



Instagram marketing: 10 steps to build your strategy

Learn how to build a successful Instagram marketing strategy for 2022 and beyond

With over 1.38 billion users worldwide, Instagram is a mainstay in the lineup of social media platforms. It ranks fourth on the list of the world's most active social media platforms and is showing no signs of slowing down. In fact, over the last year, Instagram's advertising audience reach grew by 28.2%. So if you're looking to market your business on "The Gram," there's still much success to be had.

But how exactly can you use Instagram for your business? The platform can elevate you to influencer status and has even become a sole stream of income for many brands. It's a place where you can grow a following and stay in touch daily. As a result, you can build relationships and gain influence over their buying decisions. And, it's all done through fun, educational, and entertaining reels, stories, carousels, and posts.

Not sure how to get started? Don't worry. Here are 10 key steps that can help you develop a successful Instagram marketing strategy in 2021 and beyond.

Steps to Build your Instagram marketing strategy

- Step 1. Optimize an on-brand profile and bio
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13 Instagram marketing tips to perfect your strategy

- Step 1. Optimize an on-brand profile and bio

The first step in creating an effective Instagram is to ensure your profile is optimized to attract and engage your target audience. In other words, when people click on your profile and read your bio, you want them to want to see more from you. Then, they will



likely follow you, begin to engage with your posts, and eventually buy from you. But how do you do that?

It all starts with your brand. You need to identify the story of your business, where it started, where it's going, and what it stands for. Define the impact you want to have and how you want to come across. With that information in mind, ensure your profile tells that story and stays consistent with your goals.

There are a few ways to do that which include optimizing your username, bio photo, and bio. Here are a few tips on each:

Username: Choose a name that is catchy, easy to remember, and easy to spell. It should also be representative of your brand. You may want to add in a keyword that hints at your values, services, or products.

Bio photo: Ensure your photo is of good quality and reflects your brand. Think about how it will look in the context of your profile page and in the comments sections.

Bio: In a few strategically chosen words, you want to hook your readers and pique their interest. Include what you do, how you help your audience, social proof (if possible), and a call to action. Also, your bio is the only place you can include a link so be sure to use it wisely.

Step 2. Tag your location

Does your business have a physical location? If so, Instagram's location features are a must! First, you can add your business location to Instagram so users can easily navigate there using apps like Apple Maps or Google Maps. To do so, ensure you have a business Instagram account. Then, click "Edit Profile" from your profile page (when you're logged in). Under "Public Business Information," click "Contact Options." Then, you'll see an option for the business address. Once your business address is programmed in, be sure to tag your business location whenever you create a post. This will help people to find your location and will bring you more exposure to your audience nearby.

Step 3. Create a cohesive, branded feed



Above all else, Instagram is still a visual platform. You can't post without sharing media, unlike many other platforms. Being so, you need to take some time to develop a strategy for the aesthetics of your posts.

When someone clicks on your profile, each post should be on-brand and all of the posts should go together and look good when viewed in the grid format. To create that cohesive feel, start by formulating design guidelines for your posts. Choose a style, filter, and color palette that will be used across all posts. Decide what types of content you're going to post, for example, product shots, lifestyle shots, sceneries, etc. Plan how you will alternate between post types and how it will all lay out on your profile page. If you post reels, plan the cover pages for them so they are engaging and complementary to other posts.

If you poke around on a few seasoned Instagram profiles, you'll see what we mean. For example, Teva is a sport sandal company with over 585k Instagram followers. Each of their posts can stand on its own but is also part of a larger story, both visually and ideologically. They show off their sandals in a series of lifestyle photos which help followers imagine their lives with Tevas.

teva instagram

Ref: Teva

Step 4. Write engaging captions

While media takes the forefront on Instagram, captions still matter. They help to engage your audience, tell them more about the videos or images, and invite them to join the conversation.

So how much should you write? You can write captions up to 2,200 characters, however, that doesn't necessarily mean you should. First, consider that captions are truncated after 125 characters. That means if your caption is longer than that, you need to hook them in the beginning so they click "see more." As for how long captions should be, many studies have been performed which found that captions with about 10 or less (about 1-50 characters) performed the best. That said, if you have a smaller audience (under 1,000 followers), you can benefit from longer captions to help establish your brand and build a core audience.



