7 Average	4.7 Average	3.9 Low	5.7 High
Vision Credibility ¹	5.3 High	4.9 Average	4.0 Low	5.0 Average
Empathy ¹	2.5 Very Low	4.9 High	5.9 Very High	3.7 Low
Engagement Generosity ²	8.7 Average	9.2 Somewhat High	8.8 Average	8.7 Average

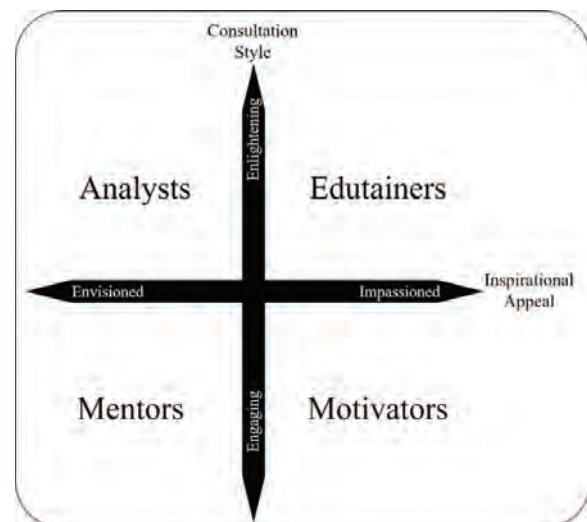
1) Based on Likert values (7 = highest)
2) Based on Kred Outreach score with maximum of 12

Distances between Final Cluster Centers				
Cluster	Analyst	Mentor	Motivator	Eduainer
Analyst		3.369	5.600	3.423
Mentor	3.369		2.804	2.440
Motivator	5.600	2.804		3.306
Eduainer	3.423	2.440	3.306	

No. of Cluster Cases		
Cluster	Analyst	37
	Mentor	38
	Motivator	19
	Eduainer	71
Valid Cases		165
Missing		3

not be as concerned with empathetic responsiveness as those postured as motivators. The second archetype resembles that of a *mentor*. Like the analyst, little emotional connection is made through entertainment and inspirational appeals. Mentors are more concerned with establishing a one-on-one connection where attention to individual needs is key. Consequently, as displayed in the second column of Table V, *mentors* earn their social influence from their empathy, engagement and credibility.

These 4 archetypes (analysts, mentors, motivators and edu-tainers) suggest a 2-tiered typology based on the 2 soft influence tactics discussed in the literature: consultation style and inspirational appeal. As shown in Figure 4, a 4-quadrant placement of the archetypes suggests that social influencers have consultation styles that are either engaging or enlightening while inspiring their audiences either from their perspectives (envisioned) or through their emotional personalities (impassioned).

Figure 4: Matrix of Social Influence Archetypes

In examining the results of the author as follower sample (the bottom portion of Table V), we can see they coincide very well with the results from the influencer's self-administered survey (top portion of Table V). For instance, in both studies a cluster emerged which scored high on credibility and low on inspirational appeal, entertainment value, and empathy (i.e. analysts). In addition, when comparing the results of the motivator cluster from the influencer's self-administered sample, we can see that for the author/follower content examination, a similar cluster was present which showed high values for inspiration, entertainment value, and empathy, as well as low values for tactical guidance and credibility. Moreover, for both studies a cluster emerged which scores high on entertainment value, average on credibility, and low on empathy. As noted, this cluster was labeled as edu-tainers for their ability to use entertaining platforms to teach. Finally, when looking at the scores for the mentor cluster from the influencer's self-administered sample, we see that the author as follower sample revealed a similar cluster which demonstrated high values for empathy and engagement, and low values for entertainment.

Taken together, these results serve to provide further support for our typology, since there was a good agreement between the two separate studies, with both revealing archetype clusters demonstrating very similar characteristics.

