

YOUR GUIDE TO MAKING MONEY WITH INSTAGRAM



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Summary

Social networking sites have become a hub for business owners to promote their businesses and engage with potential consumers. This has led to Social Media Optimization becoming an integral part of most businesses' marketing strategies. Instagram is one such networking site that has only become bigger since its launch in 2010. Instagram is a social networking site based on a combination of photo and video sharing.

In a short span of time it has become the biggest photo-sharing site with about 130 million monthly active users, according to the official website. From a business perspective it proposes reaching out to over a 100 million potential consumers. Businesses as big as Audi, Burberry, Starbucks and Adidas actively use Instagram to promote themselves, so there is no reason why you can't too.

Instagram is an easy to use site with a lot of promise. This e-book is aimed at providing all the information you need to reap the benefits of this effective, almost cost-free marketing hub.

Contrary to general perception, Instagram not only caters to the retail and food industry, it also holds a lot of potential for other business types, as long as you use the right strategies. This e-book is well equipped to guide you through the entire procedure. From setting up your own account to generating traffic to turning that traffic into sales – this Instagram guide is enough to make your business prosper, using one of the most powerful Internet marketing tools available today.

Chapter One

What Is Instagram?

Instagram is a photo and video sharing website and mobile application that allows users to upload, filter and share photos with followers and friends on Instagram and other social networking sites simultaneously. The photos in Instagram appear to be square rather than the 16:9 aspect ratio photos that are generally available in most phones today. The square photo format gives the images a vintage feel like Polaroid instant photographs.

Instagram also offers a video-sharing option allowing users to share videos of up to 15 seconds in length. Instagram today is widely used by individuals for social as well as business purposes. Businesses use Instagram to promote their products or services while connecting with their followers.

In order to connect with a specific individual or business on Instagram you will need to search for and follow them. Public profiles are easy to follow, and anyone can. However, private profiles are restricted and require permission from the profile's owner.

Instagram is currently compatible with Apple and Android phones above 2.2 versions and can be downloaded for free from the iTunes store or Google Play. Instagram is relatively easy to use and allows businesses to connect with their potential customers in a visually appealing way.

According to the Instagram founders, *"we imagine a world more connected through photos,"* but today with its increasing popularity, Instagram offers more potential than instant photo sharing – it allows those pictures to generate customers and brand recognition.

Sharing pictures through Instagram is easier than on other social networking sites where it can take minutes to upload a single photo. Instagram on the other hand offers faster and higher quality images.

History Of Instagram

Instagram was developed and launched by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom in October 2010 as a photo-sharing application. According to the duo, the primary objective was to allow people to share their life through pictures instantaneously all across the world.

They came up with the word Instagram as a combination of instant and telegrams, words that pretty much sum up the functions of Instagram. Instagram has greatly evolved since its launch and has added different features like profiles, impressive filters and video-sharing options in its brief history.

Today, Instagram is popular among celebrities and influential people throughout the world. Beyoncé, LeBron James and even Michelle Obama are on Instagram not only to connect with their fans and audiences, but also to keep them updated about upcoming projects. In a small span of time, Instagram has become an indispensable social media tool for many people, primarily because long textual content hardly catches the viewers' attention anymore.

Attention spans are decreasing and the content available online is increasing by greater numbers each minute. With viewers demanding instant connections and visually appealing content to keep them engaged and educated, it is no wonder Instagram has become so popular for individuals and businesses.

Approximately 40 million photos are posted on Instagram each day. Needless to say, Instagram has a lot of potential. However, it also has a lot of competition when it

comes to promoting businesses. In order to make the most of Instagram you will need to do a little more than take a picture of the view from your office window.

How Instagram Is Helping Businesses

Instagram, like most social networking sites, was not designed for businesses, but just like others, it has seen its fair share of business potential. Big names in music such as MTV, Foo Fighters, and John Mayer are able to promote themselves and their business using Instagram. Sports icons include virtual tours and behind-the-scenes views for exclusive tournaments such as Wimbledon, The Masters, and the World Series. All of these people and their respective brand sponsors capitalize on Instagram as part of a larger Internet marketing strategy.

Whether you are a restaurateur, website owner, fashion blogger, a logistics company, in retail, or the food industry, the evolution and popularity of Instagram provides the potential to connect and do business with hundreds, thousands and even millions of people across the globe.

Today, their website is filled with success stories of businesses that gained popularity and customers with the help of Instagram, and there is no reason why yours can't make it on those pages too.

Instagram encourages customer participation and enables them to connect with you on a more personal level compared to other internet marketing strategies. Whether it is a behind the scene video or a photo of a project in progress, your followers will feel like a greater part of the whole development process.

Social media is only useful for businesses if it focuses on engagement; this is also the case with Instagram. The chances of success don't depend on whether or not you have an Instagram account, but rather they depend on how you utilize the platform.

The following is a step-by-step guide to entering, understanding and conquering the world of Instagram.

