

THREE DIGITAL OPINION LEADER PERSONAS

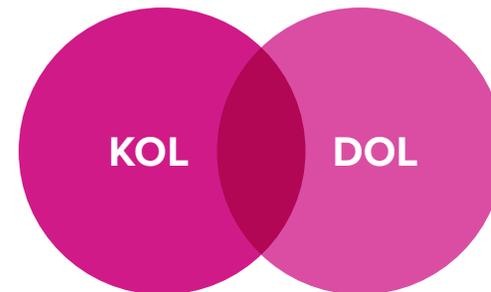
OPINION LEADERS PLAY AN ESSENTIAL ROLE

Since healthcare marketing began, opinion leaders have been the go-to authorities healthcare marketers seek out to spread awareness and even expert advice on new therapies and disease state research. We believe that opinion leaders are becoming more prominent players in peer-to-peer marketing as more medical activities move primarily to digital platforms. Today, there are two types of opinion leaders: **key opinion leaders (KOLs)** and **digital opinion leaders (DOLs)**. While KOLs can be DOLs, and vice versa, they currently each serve a unique role. Understanding this is fundamental to identifying the optimal opinion leaders you need to communicate your brand and therapeutic disease state data and experience with credibility, authenticity, and authority.

Although they share overlap—while DOLs are often KOLs, and some KOLs may dip their toe in the DOL waters—the two are not interchangeable. DOLs come in all shapes, sizes, and specialties. They can be physicians, physician’s assistants, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, dieticians and physical therapists, among other healthcare providers (HCP) types. While they can be as well-known as traditional KOLs, they don’t necessarily have to be. What makes a DOL a DOL is a deep drive to connect with other HCPs to share information, knowledge, and perspectives on the newest data and treatment practices, all while knowing how to do this best on social platforms. This general expertise combined with digital presence means they have tangible influence in the discussions taking place among various medical communities online.

A critical component of any opinion leader (OL) engagement strategy, DOLs demonstrate distinctly different ways of communicating and connecting with their audiences. To help better determine how DOLs can augment your overall OL engagement strategy, we have developed three common DOL personas: **Creators, Sharers, and Engagers.**

There is overlap between KOLs and DOLs, but each group is unique.



The three key DOL personas:



Creators



Sharers

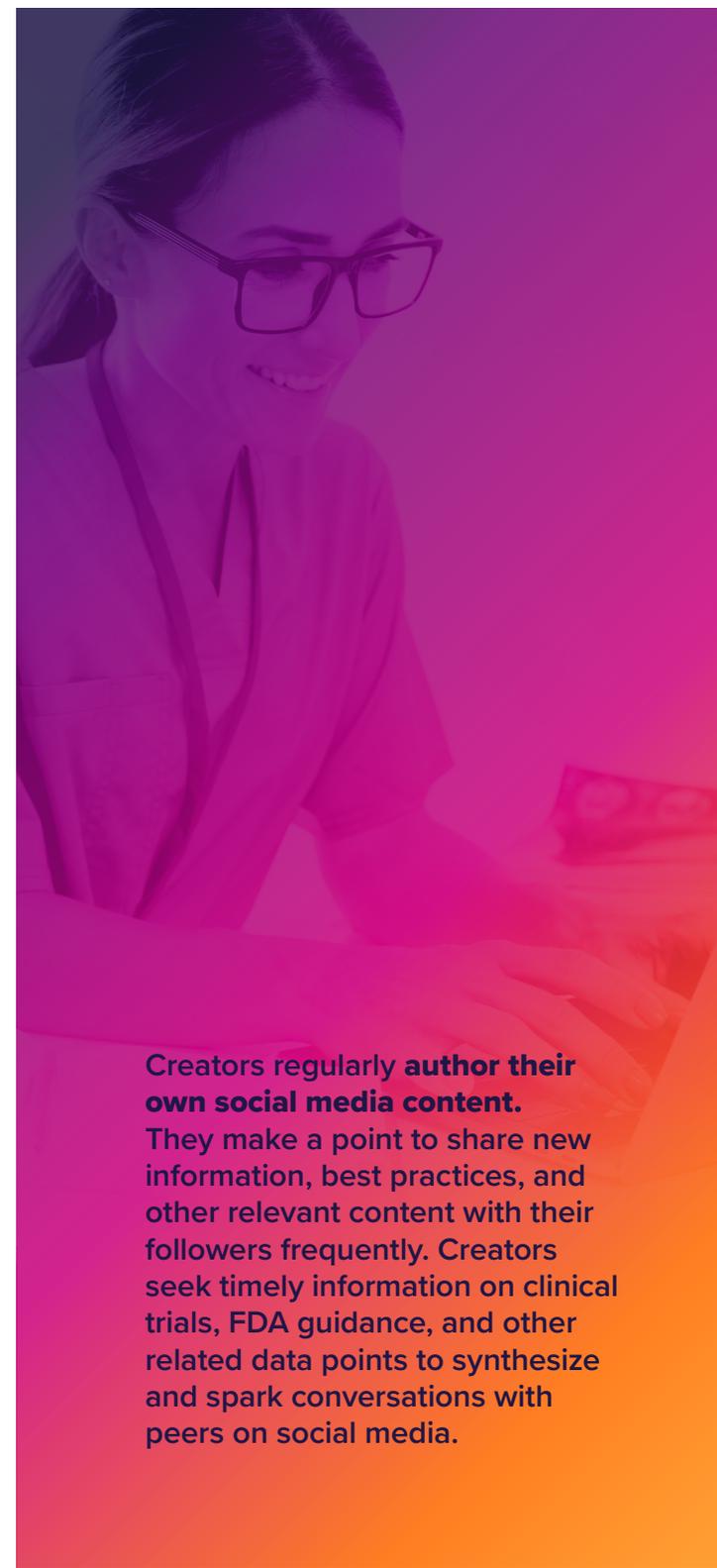


Engagers



PERSONA ONE: **THE CREATOR**

Creators establish authentic connections with their audience by authoring their own content, sharing best practices and new discoveries that resonate and linger with their followers long after they have stopped scrolling. Whether that Creator has amassed a large following that hangs on their every word or a smaller, tailored following of niche HCPs—Creators typically have the following characteristics: they are fearless trailblazers, trusted advisors, and experienced mentors.



Creators regularly **author their own social media content**. They make a point to share new information, best practices, and other relevant content with their followers frequently. Creators seek timely information on clinical trials, FDA guidance, and other related data points to synthesize and spark conversations with peers on social media.

CREATES FEARLESSLY

The Creator persona, as the name suggests, creates content. Look to Creators to be the leaders of DOLs. They are not afraid to initiate dialogue amongst their peers. This dialogue can be about treatment plans, drug discoveries, or simply the best way to tackle an ongoing problem or issue. This type of content is created with the intent of the viewer interacting with the post. Depending on the platform, the Creator may include a poll or question to elicit further engagement. Optimal engagement includes cross-communication between the Creator and followers—thus building a sense of community. At their core, Creators are thought leaders and innovators who are unafraid to share the latest news and create meaningful conversations around it.

ADVISES ON THE EVER-CHANGING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

However, Creators do much more than just create. They advise on a social media landscape that is highly regulated and can look vastly different from the informal users of most social media platforms. Creators can advise institutions and organizations on methodologies to connect with HCPs via social—making Creators prime candidates for advisory boards and consulting roles. As content creators, they have become experts in not only creating content but understanding how their followers respond to clinical-based content. Granted, this is not an exact science, but with enough practice, Creators can gauge the type of content their audience will respond to and predict what engagement could potentially look like. This information is invaluable to institutions and organizations looking to engage DOLs or HCPs on social media channels.

Considering the investment of both time and experience to become a DOL, look to the Creator to establish best practices in an ever-changing digital landscape.

MENTORS THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Creators reap the benefits of an elevated status on social media, which also means they run the risk of becoming mentors by default.

In the wise words of Winston Churchill “The price of greatness is responsibility.”

