



# Social Media Influencers

The Good, the Bad and the Unknown

ARIZONA  
OFFICE OF TOURISM

# Presenters

## Arizona Office of Tourism



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# Agenda

## 1. Why Influencers?

- The Good
- The Bad

## 2. AOT Influencer Program

- Trade and Media Divisions
- Media Buys/Campaigns
- AOT Process, Challenges & Future Initiatives
- Case Study

## 3. Looking Ahead: A Fast-Changing Landscape

## 4. A Few Lessons from AOT's Experiences

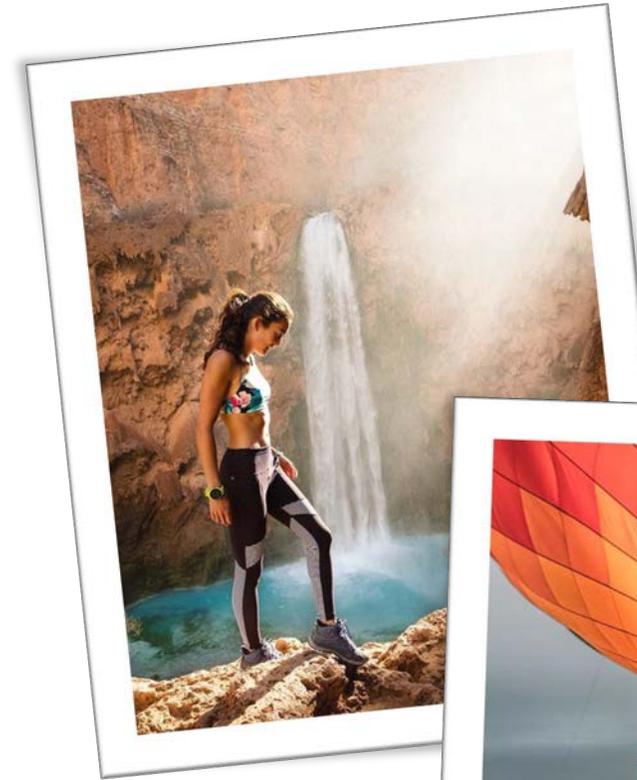
## 5. Resources



# Why Influencers?

## The Good

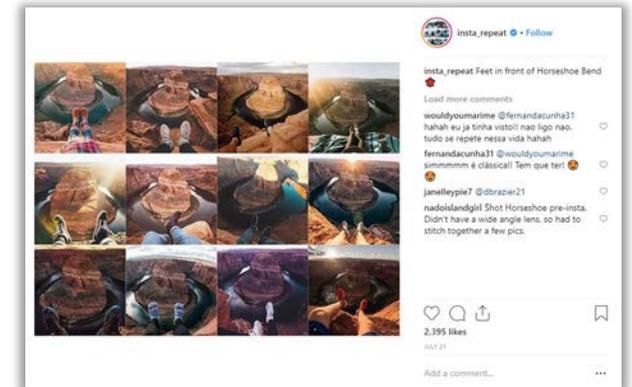
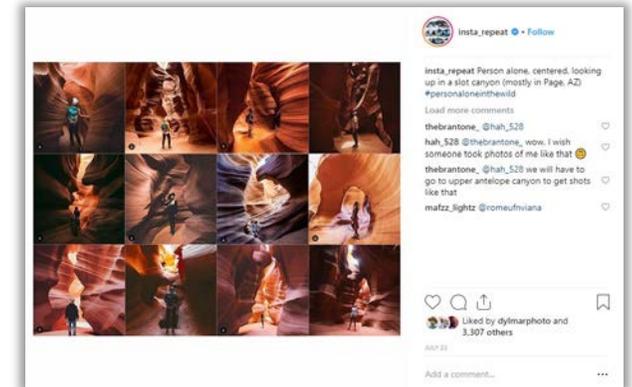
- Target similar visitor profiles through a trusted voice
  - Consumers view them as friends
  - More consumers are turning to peer reviews
- High return on investment
  - Approximately 11x higher than traditional digital advertising ([Invespcro](#), 2018)
- Cost effectiveness
  - Many influencers are willing to work in exchange for a hosted stay or free experiences.
- Consumer trust in businesses is trending downward ([Edelman Trust Barometer](#), 2018)
  - Nielsen research suggests 83% of Americans trust endorsements ([Sprout Social](#), 2017)