Chapter Two

How To Setup An Account

Currently, the only way to create an account on Instagram is by using their app on Android or iOS (iPhone) supported devices. Most supported phones today come with the app already available, but in case it isn't then you can easily download it from the App Store or Google Play. Once the download completes, click on the icon and tap register.

You will be prompted to fill in the details including a username and password, along with other profile information including your name, e-mail address etc. Tap "Done" when you have filled in the desired fields and your account will be created in less than 5 minutes. Make sure that you use a name that aptly describes your business as a brand, and that is catchy and easily identifiable.

Make sure that the details you provide are accurate and that you avoid giving out any personal information. Small business owners in particular at times make the mistake of promoting their business by creating personal accounts. This does very little for the credibility of your business and at the same time comes across as amateur and unprofessional. It is alright to promote and share the photos and other content of your business by linking it on your profile but not very beneficial for your friends and family to be constantly reminded of your business via a personal page. So make sure that you run a completely independent profile for your business on Instagram. Business and personal life should always be separated, especially when it comes to social media marketing.


Getting Started

Now that your business is officially on Instagram, it is time to play with it. The first thing you need to do is add a profile photo that reflects your business properly. The

profile photo can be of your latest products, your company's logo or simply a photo of your head office. Whatever works for you!

Next, add a link to your website so that those reaching out to you can easily reach out to your business too. Instagram offers biographies of up to 150 characters, which will eventually appear on your profile page. You can add a little info about the business, what you do and then add a link at the very end.

How To Edit Your Bio

- Tap on the Profile tab.
- Go to "Edit your Profile". It will be at the top right corner of your screen.
- Simply enter the text and the link and click "Submit."
- You can also change your profile picture, username or website in the same way. Simply tap the  icon available at the lower right corner and tap "Edit your profile."
- Make sure that you come up with an identifiable username early on, because changing it again and again will cause confusion among your followers.

The next step should be to connect your profile to other social networking sites like Facebook and other third-party sites like Twitter, Foursquare, Hipstamatic etc. You can easily connect to these sites by going to Settings on your Android or iOS device and tapping "Sharing Settings" you can then easily connect all the third party networking sites you wish to integrate.

It is essential that you connect the other networking sites in order to increase visibility and accessibility. You can also reach out to your Facebook friends on Instagram by tapping on "Find Friends."

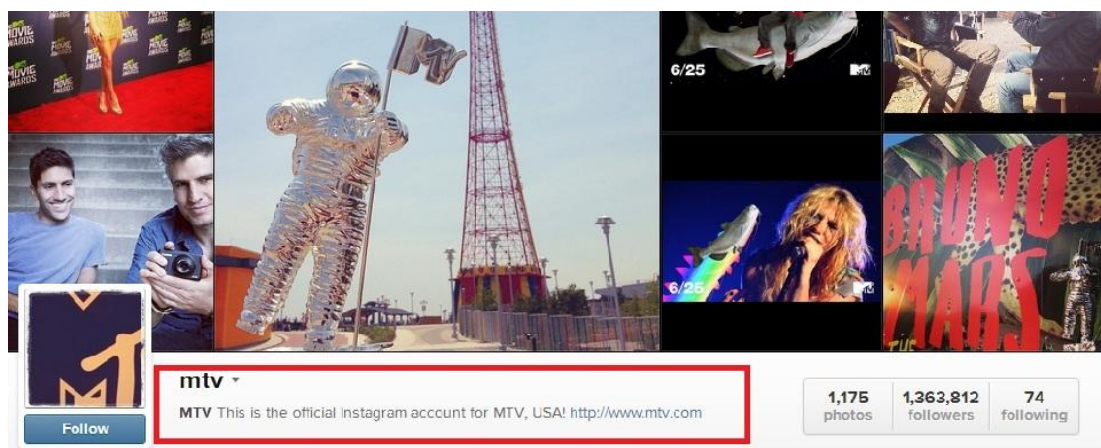
There are plenty of ways to connect through Instagram and numerous features to try out. The best way to do that is to keep on playing with it until you understand exactly how it functions and how you can make the most of it.

Features You Need to Know About

Instagram offers numerous features that are not only a lot of fun to try out, but also help you connect with your audience. The following are some of the most beneficial features of Instagram:

Your Web Profile

Your business profile is the window through which followers can get an idea of exactly what it is you are trying to promote. Your profile should be regularly updated with correct information.



This is the MTV USA's Instagram page. As you can see, it very briefly explains what the page is about along with a link to their website. The pictures reflect their business and give you a taste of what you can expect. Your page should also reflect your business so that those who land on your page can make a quick decision of whether the content you provide will be of any value to them.

Hashtags

Instagram hashtags work pretty much the same way as hashtags on Twitter. They enable users to get access to desired or similar content relatively easily. All you need to do is simply start clicking photos and hash-tagging them with relative tags. An example would be for a photo to celebrating 1000 followers on Instagram, you can simply take a picture of a celebratory cake, or a placard that says “Thank you” (or something even more creative!) and then place hashtags such as #Thankyou, #YoureAwesome, #celebrations and more.