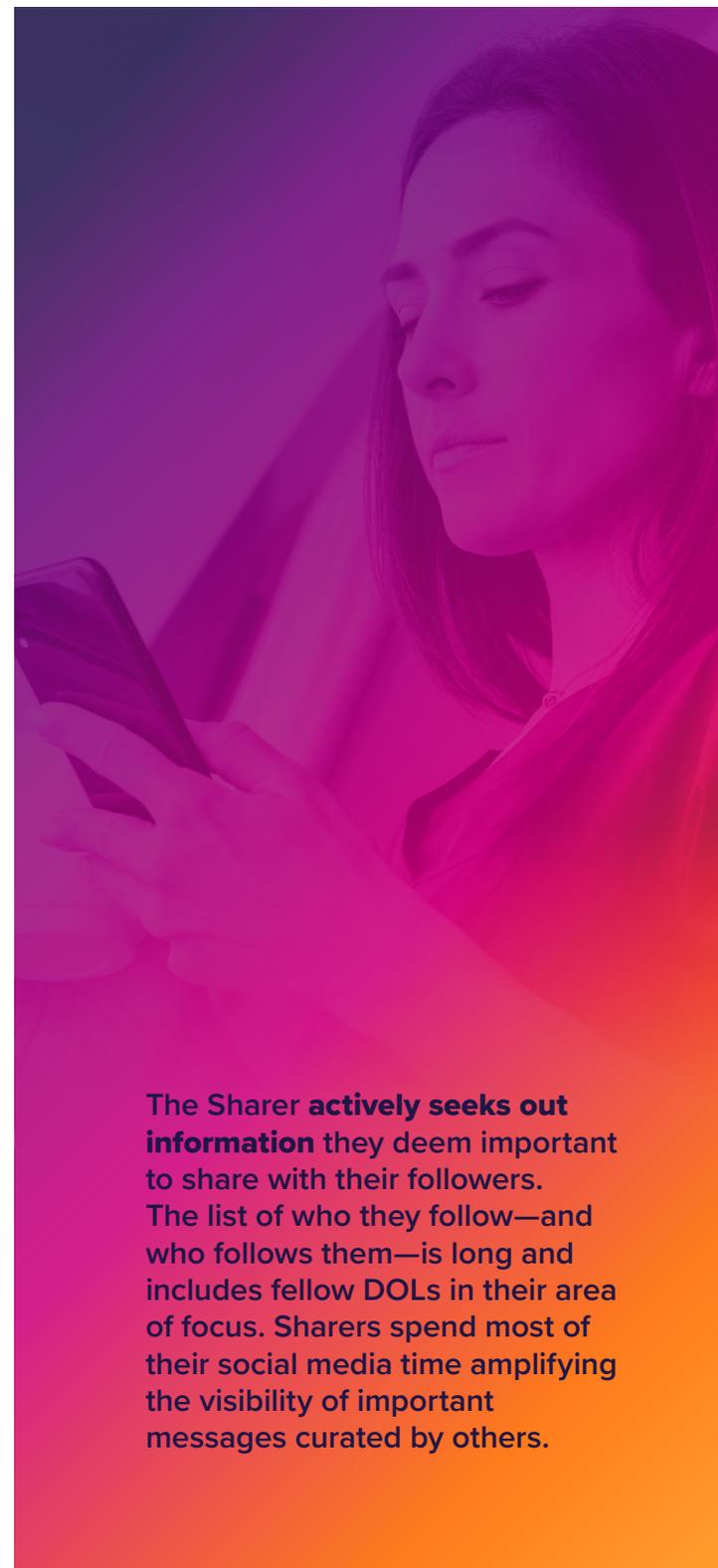
That responsibility comes in the form of mentorship. Rising DOLs look to Creators for guidance and leadership. Creators make great mentors to early-career HCPs looking to network within their specialty, grow their following, or niche down their personal branding. Because they quite literally created the space for HCPs to thrive on social media, Creators are well suited to help the next generation of DOLs create authentic connections while avoiding pitfalls that may have fallen upon their predecessors.

Whether clinicians and academia are ready to acknowledge it or not, Creators are influencers. Their posts have the ability to incite dialogue, build community, and they just might be the spark needed to challenge the current standard of practice.



PERSONA TWO: **THE SHARER**

Simply put, the Sharer is a content curator. A content curator gathers relevant content from various parts of the internet, assembles it in one place, adds context, and re-publishes the content for their audience. Sharers keep their fingers on the pulse of what's new, trending, or thought-provoking in healthcare—and share those findings with their followers. The Sharer's motivation is to have an informed following of HCPs that are up to date on the latest information in their expertise. Curated content for HCPs can come in various forms. Content from a Sharer could look like links to research publications with groundbreaking discoveries, new drug launches and indications, or reposts of expert advice from their peers.



The Sharer actively seeks out information they deem important to share with their followers. The list of who they follow—and who follows them—is long and includes fellow DOLs in their area of focus. Sharers spend most of their social media time amplifying the visibility of important messages curated by others.

