

# INSTAGRAM FOR BUSINESS IN 2018

USING INSTAGRAM STORIES, CAROUSELS, ADS, INFLUENCERS, AND MORE!



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# Introduction

**It's amazing how much Instagram has evolved in just a few years. Once a place for selfies and photos of your food, Instagram in 2018 is as much a marketing platform for businesses as it is a social network for over 800 million people.**

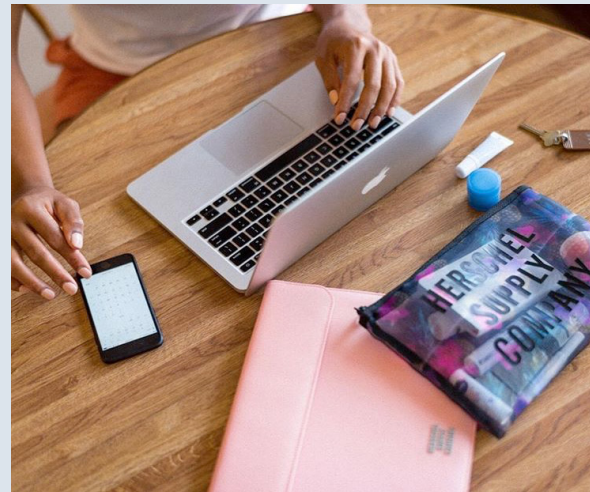
Just look at Instagram's newest features! In the last year alone, Instagram has released dozens of new features for businesses, including new ad types, paid partnership tools, and new ways to drive traffic and make sales.

And as more businesses use Instagram to connect with customers, brand strategy has expanded to include new goals and key performance indicators (KPIs). While businesses used to focus mainly on increasing brand awareness, Instagram is slowly but surely transforming into a full-on sales channel, with more businesses than ever before focusing on Instagram advertising, influencer marketing, and product promotion.

No matter what industry you work in, it pays to build a presence on Instagram. But if you really want to get ahead, you need to know the platform (and your audience!) inside and out, including what kinds of content resonate most, how to build an Instagram Stories strategy, and how to track your metrics and KPIs.

That's where this guide from HubSpot and Later comes in to help. In the following, we provide a comprehensive look at Instagram for business, highlighting the features and strategies that you need to be investing in. Ready?

**Let's get started!**



# How the Instagram Algorithm Works in 2018

If you already use Instagram for business, you've probably noticed a recent-ish decline in your Instagram engagement. Don't worry, it's not just you. Accounts of all sizes are getting fewer likes, comments, and followers than they did in the past. And it all has to do with Instagram's algorithm.

**The Instagram algo-what now?** If this is your first time hearing about the Instagram algorithm, here's the long and short of it:

The Instagram algorithm is a set of complex rules and factors that Instagram uses to determine what posts show up in your feed, and in what order.

This is a huge difference from the early days of Instagram, when the feed was chronological and users just saw the most recent posts. Now, Instagram is more like Facebook, and uses an algorithm to determine what content you will be interested in seeing in your feed.

This is especially important for businesses who want to get their posts seen by their followers! The Instagram algorithm determines how "good" a piece of content is by taking into consideration factors like the amount of engagement a post receives, or how many comments it gets. If a piece of content is deemed good, Instagram will show it to more users. But if it's deemed bad or unpopular, Instagram will limit the number of users it gets shown to.

Previously, businesses didn't have to worry about strategizing to get maximum engagement on their posts -- you could get by pretty easily by just posting consistently. Today, that's no longer the case. If you want to succeed on Instagram, you have to optimize for the Instagram algorithm.

Indeed, the Instagram marketer of today has to be extremely diligent: Is the call-to-action in your caption strong enough? Did you use the right combination of hashtags? Are you posting at the best possible time? Is your Instagram feed attractive as a whole? Businesses are under more pressure than ever to create compelling content and engage with their followers in unique and creative ways.

While we may not understand the intricacies of what makes the Instagram algorithm tick, we do know several factors that determine how your post will perform (and how many people will see it!). **Here are 5 of the most important factors:**

## 1 HOW MUCH ENGAGEMENT YOU GET

In general, posts with high engagement (likes, comments, shares, views, etc.) will rank higher on your Instagram feed. When a post receives a ton of likes and comments, this signals to the Instagram algorithm that it's quality, engaging content, so the post gets shown it to more users. If you can optimize the engagement rate, you increase the chances of getting more eyes on your Instagram posts.