You can also add hashtags in the comment section once the picture is taken. The following are a few rules for using hashtags:

- You can only tag your own pictures and videos and cannot tag others.
- You can use a maximum of 30 tags per photo or video. If you add more than that the comment will not be posted.
- You cannot use characters like “%” or “?” in hashtags, however, you can use numbers.
- You can search for hashtags by tapping on Profile tab>Search Instagram>Tags.
- Make sure that your profile settings are set on public rather than private, otherwise your photos and videos will only be available to your followers and not the rest of the Instagram community.

Follow

Just like Facebook’s subscribe option or Twitter and Pinterest’s Follow option, Instagram enables users to follow other profiles. It is important that you set your profile to public so that it is easier for others to find and follow you.

However, don't just wait for others to follow you. You should be following other relative users and businesses in order to get a good idea of what people are talking



about and what is trending.

Make sure that you follow your competitors, news channels, celebrities and other prominent and relative users.

All you need to do is go to a profile of your choice and simply click on Follow to start following their posts.

Filters

Filters are easily the star component of Instagram. They add character and personality to each image or video by providing a variety of options to edit the photos. Here is the list of filters available on Instagram right now:

Amaro	Mayfair	Rise	Valencia
X-Pro II	Sierra	Willow	Lo-fi
Sutro	Toaster	Brannan	Inkwell
Walden	Hudson	Earlybird	Hefe
Nashville	1977	Kelvin	

All these filters offer impressive post-editing options that can easily enhance the quality of your image. You can also use third-party photography or editing apps to take pictures and then upload them on Instagram.

Other Photo Editing Features

There are plenty of other photo editing features available on Instagram including Lux, which makes the picture more prominent and profound, High Dynamic Range, Light Bokeh, Auto Exposure, combining multiple images, straightening images and more.

The Web Feed

Instagram introduced the Web Feed in early 2013, which enables users to log in and check their news feed on a desktop or laptop computer the same way they do on their Smart phones. Instagram has been a mobile-based site for a very long time, and it still is. However, now you can access your newsfeed on any device.

Simply go to Instagram.com, log in with your details and browse through those you follow on the web in pretty much the same way you would on a smartphone. You cannot, however, post images through the website. According to the co-founder of Instagram, Kevin Systrom, “Instagram is about producing photos on the go” and so the only available way to post photos is through the mobile application

The web feed will make it very easy for your followers to check your photos and videos on the go at their own convenience. The larger screen undoubtedly increases the visibility of your products and enables them to move from the image to your website, leads to more brand buzz

Photo Maps

Instagram began offering Photo Map in version 3.0. It allows you to easily add the time and location of the photos you take. This option makes it very easy for businesses to let their followers know where they can be found. For example, if you are attending a convention or trade fair then, by simply posting a picture with the location, it will be easy for others to find you. Photo Map also enables you to look at a broader picture of where your photos were mostly taken and the ability to organize photos according to their time and date.

Your followers will be able to see your photo map if you permit them to do so, allowing them to see a map of what your business has been up to at specific times. By default, photomaps are turned off. You will have to switch on the “Add to your Photo Map” before posting a photo.

The New Instagram Video


Instagram introduced the video feature in June 2013. You can now record up to 15 seconds of video, choose from 13 different filters and share with millions of people across the globe. The new feature has seen a lot of positive feedback because of its ease of use and editing options. You can also choose a specific frame from the video to appear as the cover image to make it more visually appealing.

Video for Instagram also offers the Cinema feature with which you can stabilize the video once it has been made. From a business perspective you can use this function to encourage your customers to post videos when using your products or services, or post short videos of why you love them, ask for feedback or post your own behind-the-scene videos. The options are endless and so is the potential to communicate and connect with those who matter to you and your business.

How to Make Videos on Instagram

Making videos on Instagram is just as easy as taking pictures. Simply tap the



icon at the bottom and then tap  icon to switch to video from camera. Press and hold the icon to record the video. Release the icon when you wish to stop recording. Tap Next to add filter to your video. You can experiment with different filters before choosing the one you like. Once you are satisfied with the outcome, tap Next to share the video with the world. These are some of the most prominent features of Instagram that have assisted many businesses in connecting with their potential customers and promoting their products/services. As with most new ventures, you will need to try out angles, filters, moments and stories to eventually start creating valuable, quality content.

Chapter Three

Now that you understand all that Instagram has to offer, it is time to grab the bull by the horns and use all these features to your advantage. Instagram is effective and productive only when it is correctly used and implemented. Simply making a profile and posting a picture or video each week will do very little to generate interest or engage followers, let alone foster sales.

It is only by posting useful content, that your followers will want to click the “like” button and have enough interest to visit your website where they can convert into customers. Brands like DVF, Nike, Michael Kors, and Dunkin Donuts are constantly promoting their business by posting interesting pictures and videos on Instagram. Pictures can be worth a lot more than a thousand words They can be your followers’ window into your world or your door into theirs.

How to Get Followers

Your first step should be to get followers, more followers mean more potential business. Posting pictures or videos will not only give exposure to followers on Instagram, but also to those following you on other social networking sites.

