

AN INSTAGRAM MARKETING GUIDE



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TO BOOST YOUR BRAND &
INCREASE YOUR TRAFFIC

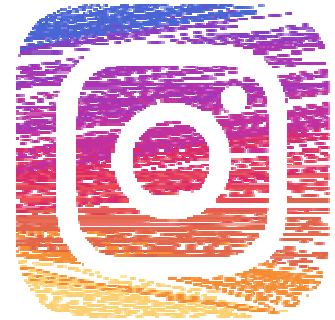
Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Why Instagram Marketing?	4
Creating an Instagram Account.....	5
Buying an Existing Instagram Account.....	6
Optimizing Your Biography.....	7
Building Your Instagram Page & Gallery.....	8
Add Your Starting Content.....	8
What Are Filters?	9
How to Create Amazing Instagram Photos	10
Using Instagram Stories.....	11
Using Other People’s Content.....	11
Growing Your Instagram Following.....	13
Growing Followers by Interacting with Others	13
Hashtagging	14
To Bot or Not to Bot, that is The Question	15
Growing Your Account by Buying "ShoutOuts".....	15
Other Ways to Grow Your Instagram Following.....	17
Analyzing Your Results - When to Post.....	18

Introduction

First off, what is Instagram anyway?

Instagram is an application you can download to your smart phone or tablet. It is a social networking app that was created to let you share videos and photos online.



It's been around since 2010, and has really exploded in popularity since 2016. The growth of the online social hangout has picked up steam as the cameras in smart phones have become better at taking high-quality pics and videos.

When you open an account, and it is free to do so, you have a profile and a news feed. Snap a picture with your smart phone camera, and when you share it on Instagram, it is displayed on your profile. This is similar to the experience on Facebook. If someone searches for a particular term and you have added a caption or hashtag with that term to your photo or video, that person may see your content.

When someone views content on your profile, they can follow your activity. This means whenever you post a new photo, it shows up in their news feed. It is pretty much a direct copy of Facebook, except the focus is on visual content and mobile use. People can comment, like, tag and private message on Instagram, which is currently available as a download on any android or iOS devices.

Why should you be marketing on this popular online hangout?

Take a look at the following Instagram statistics as of mid-2017 and you will probably be raring to go open your own account and start snapping pictures to build your business.

Why Instagram Marketing?

There are plenty of places online where you may already be marketing your blog or business. To get the best bang for your marketing buck, and the biggest payoff from your efforts, it makes sense to go where the biggest crowd of prospects are. As one of the largest and fastest growing sites where users share content and connect with each other, Instagram definitely deserves your attention. Here's why:

- In just 7 years, Instagram has grown to more than 700 million active monthly users.
- Over 400 million Instagrammers are active every day.
- More than 140 million Instagram users access the social media site several times a day.
- Nearly 100 million videos and photos are shared on Instagram each day.
- 6 out of every 10 online adults has an Instagram account.
- 26% of Instagram users make over \$75,000 per year.
- 50% of the users on the social media site follow at least one business, and 60% say they have learned about a product or service through Instagram.
- In March 2017, over 120 million Instagrammers visited a website, got directions, called, emailed, or direct messaged to learn about a business based on an Instagram ad.
- Consumers are 58 times more likely to engage with branded content on Instagram compared to Facebook, and 120 times more likely to take some action than users on Twitter.

Those statistics are courtesy of [WordStream](#) and show just how active users are on that website, and just how many of your prospects are waiting for you there. While 700 million active users is certainly impressive, there is still room for a lot of growth. The Internet is not going anywhere, and more people are getting "plugged in" and online every day. You have only to realize that Facebook has 1.9 billion active monthly users to see the potential for this video and photo sharing site.

These statistics should get you really excited about what is possible. Since the social networking application was made specifically for access from a smart phone, you can snap a picture or shoot a short video anytime and anywhere to reach out to your audience. This is an absolutely free marketing opportunity all businesses, large and small, should be taking advantage of.



Creating an Instagram Account

Obviously, you need an account before you can start growing your business on Instagram. It is easy to get started. Download the app from the Google Play store or Apple store. You can sign up using your current Facebook account or email. You can set up either a personal or business profile. It is recommended you create a business profile, since Instagram provides some marketing and behavior tracking tools for business profile account holders.

Your first opportunity for marketing comes when you decide on a user name.

Instagram's search engine works pretty much like that of Google, Bing and other Internet search engines. It is text-based, and you have a better chance of someone finding you if your user name has a keyword or two that is relevant to your business. People search on Instagram for topics that refer to the photographs and videos they want to see. Someone may search for "monster trucks", so if you had a relevant business, you may want your user name to be MonsterTruckAccessories.

