

Four Steps To Building Your Personal Brand On Instagram

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September 15, 2017



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As I've built my career coaching business, I've spent a bit of time thinking about brand. No, brand isn't a dirty word. And yes, I've thought about how to build my own personal brand. I thought about it back when I launched my career coaching business and more recently when I opened my new ghostwriting and copywriting house, which supports influencers and companies with their content creation.

I asked myself: What do I want to say? How do I want to present my best self to the world? Honestly, these are questions I ask myself every time I write, speak, tweet — and yes, post to Instagram.

Of course, I've also thought about *your* brand. I've wondered what makes one person's brand explode while another flounders. I've watched as my friends' businesses take off — and then, sadly, some of them don't.

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Now, I'm not going to claim Instagram is some magic potion your clients will drink. But I do believe — if used correctly—it can be an incredibly powerful tool.

Step 1: Turn Your *Why* Into Followers

If you don't have a why, it's time to dig deep. Your Instagram account should be a reflection of your brand's essence. Think of it this way: If you don't know why you're building a business, your clients won't know why either — that is, why they should invest their time in you. If you don't know why you're posting to Instagram, your followers won't know why they should follow you.

Stop right now. Think of what you want your personal brand to look like. What are five words that come to mind? Is there a universal theme? Is your goal to help others? To spread a specific message?

Your followers — and later, your clients — will be the people who get your why. They will be asking the same questions, have similar concerns, and will be compelled to keep clicking to find the answers. Your posts should dig at the why, getting at the heart of your brand. A lot of this means being familiar with your customer's pain — the problem that you're there to solve.

Step 2: Refine Your Voice

When I launched my new ghostwriting company, I knew I needed to refine my voice for this *specific* new venture. My voice wouldn't change, of course (I'm still the same person!), but I needed to learn the language of this new business. I also needed to surround myself with people who understood both my voice *and* vision.

If you're an entrepreneur, who are your clients? If you're an influencer, who are your fans? And what might they think if they looked at your Instagram account?

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Is your voice clear? In this case, your "voice" is speaking in pictures, video, and text. Yes, Instagram is not all about the pictures (shocking, I know!). All three of these mediums work together to define your brand. Stay on message. Be loud and clear.

And no matter what you do, don't try to be someone else. Early on into my career coaching practice, I had a career coach copy a bunch of my content and claim it as hers. While it's tough to find your voice (and I get it!), people will feel when you're being disingenuous.

Step 3: Use Hashtags (But Use Them Appropriately!)

You have your why. You have your voice. And, you still don't have many followers. This is where we get down to the nitty-gritty. It's time you understand how to use hashtags. Don't abuse this privilege. We're not looking for 500 hashtags per post. We're looking for the key hashtags used in your industry.

Where to begin?

To start: Look for other similar accounts. Who are the influencers in your industry, and what hashtags are they using? Click on the hashtags, and hop into that rabbit hole. Are you speaking the language yet? If your goal is to become a fitness guru, for instance, you *must* learn the language of the fitness world.

My publishing house has supported clients in increasing their social media followers, and we swear by hashtags!

Step 4: Interact. Promote. Post.

OK, so step four is actually three mini steps. But I can assure you that they're all related.

You're busy. We know this. As you look at your never-ending to-do list (I say this as I look down at my own to-do list), it can be difficult to consider making time for your Instagram. But spending time commenting on posts, particularly those within your field, is so important as you build your brand.

Those key influencers in your industry I mentioned earlier? Interact with them. Don't be afraid to reach out. Comment, like, and message.

Speaking of message, consider how else you can get your message out there. Do you already have an active Facebook community? A blog? Don't be afraid to directly promote your Instagram account on other platforms. You don't want to oversaturate, but you *do* want to let people know you — and your brand — exist.

Post frequently. At least 3-5 times a week, if you can (though many influencers post daily). This will not only keep your followers engaged, it will help you to refine your why and your voice — and in the end, your personal brand.

Your personal brand isn't some inauthentic and forced measure. Your brand is an expression of you. It's your vision, your voice.

What better place to start building than Instagram?

See you there.



Ashley Stahl

I'm a career coach, keynote speaker, podcast host (You Turn Podcast) and author, here to help you step into a career you're excited about and aligned with. This may look

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