Know Your Audience

You can't post cute pictures of baby feet with the objective of generating more sales for your office supplies. You need to understand exactly who your target audience is and what they're interested in.

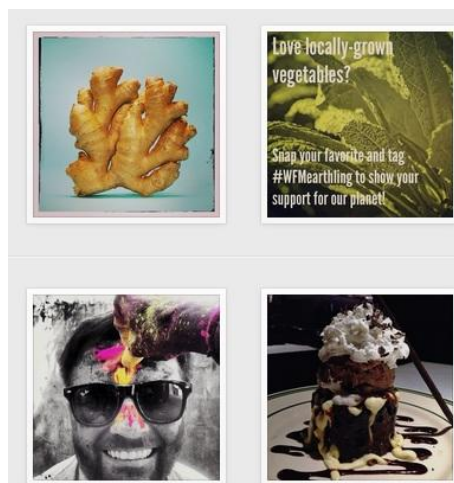
You have a better chance of connecting with them if you have a good idea of who they are. This is where Instagram differs in personal and business use. When using a personal Instagram account, your objective is to let your personality show through

interesting pictures, regardless whether or not anyone approves. With your business profile, it's not about what is personally relevant to you, but what is relevant to your audience.

This doesn't mean that your images or videos need to be static or boring; this simply means that you need to reflect your potential followers' preferences.

You can also get a good idea about your targeted audience by following and analyzing your competitors' Instagram pages. Go through them to see what kind of pictures and videos they have posted and what their followers are commenting. You can also use geotags to see what people are posting in your area, and what seems to be trending on social media in general. At this point, research is paramount, and will enable you to plan your strategy accordingly.

Once you understand your audience and their preferences then start posting pictures accordingly. Simply posting images of your products or services will do very little to interest viewers.



The pictures in the image on the left are from Wholefoodsmarket, the popular food chain. Now although all these in some form or another reflect their business, they are not simply product pictures

That's exactly what you need to do. You need to post photos and videos that reflect your business rather than literally hoarding the newsfeed with boring and uninspiring imagery. Try not to post too many pictures or videos at a time, just once a day or thrice three or four times a week should suffice.

The Power of Hashtags

Hashtags are the compass of an image or video. They are the ones that lead you to your potential consumers and lead those looking for the products and services you offer straight to your profile.

Hashtags are simple to use but quite difficult to strategize. Misleading hashtags can negatively impact the credibility of your business, whereas targeted hashtags can lead to more followers and thus more potential customers. So how do you hashtag effectively?

Here are a few tips and tricks to help you make the most of Instagram's hashtags:

- Make sure that you tag the location, so that you can narrow down your audience to those who can purchase your products and services.
- Use specific tags rather than generic ones. For example, rather than using generic tags like #print or #silk or #love for the picture on the right, you could be more specific. For this particular image hashtags like #floralprints, #summerlove or #newarrivals or #fabricdiscount will likely attract the targeted audience you want. The more specific the hashtags, the more specific the audience.
- Now Facebook has introduced hashtags, so be sure to add the tags when sharing your Instagram posts on Facebook as well as on Twitter, Pinterest, and Tumblr.
- Instagram offers a generous 30 tag limit, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you need to use all 30. Try to keep hashtags limited to 6-10. Too many hashtags can be annoying and irrelevant.
- Do not use tags that have very little or no connection to the image or video, regardless of how well they are trending. You will only be wasting your time on tags that do very little to add value to your potential customers.



- Try using two or three tags with a similar context so that you don't miss out on potential customers. For instance, rather than using simple terms like #shoes or #sports to promote your new range of sportswear, you can use tags of a star athlete, or the latest games like #Wimbledon or #T20 etc. to reach out to a wider, relative audience. This also ensures that the content relevant to recent events your followers are actually interested in. Be sure to keep a track of what works and what doesn't. If your photos or videos are not generating the desired traffic, it is time to revamp your hashtags.
- You can also add popular tags with the specific ones to increase visibility. Doing so will give you exposure to the general audience along with the targeted one. The following are the 20 most popular tags on Instagram as of July 2013:

1. #love	2. #instagood	3. #me	4. #tbt
5. #cute	6. #photooftheday	7. #instamood	8. #iphonesia
9. #picoftheday	10. #igers	11. #girl	12. #tweegram
13. #beautiful	14. #instadaily	15. #summer	16. #instagramhub

You will need to check from time to time to see which ones are trending each month. According to statistics released by Hubspot, pictures with hashtags had a higher likes-to-follower ratio than those without hashtags. You should be utilizing hashtags with each photo and video you post.

What Likes and Comments Can Do for You

There are about 1 billion daily "likes" on Instagram. That's a lot of likes by a lot of people. So how do you make your mark with such competition? And what good could these likes and comments do anyway? In the easiest of terms, "likes" help build the popularity of your business and brand.

What happens when Kim Kardashian or David Beckham post a picture of a random tree against a blank sky? It gets hoarded with likes and comments regardless of the quality of the image or its aesthetic appeal.

