How to Use

Instagram

for Business

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Introduction

Percentage of month-over-month audience growth
(months that brands added followers for each social channel)

As a company that's growing your business in the world of Inbound Marketing, you've already established an online social presence to attract leads, promote your content, and delight customers across platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest.

It's time to move to the next frontier: Instagram. With 500 million users and over 95 million posts per day, Instagram for Business has become an essential element of social media marketing.

It's critical to navigate growing Instagram for your business the right way, which is why we put together this guide on how to set up, grow, and optimize your Instagram strategy to increase your audience, followers, leads, customers, and continue down the path of becoming an (even more) lovable brand.

Then, we'll take a deep dive into Instagram's newly released tools on the Instagram for Business Platform and talk about what the 2016 changes mean for marketers today.

Determine Your Goals

What will you be using Instagram for?

The first step with any social media channel is to determine your goals.
Here are a few examples of goals to accomplish with an Instagram for Business account:

1 Will it be a place to show off your internal company culture, similar to how we use ours at HubSpot? Often companies will use Instagram as part of a "brand awareness" strategy, as it's an ideal place to share what your company is all about.
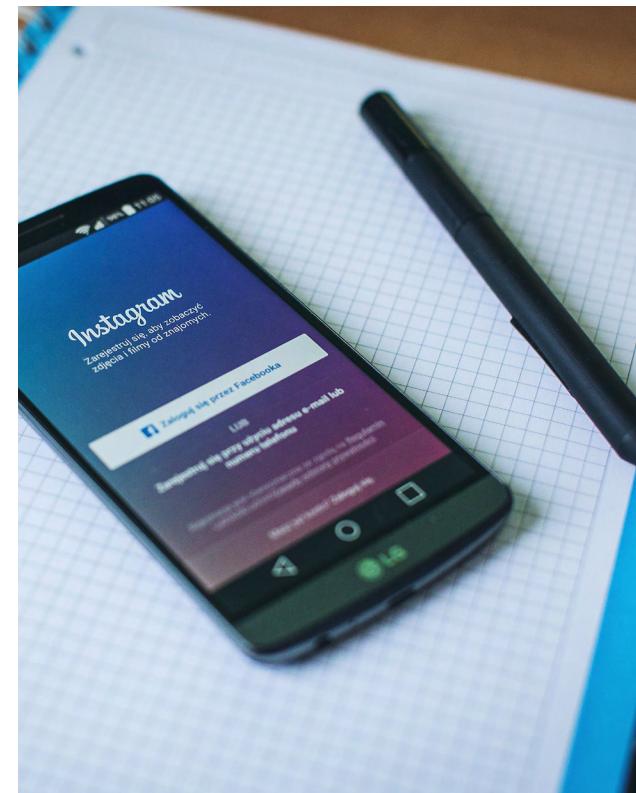
2 Do you want to showcase your customers? Perhaps you run an ecommerce business and you'll be using Instagram as a place to showcase deals and customer success stories, or showcase your products.

3 Will your Instagram be a part of your lead generation strategy? If so you'll need to consider that users typically interact with Instagram on a mobile phone. If you have particularly lengthy forms, you may want to consider using smart content.

4 Do you want to gain followers and then decide what strategy to go after?

Keep in mind you can hone in on goals, too. For example:

Gain "X" # of followers per day, week, month, quarter
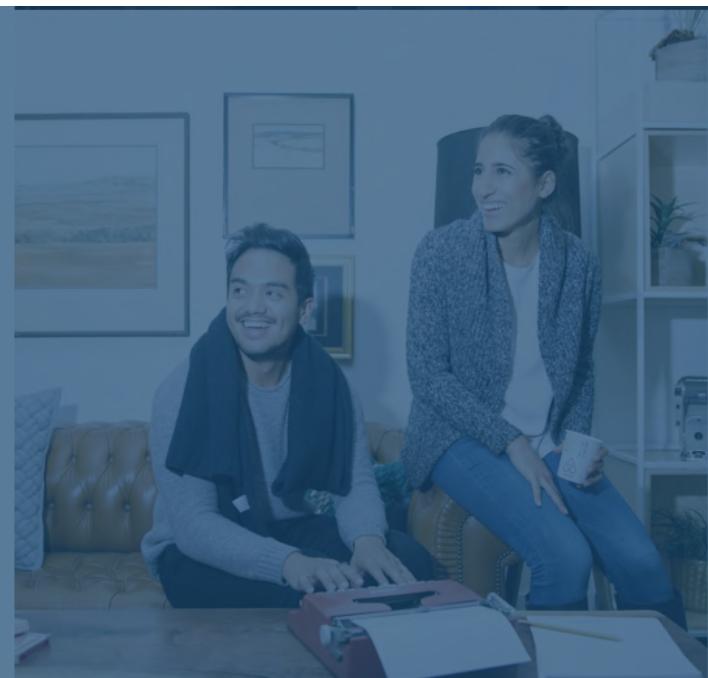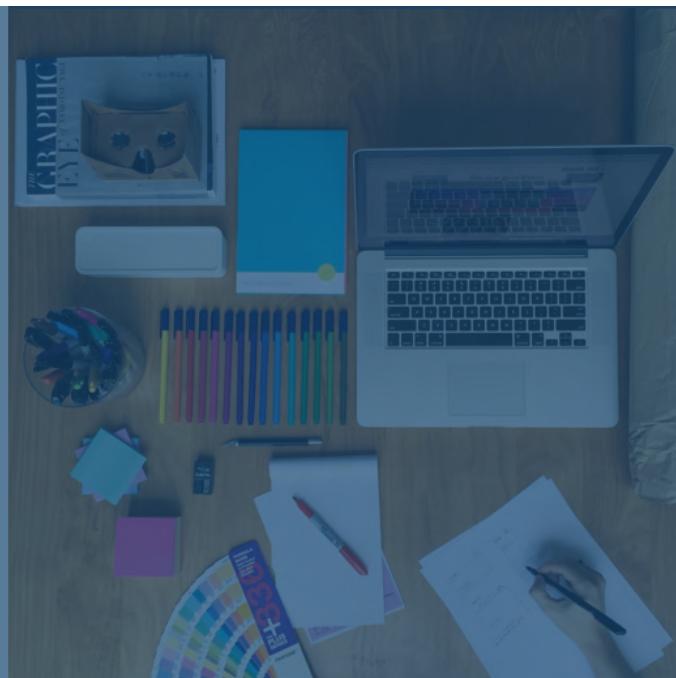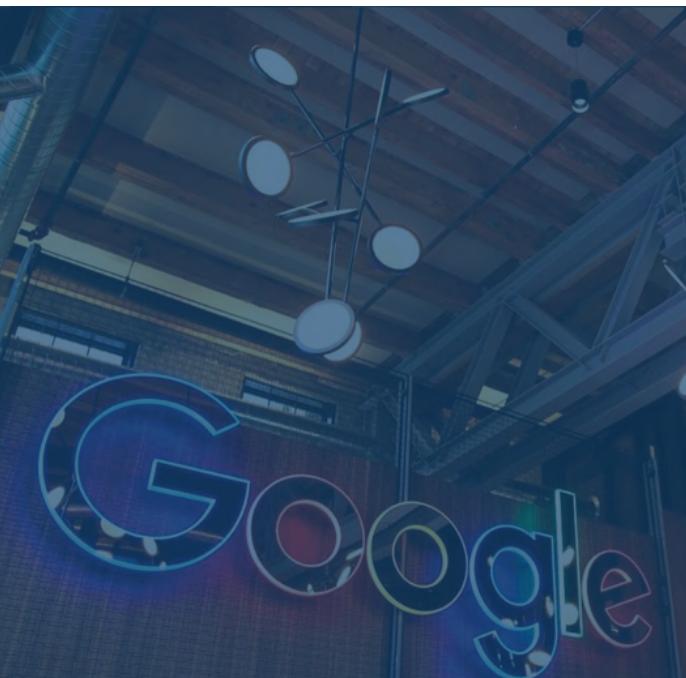
Get "X" # of likes on each post

Post "X" # of video posts

Later in this ebook we'll talk about hashtags, which should be a key part of your strategy for growing your Instagram following

Determine Your Metrics

Use Data to Draw Conclusions

Example of Instagram Analytics
in Iconosquare's platform.

