

# Why Webfluential's wired as the SA start-up to watch

 By Leigh Andrews

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So many start-ups, so few still thriving a few months down the line. It's sad but true. Luckily Webfluential falls into the 'still a success and steadily increasing' category - here's why...

Influencer marketing is a hot topic at the moment. Imagine this then: 1,000 marketers accessing almost 3,000 influencers, effectively reaching 185 countries across the world. That gives these marketers access to a combined audience bigger than most of the international news sites we read every day. That's what you get [with Webfluential](#). But what exactly IS Webfluential? Let's backtrack a bit.

Back in 2013, [Webfluential was known as](#) 'a new platform harnesses power of social communication'. It was, simply put, a "subscription-based platform that connects brands with consumers via credible social media influencers in order to realise the full potential of social communication" and launched by Retroviral digital communications agency, development house Silver Apple Studios and digital media venture capital fund Stratos Capital.

Things went well and it launched to trade in March 2014. Since they've been working hard to build a platform that services marketers in major cities like New York, London, Lagos, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Sydney, and Nairobi.



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The fact that the [African Blogger Awards](#), co-founded by [Mike Sharman](#) of Retroviral, required entrants to register their blog, Twitter, Instagram or YouTube profile (or a combination thereof) on Webfluential and for their entry evaluation to be primarily managed through Webfluential, is proof of this South African-run business' success.

But of course, the business world changes fast. So much so that Kirsty Sharman, the South African Franchise CEO and no relation to Mike, decided to update us on everything from new metrics that ensure clients get the most value from their Influencer Marketing campaigns to the addition of paid media, retargeting and detailed reports...

## ■ 1. Let's start off with a brief history of Webfluential since its launch to trade in April last year...

**Sharman:** Webfluential has been working hard to build the leading influencer marketing platform not only in Africa, but in the world. We've grown our influencer base to almost 3,000 now. We've paid out over 2.5 million rand to influencers in Africa. With 40 million blog reads a month and 20 million combined Twitter followers, we're working hard to match the right influencer with the right brands. Our local team has grown to 16 people in just a year and together we've worked with some of the top brands in Africa. Our clients include PayPal, Vodacom, BMW, Barclays Bank, Mazda, Cricket South Africa, SuperSport and more.



Kirsty Sharman, Webfluential's South African Franchise CEO

## ■ 2. Impressive. What exactly do the 1,000+ marketers do on the platform?

**Sharman:** Brands work with social influencers for many reasons but one of them is to help spread their stories and content to the right audiences. By having a Webfluential account, our clients have access to search and discover the most relevant social influencers to tell their stories. They are able to use the Webfluential platform to access influencer metrics (likes scores, audience demographics and potential reach) and when running campaigns, they can now report on all these things too, within the platform.

### ■ 3. Explain the shift towards social media/influencers as the most trusted advertising model over traditional...

Sharman: [This infographic](#) I created sums it up quite well...

### ■ 4. OK then: Why is Webfluential seen as 'the SA start-up to watch'?

**Sharman:** We believe that influencers are the next media channel to be added to our digital landscape. We are also confident that we've built a world-class platform, and believe that by working with the right clients and agencies, we can deliver great results inside and outside of our SA borders. Our focus for the next 18 months is to take the model we've build in South Africa and roll it out in Nigeria, Kenya and the United Kingdom. We already have clients and influencers in all those locations, it just about increasing our market share. Even though we're growing an international client base, our execution teams are based in Johannesburg and the plan is to stick to our South African routes; working with local programs to grow the digital talent pool in South Africa.

There you have it. If your campaigns strongly feature earned media, talkability, feedback and ultimately, sales but you're not using the power of [Webfluential](#) to involve today's true influencers, you're missing out... You can also follow Webfluential on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at [@Leigh\\_Andrews](#).

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