Those likes or comments are not always for the image or video, but for the personality and the desire for association. That's what your images and videos can do for you provided you give your targeted audience something to associate themselves with. Perhaps coverage of a specific event, a shout-out to a star customer or simply asking for opinions on a specific promotional campaign.

Generating likes and comments can be tricky, but also interesting and productive at the same time. Where likes can help increase popularity and association, comments can help start conversations and engagement.

Who You Need to Be Following

Followers will follow as long as you keep on adding value to their time, whether it is through a blast from the past or futuristic ideas. The trick is to keep them engaged, interested and educated.

However, Instagram is not just about increasing your number of followers, it's also about you following the right people. You will also need to start following relevant users in order to get a good idea of what the others are saying, and how you can integrate that knowledge into your own promotional strategies in Instagram and elsewhere.

You need to be following people you like as well as your competition on Instagram to get a good idea of what the world is saying. For instance, if you run an online business selling umbrellas, then you need to know the weather in your area at all times. You also need to know what new products, services or value your competitors are offering to your potential customers.

If they are offering giveaways or discounts then are they working? Are their posts getting likes and comments? If yes, then what kind of pictures are they posting? Seeking answers to these questions will help you strategize and post pictures and videos that create customers and brand loyalty

When to Post

Timing is very important when it comes to posting on any social networking site, whether to attract new followers or engage the present ones. Posting images and videos is as much a science as it is an art. Instagram has a life span of about 3-4 hours, which means after that it will get so lost in the newsfeed that the chances of being found will be pretty much nonexistent.

Make sure that you post at a time when there is the most traffic. Ideal times are mornings, evenings, lunch breaks and weekends. Basically – right when people get to work, when people are taking a lunch break, and when people come home from work. Many people generally use Instagram while commuting to or from work. This is the best time to reach out to them - in the early morning hours, around 8-9 am or during the evening around 5-7pm. According to a survey by Simply Measured, the most ideal time for engagement on Instagram is during 5-6pm on Wednesdays. Now, this might be a little too specific, and may not work for your targeted audience, but it offers a good gauge.

You can experiment by posting at different times on different days to see what generates the most feedback in terms of likes and comments. Make sure you don't post a picture every hour on the same day. Even a great picture will seem annoying if it's too excessive. A good idea is to post around five images in a week and keep a journal of the feedback on each image. Then, change the timings the next week.

This might seem like too much work, but it's essential when it comes to knowing your potential consumers and their habits. Also make sure to keep a record of what kind of images, videos and hashtags generate the most followers, likes and comments.

Engaging in social media for business gives you an insight into your potential customers' preferences, likes and dislikes.

Chapter Four

How To Keep Your Followers Engaged

Getting followers is just the first milestone. It is like convincing a shopper to stop at your window and check the display. But the display will not generate into sales if the content inside is not worth checking out. Hence, you will need to dress it up and keep offering a variety of items and displays so the shopper remains engaged and ready to take it to the next level - sales.

Selling your products and services with the help of images and videos is not a new concept; it has been in play for a very long time, pretty much since the beginning of advertising. Whether in newspapers or TV ads, visuals have had a major impact on consumers' decision-making, but the consumers' needs and habits are evolving, which means your strategies need to evolve too. Instagram is that evolution, rather than knocking on a potential consumer's doorstep you invite them into your own space and then gradually turn them from followers to customers.

But that transition is not an easy one. Once you have your followers you will need to constantly keep on developing interesting visual content that targets your audience at the right time and in the right manner.

Know Your Followers and Fans

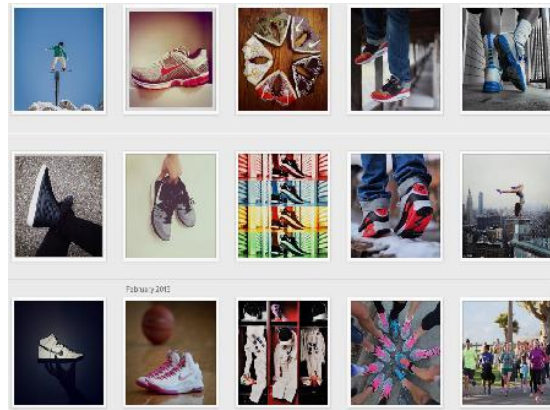
The first step will be to know your followers and fans. This might seem similar to knowing your target audience, but it differs in the sense that you need to be very specific and cater to those who have already shown interest in your brand by following you. Be sure to research what their preferences are, what they seem to be purchasing and what kind of content they are most interested in.

Analyze which pictures and videos create the biggest ripple, what kind of posts increase your website traffic and what videos and photos your followers are talking about. Understanding your audience is your first step to entertaining and inspiring them, so make sure that you keep a constant check through and through.

The fact that you have a decent amount of followers does not say much if they aren't interested in the content you are posting. It is only through engagement that those followers will convert, and the first step towards that is to understand them.

What to Post

You know you need to be posting interesting photos and images, but how do you come up with content that can compete against over 40 million new pictures every day? That is a lot of pictures, but that does not mean you cannot come up with another unique one each day to engage your targeted audience with.