Until recently, Instagram had limited native analytics. But as of 2016, Instagram introduced their Instagram for Business platform with a built-in Insights tool. Now, you can see who your followers are and which posts resonate best with your audience. To get more data on your Instagram account, you can also use third-party applications like Iconosquare. We use Iconosquare daily at HubSpot to measure the success of our Instagram campaigns, follower churn rate, growth over time and success of our hashtags.
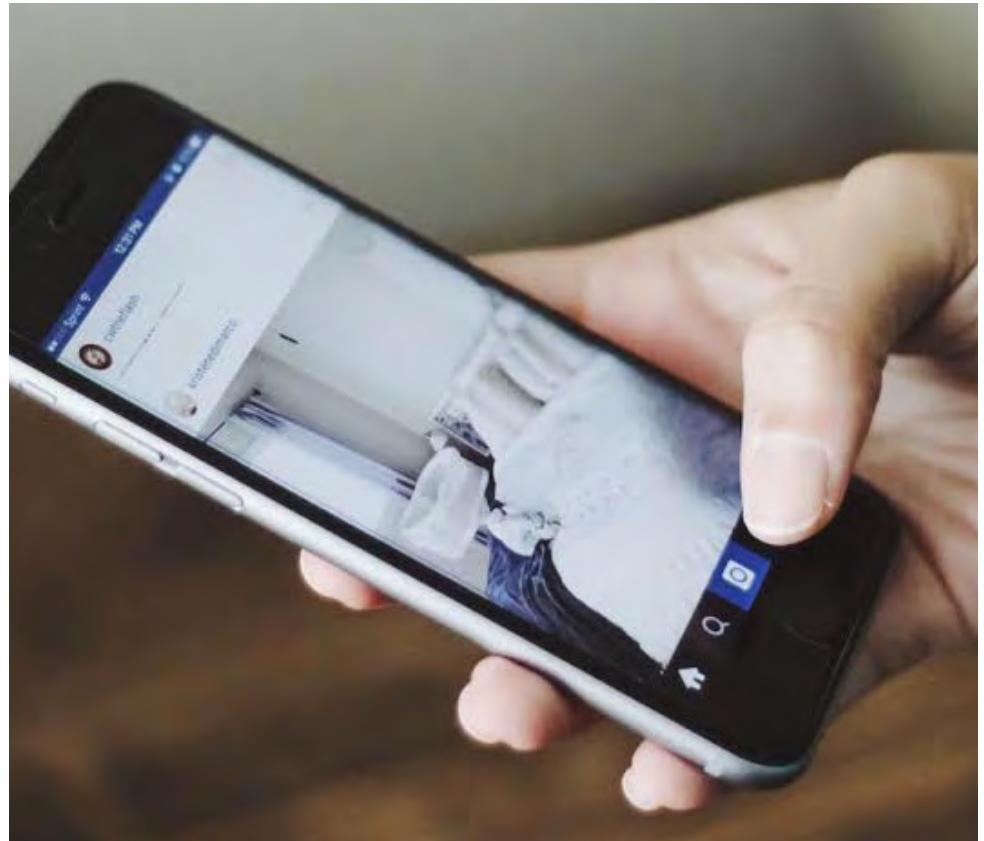
Creating an effective Instagram strategy is easy when you have data to back your decisions. With the help of a modified version of this social media content calendar, you can stick to a plan for the best posting times of day, days of the week, etc. Keep a running tally of followers gained per day/ per week and more; determining these metrics before you get started and as you focus your strategy will help determine both your success and ability to repeat what's working and cut what
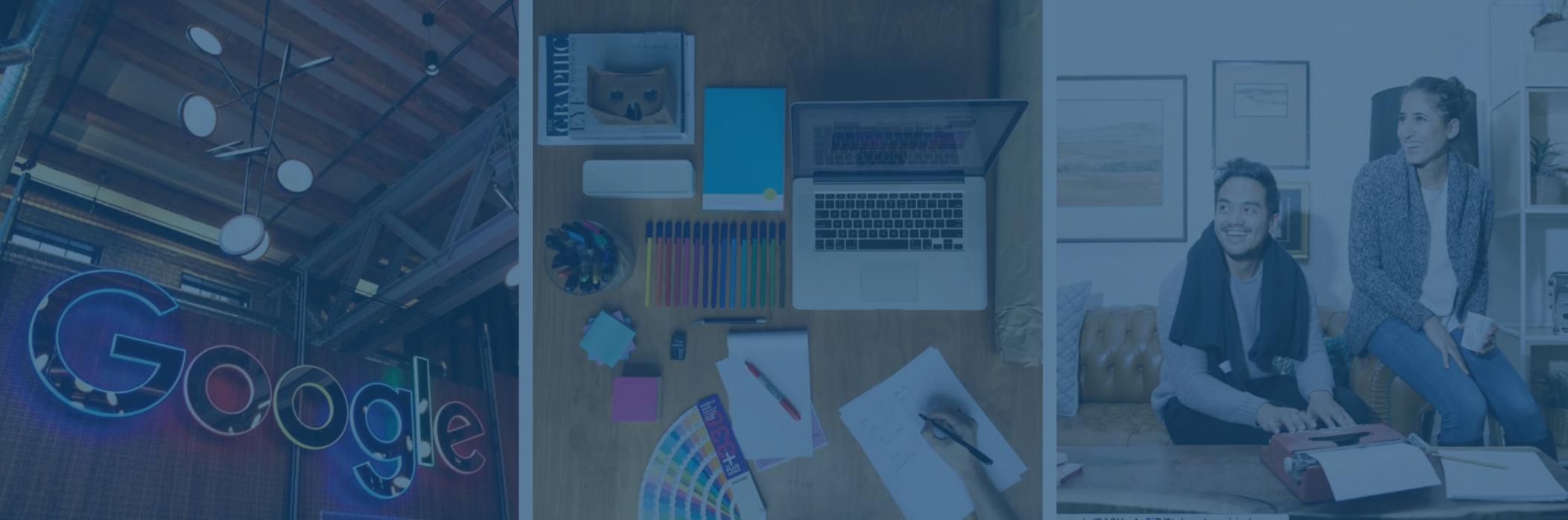
Define Value to Management

is not.

Often times with social networks, it can be hard to define value from a platform that is somewhat "intangible." Unlike an ebook or webinar that could generate hundreds or thousands of new leads and customers that you can proudly show your CMO, Instagram is beneficial to the heart of a company: it humanizes and gives life to your brand.