RESEARCH AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

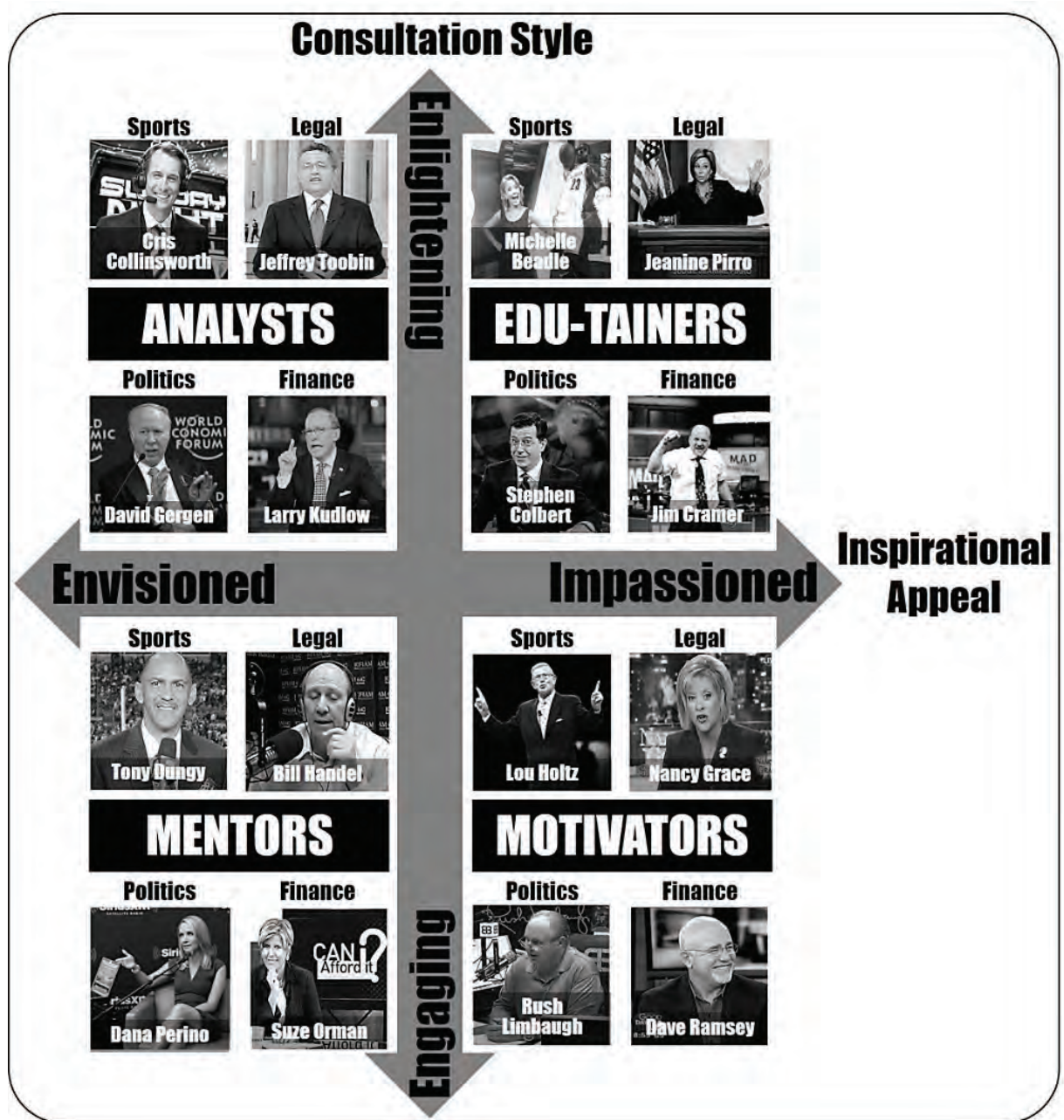
In an age of social selling, sales professionals are discovering ways to exploit the power of social network platforms for sales intelligence gathering and lead nurturing. But what started as an online tool for broadcasting golden resumes has turned into a content marketing platform for branding thought leadership. Those successful in professional networking have harnessed the power of helpful content and their network connections to showcase their expertise while often earning the reputation for being inspirational and trustworthy in the process. In so doing, sales professionals can distinguish themselves as 'go-to' advisors who are well positioned to cultivate relationships with their prospective clients.