Don't waste too much time sweating over your user name, as you can change at any time.

If you sign up through Facebook, you will be asked if you want to follow your FB friends that are already on Instagram. If you don't want to do this now, skip this step, and you can always come back to it later. You want to customize your profile by adding your name, link to your site or blog, a short and lighthearted biography and of course a photo. Add all of your contact details as well, so people know how to get a hold of you.



Buying an Existing Instagram Account

If you want an extremely quick way to have access to thousands of people on Instagram, this method may be attractive to you. On eBay and elsewhere on the web, you can purchase current and active Instagram accounts. This is a great way to go from zero followers to 5,000, 10,000 or even 20,000 overnight. Understand that prices will vary, and you could pay as little as \$50 or more than \$500 for an existing account.

Unfortunately, some accounts are created with fake likes and fake followers. These fake accounts can look pretty good, but obviously will do nothing for your business since the followers do not exist. There are a few things you should look for if you decide to purchase an Instagram account.

Take some time to look through the list of followers. If the majority of the followers of an account have profile pictures and look like normal people, you are probably looking at a valid account.

Make sure any account you decide to purchase has more than 100 posts.

Look at the followers. Are they commenting? Are the comments in-depth and "normal-looking"? Many fake accounts have little or no comments, and when comments are posted, they are extremely short.

If purchasing from a seller on eBay, check the persons selling history. Simply click on the user name to see if there is any negative feedback.

When you make the purchase, use some type of buying medium that protects you. PayPal and other payment services have tools in place that refund your money if you are dissatisfied with the transaction. On eBay there is buyer protection, so think about buying an account there rather than someplace else that is not as secure.

As soon as you purchase an Instagram account, immediately change the biography details, contact information, password and any other sensitive information.

Optimizing Your Biography

You only have 150 characters for your biography. This means you have to put on your marketing hat. Be direct, concise and informative, but still engage your audience. Add a hint of personality, and encourage users to take a specific action. This is a great place to add a link to an opt-in squeeze page where you give away a free gift in order to build your email list.

Use a link shortener such as Bitly or Goo.gl so your link doesn't take up too many valuable characters. Those link shorteners also have free reporting tools that keep track of just how much traffic your Instagram biography is sending to your squeeze page.

You can also use industry-related keywords so the Instagram search engine can start sending you interested users.

Your profile picture should be a picture of you, if you are the main focus of your brand. If the page is more of a brand that isn't tied to a specific person, then you can use your logo or a high quality picture that matches your niche and attracts attention.

Building Your Instagram Page & Gallery

Once you have set up your account, you need to build your page and gallery. What do I mean by “page”? Well, I mean what people will see when they click on your profile. They’ll see your profile avatar, your description (as mentioned above) and then your gallery.

Basically, think of your Instagram page and gallery as a way to make a first impression on any potential followers. And the best way to make an awesome first impression? Take great photos!

Add Your Starting Content

At this point you're probably ready to get out there and start getting followers. This is never a good idea until you have added content to your gallery. You want at least 10 or 20 photos or videos on your page to get started with. Think about it. If you have no content for someone to view, like, comment on and share, why would someone want to follow you?

You can add content by taking photos yourself (and I’ve included specific tips below about how to make sure they’re good ones).

But before you do, you’ll want to understand filters.



What Are Filters?

Instagram provides 23 filters you can choose to apply to your videos and photos. Just as a professional photographer can use filters with a hand-held camera, you can use these filters to change the way your photos and videos look. In normal mode, no filter is applied.

The "1977" filter gives your photograph a brighter, rosy, but faded look.

The "Rise" filter puts a softer lighting on the subject and adds a glow to the image.

Play around with these filters to find your favorite. Tapping the "Edit" option at the bottom of your photo editor also gives you several editing tools to apply to your content.

Note: Once you get better at taking your own photos, and understand the feel you want them to have, you might move away from Instagram's filters and use third-party apps.

How to Create Amazing Instagram Photos

The following tips and tricks will help you create engaging and memorable Instagram content, photos and videos that increase your followers and build your business.

- Instagram should be less about sharing other photos you find online, and more about taking your own photos and videos.
- Create a conversation with your images. Pictures and videos that tell a story will get more followers, likes and comments.
- Eventually, you'll even be able to have a "theme" for your photos. For example, they might all contain a hint of blue (your brand color) or evoke a certain emotion (like moody or bright and cheerful). This all takes practice.
- Think about your subject before you take a picture. What is it that moves you about this particular scene or image? Mention that in your caption.
- Use the tools at your disposal. Instagram offers filters and editing tools. There are also third-party applications which boost the ability of your smart phone camera.
- Experiment with unique and interesting ways to take a selfie.
- The early morning and late evening hours provide the best outdoor light for taking photos.
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Look around Instagram and find content that appeals to you the most. What is it about that content you like so much? Use the same ideas and tips on your page.
- Shoot more pics. The more snapshots you take, the more amazing content you will create.