The following are a few tips and tricks to make your photos and videos worth a second look:

- Primarily you will need to show your products so that your followers can identify your company with the products that you promote. But these product photos or videos don't necessarily need to be boring. For instance, these images from Nike's Instagram page show their products in a way that is both promotional and inspirational. Be creative.
- Allow your followers to see how your products are made, whether through photos or videos. Make a small video of a muffin at your coffee shop or a photo of a designer at work for your web development firm. There is a story

behind every product and service, and by sharing it with your followers you will be letting them in on it.

- Show the usability of your products and services by posting pictures or videos of people using them. You can also ask your followers to share photos using a designated hashtag to do the same.
- Make your Instagram followers feel valuable. They are a special bunch that took the time out to follow you and stay updated with your posts. They need to be given attention. Offer exclusive content, or announce new offerings, deals or products on your Instagram page before it is announced elsewhere.
- Give them previews of exclusive content like a new product in the making, office renovations or even preparations for an office party. There is nothing more personal and engaging then giving your followers a sneak peek into what actually goes on behind the curtains.
- Introduce your employees. This will humanize your brand and will encourage your employees to work better knowing that they are being acknowledged and appreciated. You can also use it as an ongoing campaign to post the picture of the employee of the week or something like the best picture taken by an employee.
- There is nothing more interesting than a celebrity sighting.. Of course, you shouldn't stalk Beyoncé with a Smartphone in hand, but simply being on the lookout for local and known celebrities to see if they are using your brand or endorsing something that is related to your industry is a good idea.
- Let them know where you have been, as it will help followers connect with you on a more personal level. If you have been at a trade fair, a promotional event, press conference or even at the airport, let your followers know. Make sure that you post a picture with a location and invite them to join you.
- Animals and babies almost always sell. A cute picture will almost always get a like or comment. Post pictures of a stray dog in front of your office or a baby checking your products out, as long as it is cute; make sure you capitalize on it!

- Just like most forms of art, pictures and videos need to be thought provoking. Otherwise, the purpose is lost. Try to set a theme or tone with your photos. If you are keeping it light and funny, don't change the tone abruptly, or you could risk losing your followers.

What You Need to Offer

According to eMarketer, one in four people around the world are using social media. It is no wonder why businesses have turned to social media to promote their brand. However, this also means there are plenty of businesses offering plenty of great opportunities to keep their audiences engaged and educated.

You will need to fight for their attention each time you post a photo or video. The best way to do that is to make offers that are hard to ignore and harder to refuse. Here are a few ways you can get your followers involved by offering something in return for their time and effort:

Photo Contests

Everyone loves a photo contest. You get to showcase your photography skills to a larger audience, and get rewarded for it too. Photo contests are also a good way to spike up your followers. You can ask users to post photos of themselves using your products with your company's hashtag, along with an interesting caption. Or, they can post their favorite piece of furniture, or an item that reminds them of their first pet.

The ideas are endless. Be sure to offer an attractive prize as a reward. It can be a subscription to your own services, a goody bag, tickets to a concert, or a popular product like a Smart phone or a tablet, depending on your niche, market and budget.

Photo a Day Contests

Photo a Day contests have become widely popular on Instagram. All you need to do is offer a 30-day challenge to post a picture with a different theme each day. The ideas can be as specific or as general as you'd like them to be. Simply make a thirty-day plan and post a picture of it on your blog or Instagram along with the start and end date.

There can be a theme for the whole contest such as winter. Each day can be a little more specific like Christmas, snowflakes, fireplaces, reflection, snowman etc. You can have a random Picture Photo a Day contest as well. The closer the theme is to the industry that you cater to, the more relevant and productive the outcome. Don't forget to offer desirable prizes and ask your followers to tag the photos appropriately.

You Don't HAVE To Give Away A Prize

You do not necessarily need to offer prizes to make your followers feel special. Simply ask them to hashtag your product, brand or company name every time they use it, along with a good picture. Post a picture of the most interesting picture each week. Just the acknowledgment can go a long way when it comes to engagement on social media.

Unique Hashtags

Unique hashtags are another way to make lasting impressions on Instagram. Many businesses use special hashtags to promote events or new products on Instagram and on Twitter. For instance, Red Bull's #givesyouwings, General Electric's #GEinspiredme and Jason Marz's #IWONTGIVEUP are some examples of how you can use unique hashtags to make contests. Ask followers to get involved using

specific themes. Each unique hashtag comes with its own associated RSS Feed, making it easier to subscribe to relevant photos.

Chapter Five

Instagram For Branding

Businesses today are based as much on the quality of their products and services, as they are on branding. You might be offering awesome products, but if they are not associated with a brand, the success will be greatly limited. Branding is a long, hard and slow process, or so it was before social media.

Now, you can easily brand your business by showcasing it to your audience the way you want it to be seen, but this too will require constant efforts and strategic planning. The first step to branding your business on Instagram (and in general) will be to decide how you want your targeted audience to associate with it.