Keep in mind that it isn't always about how much engagement a post receives. In some cases, the Instagram algorithm cares more about how quickly a post receives its engagement.

[Scheduling Instagram posts](#) for optimal times is an important strategy to overcome the Instagram algorithm and get your posts seen by more people. Why?

Because if you post at a time when most of your audience is online, you're giving yourself a better shot at getting more engagement, faster. If you get a lot of likes and comments shortly after posting, this signals to Instagram that your post is quality content and should be shown to more people.

## 2 HOW LONG PEOPLE SPEND VIEWING YOUR POST

The Facebook algorithm looks at the length of time you spend interacting with content, and it's no different with Instagram. The Instagram algorithm tracks the amount of time users spend viewing your post and then uses that to determine whether or not it should show that post to other users.

What does that mean for you? Writing captivating Instagram captions and posting quality photos are things that can stand out in the Instagram feed and get people to spend a bit more time looking at your post, instead of just scrolling by.

## 3 YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND FAVORITE ACCOUNTS

If you engage with a particular account regularly, you're telling Instagram that you really like that account's content. As a result, Instagram will show you more of that person's content in your feed. This is why you probably see your mom's Instagram posts at the top of your feed, even if she only has 20 followers and a few likes on each photo.

The same thing goes for people who love your business' content: if they are regularly liking, commenting, watching your Instagram Stories, or saving your content, your posts are more likely to be shown to them.

## 4

### WHEN YOU POST

Another factor that the Instagram algorithm takes into consideration is the timeliness of a post, a.k.a. how recently it was posted. The Instagram algorithm will likely show you more recent posts rather than posts from a few days or weeks ago — but again, this isn't always true.

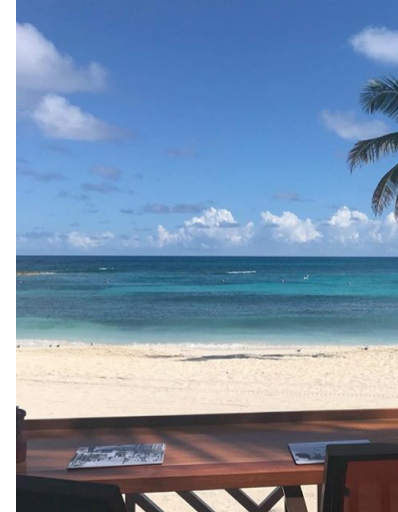
It really depends on how often you browse Instagram. If you only open the app a few times per week, you're more likely to see top posts from a few days ago, because Instagram wants to catch you up on anything you missed.