Using Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories is a feature that was added in 2016. This allows you to post a photo or video that disappears in 24 hours. It has become increasingly popular, since the Internet is full of people looking for content right now. Everyone wants instant information and instant gratification, and Instagram Stories provide that.

At the top left corner of your Instagram feed you will see a plus sign (+). Click this. Then tap on the circle button that appears at the bottom of the screen to take a photo from your smart phone, or hold it down to record video. To add a filter, just swipe right or left and choose from the different options provided.

Tap the check mark at the bottom of the screen to add your story. You can decide on just who can view your story by clicking on the three dots in the bottom right corner and choosing "Story Settings". People on Instagram are using stories to provide behind-the-scenes looks and provide a more intimate look into their personal lives and businesses.

Using Other People's Content

Generally, most people on Instagram – even brands – will use their own photos for the platform. However, if you want to make things easier and use other people's photos then you could set this up the right way in a way that doesn't violate any copyright.

In your profile description you could add something that looks like this:

"Tag #jokesdaily if you want your content to be featured on our page!"

This does two wonderful things for you.

First, it gets other people creating videos and photographs for you. This means you will have other people "working" for you, for free, and this will keep fresh content headed to your account. When you add a picture or video and include a hashtag (#), followed by some phrase, this tells the Instagram search engines what your content is about. It also makes it super-fast for people to find your content.

The second thing this does that is really great for building a following quickly is it keeps your audience engaged. It shows people you are interested in what they have to share, and not just in promoting your business.

Announcing the hashtag that you are going to use on your content in your page description means that when others also use that hashtag, they could be featured or promoted on your page.

Just make sure you create a hashtag that is memorable, makes sense for your page, and is preferably unique to you (there's more info on hashtags on page 14).



Growing Your Instagram Following

Marketing on Instagram is all about earning lots of followers. If you can build your page to over 1 million followers, you can make quite a good living on Instagram. If you think that level of popularity is out of your reach, think again. By spending no more than 30 to 60 minutes on Instagram 5 or so days a week there are people generating 5-figure-a-month revenue. When you first get started, you're going to want to check into Instagram every single day. Once you develop a considerable following, you don't have to put it near as much time to see your marketing efforts pay off.

The magic number for followers when you're first starting out is 10K. Getting your first 10,000 followers is no cakewalk, but growth after that point really begins to take on a life of its own. Depending on how dedicated you are, you could gain 10,000 followers in your first 30 days on Instagram.

Growing Followers by Interacting with Others

Let's go back to the example I used earlier, where you have a business selling truck accessories. In order to gain your first followers, find another page on Instagram that posts truck photos. You want to find one with over a million followers in your niche if that is possible. In a perfect world, you want to wait until that page posts a brand-new photo. This is because when you see people liking that photo and commenting on it, you know they are currently online.

As long as you find photos that have been posted within the last hour, you have a good chance of catching Instagram users that are still online. Now you can start following, clicking through to these users' profiles, and leaving meaningful comments on them (no generic comments or spam!)

Some marketing experts will tell you to follow as many people as you can on Instagram each day to gain new followers (as a small percentage will decide to follow you back). This can work, but very slowly and isn't really the best way to get an *engaged* following. Instead, take a look at individual profiles and follow those you'd be more likely to actually like and interact with.

Doing things the right way does take work, but it's worth it. Instagram is, after all, a social network, so it's important to be social, respect the rules and avoid spamming. Thankfully there are others methods you can use, too, like hashtags.

Hashtagging

Another way to make sure you are hanging around with the people you eventually want to do business with is to use the hashtag. In the Instagram search engine, look for #trucks, or #cupcakes or #monkeys, anything that is relative to your page. You will be shown the most recent photos that also have that same hashtag. Start with ones that have been posted in the last few seconds or minutes, and click on the images. Find out those users that liked those photos, and interact with them in a genuine way.

More powerful, though, is to actually *use* these hashtags when you post new content. This is another way of hopefully getting access to Instagram users that are still on the site, but do not follow you so would not have seen your posts otherwise. By the way, one Instagram study showed that adding at least one hashtag to all of your posts will create 12.6 % more engagement on average.

It takes time to find the best hashtags to use. Some ideas include:

- Looking at the hashtags your competitors regularly use,
- Experimenting with different hashtags and analyzing your results,
- Downloading an app for hashtag ideas (like TagOMatic)



To Bot or Not to Bot, that is The Question

There are some really big Instagram account holders who openly talk about using software to gain followers. These are referred to as "bots" in Internet parlance. These software suites automatically like photos, make comments and follow users, and they work tirelessly every minute of every hour of every day.