Many businesses make the mistake of looking for successful recipes for branding, and so they make their business affordable and exclusive, innovative and traditional and for young and for old, all at the same time. But that's not branding, on the contrary, that's spreading yourself too thin. You want to find a niche audience when promoting your business on Instagram. You cannot post pictures of a the sky followed by an important seminar on "How to Increase Employee Productivity."

You will need to make your photos coherent and your strategy well researched and thought out. This doesn't mean you cannot post pictures of a sky looking beautiful, this only means that it needs to have some association with your brand.

Build Momentum about Your Products or Services

Followers will associate your business with a specific product or service if they already have a connection with them. A lot of businesses today start building

momentum about their products or services prior to the release in order to increase followers' interest and knowledge.

You can also share pictures or videos of work in progress, or even the picture of your graphic designer with a thinking expression on and an interesting caption like "That's how he came up with the awesome idea we will announce next week."

You can also take tricky or confusing pictures or videos and ask your followers to guess what your new offering is and perhaps even offer a reward or prize to the one that gets it right. You can also lure them into checking your website out for more exclusive content. Be sure to add a link that goes back to a specific, relevant page on your site.

Asking for Feedback and Opinions

Your followers are your valued customers or potential customers, and so it is important that you make them feel special and let them know that their opinion matters. Ask them for feedback through photos and videos about their experience with your products or services.

Asking for feedback and addressing it will not only help create a bond it will also lead to more sales, and brand identification.

Chapter Six

How To Turn Followers Into Customers

The primary objective of using Instagram for business purposes is to eventually turn leads into sales, to make your followers your customers. It is important that your photos and videos lead your customers to your website and prompt them to subscribe to your newsletters, and download your e-books.

Your strategies need to be designed in such a manner that your videos and photos encourage the viewers to show interest in your products and services.

Call to Action

A call to action directs your followers where you want them to go, so they convert into sales. Make sure that you have a call to action along with a link. If you are posting pictures for an upcoming event, a trade fair, a new product launch or even a sunny day, tell them to see what you have to offer.

For instance, add a link to accept your invitation to a trade fair, or a link to how your products and services will compliment the weather or more information about your upcoming projects. Guide your followers and make it easy for them to find the link.

Promo Codes

Deal seekers are everywhere, and they are constantly on the lookout for the best deals in town. No longer do people spend ages looking at magazines or newspapers for coupons or discounts. Coupons have made it online, and social media in particular has become a popular spot to hunt for them.

Promo codes have become widely popular on Twitter and Instagram and many businesses are using them to keep followers wanting more. Create images that offer exclusive coupons and discounts for any of your products and services. It is a fast way to boost sales and attract new followers. Don't forget to hashtag #promocode with each of your promotional images to increase accessibility.

Promote Latest Offers and Deals

You can easily promote your latest offers and deals on Instagram. All you need to do is take a picture of your pamphlet or promotional deal and post it on Instagram. Make sure that you include all the information, such as the pricing or total discount along with when it will be made available.

Businesses are making new offers by the minute on social media, so people don't have enough time or patience to inquire further about them. It is ideal that you provide all the necessary information within an image to help potential customers make a quick decision.

Reply!

Almost every relationship in this world is a two-way street, especially when it comes to customer relations. Simply asking your customers to post pictures, hashtag your products or services or come to your events is not enough. It is important that you acknowledge their efforts and thank them for it. Comment on photos of consumers using your products or mentioning you, or even hash-tagging you with either positive or negative feedback.

Chapter Seven

Integrating Instagram With Other Social Sites

Instagram is a strong platform on its own, but it can become stronger if you integrate it with other social networking sites. Once you connect your Instagram page to other sites, your posts will start showing in those site feeds, increasing your visibility and accessibility. The following are some of the most popular social networking sites, and how they can increase the traffic and productivity of your business:

Facebook

With more than a billion users, there is no question about the potential of Facebook for business. Most businesses, no matter how small or large, today spend a good chunk of their marketing budget on Facebook advertisements and marketing, and for good reason.

If marketing is about reaching out to your potential customers, then Facebook is an indispensable tool. You can easily link your Instagram page to your Facebook page as long as you are the business's designated administrator. Just go to the Sharing settings and tap the Facebook button. Connect Instagram to Facebook on your device and authorize the business's Facebook account.



If you have been logged in on your personal Facebook account then you will need to tap on “Logout and unlink account” so that you can log in from the company's account. By default, the device will start posting on your

Facebook timeline and Instagram simultaneously.

If you would like to change that option, then tap on “Share Photos to” and select the pages that you would like the Instagram photos to be posted on. Post your Instagram link in your About Us page on Facebook in order to increase your visibility.

From time to time, also post a status on Facebook prompting your Facebook followers to follow you on Instagram. You can also sync and import Facebook and phone contacts to start following them on Instagram and request them to like you back. Also ask your friends on your personal Facebook page to share your Instagram link as well as photos from time to time.

Twitter

For your followers on Twitter, share your emotions wrapped up in a photo rather than the limited 140 characters. As far as micro-blogging goes, Twitter is the only name you need to know about, but sometimes the limited amounts of characters do not convey your products or services the way they need to be conveyed, and for times like that, sharing it through Instagram is your most viable option.