But what should you write? You should first identify your brand voice, how you want to come across, how you want your audience to feel, and what you believe in. Then, ensure each post aligns with your strategy. Plus, you can help to increase engagement by sharing something and then asking users a question.

Step 5. Speak to your target customers

As with any marketing strategy, it's important to have a target. Identify who exactly wants and needs your product or service most. Dig into why they want or need it. What problems are they facing? How do they describe their pain points? What attracts them to your brand or product?

Armed with this knowledge, you can create posts designed to meaningfully speak to the people who are likely to buy your product in the end. This can help to improve the quality of your following leading to better engagement and conversion rates. It can help to identify your audience in detail such as their gender, age, interests, behaviors, etc.

Step 6. Perform competitor research

While you can attract your audience on Instagram, it's likely your competitors are there, too. It's a good idea to find out what they are doing. By performing competitor research, you can get a benchmark of your industry and formulate a plan to stand out and pull ahead. But what should you analyze when researching competitors? Here are a few ideas:

What hashtags are they using?

What kinds of posts are they creating?

Are they getting good engagement (likes/comments)? What's working best?

Do they rely on user-generated content?

How often do they post?

How many followers do they have and how fast are they growing?

The best part is you don't have to do all the research work manually. You can use software tools to help you gain insights into user-friendly dashboards.



Step 7. Use hashtags to increase visibility

We mentioned hashtags (#) above but you may be wondering exactly how they work. When you add a hashtag to your Instagram post (e.g. #worklife, #sunsets, etc.), it adds your post to a page with all the other posts containing the same hashtag.

Instagram users can and do follow hashtags which means all the content tagged with a particular hashtag shows up in their feeds. By adding strategic hashtags to your posts, more people will see them. However, you must choose hashtags that are popular with the right people — your target audience.

Here are a few hashtag tips to keep in mind:

You can add up to 30 but typically 2-8 are best so you don't come off spammy

You can search for hashtags to see how many people follow them

Track the performance of the hashtags on your post (your insights will show you how many viewers came from your hashtags)

Create a specific hashtag for your brand

You can include hashtags in your caption or as a comment and they will have the same effect

Step 8. Make carousel posts

When it comes to the various types of posts, you have three main options on Instagram: videos, images, and carousels.

An image post is just one still image

Videos under 60 seconds are called reels and those over one minute and up to 15 minutes can be posted to IGTV

Carousels allow up to ten still images which users can swipe through on one post



It turns out that carousel posts have been shown to lead to a higher impression rate than other post types on Instagram so should be a cornerstone of your marketing strategy. There are many creative ways to use carousels from photo slideshows, to case studies, to product showcases, and more. The key is you want to keep the audience's interest as long as possible so they keep swiping.

Step 9. Post stories regularly

Aside from the regular newsfeed, Instagram has circles across the top of the app screen which pop up when someone shares a "story." A story is a short video or still image, up to 15 seconds long, which you can edit using a variety of effects. While they are short, you can post up to 100 stories within 24 hours.

Posting stories is an important part of any Instagram strategy for a few reasons.

First, it brings more visibility to your content and your profile. Not only are you showing up in the newsfeed but you are also showing up in the stories area as well. The more you and your content are seen, the better.

Additionally, stories help add more to your brand story. They fill in the gaps between posts in a way because they are often more "in the moment" and unplanned. They can help users get to know your brand better and get a peek behind the scenes.

If that's not enough, stories are also the most popular feature on Instagram.

When creating stories, it's important to stick to your brand narrative even when going off-script. Ensure they align with your brand voice and values while also having some fun. Be sure to experiment with the various features available like music, filters, boomerangs, GIFs, mentions, and hashtags to make them more interesting. Plus, use the features that invite your audience to interact like polls and questions. These can not only increase brand loyalty and engagement but can help you collect helpful insights to improve your products and services.

Step 10. Track your most successful content

Last, but certainly not least, it's critical to track what's working and what's not. Your Instagram strategy is not a "set it and forget it" type of deal. Instagram arms you with the ability to gain insights into each post and your performance overall. You can track



which posts get the most views, comments, likes, etc. Then, you can make more of the content that performs best.