This study demonstrates that the path towards building social influence goes beyond an offer of helpful business tips. Leadership research and influence theory suggests that a number of soft influence tactics are required to motivate followers. Relationship marketing further suggests that followers will stay loyal to those they know, like and trust. Together, these bodies of literature provide a framework for understanding why followers (e.g., consumers, subordinates, social media communities) commit their time and energy to certain influencers. Following an extensive review of content and personality styles exhibited by top influences in social media sectors, a conclusion was reached in this study that followers expect content that is instructional or insightful from an influencer who engages with them in an empathetic way. In addition, they expect a personality that either stirs their passions or provokes big idea thinking.

This is a tall order for even the most visionary icons or charismatic personalities. And yet many professionals have millions of network connections, fans and followers despite their lacking the broadcast exposure of well-known celebrities. Common to most is an inspirational appeal and consultative style that stays true to their nature. This can be further exemplified in Figure 5, which applies the 4 archetype social influence typology to popular broadcast commentators. Rarely do these featured broadcasters take on a different personality in order to suit their followers. Instead, these broadcasters stick to what they do best and further hone their skillsets, as opposed to trying to be everything to everyone. For instance, motivational speakers who adjust their messaging to suit a scholarly audience are likely to be dismissed as unauthentic much like an analytical pundit who embarks on a comic routine.

This study helped reveal that several avenues are available to sales professionals for leveraging their content and personality attributes as aspiring thought leaders. Those not prone to high engagement, for example, should seek ways to enlighten their target audiences just as those not known for breakthrough ideas can win over audiences by motivating them. Similarly, the critical role of inspiration in building thought leadership can be tackled from a cognitive or emotional perspective. Not all thought leaders are

Figure 5: Archetype Application to Broadcast Commentary Business



motivational, entertaining or capable of energizing large audiences with their humor, stories or inspirational messaging. Some gain their audiences by sparking an idea that encourages their audiences to envision the possibilities. A sizable population was observed for both thought leadership paths.

What appears evident from our cluster analysis is that four personality types stand out among the leading influencers

on social media. Each has its own peculiarities. *Analysts* bank on their ability to spread thought provoking ideas. Followers are likely to be inspired more by their perspective than their ability to arouse emotions. The same applies to *mentors*. But unlike analysts, followers expect *mentors* to advise them in a personal way. This requires active engagement with evidence that the *mentor* understands the audience perspective.

Similarly, the more passionate appeals made by *edutainers* and *motivators* requires these archetypes to routinely stir hearts, perhaps as a way to keep them enthusiastic. *Edu-tainers* can arguably maintain follower interest with lighthearted performances. *Motivators*, on the other hand, are expected to rouse emotions while responding empathetically. This is often done with heartfelt storytelling that resonates with the targeted communities.

Upon capturing and categorizing the profile commentary gathered during qualitative assessments, distinct profiles were created for aspiring thought leaders to consider when choosing their path to growing social influence. Shown in Table VI are descriptions of traits, expertise, strategic and stage orientations, influence role expectations, content and presentation styles, communication objectives and suitable dialog settings for each archetype.

For researchers, this inductive based research offers a framework for operationalizing thought leadership in the context of its antecedents and outcomes. Robust models from this conceptualization can then be tested under a more deductive approach. The examination of 4 archetypes reveals a 2-dimensional typology of influence tactics that sets the stage for subsequent construct evaluations. Specifically, researchers are encouraged to examine the constructs of *inspirational appeal* as being impassioned or envisioned and *consultative style* as being engaging or enlightening. Finally, a reliable survey instrument was derived from the influencer survey. Other researchers are encouraged to apply the test to additional thought leadership domains such as motivational selling, life style coaching or executive leadership.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Despite the encouraging findings and directions for future research, we acknowledge a number of study limitations that restrict its usefulness. First, the self-administered survey of high influence thought leaders was taken from a recognized thought leader's perspective. The disparity in archetype distributions between the authors' assessment and the influencer's self-assessment suggests that influencers may inflate their perspectives. Future research on influencer/follower dyads is encouraged to overcome this self-bias.