Where Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are for networking and sharing and promoting content, Instagram is the platform where a company can show its human side. By showing off the wonderful people who build your product, the place where you all come together and work, events and friends in the industry you're growing with, the dogs that roam around your office, and the things that your company celebrates, you're offering an invaluable window to your brand's culture that is warm, inviting, friendly, and most of all: human.
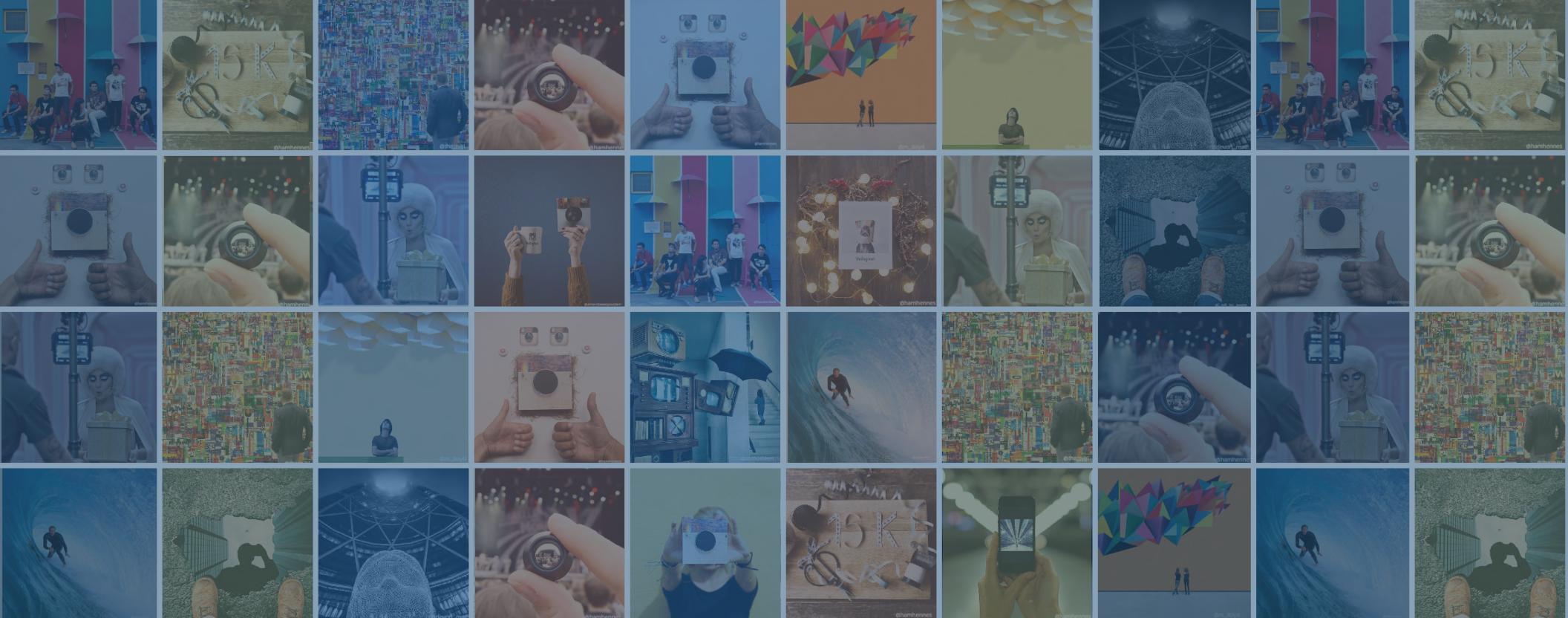
What's the value in humanizing your brand?

Culture and recruitment, for one. Out of Instagram's 500 million+ users, 30% of U.S. teens (aka, the people who will be looking to apply for jobs in 3-5 years) consider Instagram to be the most important social network, (in comparison just 23% consider Facebook to be as important).

Another value-add for humanizing your brand through Instagram is the last stage in the buyer's journey: delight. After you've attracted leads, gained customers, and increased your audience, giving that audience a community to be a part of is invaluable.

Check out this post from PR News that explains the business value from investing resources into an Instagram for Business strategy.

Determine Brand Guidelines

Stay on Brand

If your company utilizes a visual style guide (colors, fonts, etc.), make sure that your Instagram posts are "on brand" and follow the prescribed guidelines. For example, does your company only post social images in your brand's specific color scheme on Twitter and Facebook? Should your pictures all include your company's logo? If necessary, ask your PR or branding team before posting to agree upon visual guidelines before you get up and running. Here are a few resources/tips when it comes to branding, some free stock photo sites for you to use (royalty-free) and a little bit of information on composition:
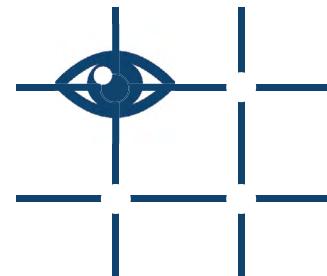
Use High Quality Stock Photos

Freestockphotos.org, unsplash.com, deathtothestockphoto.com High quality stock photos, set as a backdrop for text and graphics, are a fantastic way to showcase your brand's look and feel.
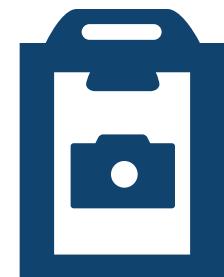
Follow the Rule of Thirds

The rule of thirds states than an image is most pleasing when its subjects or regions are composed along imaginary lines which divide the image into thirds — both vertically and horizontally. The rule of thirds is all about creating the right aesthetic trade-offs. It often creates a sense of balance without making the image appear too static, and a sense of complexity without making the image look too busy.
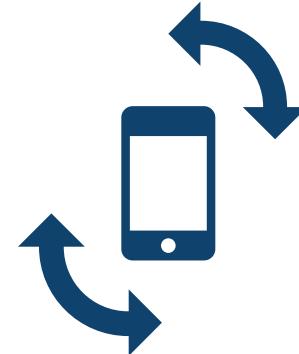
Designate a Content Creator

If you work for a large organization, chances are many decision-makers will want a say in what is posted. Be prepared to have an organized request or guidelines document on how to request a post on your Instagram for Business account, when, the value, and why. Be prepared to back up your own posts as well!
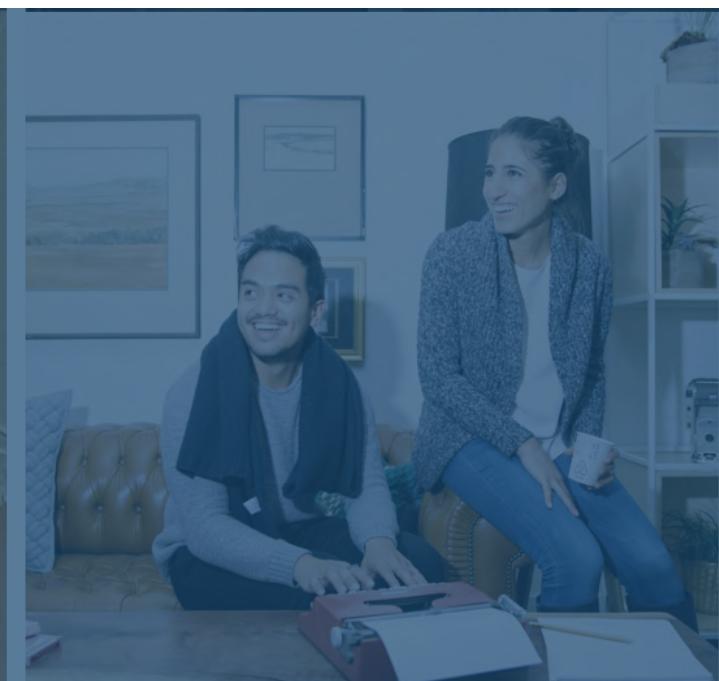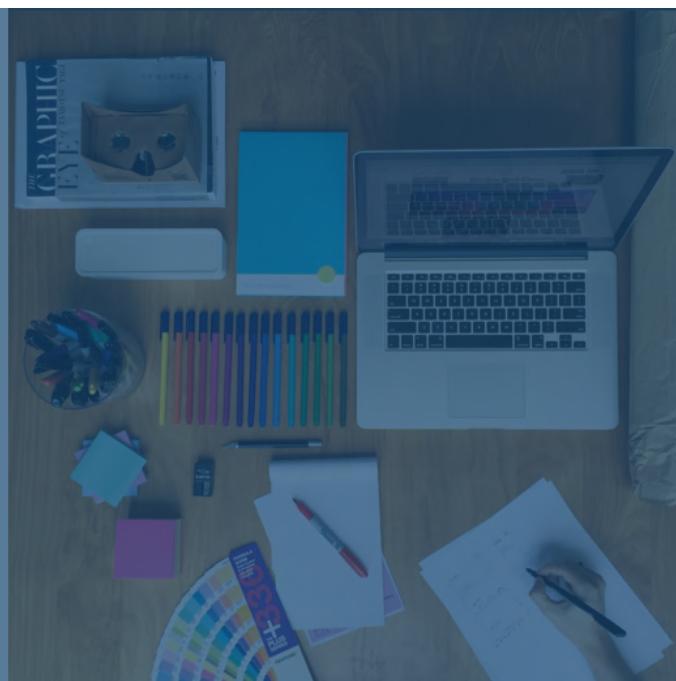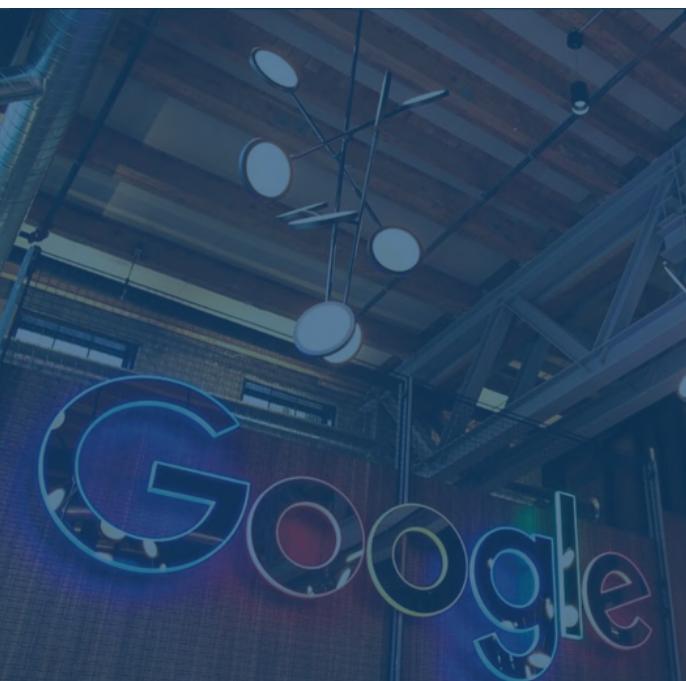
Take Great Pictures

Not all of us out there have a professional photographer to encapsulate a story in one image and make it look great! For the iPhone user, here are some tips for taking great pictures with your phone.