GENERATES VALUE WITH AMPLIFICATION

Unlike the Creator, the Sharer does not create, which is why this persona has the potential to be overlooked. However, the power of the Sharer lies in the value they provide. Sharing content takes significantly less time than creating original content, but that does not mean the Sharer is less skilled than their counterparts. Sharers can cut through the noise and identify the information HCPs find valuable and tailor it to their expertise. This persona can act as an advisor on social media engagement because they have a keen sense of what HCP audiences find relevant and worthwhile. The Sharer not only connects with their followers, but they expand their professional network by amplifying the voice of their peers.

BUILDS COMMUNITY USING CURATED CONTENT

The Sharer can build community without original content while positioning themselves as opinion leaders. The power of curated content with the addition of commentary or anecdotes allows the Sharer to develop an authentic voice outside of sharing content. This distinction is imperative to building and nurturing an online community of HCPs. That authentic voice is seen most when sharing real-time content from events and congresses. The Sharer creates an environment where they have access to fresh content, again positioning themselves as the ones to share exclusive content before it reaches the masses.

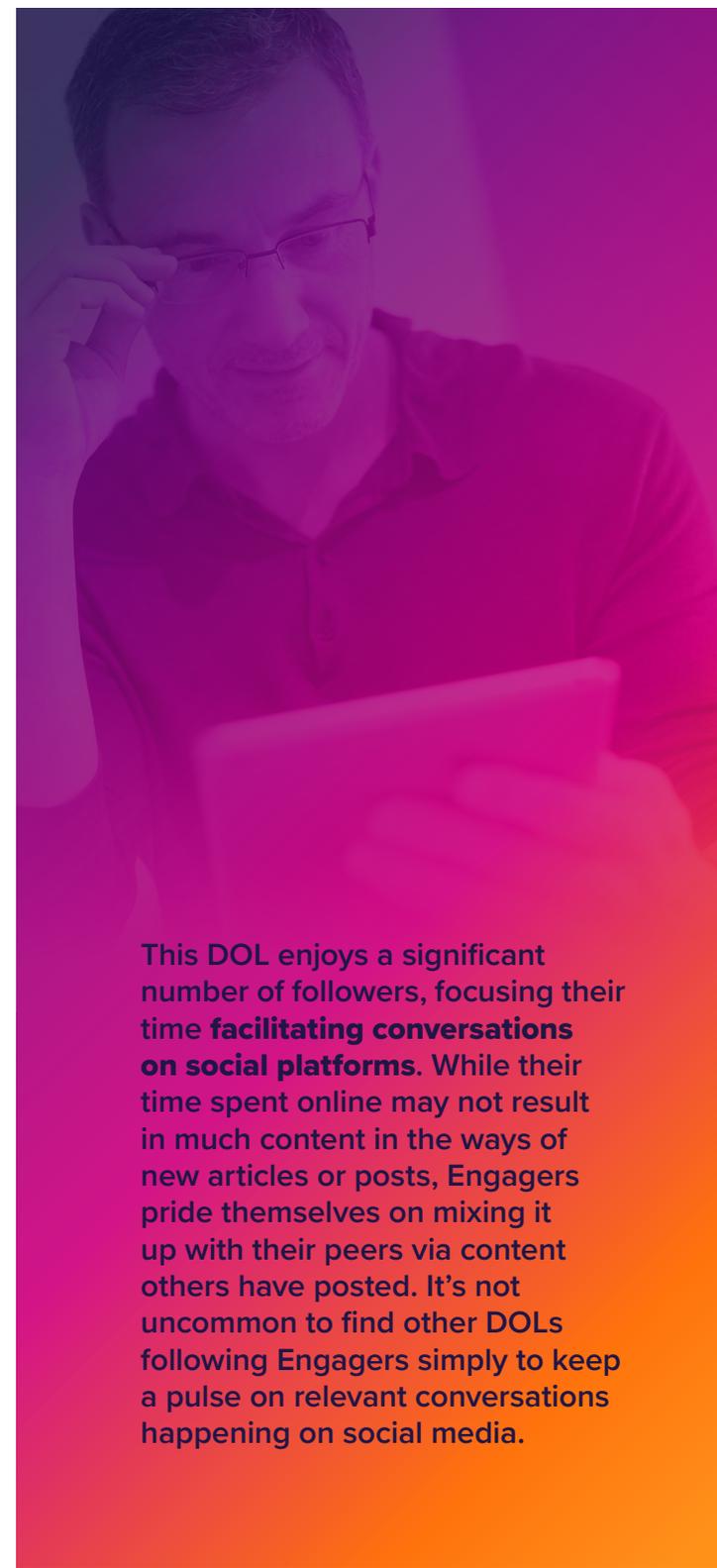
Whether the Sharer is a DOL with a niche specialty focusing on a rare disease state or a general family practice—their objective is to gather content from media outlets, organizations, and creators to curate a tailored content experience that provides value to their followers.