13 Instagram marketing tips to perfect your strategy

1. Find the best Instagram hashtags for your business. Earlier within the guide, we have explained how hashtags can help your business grow its reach, get more engagement, and attract more followers, but here's the thing: you can only reap those benefits if you're using the most effective and relevant hashtags for your target audience. Simply any hashtag just won't do!

Our advice is to avoid using the most popular and generic Instagram hashtags, like #love and #instagood. Instead, it's better to find and use hashtags that are smaller, more niche, and have an engaged audience that's relevant to what your business does and the audience it targets.

So, how do you find the best hashtags to use for your business on Instagram? We've compiled the five most helpful methods below.

Examine what hashtags your audience is using and see which ones are most relevant to the content you're publishing

Look to which hashtags your competitors are using and which ones provide them with the most engagement

Research the key influencers within your industry that have a similar target audience to your own, then note down which hashtags they frequently use

Use the Search bar and Tags feature within Instagram to find hashtag trends relating to particular keywords. Just type in a term relating to your business to see which related hashtags are trending the most

Utilize an Instagram analytics tool to determine which hashtags you're already using are performing the best

2. Switch to a business account, if you haven't already. Business accounts offer additional benefits for brands, including contact buttons, the ability to create and publish Instagram ads, the Insights feature, and more.



3. Schedule time to go live with your Instagram audience regularly. This allows you and your business to connect with your followers in real-time, helping to boost engagement and brand awareness, as it's a great method to showcase the 'human' side of your brand.
4. Share user-generated content, including the photos or videos other users create featuring your products. Not only is this a quick and easy addition to your Instagram content calendar, as the content has already been produced, but it's a great form of social proof for your business.
5. Run targeted Instagram ads. This is one of the most effective ways to reach users who don't already follow your account and put your business in front of a much wider target audience. When creating your ad, you can use parameters such as age, gender, location, and interests to select your ad audience.
6. Respond to comments and messages. It might seem time-consuming but responding to user's comments and messages on Instagram is an excellent way to boost your marketing strategy. It encourages other users to engage with your brand, boosts your credibility and authority, and shows your audience that customer service is a top priority for your company.
7. Offer exclusive content: Reveal products you haven't shared elsewhere, launch a product or event live on Instagram, or give your followers an opportunity that won't be offered on your other social media channels
8. Go behind the scenes: Showcase a behind-the-scenes look at your business that seems so awesome, followers can't help but want to be involved. Employees having a great time, snapshots of your workspaces or extracurricular activities you and your team participate in are effective
9. Be authentic and likable: Don't gloss over the fact that your business is run by humans, each with their own unique personality, quirks, and interests. Post fun and authentic content about your business, its employees, and products that your audience can relate to



10. Run Instagram contests: A contest offering a desirable and relevant prize that requires users to follow your profile, comment, vote, share, or more is one of the best ways to generate leads from Instagram
11. Offer promotions: Use the platform to share Instagram-only discount codes or deals that users must take advantage of within just hours. This will incentivize users to act quickly and follow your profile
12. Highlight your customer service: Post images or videos of customers and their experiences with your brand to show your audience how beneficial your products or services are. Additionally, highlight in-store experiences with customers to showcase your excellent customer service
13. Choose the best times to post

As a general rule, studies reveal that the following times are the most effective for posting content on Instagram:

Sunday: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Monday: 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday: 5:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 5:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Thursday: 5:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Friday: 5:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Saturday: 11:00 a.m.

Grow your business with Instagram

Instagram is a great place for businesses to be as there are so many users that you are sure to find your own loyal audience. It can take some time to get the ball rolling but in time, you will begin to gain momentum. However, tips like these can help to speed up the process.



Before jumping in, take some time at the drawing board. Plan out your brand's identity and how it will communicate with your target audience. From there, make sure that your profile and bio are optimized and you know what your competitors are doing. Then, think outside the box, experiment, and be sure to keep a finger on the pulse of what's working best on the platform at the time. Soon, Instagram can be a leading source of new customers for your business.

Courtesy of Fiverr