Follow Typography Rules

When adding text to images, remember the graphic design rules for typography and how to use different fonts to captivate audiences and create beautiful designs. Canva has a great post here.

ABCde

Test, Repeat, Optimize

Now that you've determined guidelines and guardrails, it's time to come up with a posting schedule.

Include a planned frequency and times-of the-day you'll be posting in your schedule. (Don't have a social media posting template? Here's one.)

Regarding the time of day, start by experimenting posting at different times to see when you get the most engagement. Consider your target audience and persona (don't have a target persona? Check out this template). Are you a small sandwich shop trying to showcase your wonderful lunch specials? Are you trying to attract employees?

Targeting your persona can drastically change your Instagram schedule, especially if you're targeting an audience in a different timezone.
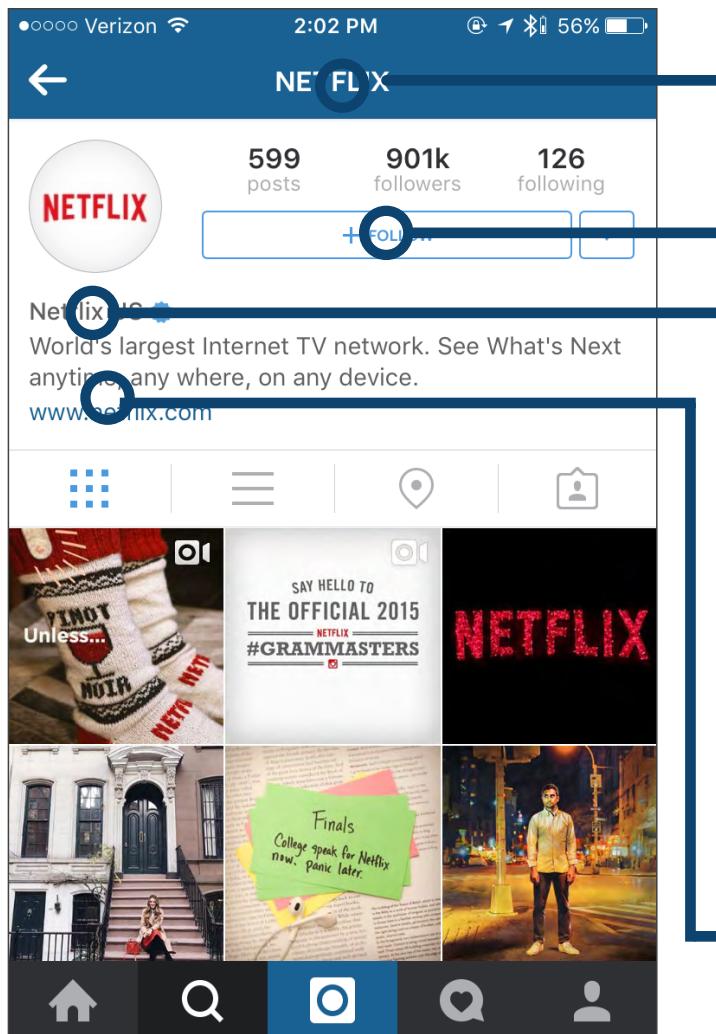
Once you've done initial testing with a few posts and have collected data on engagement, optimize your post schedule depending on the test results.

Iconosquare's best time to post graph pictured above can be extremely helpful for looking at engagement vs. posting ie. when will be the best time for you to post when your audience is active.

Anatomy of the Perfect Profile and Post

9 Ways to Optimize Your Instagram Profile and Posts

1. Your Business Username

Not only is your username/handle a prominent piece of your business profile, it's also what your users will use to find you. Make sure to use a recognizable username.

2. Make Your Profile Public

Since your goal is to build an Instagram following, make it as easy as possible for people to follow you.

3. Your Business Name

Make sure to add your full Business name to the "name" section in settings. This will appear under your profile picture and under your handle in search.

4. Add Links to Your Bio

Adding a link to your desrciption section will make it easy for followers to go straight to your website.

5. Location

When people see beautiful photos, they often want to know where they're taken.

6. Post Relatable, Inclusive Content

The more your users relate to the content you're posting, the more likely you are to get more followers.

7. Customize Your Posts
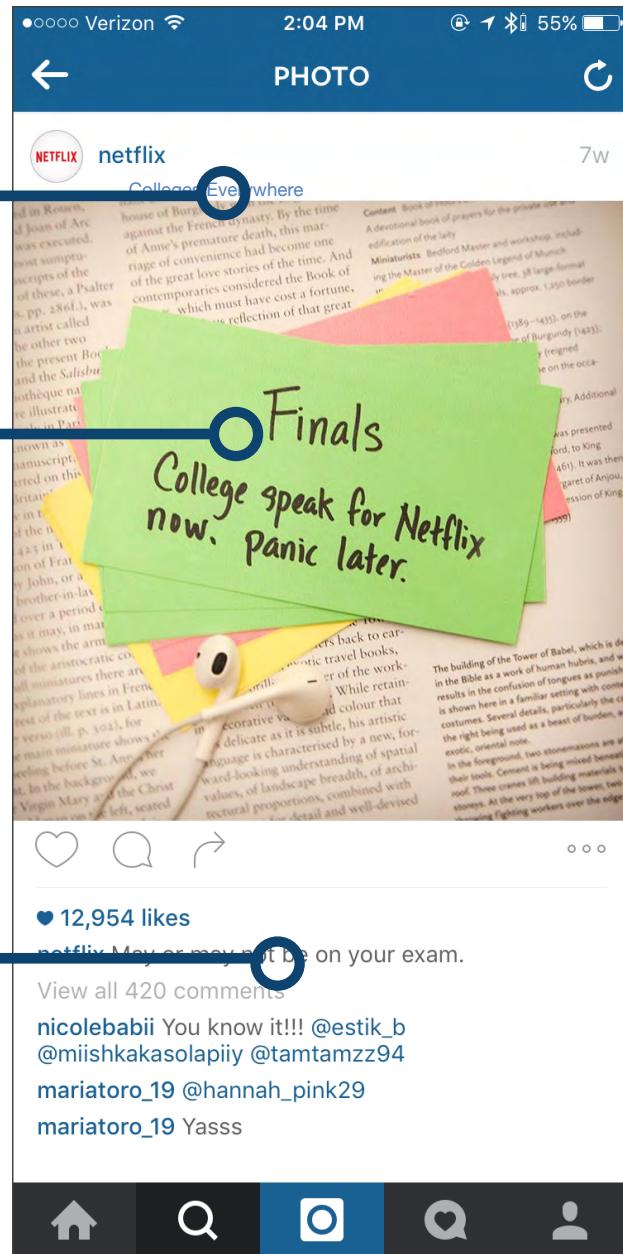
Don't forget to use filters, tags, links, and hashtags to your photos.

8. Use High Quality Photos

No one wants to look (or like!) pixelated, blurry images.

9. Calls-to-Action Links

If you want your followers to take action (like enter a contest), you have to call them to do it! Don't forget to use links in your captions for your CTAs.