Twitter is yet another powerful tool, and with its similar hashtag option, it gives you the freedom to share your image with over 500 million users and around 135,000 daily new users.

Foursquare

Foursquare is a location-based website that allows people to check-in at places and earn points and discounts for doing so. Foursquare brand pages are very popular, and if you already have one then you can make the most of it by integrating it with Instagram too.

All you need to do is choose “Add to Your Photo Map” when uploading photos and then tap on the Foursquare share button once you choose the location.

These are only a few of the most popular social networking sites that you can link Instagram to including Tumblr and Flickr among many others. Instagram offers a plethora of options to choose from. If there is a site catering to your niche market, check out the sharing options sync it with Instagram.

Embedding Photos and Videos

Instagram also allows users to embed photos and videos directly on a web page. If you have an active blog, you can easily share your photos and videos on the webpage without having to provide links back to your profile. All you need to do is copy the embedding link and place it anywhere you’d like.

Instagram keeps on upgrading and adding new features, making it easier for users to always stay ahead of any of the visual and technical advancements in the industry.

Other Apps That Integrate Well With Instagram

You can also integrate Instagram with other third party apps. There are plenty of applications out there that target Instagram by adding extra filters and tools for pictures and videos.

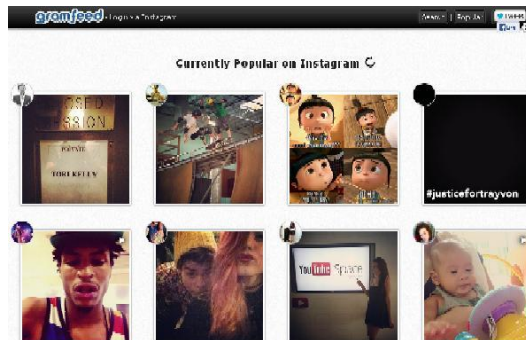
Using these apps can increase the quality of your photos and videos and lead to a more visually appealing end product.

The following are some of the most popular applications that you can use to get the most out of Instagram:

Hipstamatic

Hipstamatic is an iPhone application that allows you to take square photos with a vintage film camera appeal. You can choose from a large number of filters to make your images more visually appealing. With over 1.4 million copies sold since 2010, Hipstamatic has a lot to offer Instagram users in terms of image quality. The application presents stimulated lenses, flashes and films to create beautifully processed pictures. With the application landing a third place in the Pictures of the Year International award to Damon Winter, the app has proved its worth as a must-have addition for Instagram. Hipstamatic allows users to share photos directly to Instagram. Simply select the image you wish to share and then tap on the Instagram icon. You can also write a caption, camera and lens details as well as the #hipstamatic hashtag.

Gramgrab



Gramgrab is a simple web application that helps you keep track of photo details. By hovering over a photo you can check what filters were used, how many number of likes it has and the time of upload. If you would like more details about the images that people are uploading, then this app is your answer.

GramFeed

Gramfeed allows you to check photos, like them, share them on Facebook, Pin them on Pinterest, and comment on them from your web browser. So if you don't have

your phone handy or would like a convenient app with multiple features, then Gramfeed is quite helpful.

Prinstagram

As the name suggests, Prinstagram helps you print Instagram photos. The application also enables you to create posters, stickers and mini albums. So if you have been looking for ideas on how to decorate your display window for Christmas, then Prinstagram is worth checking out.

Statigram

Statigram is a web app that includes a custom Facebook tab, statistics; cover creator as well as Timeline integration. It is a great addition to keep you posted about your Instagram statistics and to create visually appealing covers, along with other great features.

There are plenty of applications to choose from that make Instagram an even smoother and greater experience for your followers and business.

Conclusion

The fact is, businesses small and large are using Instagram to reach out to their customers, and there is no reason why you can't do the same. Instagram is a powerful tool that helps you connect with your potential consumers in the most visually appealing manner possible.

Instagram may not have started off as a platform for business marketing, but its potential for greater sales and productivity has made it a promising hub nonetheless. Every marketing strategy comes with a unique flavor that expresses the individualistic characteristics of a business.

You cannot expect to strike a chord with your audience without understanding them and their preferences. You need to know what they like and you need to understand how your business can reach out to them in a way that is both effective and profitable. Undoubtedly, Instagram is only set to grow in the foreseeable future. Keep in mind the increasing number of photo-sharing sites available today. There is nothing more effective than a photo that strikes a chord with its audiences and impacts their purchasing decisions.

There are plenty of ways that you can use Instagram for your business, as mentioned in this e-book. But beyond it all, it is important to keep your photos and videos reflective of your business practices. What might be working for one business will not necessarily work for yours if it seems repetitive or careless. You will need to keep your content fresh and unique to build a trusting and reliable relationship with your audiences.

Integrating Instagram into your business strategy is an art that requires careful planning. Be sure to strategize well before taking your potential customers on this visual ride.

If you follow the advice in Instagram Impact it will without a doubt help you and your business to thrive.

Thanks for reading.

Here's to your success!