# Why Influencers?

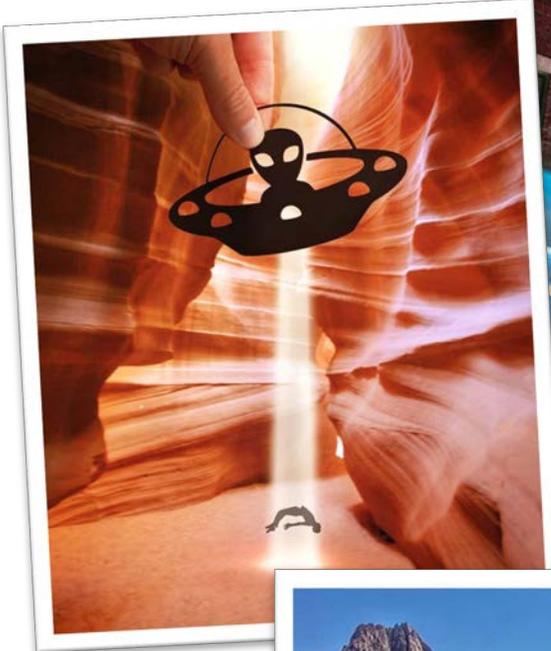
## The Bad

- “Influencers” with no influence
  - Purchased followers and “likes” to appear more influential than they really are.
- Less control over content
  - Unless you’re paying them, your control over their portrayal of your destination is limited.
- Their content can appear inauthentic
  - Ex: sales-y sponsored posts
  - Unoriginal content (see examples)
- Influencer landscape is becoming saturated
  - Consumers are experiencing distrust in influencers due to mismatched business/influencer relationships.



# Media Relations Division

- Targeted approach to influencers
  - AOT's international reps regularly provide recommendations for journalists, bloggers and influencers in their markets.
- Writers, bloggers and journalists
  - AOT has hosted group tours including a mix of traditional media and influencers.
- Domestic and international influencers
  - There have been a few collaborations with influencers with whom AOT networked with during missions.
- Working in concert with communities to host influencers
  - Often, communities will host a group of influencers who are interested in visiting another community during their trip. AOT has helped facilitate these trips.





# Consumer Marketing

- Arizona Expedition Season I
  - Influencer group FAM
  - AOT's first time using traditional influencers for a consumer campaign.
- Arizona Expedition Season II
  - Various influencers with visits coordinated by campaign's partnered publishers.
- Arizona Expedition Seasons III & IV
  - "Arizona as the star" with help from local faces to tell its stories.
- Matador Program
  - Influencer collaboration coordinated by Matador Network
- AZ Central Wine & Food Experience
  - 2017 & 2018 Foodie FAMs