9 Types of Posts Every Marketer Should Try on Instagram

1. Food

michelleobama Hello! Chef Comerford here from the @WhiteHouse Kitchen. This afternoon my colleague Susie Morrison, Head Pastry Chef, and I will be giving you a peek into our work surrounding the #WHHolidays. Here is me preparing one of my favorite dishes, our mini Winter Vegetable Gardens. Fresh, colorful and delicious! —Chef Comerford kicking off today's edition of the #12DaysOfTakeovers.

2. Product-Centric

harleydavidson Custom #HDBreakout.

3. Customer-Centric

microsoft Not many 9-year-olds have taken out a loan and successfully paid it back with a profit. Few have published a book, won a cooking competition and baked for the stars either. @TaylorTheChef is no ordinary 9-year-old. After her dad loaned her $40 to buy a doll, Taylor sold cookies to pay back her debt. Today she's made almost $10,000 and bakes for some of Miami's biggest stars—all while donating 30 percent of her proceeds to charity. She recently launched a book about overcoming obstacles and is in the process of opening her second mobile library in the Bahamas, which gives children new access to books and entrepreneurial skills. Taylor has inspired us with her cause, proving that good business can happen at any age.

4. Employee-Centric

rei With any spare time he had, Doug would head to the mountains. He was a long-time co-op member, and made enduring contributions as a member of REI's board of directors, including serving as chairman for three years. He was a treasured friend and colleague of many at the co-op and inspired many others with his great passions for climbing, conservation and civic engagement. Today we honor Doug by sharing some of the memories from REI Employees who knew him best. (story link in profile)

5. Working Photos/In the Field Events
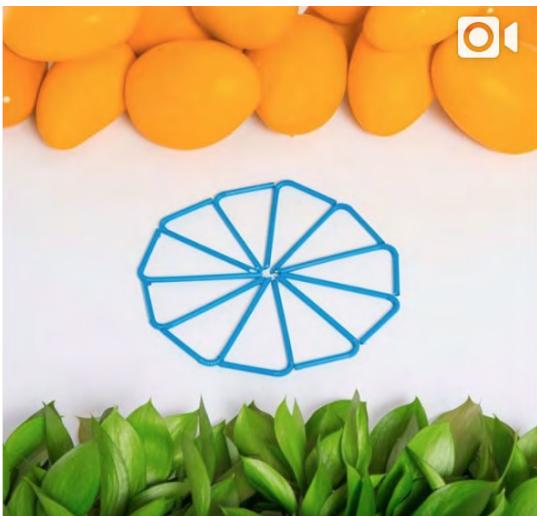
generalassembly Greetings from San Francisco! Check out this update from our amazing #Womenontherise winners as they take over Silicon Valley this week!

6. Motivational Posts

generalelectric If the definition of insanity is repeating the same behaviors and expecting a different outcome, then call us crazy. But we believe that the formula for success is perseverance. Often times, you never know how close you are to success, which is why you should never give up on a goal. In 1876, Edison opened a laboratory in Menlo Park, NJ to explore the possibilities of the dynamo and other electrical devices. Out of that lab came what is perhaps the greatest invention of the age - an incandescent electric lamp. By 1890, he established #GE, and today we owe much of our successes to him and his inevitable determination to find answers to problems no matter how many experiments it took to yield a result. #Quote #Inspiration #Motivation #ThomasEdison

7. Videos/Boomerangs*

thefrootilife Happy Independence Day! Celebrate with a #Frooti 😉
#independenceday #indialove #mangolove #thefrootilife #parleagro

8. Giveaways/Contests

starbucks Only two more days to show us your creativity by tagging your photo with #RedCupContest for a chance to win.
☐ See link in bio for more info. ☐
#Regram: @Tamalinn

9. Guest Takeovers

wayfair More awesome photos from Kaley Cuoco's #WayfairRoomover! @normancook @jeffandrewsdsgn

*Boomerang is an app by Instagram for creating short, gif-like videos.
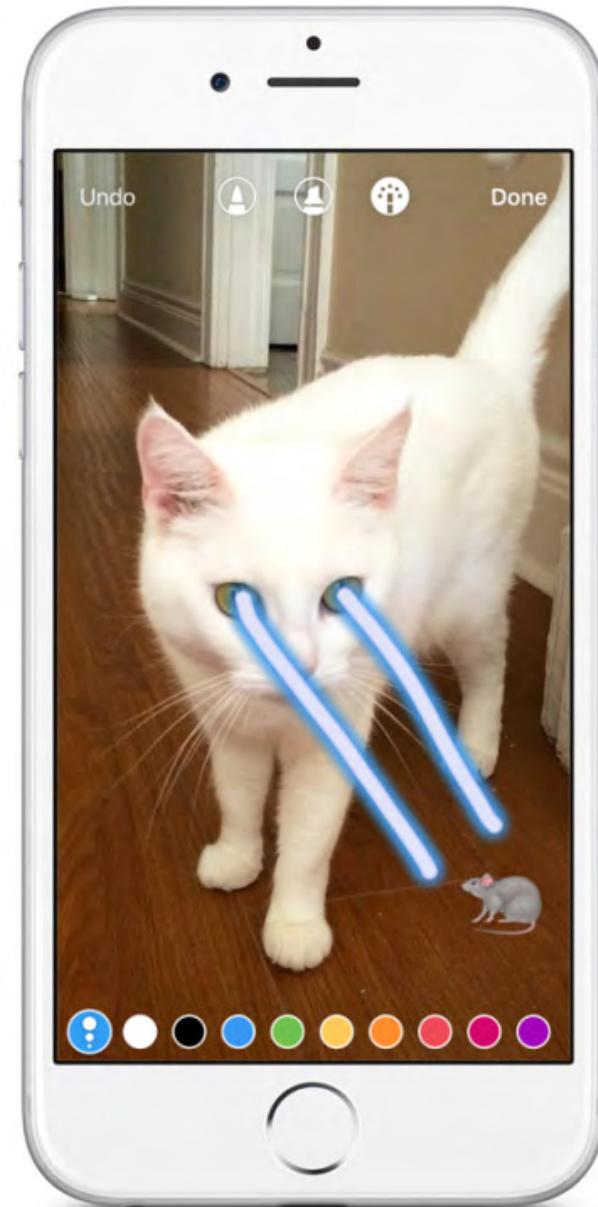
How to Use Instagram Stories

In August 2016, Instagram introduced a new feature that looks remarkably similar to Snapchat: Instagram stories. While traditional Instagram posting is reserved for creating picture-perfect content for users to engage with, stories is all about posting quick, transient moments without worrying about over-posting.

Stories are hosted on a different part of the Instagram platform. While your feed will continue to show your traditional content, Stories live at the top of the feed.

Your traditional content can be liked and commented on, but your Stories **can only be viewed**; there's no real feedback loop on how much your audience likes this new format. They are meant to be quick, unfettered bits of content to showcase snapshots of your business. Traditional Instagram content is more refined. As a Marketer, you should use Stories to showcase **ephemeral content.** Focus more on creating quality posts for traditional Instagram content, and use Stories for quick, silly content.

For an in-depth technical guide on how to use Instagram Stories, underline check out this blog post.

How to Use Hashtags

Hashtags are a proven way to grow your Instagram following.

Appropriate hashtagging that's relevant to your goals, content, and brand will help aggregate your images and will also associate them with trending topics.

The importance of a "brand identity" goes along with a specific hashtag you create for your business. A lot of brands will use their own brand name as a hashtag, so your brand name can be your handle (username) and also used as a "brand hashtag".

When coming up with a hashtag for your brand you should make sure it's something unique enough that it will be relevant to your company and not overlap too much with other brand's posts (ie, if you are a Nike, rather than using #sneaker you will want to use something like #nike).

When you use a hashtag that you've created for your brand you can follow its evolution and start answering important questions such as:
- Is the hashtag gaining popularity?
- Do your followers use the hashtag?
- Is that hashtag gaining you followers?

Iconosquare's search engine allows you to see the number of times your hashtag has been used, which gives you an idea of how popular your hashtag is. You can even compare your own hashtags to top trending hashtags by perusing Iconosquare"s "Top Tags on Instagram" section, as well as export data about any hashtag (posts per day, likes, comments, advocates, geolocation, etc.) to dig even deeper into the analytics of hashtagging and optimizing for your audience.