Instagram doesn't want you using bots, and they may ban your account if they find out you are doing so. But there's another reason why you shouldn't use them: they won't give you engaged followers. It'll all be automatic, and people who follow you are very, very unlikely to actually care about what you post. And if they don't care, you're not going to see great results. It's not worth the risk.

Growing Your Account by Buying "ShoutOuts"

Have you ever listened to any talk radio? Users call in on a number of topics including sports and politics, and they will sometimes give a "shout out" to a friend or family member while on the radio. They say something like, *"I would like to give a shout out to my friend Bob."*

You can also do this on Instagram. You pay other users to put the word out about your page.

Make sure you have a few followers and a lot of great pictures and content before you do this. It makes your page more attractive to people who discover your account using this method.

To purchase a shoutout, start looking for other accounts in the same niche as yours. You want account holders that have a lot more followers than you do. Most big accounts will have plenty of contact information. Instant message them or shoot them an email, and just ask them how much a shoutout is going to cost.

Since this is a supply and demand transaction, and also because some people are just on Instagram to have a good time, prices vary wildly. Look around until you get a nice price that fits your budget. You may also find shout outs for sale on eBay, and you can purchase them for as cheap as \$6 on Fiverr.com.

Find your most popular, most commented on, most liked photo and use that one for the shout out. Add a simple caption like this:

"Found this awesome monster truck picture on @TruckPostsDaily, check them out."

That caption is what the shoutout seller will post when they display your photo on their page.

As you can imagine, getting a really good piece of content on someone's page with over 1 million followers could give you hundreds or even thousands of your own followers overnight. Just make sure to use a simple and informative caption, add a hashtag, and keep it short.

Other Ways to Grow Your Instagram Following

The importance of hashtags for people to find your content was mentioned earlier. You can also use the following techniques to further improve the engagement you have with your audience, while increasing your following.

- Geotagging allows you to tag where you are when a photo or video was shot. Used in conjunction with an Instagram Story (more on this feature later), a geotag offers a lot of possibilities for a local business.
- Host a contest. Award a prize for whoever comes up with the best caption for one of your photos, and use apps like Heyo, WishPond and AgoraPulse to run your contest.
- Survey Monkey is just one survey managing website that lets you ask your Instagram followers exactly what is on their mind.
- Spend some time commenting on content similar to yours. Provide real value and in-depth comments, and not just "nice pic".
- Liking photos and following others is the best way to get yourself followed on Instagram.
- Post regularly. If you can, post content on a set schedule. This trains your audience when you are going to be online, which drives engagement.
- Stay consistent to your page theme. This is not like Facebook, where your personal page may cover several different topics. Only include photos, hashtags, captions and videos relevant to your page topic.
- Respond to the comments you receive on your content, and reach out to other page owners who are posting content similar to yours. Social media networks are all about socializing.
- Tell your followers what to do. Ask them to like your photo if they enjoy it, and ask for comments as well.
- Link your Instagram account to your other social networks.

Analyzing Your Results - When to Post

A lot of data shows that the best time to post on Instagram is at 5 PM on Wednesdays. This may or may not be true for your page. Depending on your topic, the demographics of your followers and other things specific to your niche and content, Wednesday may or may not be a good day for you.

Most Instagram users are between 18 and 29 years old, so they will probably be in school or at work during the day. Because of this, a lot of users find after 5 PM is the best time for engagement on Instagram.

Also, 60% of the top brands on Instagram use the same filter for every post. There is a school of thought that using the same filter over and over means your audience learns what to expect over time. This could make your followers and other people who view your content feel more comfortable with your photos.

By the way, if you are deciding on which filter to use, Clarendon, Gingham and Juno/Lark are far and away the most popular.

Analyzing your marketing efforts on Instagram is really easy. You have access to what Instagram calls Insights if you build a business profile as opposed to a personal profile. This is all the relevant data about your page. It lets you know how your marketing efforts are paying off. This is a free service Instagram offers.



After a while, you will notice what types of photos get the most likes and the most comments. Start taking more of those types of photos, or collecting them online.

The same will be true with filters, captions, and comments you make on other photos. It would be wise to keep an Instagram journal where you diligently record the time you post, what hashtags you use, the exact caption you add and any other relevant information.

This way you can maximize your marketing efforts, and make sure you are spending your time working on the things that will be most profitable for you. Buffer offers analytics tools for a low fee that do a really good job of sorting all of your content by the most likes, comments, most popular, etc. You can customize your time-frame so you see exactly if your marketing efforts are paying off or not.