Another limitation is the method used to screen candidates for thought leadership. At the time of this writing, Klear, Klout and Kred scores were the most widely used social media analytics for measuring influence. Influence measurement using these tools is regularly debated in academia. Some more promising prototype apps are now under development that could further substantiate the sample screened for thought leadership. Though not as critical for this archetype study, measures of thought leadership outcomes like "influence" may require a more robust metric than what is offered by Klear, Klout and Kred.

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Table VI: Attributes and Orientations of Social Influence Archetypes

	SOCIAL INFLUENCE ARCHETYPE			
INFLUENCER ATTRIBUTES	Analyst	Mentor	Motivator	Edutainer
Traits	Market Authority, Forward Thinker, Scholar, Mastermind, Trailblazer, Guru, Futurist, Pioneer	Intuitive, Strategic, Insightful, Communicator, Nurturer, Natural Leader, Advisor, Approachable, Engaging, Helpful, Skillful, Tactical, Creative, Communicator, Focused, Client Nuanced, Trusting	Exuberant, Likable, Compassionate, Genuine, Warm, Charming, Aspiring, Optimistic, Energetic, Driven, Results Oriented, Spirited, Advocate, Enthusiast	Bold, Witty, Captivating, Vibrant, Fun, Sarcastic, Authentic, Ebullient, Affable, Exuberant, Likable, Compassionate, Genuine, Warm, Charming,
Subject Matter Expertise	1) Harnessing the Power of Emerging Trends; 2) Prescribing Techniques for Operational Excellence & Growth	1) Applying Technology Abstractions to Realistic Enterprise Strategies; 2) Executing Vision from In-depth Industry Knowledge, Management Skills & Results Orientation	1) Empowering Teams to Get the Most Out of Their Resources; 2) Embracing Early Adoption of Technologies or Business Choices in Advance of Mainstream Acceptance	1) Communicating What's Wrong with Current Approaches to Marketing; 2) Depicting Personal Insights into the Larger Context of Technology or New Media Adoption
Influencer Role Expectations	1) Maintaining Industry Pulse ; 2) Clarifying Direction of Complex Trends; 3) Navigating Organizations Through Complex Issues; 4) Rationalizing & Charting Tangible Steps for Leveraging Feasible Technology Solutions	1) Guiding Organizations in their Understanding, Common Sense Adoption & Integration of Tools with Strategies & Enterprise Cultures; 2) Updating & Evaluating Best Courses of Action from ROI Implications & Lessons Learned; 3) Tutoring Teams on Performance Fundamentals; 4) Sharing Tips on Tool Adoption	1) Leading Teams in Line with Game Plans; 2) Motivating Teams to Produce Their Best Work 3) Building Team Skills in Program Adoption; 4) Planting the Seed & Leading the Charge for Market Disruption; 5) Transforming Mindsets to Accept New Business Approaches; 6) Equipping Enthusiasts with Latest Knowledge	1) Simplifying Explanations of Complex Concepts; 2) Building Large Audiences for Active Community Engagement; 3) Interpreting Changing Customer Behaviors; 4) Enlightening Organizations on Promising Strategies; 5) Interpreting Business Climate Change as it Relates to Meaningful Strategies
Strategic Orientation	1) Rethinking Enterprise Level Objectives; 2) Reevaluating Business Practices; 3) Developing Strategies: How to Build, Operationalize & Measure Enterprise Initiatives	1) Revitalizing Enterprise Programs; 2) Tailoring Industry Remedies to Organization Visions; 3) Spearheading Actionable Plans; Translating Tangible Frameworks into Granular Tactics	1) Setting Goals to Achieve Excellent Results in Strategy & Tactics; 2) Deploying Tactical Level Tools for Early Competitive Advantage	1) Questioning Cultural Mindsets; 2) Offering Fresh Perspectives on Dealing with Consumers; Setting the Stage for Mission-Driven Initiatives
Stage Orientation	Keynote Speaking, Expert Interviewee	Expert Opinion Host or Commentator; Teacher, Q&A Host	Narrowcasting, Expert Interviewee "Can Do" Success Stories in Tight Knit Settings	Large Audience Keynotes, Broadcasts and Crowd Interactive Performances as Standup or Host
Communication Objective	1) Predicting the Future, Showcasing Important Ideas; 2) Mapping out Comprehensive Processes	Sharing Knowledge, Collaborating and Overcoming Obstacles in Technology Adoption, Initiatives & New Ideas	Challenging Audiences to Think Bigger and Bolder; Fostering Communications among True Believers of Emerging Technologies	Exciting Audiences to Embrace Unique Perspectives
Content Style	Statistical Research, Technical Reports, Forecasts, Infographics, Process Frameworks	Tutorials, Best Practice Case Studies, Decision Aids, Reasons Why, Training Programs, eBooks, Playbooks, Tactical How To's	Inspirational Messaging & Imagery, Must Haves, "How to" Life Lessons, Demos, Reviews, Apps	Provocative Imagery, Caricatures, Anecdotes, Entertaining Videos, Analogies, Visual Storytelling, Conceptual Talking Points
Presentation Style	Analysis, Lecturing, Technical	Reflective, Conversational, Team Action Oriented, Detailed, Instructional	High Charged, Encouraging, Engaging, Uniting	Funny, Common Sense, Philosophical, Dynamic, Heart Warming
Forum to Exchange Views	Podium Pitched Audiences, Auditorium Speeches, Expert Panels	Podcasts, Seminars, Journalism & Hangouts on Air, Conferences, Workshops, Webinars, Explainer Videos, eBooks	TED Talks, Podcasts, Talk Shows, Workshops, Inspirational Videos, Webcasts	Hosted Chats, Hangouts on Air, Podcasts, Summits
Community Commentary	Debate Triggered, Sage-like Advice	Shared Success Stories, Helpful Tips, Illuminating, Thought Provoking Dialogs with Pearls of Wisdom	News to Spark a Movement, Community Supportive, Action Oriented	Playful, Illustrious