#InstagramforBusiness
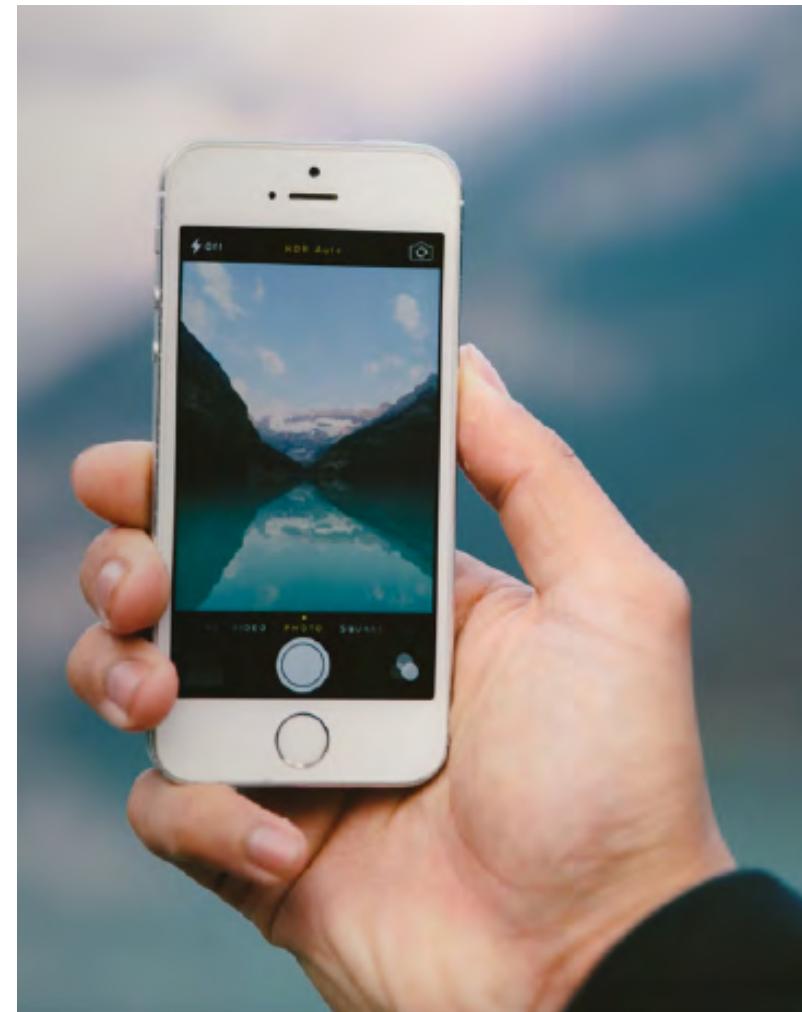
How to Grow Followers Fast with an Instagram Contest

Use Contests to Expand Your Reach

Whether you're looking to support the launch of a new product, generate loads of attention or build momentum with consumers quickly, contests are by far the best way to expand your reach, engage your community and boost virality.

Among all the different types of contests you could be running on Instagram, nothing encourages people to engage with your brand and connect with your products more than UGC (User Generated Content) contests.

Asking for content expands the emotional connection between the consumers and the brand. Moreover, by running a photo or video contest you also effectively generate real and authentic marketing content that is created by and for consumers. This helps to spread the campaign reach beyond your audience because when Instagram users post their entries, their followers see it too.

Below are the 11 elements of setting up an Instagram contest for fast follower growth:

1. Plan objectives: timeframe, budget, targets, and benchmarks
2. Create an entry method for the contest
3. Find the perfect hashtag
4. Define a theme for the contest
5. Outline how winners will be chosen
6. Devise a method on how the prize will be distributed (ask your legal team to ensure it's compliant)
7. Create rules for the contest
8. Set up a landing page
9. Promote, promote, promote!
10. Monitor
11. Follow-up

What the 2016 Changes Mean for Marketers

2016 brought many changes, new features, and tools to the Instagram world. From the introduction of Instagram's Stories feature to algorithm changes to new outside apps like Boomerang, the wide host of changes left Marketers with lots of questions about what these changes mean for their Instagram strategy.

There were 3 main changes introduced by Instagram this year plus an additional new Instagram for Business platform that we'll take a deep dive into now.

Stories
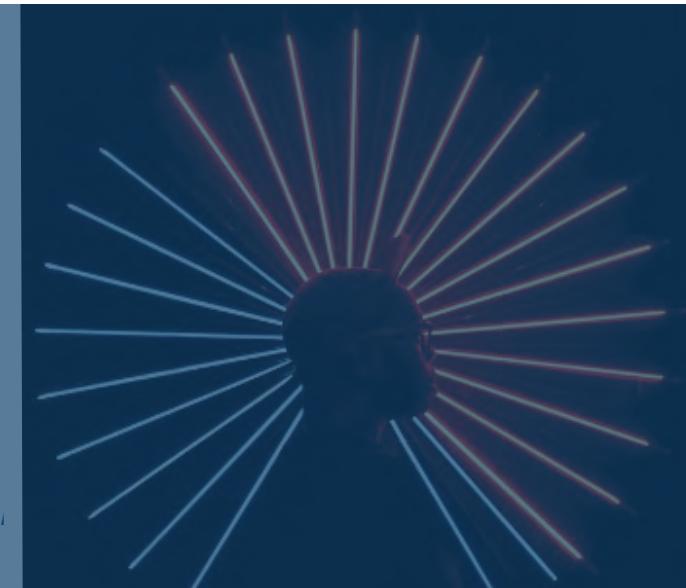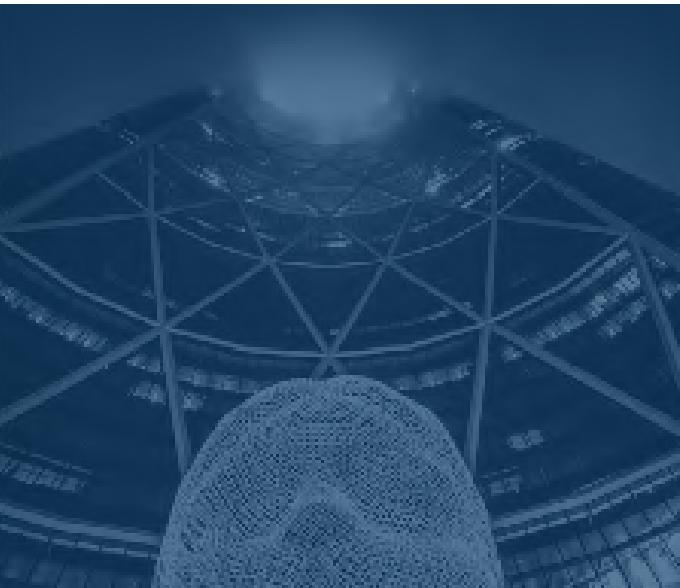
Instagram now has a second feed that shows users their followers' Stories -- quick, silly content that competes directly with Snapchat. Check out how to use Instagram Stories here.

What does this mean for marketers? It means there's now two types of content you should be trying on Instagram: traditional, perfected content for the regular feed, and quick, silly content that gives your followers a snapshot view into the unperfected side of your business. Content for Stories goes away after 24 hours, so it's meant to be imperfect. Play with both features! Give your audience new ways to engage with your brand.

Algorithm Shift

Previously, Instagram feeds displayed your followers' content in chronological order -- whoever posted something most recently was at the top of your feed. But as of 2016, Instagram designed an algorithm that now shows users' the content they think users most likely want to see based on users' past engagement.
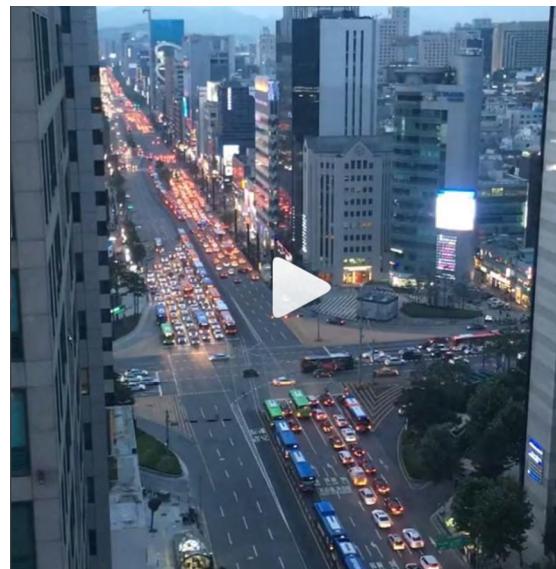
For marketers, followers who engage with your brand most are more likely to see your posts first, and those followers who don't engage have to scroll farther before they see your content. Try using eye-catching posts that work better for your audience if you see a downtun in engagement.