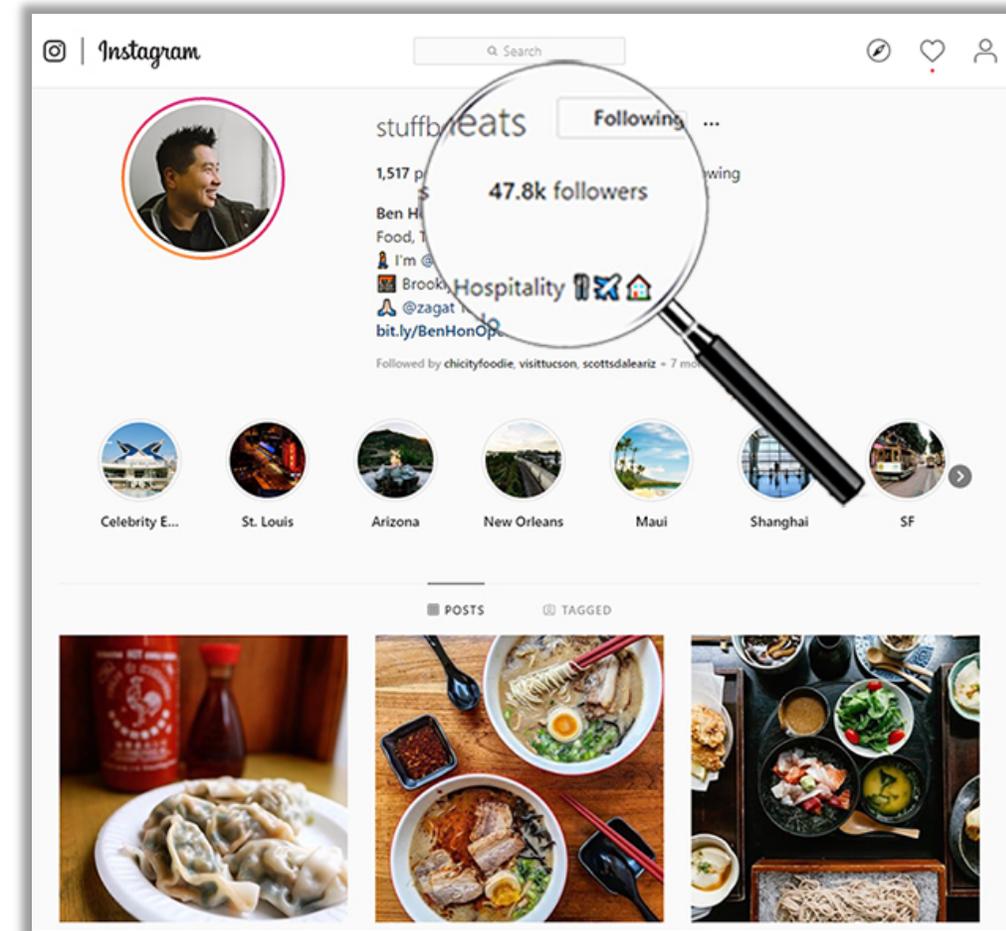




# AOT Influencer Program

## AOT Working Process

- Managing requests and communication
  - Funneled through one person at AOT
  - Cataloging requests and high-level details
  - Learning to say “no” gracefully
  - Canned responses
- Vetting
  - Number of followers
  - [Engagement rate](#)
  - Brand affiliations and Google search
  - Tone and voice
- Quality of work
  - Quality of work comparable to journalists and bloggers





# AOT Influencer Program

## AOT Challenges

- Managing requests and communication
- Vetting
  - Time intensiveness
- Convincing influencers to visit all regions
  - Most of the requests we get are from influencers with their mind made up to visit a particular destination.
- Managing and collecting assets
  - Follow-up process
- Finding unique, authentic influencers
  - Many influencers sound/look the same and most of them do not fall in line with what we would consider Visit Arizona branding.



# AOT Influencer Program

## AOT Future Initiatives

- Directing influencers to rural communities
  - If AOT makes initial contact, we feel it might be easier to direct influencers to places that need more exposure.
- Amplify AOT's messaging through influencers
  - AOT would like to take advantage of the opportunity to use influencers to amplify messaging about sustainability and responsible tourism in the next year.



# AOT Influencer Program

## Case Study



Influencer A  
179K followers



Influencer B  
349K followers

# AOT Influencer Program

## Case Study: Influencer A



### Influencer A 179K followers

- Discovered and vetted by media buy publisher
- Health/wellness focus
- Active on various platforms, primarily Instagram
- High engagement
- Previously partnered with athletic brands
- Personal brand aligned with AOT's
- "Influential" by all accounts

# AOT Influencer Program

## Case Study: Influencer B



### Influencer B 349K followers

- Discovered by media buy publisher, vetted by AOT
- Travel/adventure focus
- Active on various platforms, primarily Instagram
- High engagement
- Previously partnered with travel networks
- Personal brand aligned with AOT's
- "Influential" by all accounts

# AOT Influencer Program

## Case Study: Influencer A

### The Good

- Assets were fulfilled and on time
- Good response from her audience
- Good on camera
- Image aligned with Visit Arizona brand
- AOT acquired great photo assets



### The Not-So-Good

- Difficult to negotiate with
- Tried to deviate from initial terms
- Insisted on representing other brands in video
- Difficult asset-renewal process

# AOT Influencer Program

## Case Study: Influencer B

### The Good

- Assets were fulfilled and on time
- Good response from his audience
- Good on camera
- Image aligned with Visit Arizona brand
- Provided more coverage than promised
- Easy to negotiate with
- Provided rights to assets in perpetuity
- Represented Arizona extensively in coverage



