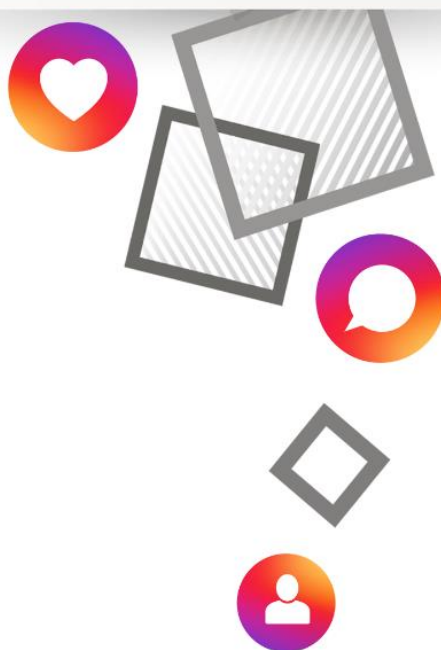




HOW TO USE INSTAGRAM FOR BUSINESS



Introduction



As you may know by now, billions of people are hooked on social media with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram being the most popular and successful brands that have caught the attention of the general population. With Facebook's hype slowly dwindling, today people, are shifting gears to Instagram.

Although 55% of those online are 18-28 year olds, according to recent studies, the next largest age demographic who use Instagram regularly are middle-aged men and women around 30-50 years old followed by 51-64 year olds at 11%.

What is Instagram?

Instagram is a photo-sharing social networking application. This social networking app is designed to share your videos and photos from your smartphone. Just like Twitter and Facebook, anyone who registers automatically has a profile and a newsfeed. Every time you post a video or a photo on Instagram it will show up on your profile and on the newsfeed of those who follow you.

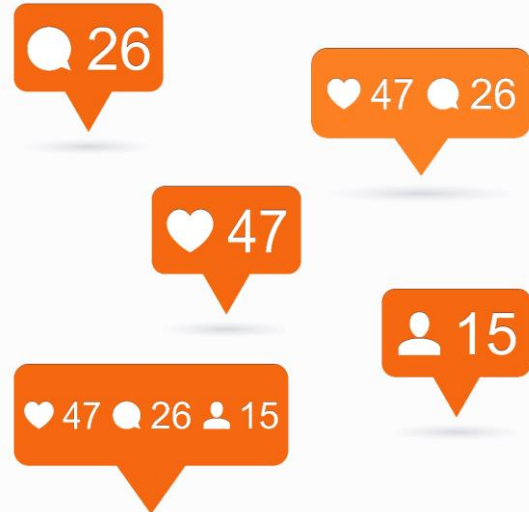


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What makes Instagram different from Facebook and Twitter?

The majority of people who are on Facebook use it as a communication tool because of its chat box feature, which explains why most of its active users are middle aged. On the other hand, the young ones depend on Twitter for news updates. Twitter distributes news faster than any social media platform known to man. Owing to its micro blogging feature, Twitter allows its users to keep abreast with real-time events in their newsfeeds. Twitter is also popular among the older generation for the same reason.



A lot of middle aged women are also into Instagram because of its unique photo and video-sharing features. For some reason, Instagram's distinct features appeal to the older generation. The tidal migration from Facebook to Instagram is a result of Instagram's 'fun and quirky' vibe, a characteristic Twitter and Facebook lack.

But with Facebook being the primary social media site used by millions, Instagram is slowly following the footsteps of Facebook when it comes to gathering active users. Many of them use Instagram solely for entertainment while others use Instagram to help their businesses. If you find yourself intrigued by my title then it means you've seen the importance of using Instagram for your business.



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How can you use Instagram for your business?

Like any other application, Instagram is constantly updating and with its latest update, Instagram users can enjoy a variety of new filters; the 'fun and quirky' (as the app is known for) interface design plus they get to experience real time commenting. No wonder Instagram instantly became a hit among Internet users the moment it was launched.

What attracts people to Instagram is the fact that they can endlessly browse through photos and videos of virtually anything from food to clothes to their favourite celebrities. Major brands such as Nike, McDonalds and Starbucks are also on Instagram. It is clear that these big brands have seen the relevance of using Instagram in marketing their products and services.

It is hard to tell though if Instagram has been of help since these brands have already established a strong fan and brand base and you might wonder why would they bother to create Instagram accounts and keep it updated? I believe one of the reasons why is the fact that the majority of people are glued to their smartphones and what better way to tell them about the latest products and services than on the apps users frequently use. Nike's line of products changes every season so if you don't stay tuned you won't know what's new.

If you still haven't grown your fan base, it's high time you use Instagram to increase your brand recognition. Just think of Nike and McDonalds; these brands are known on a global scale yet despite their massive popularity, they still see Instagram as a valuable marketing tool. So yes, you can generate new customers and experience an increase in sales if you take advantage of Instagram just so long as you do it correctly.

I see numerous business owners taking Instagram for granted. Here's the thing, when you take this photo-sharing networking app seriously, it can and will, I guarantee you, open your business to endless opportunities.

Instagram was hailed as the *King of Social Engagement* owing to the fact that every time big brands make a post they generate a per-follower engagement rate of 4.21%. This means that Instagram gave these brands 58 times more engagement for every follower compared to Facebook and 120 times more engagement compared to Twitter.

Now that you know how important Instagram is for your business, I will now share with you how to use Instagram for your business.

Create a strategy

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1 It would be unwise to jump onto the bandwagon and join Instagram without doing your research first. Instagram is not that hard to understand but it can be completely perplexing for beginners, so it would be best that you use Instagram for yourself first before you officially use it for your business.

Find the time to study the Instagram accounts of other known brands or better yet find the best businesses on Instagram and yes, that includes your competitors! Why? Getting a peek at their profiles will give you competitive intelligence and even if you hate to admit it, it will surely give you some inspiration.