Video

Video posts on Instagram used to be limited to just 15 seconds. Now, video length limits have been increased to 60 seconds. Increasing the lengths of videos means it's ever more important to capture users' attention within the first few seconds. Play around with different video styles to see what works best for your audience. Maybe videos don't work well at all! Also remember that just because you have 60 seconds doesn't mean you have to use them! People like snackable content. That's what Instagram is all about. Keep that in mind when you're incorporating video into your Instagram strategy.
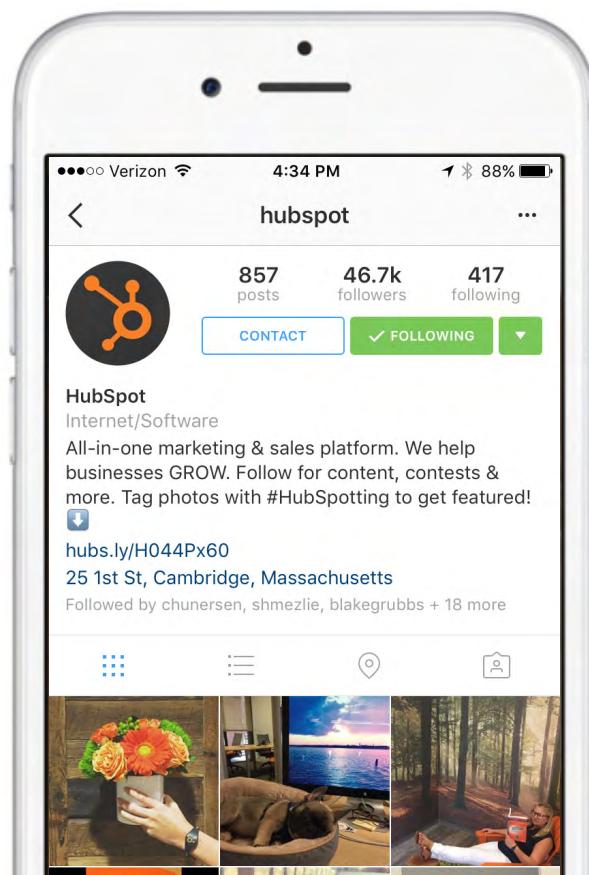
How to Use Instagram's New Business Tools

While other social platforms like Twitter and Facebook have had Business platforms for years, Instagram only just launched Business-specific profiles and opened their within-app Business tools. Previously, Business profiles were just like regular Instagram profiles, and Instagram ads were all hosted through the Facebook for Business platform.

But that way of doing Instagram for Business is no longer. Now, you can you can create a business profile (linked to your Facebook Business page), see actual analytics on your followers and posts, and create paid ads all within the app.
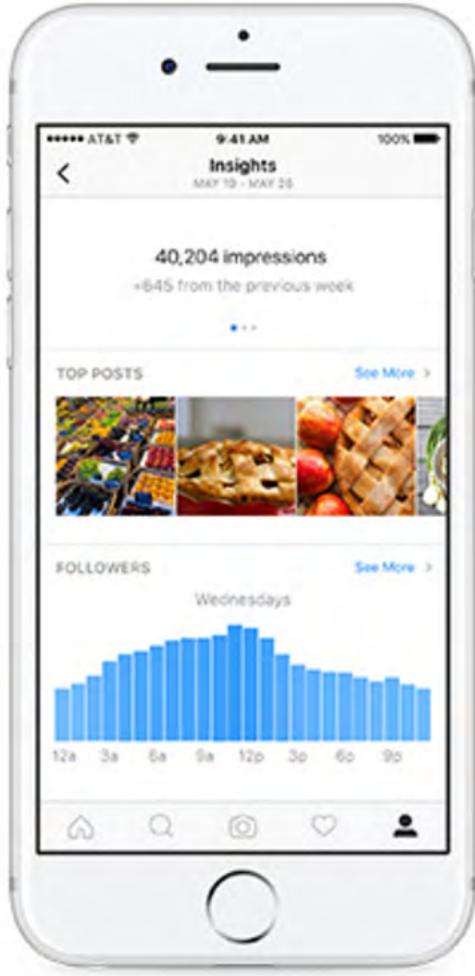
Business Profile

The Instagram for Business tool now allows users to turn their regular Instagram account into a business profile. This makes it easier for users to identify your account as a Business account and get in touch with you directly from the app. It also gives you access to the Insights and Promote tools, which make your life as a marketer much easier.

Need help setting up your Business profile or converting your regular account to a Business Profile? Check out this tutorial.

Insights

Previously, businesses could only access information and analytics about their followers and performance through third-party apps. Now, the new Insights tool lets you see who your followers are and what kinds of content performs best for your audience.

Insights also tells you how many total number of impressions, reach, and engagement each of your posts are getting. This information is invaluable to marketers because it helps you tailor your Instagram posting strategy over time.

Promote

Your primary focus on Instagram should be creating Instagram content that performs well with you audience, but what about expanding your audience past your current reach?

Previously, you could only advertise on Instagram through the Facebook for Business platform. But with the Instagram for Business tools, you can now promote posts right within the app. Want a full guide on Instagram advertising? Check out this guide.

Instagram Etiquette

No matter what the social network, there will always be people out there posting negative or inappropriate comments.

Respond to positive comments on your Instagram content if a user takes the time to ask a question and participate in any conversation you've started. As a best practice, check comments at least once a week thoroughly, especially for contests/timely posts.

If you use Iconosquare to manage your Instagram for Business account, check out the comments tool to mark things as read/unread, moderate inappropriate comments and reply to the positive comments and questions on your desktop without having to manage these from your phone every time.

Engage with people who follow you, or other people in your category that you follow, ie. you Give love to get love. Spend time daily or at least weekly "liking" and commenting on other posts besides your own.

Not sure how to respond when different types of comments start rolling in on one of your posts? Follow these guidelines outlined by HubSpot's social media and content strategist, Brittany Leaning:

How to Respond to Comments on Instagram

Positive + False = Respond

Postive + True = **Listen** or **Respond**

Negative + Not a Troll + Rant/Joke = **Listen**

Negative + Not a Troll + Not a Rant/Joke + Erroneous Information = **Respond**

Negative + Not a Troll + Not a Rant/-Joke + Not Erroneous Information + Unhappy = **Respond**

Negative + Not a Troll + Not a Rant/Joke + Not Erroneaous Information + Not Unhappy = **Listen**
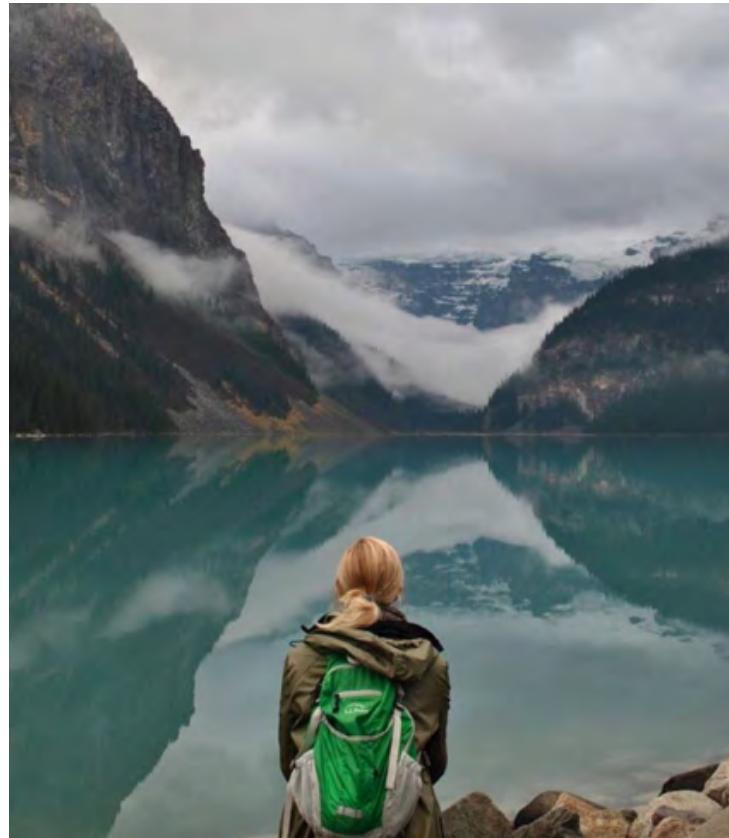
Creative Inspiration