### The Not-So-Good

- Digital asset rights only
- Asset quality was not very good

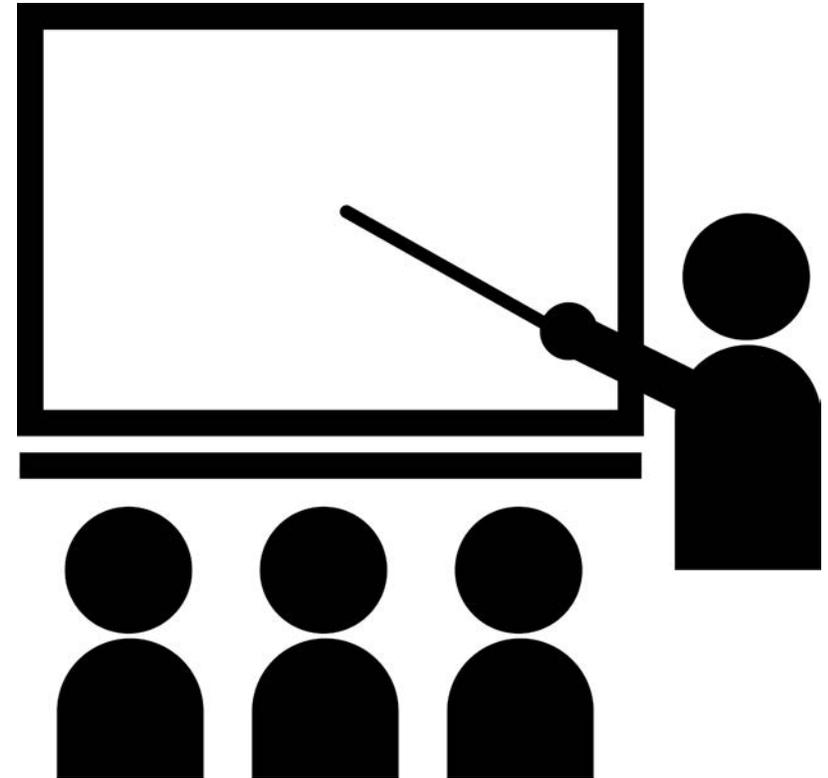


# AOT Influencer Program

## Case Study

### Key Learnings

1. Plan as far in advance as possible.
2. Lay out your expectations from the beginning.
3. Outline your needs and non-negotiables.
4. Set clear goals for your campaign.
5. Strive for person-to-person communication.
6. Don't be afraid to say "no."
7. Maintain good relationships post-campaign.





# Looking Ahead

## A Fast-Changing Landscape

### Influencer marketing has already seen major changes ...

- [FTC Regulations](#)
  - To create transparency by disclosing “material connections” between brands and influencers
- Favoring of long-term partnerships vs. one-off relationships
  - How do we make brand ambassadors without jeopardizing authenticity?
- Favoring micro influencers over macro and mega
  - Micro:  $\cong$  1K to 100K followers
  - Macro:  $\cong$  100K to 500K followers
  - Mega:  $\cong$  500K to 1M + followers
- Consumer awareness
  - The average social media user is aware of when they’re being advertised to
  - Transactional approaches to influencer marketing have led to a decline in trust from consumers