PERSONA THREE: **THE ENGAGER**

Engagers share attributes with the Sharer like a dedicated online community and amplification of messages, but the Engager goes beyond surface commentary. Much like the Sharer, they don't create rich media content. Instead, the significance of the Engager can be found in their ability to create editorial content that drives thoughtful conversations amongst their audience.

This DOL enjoys a significant number of followers, focusing their time **facilitating conversations on social platforms**. While their time spent online may not result in much content in the ways of new articles or posts, Engagers pride themselves on mixing it up with their peers via content others have posted. It's not uncommon to find other DOLs following Engagers simply to keep a pulse on relevant conversations happening on social media.



FACILITATES DISCUSSIONS

Simply put, the Engager thrives on discourse with their peers. This persona can be found on platforms that encourage two-way communication between the persona and their audience. Two-way communication allows the Engager to foster a sense of trust amongst their followers, making the discourse within the community even more beneficial.

Engagers stay up to date on the latest events and trends within their expertise and supply a platform for their peers to communicate through a variety of means such as polls, questions, scenarios, etc. These discussions provide value by not only allowing a safe space for HCPs to engage in topics that are important to their specialty, but Engagers can also provide their audience with added data-driven insights to advance those conversations to the next level.

PROVIDES CONTEXT FOR THE COMMUNITY

We have highlighted the similarities between the different personas, and how they work in tandem. The Sharer amplifies messages and builds community without creating content, while the Engager builds community by providing context to bring the message to life. These personas can work together to drive repetition.

Community is the cornerstone of the Engager’s persona. HCPs rely on the Engager to facilitate meaningful conversations. Their community trusts the Engager to provide a space to engage, without bias or repercussions. A speaker without an audience cannot be effective. The same concept applies to the Engager.

DRIVES THE AUDIENCE TO DATA

Pharma collaboration with a DOL, especially facilitating discussions, can cause a bit of fear. However, that fear can be quelled by drawing a simple parallel. Yes, there is a level of trust involved when collaborating with Engagers, however that risk is no different than that of a traditional KOL facilitating discussions in person. Like any other opinion leader, risk can and should be evaluated during the identification phase.

Engagers have access to HCPs and organizations around the world for the purpose of discussion and interaction. In the end, people will talk, but having the Engager on your side to facilitate meaningful discourse with their community can make all the difference. The Engager can act as a “myth buster” and drive audiences to data and research to support those claims.

HOW TO ENGAGE THE DIFFERENT DOL PERSONAS

Now that you've learned the more common DOL personas, how do you apply that knowledge to bringing these types of DOLs into your overall opinion leader engagement strategy? Let's walk through a few examples.



CULTIVATING WITH THE CREATOR

The Creator can serve in an advising capacity by evaluating your overall social media strategy, through the lens of an HCP. They can also help with specific social media content, both in creating and providing feedback on previously drafted posts. The Creator also serves as an excellent mentor to upcoming DOLs, pharma medical and product development teams, or to your traditional KOL who has not yet mastered their social media presence.



SHAPING CONTENT WITH THE SHARER

The Sharer can provide great perspective on any content you plan to post on social media. They have their finger on the pulse and can provide feedback about how shareable your content is in its current format, including how to pulse, segment, and tailor that content.



ENGAGING WITH THE ENGAGER

The Engager can serve as a great resource for consulting on the content you intend to share via social media. They may be able to help you by providing information on the most recent content-sharing trends within their area of expertise. Over time, as you build a strong relationship with the Engager, the hope is that they create a conversation around the content you have created and/or shared.

DOL ENGAGEMENT: THE NEXT STEP

Knowing a bit more about the three DOL personas will hopefully jump start your thinking around how and where you can begin building DOL relationships. Doing so will help solidify your approach to opinion leader engagement—and show DOLs you know your stuff.

Devising a sound opinion leader strategy while employing social media best practices, gaining internal stakeholder alignment, and creatively approaching problem solving can help take your brand where it needs to go next.

Want to learn more from our experts in opinion leader identification and engagement? Let's connect.

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