When you have already familiarised yourself with the Instagram app, you can now start creating your very own Instagram strategy. The strategy you come up with has to be reflective of your Social Media marketing plan. Your social media marketing plan functions as your guide for all of your social media activities.

Your first priority is to list down your Instagram goals. But remember that your goals need to be tied to your business goals. Examples of Instagram goals include the following: increase website traffic, increase sales, increase branded hashtag mentions and increase brand awareness, among others.

Decide how often you should post videos or images, know what time of the day and what day of the week to post, come up with a content calendar and choose various content themes for your profile.

When on Instagram, it is recommended that you *maintain a constant posting schedule*. But it is important you take note of this: don't flood your followers with an exaggerated number of posts.

Usually brands schedule around 1 to 3 posts a day. For the time of day and the day of the week, this will depend mostly on your target audience. To determine this you need to do some tests. You can post on different times and on different intervals and take note on the time and the days that work best. You also need to consider the location of your audience because your time zone may be different from theirs. When you've done your tests and have identified the times and the days of the week, you should then create a *content calendar*.

Your content calendar should indicate who is in charge of posting images or videos, at what time of the day the post will go live and what content will be posted. There are certain apps that allow you to schedule posts on Instagram in advance. This convenient way of scheduling posts saves you



time on posting and it allows you more time to work on other marketing strategies.

My tip is that you allocate a chunk of your time every week to schedule Instagram posts in advance during times where your audience is most active and don't forget to check it regularly.

2 Build your brand

I am assuming that you've done your research about Instagram already so at this point you know that Instagram is a very visual social media networking application consisting of videos and images. With this in mind, building a brand on Instagram requires some careful analysis because you need to come up with your own unique brand identity with the goal to make it stand out from the rest. The purpose of this is so that people will be able to recognize your brand and know what product or service you offer. Here's how you can do that.

First of all, you need to come up with your own, unique visual style for your brand. One way of doing this is by deciding on a type of filter or a set of filters you will be using for most of your photos. Usually brands stick to one type of filter but this will depend on you and your preference. When you stick to the same filter for all of your posts you are already establishing your brand's personal style and your followers will be able to recognise that.

Our main goal here is to stop your followers from scrolling down as soon as they see your Instagram post and engage with your account by leaving a comment or by liking your post. If they can recognise your post then you can give yourself a pat on the back for achieving a goal. The more your followers recognise the uniqueness of your brand because of your identifiable posts, the better.

An example of a company that was able to build their brand is 33 Acres Brewing Company. If you look at their Instagram profile you will find that most if not all of their photos have white borders and make use of a white color pallet. When you visit their profile you can instantly appreciate their trademark style and this will automatically register in the minds of followers. And so the next time you see an Instagram post with white borders you will immediately associate the images with the 33 Acres Brewing Company.



You can also try using other photo editing apps aside from the ones being offered by Instagram. If you want to explore other editing tools and filters you can try downloading Whitagram and VSCOcam until you can find the right style for your business. Even if you've done the editing in a different app you can still import it to Instagram.

Another important thing worth mentioning is you need to decide first about the type of content you want to post on your profile. It's usually very simple; if your company is selling a clothing line then obviously you will be shooting photos of clothes, or if you own a restaurant your Instagram posts would revolve around food. But not all industries use this strategy. Some of them find other ways to promote their brand by posting lifestyle content or whatever content their audience can relate to. In other words, find a stream of posts that you think will increase your follower engagement as long as it relates to what you are selling.

If you are still uncertain of how to represent your brand visually (because some really do have a hard time with this), my suggestion is you observe the accounts of your followers and see what type of posts they are sharing and also see if you can find any trends. As soon as you do, copy these visual themes and apply it to your own content. Take for instance, if you notice that the majority of your followers are avid fans of coffee then share some posts that include coffee in it. Or if your followers love pets, either dogs or cats, then find a way to incorporate these in your posts and then intersperse them with your products or service or find a link between them.

Aside from the consistency in your photos or videos you can also build a brand by following a unique pattern for the language you use or the style of your captions. Instagram is known for its hashtags. Find suitable hashtags that would best represent your brand and encourage your fan base to share their photos and videos that would fit the hashtag you came up with.

3 Learn the basics and start using the app
After you've successfully created a strategy and found ways to build your brand, it is now time to start using your Instagram app. To get started you must first download the app to whatever mobile device you are currently using. Downloading the app is free. The steps to completing your profile will also be flashed on your screen so take the time to answer and fill these out. This will include your username and your bio. Your username is your account's official name and this is what your followers will key into their search tab if they want to look for your account. The username you choose



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has to be the same with all other social media profiles you have. I suggest you use your real name or the name of your company.

Your Instagram bio is limited to 150 characters only so you need to make it very straightforward. In your bio, you will be given the chance to describe and explain what your business is all about and what people can expect from your posts.

All the basics of Instagram can be learned through research so I'm not going to dwell on those. I just think it is very important that you know what username to select and what to write on your bio. Besides these, Instagram's app is very user-friendly so you can actually discover it on your own even without Google's help. But if you want to get straightforward answers then I suggest you read the basics of Instagram online.

Conclusion

Using Instagram for your business also requires strategies just like Facebook and Twitter. Don't just create a profile right away and start following people. If you fail to follow the correct strategies you will only be wasting time with your Instagram accounts. So make the most of your Instagram to generate actual profit and gain followers that will really get to know your business and followers that would actually buy from you.





I would love to offer you a FREE half hour discovery session personally with me. I guarantee by the end of the session you will know exactly what your next step is in your business or life. If you would like my FREE gift complete the form in the link below and I will be in touch with you very soon.

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