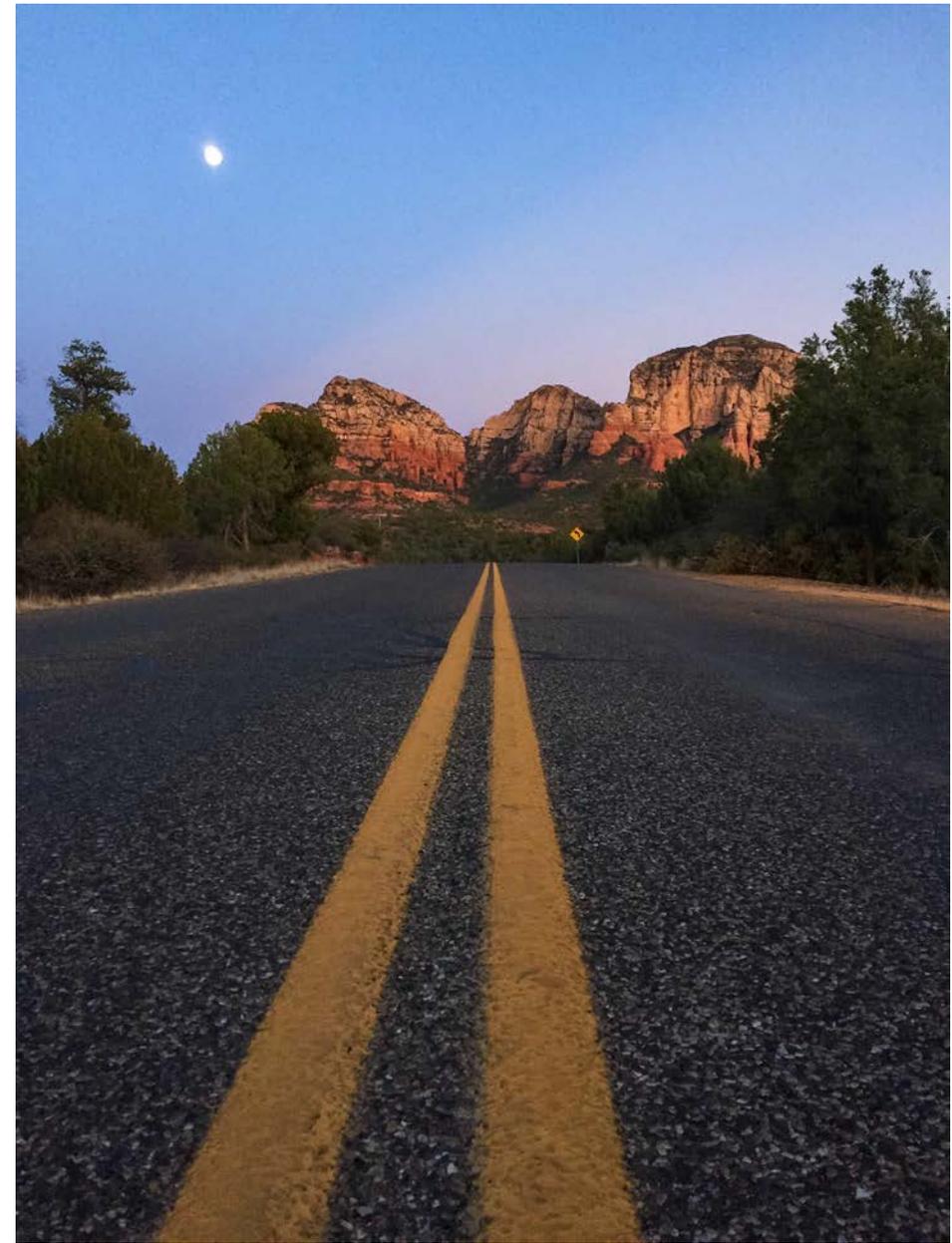


# Looking Ahead

## A Fast-Changing Landscape

### How do you jump on this high-speed train?

- Reliable research
  - [Sprout Social Blog](#), [Traackr](#), [Influencer Marketing Hub](#), [HypeAuditor](#), [Social Media Today](#)
- Talk to other communities, peers, agencies, etc.
  - Know agencies who've previously worked with the influencer? Call them up.
- Jump in with minimal commitment
  - No hard dollars. Most influencers are OK with being hosted.