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Appendix A: Scale Items for Influencer Self-Administered Questionnaire

Tactical Guidance (Cronbach =.85)

When constructing in-depth content, I often recommend apps and other decision making tools for improving their business practice (Guidance1)

After consuming my content or working with clients, my followers often credit me with:

- Providing helpful tips on applying new tools (Guidance2)
- Helping them evaluate new software tools, systems or platforms (Guidance3)
- Advising them on best practices for adopting social media tools or platform features (Guidance4)
- Having a clear understanding of how technology or tactics will impact their businesses (Guidance5)
- Forewarning them of risky technology or tool adoptions (Guidance6)
- Providing guidelines for adopting new marketing tactics (Guidance7)

Strongly Agree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Disagree

Credibility (Cronbach = .77)

My followers often credit me with having solid research to back my claims (Credible1)

When constructing in-depth content, I rely heavily on empirical data and credible testimonies to back my subject matter expertise (Credible2)

When participating in expert panels,

- I take pride in knowing my points are factual and academically sound (Credible3)
- I often rely on statistics and charts to validate my points (Credible4)

Strongly Agree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Disagree

Inspiration (Cronbach = .76)

After consuming my content or working with clients, my followers often credit me with inspiring them to achieve more in their lives (Inspire1)

When constructing in-depth content,

- I rely heavily on visual art and inspirational quotes to encourage my followers (Inspire2)
- I prefer to cite personal stories more than business cases (Inspire3)
- I prefer photography and fun facts over proof and points (Inspire7)

When presenting to me audiences:

- Followers expect inspirational stories over pragmatic advice (Inspire4)
- Followers see me more for my inspiration than my perspective (Inspire5)
- My capacity to stir hearts is greater than other social media influencers I know (Inspire6)

Strongly Agree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Disagree

Entertainment Value (Cronbach = .77)

When constructing in-depth content,

- I prefer to astonish with humor over announcing something new (Entertain1)
- My followers would identify more with my personality than my ideas (Entertain2)

When presenting to my audiences,

- I almost always share humorous stories at the onset (Entertain4)
- My followers expect humor to keep their attention (Entertain5)
- I am most effective when very animated (Entertain3)

Strongly Agree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Disagree

Empathy (Single Item)

My followers know me more for my empathy than my learning outcomes (Empathy)

Strongly Agree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Disagree

Appendix B: Scoring Rubrics for Evaluating Influencer Content and Observed Reputation

Tactical Guidance (Cronbach = .93)

Evaluation and Recommendation of Decision Aids (TacticalGuidance1): *The posting of recommendation by this influencer is:*

Routine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rare

Tips on Business Tool Application (TacticalGuidance2): *The posting of such tactical advice by this influencer is:*

Routine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rare

Tutorial Instruction on Near-term Tactics (TacticalGuidance3): *The posting of such tutorial instruction by this influencer is:*

Routine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rare

Thought Leadership Credibility (Cronbach = .92)

Rationale for Improved Business Frameworks (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility1): *Strategic frameworks proposed by this influencer are:*

Widely Respected ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Uncharacteristic

Distinguishable Subject Matter Expertise (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility2): *The subject matter expertise of this influencer is:*

Preeminent ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Unknown

Authority on Best Practice Adoption (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility3): *This influencer's authority as a best practice advisor is:*

Widely Acclaimed ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Unknown

Market Foresight and Trend Validator (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility4): *The foresight of this influencer is:*

Widely Acclaimed ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Unknown

Reputation as a Long-term Growth Strategist (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility5): *This influencer's reputation as strategist is:*

Widely Acclaimed ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Unknown

Reliance on Academic Soundness (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility6): *Academic rigor applied by this influencer is:*

Routine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rare

Empirically Backed Claims (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility7): *The use of empirically backed findings by this influencer is:*

Routine ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rare

Factually-based Sound Journalism (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility8): *The reputation of this influencer could be described as a:*

Pure Journalist ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Extremely Subjective

Foremost Technocrat (ThoughtLeadershipCredibility9): *This influencer's reputation as a technocrat could be described as a:*

Leading Authority ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Unknown

Inspiration (Cronbach = .93)

Heartfelt Reactions to Life Changing Lessons (Inspiration1): *Messaging from this influencer is:*

Routinely Heartfelt ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rarely Emotional

Motivationally Charged Messaging (Inspiration2): *Messaging from this influencer is:*

Routinely Motivational ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rarely Emotional

Heartbreak-to-Triumph Narratives (Inspiration3): *Heartfelt storytelling by this influencer is:*

Compelling ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Unusual

Entertainment Value (Cronbach = .95)

Witnessed Laughter (Entertainment1): *Content or staged presentations by this influencer are:*

Routinely Hilarious ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Rarely Funny

Comic Reputation (Entertainment2): *Content or staged presentations by this influencer qualify them as a:*

Comic Celebrity ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Serious Professional

Perceived Entertainment Persona (Entertainment3): *The intended profile of this influencer is to be:*

Amusing ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Serious

Empathy (Cronbach = .95)

Empathetic Concerns: Demonstrates Affective Empathy (Empathy1): *Audience concern by this influencer suggests they are:*

Highly Compassionate ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Apathetic

Audience Centricity: Demonstrates Cognitive Empathy (Empathy2): *Dialogs hosted by this influencer are:*

Highly Audience Engaged ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Typically Unilateral

Perspective Taking: Demonstrates Cognitive Empathy (Empathy3): *Perspectives taken by this influencer are:*

Highly Audience Centric ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Audience Independent