L.L. Bean

Why we love it:

Showcases employee involvement in the brand, @backwoodsplaid is an L.L.Bean Creative Team Writer, Blogger, & Photographer
https://www.instagram.com/llbean/

What to try:

Consider doing "employee takeovers" to use Instagram to showcase internal company culture and employee hobbies

General Assembly
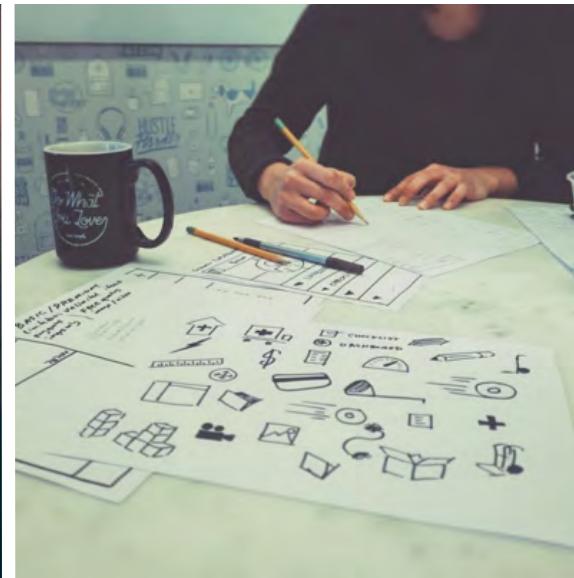
Why we love it:

It exemplifies exactly what the brand is about, General Assembly prides itself on being an educational space for adults interested in learning in a group setting, here you can see actual students collaborating.

https://www.instagram.com/generalassembly/

What to try:

Show off an example of what your brands "does." The best kinds of posts are ones that people can relate to, the one above does well because it feels attainable. Use a post like this to showcase people using your product or service.

Tandem Coffee Roasters ———

Why we love it:

It's tempting to participate and also invite the user in. This kind of post showcases employees in their natural habitat and invites Instagrammers to go "behind the scenes" of the coffee shop's kitchen.

What to try:

Show people something that not everyone would know, or usually get to see. This is the virtual equivalent of taking people "backstage" at a show.

https://www.instagram.com/tandemcoffeeroasters/

Central Square Florist

Why we love it:

It's inclusive but also exclusive. It makes people feel special when their name is used, but it's also a feel-good example of a brand being generous and that gives the brand karma points.

http://instagram.com/centralsquareflorist/

What to try:

Showcase "in the know" things. Do you run a company that provides resources for teachers? Make a post that's a part of a series based on "you know you are a teacher when…", it's relatable but it also makes people included in the post feel like they are on the inside.

Conclusion

Instagram is a growing channel that will allows you to grow and humanize your brand, recruit future employees, showcase your product, company culture, delight customers, and generate new business. All with images you can create and share!

Give it a shot: make a profile, start testing and learn from what works and what doesn't. Have fun and for more resources, check out Iconosquare's blog for information and examples on growing your Instagram for Business account and tweet to @HubSpot with any questions about growing your social media following!
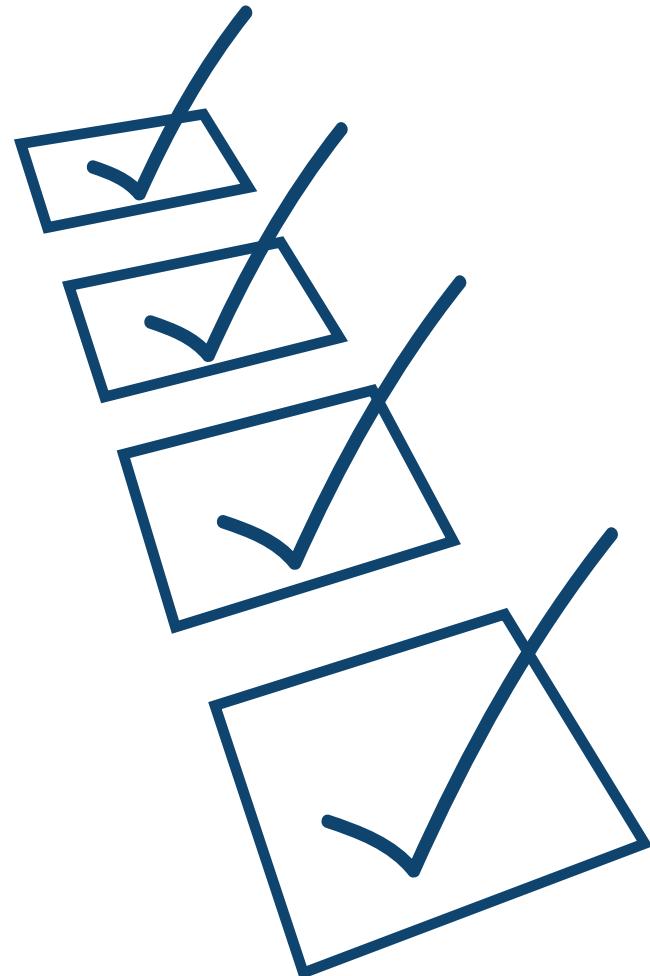
Bonus:

Checklist for Getting Started with Instagram

☐ Reserve a username that is as close to your company's name as possible.

☐ Set your account to "Business Profile" in settings to start using the in-app Insights and Promote tools.

☐ Choose a profile picture that is on-brand with your other social networks (e.g. company logo.

☐ Fill in your bio with delightful, actionable and informative information about your brand. Always include:
    ☐ who you are and what you do
    ☐ a hint of personality
    ☐ Click here for more tips on creating an effective Instagram bio

☐ Use the space allotted for URLs strategically; it's precious real estate and the only place within Instagram to have an interactive, trackable link. Utilize and change it when needed.

☐ Create a backlog of photos to use and include key stakeholders in aggregating different types of posts (e.h. CMO, CEO, your direct manager, Community Managers, HR, etc.).

☐ Use relevant hashtags to build your following (we suggest 5-10).

☐ Create a hashtag for your brand a monitor on a regular basis (#yourbrand).

☐ Post based on optimized tests you've run that prove peak engagement for your target audience.

☐ Keep an eye on what your competitors are doing.

☐ Engage with your audience and reply to comments.

☐ Don't be spammy (ie. don't use hashtags that don't make sense or are not helpful to your followers).

☐ Run a contest for fast follower growth.

☐ Promote your Instagram account across your other social channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest) and include icons in your customer and promotional newsletters and emails.

☐ Measure your performance using Instagram Insights and Iconosquare; you can't manage what you don't measure!

☐ Have fun growing a community and increasing your brand's audience!

Glossary of Instagram Terms for Reference:

#MCM = Man Crush Monday

#WCW = Woman Crush Wednesday

#TBT = Throwback Thursday

#TransformationTuesday = transformational photos along with the hashtag in the description of what the transformation was. Many people will make a diptic showcasing a "before and after" photo

#bae = before anything else, usually used to signify a strong love or connection to someone or something

#selfie = a picture of yourself, taken by you

#igers = means Instagrammers and is a powerful hashtag in Twitter.

#Latergram = Something you post on Instagram at a "later" time.

#Repost = posting a picture that someone else posted, making sure to credit them (often using an app like this https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/repost-for-instagram/id570315854?mt=8)

#MotivationMonday = a positive and motivational message, often written with an image that reflects the message