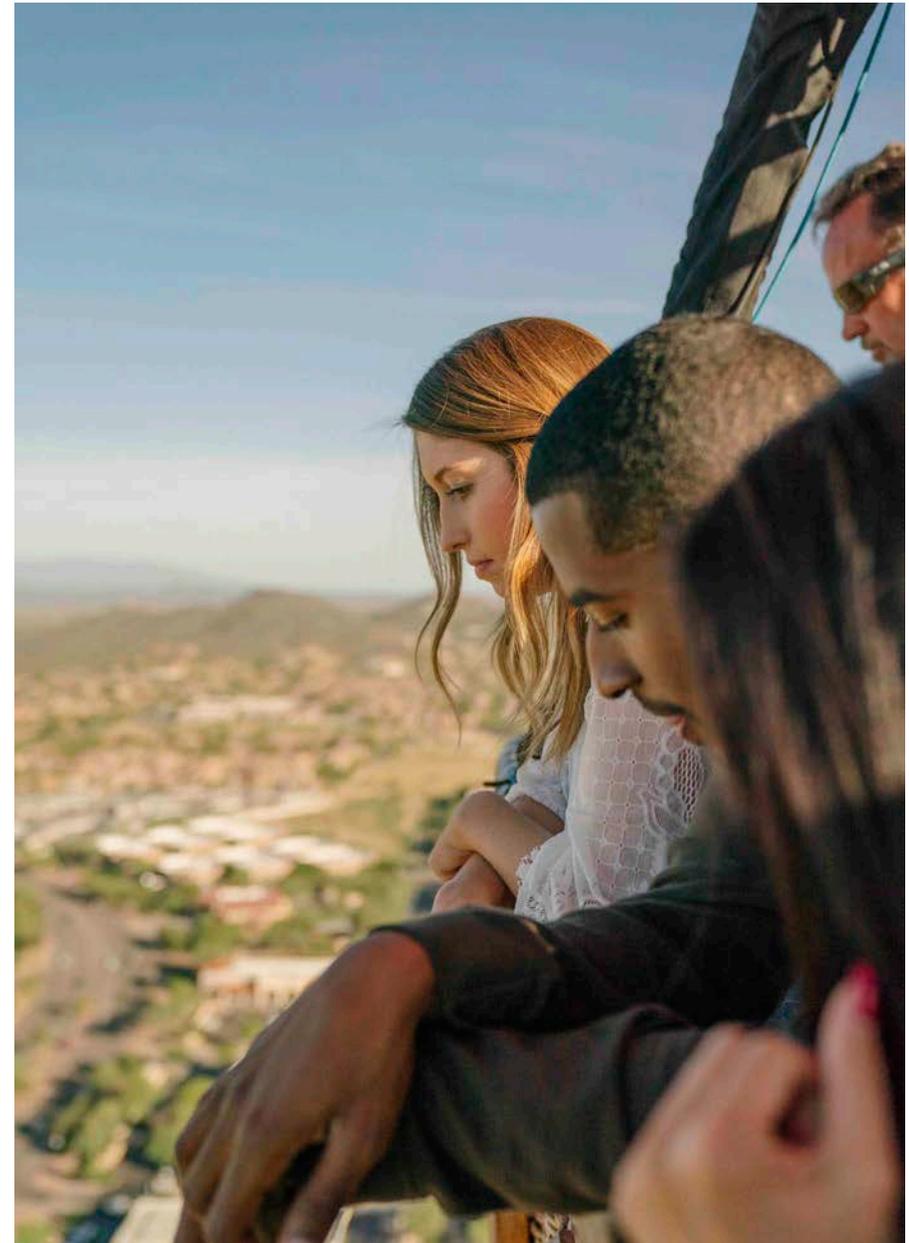
# A Few Lessons from AOT's Experiences:

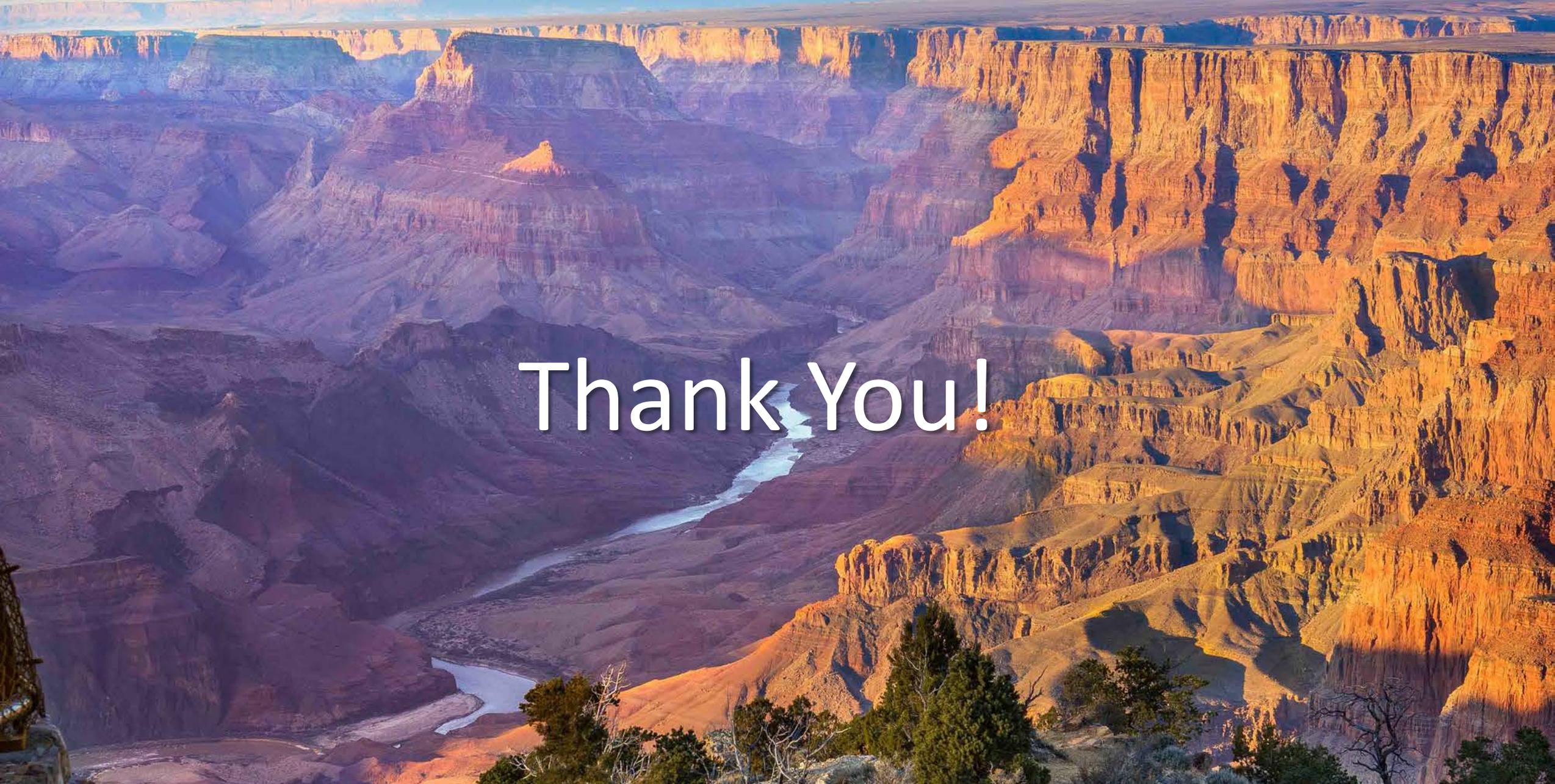
1. Treat it as you would any other marketing tactic. Employ it where you think it could be helpful.
2. Act with a clear goal in mind and find KPIs to measure effectiveness in your reporting. Is your goal to increase your social media presence? Talk to a new audience? Get more assets? Drive to your website?
3. Set expectations from the beginning in your agreement. Some influencers might be open to changes, but not all of them will be.
4. Don't just focus on the number of followers; this is just one piece of the story. Research their engagement, engagement rate, followers and comments. Find out what brands they work with and how well they align with you.
5. Influencer marketing is new territory for everyone. If you want to try it, and think it could be an effective approach to achieve your goal, give it a try.
6. AOT has no future plans to pay influencers, but know that you are likely to have better control of the content if you do provide a stipend.
7. Stay on top of trends. Light research on best practices can teach you a lot about this fast-changing landscape.

# Resources

## Tourism.AZ.Gov

- [Master Agreement Document](#)
  - Basis for negotiations with influencers
- [Influencer Vetting Checklist](#)
  - Document created to familiarize team members with vetting criteria
- [Influencer Collaboration Best Practices](#)
  - Covers broad bases including how to determine legitimacy and finding the best fit for your brand
- [Influencer Minimum Criteria Sheet](#)
  - AOT's musts and non-negotiables when evaluating influencers
- [Influencer Catalog Spreadsheet](#)
  - Spreadsheet used to catalog influencer correspondence and high-level findings





Thank You!