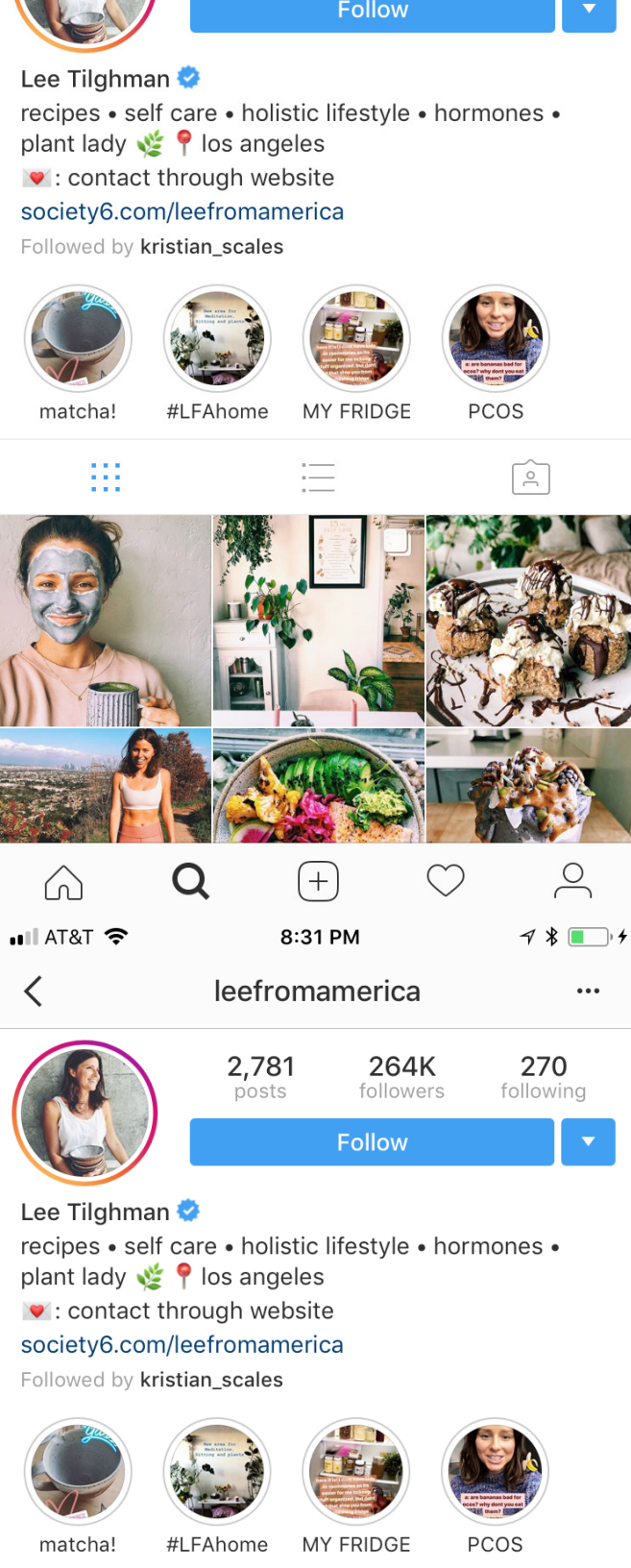
## 5

### WHAT TYPES OF CONTENT YOU POST

If the only factor the Instagram algorithm cared about was engagement, then we'd all see the exact same content! Luckily, the “genre” or type of content you engage with plays a big role in what content you see on your feed.

Have you ever noticed that if you engage with a bunch of accounts of a certain genre (sports highlights, for example), Instagram will begin showing you more of that content? This is the relevancy factor at play. If Instagram determines that you like a particular type of content, such as the NBA, it will do its best to show you other similar content that it thinks you will also find interesting, like posts from the LA Lakers.





# Your Instagram Profile

In 2018, your Instagram feed will become just as important as the homepage on your website. It's a big claim, we know. But the fact is that more and more people are turning to Instagram instead of Google to search for brands.

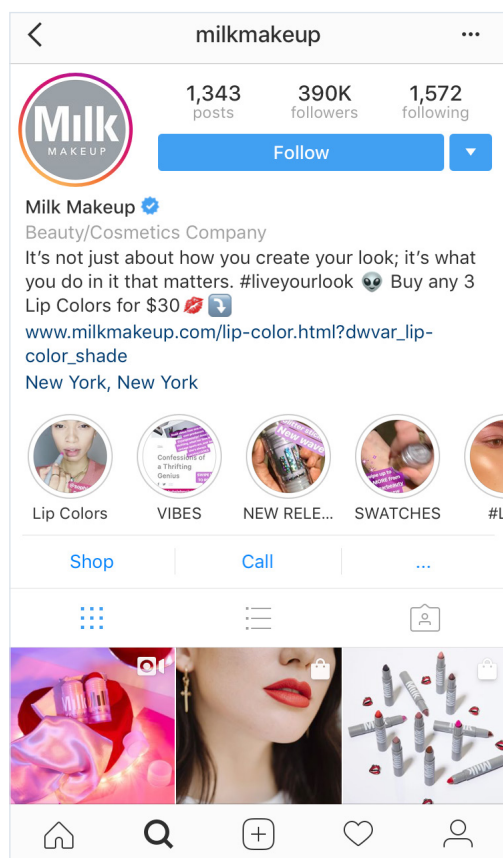
That's why we recommend taking a good hard look at your Instagram profile. Have you optimized the copy in your [Instagram bio](#)? Have you switched to an Instagram business profile? Do you have a consistent and appealing Instagram aesthetic?

Your profile is the first opportunity you have to make a great impression and entice people to hit that "follow" button. And by creating a consistent brand story through your Instagram aesthetic and bio, you can turn those casual visitors into devoted, engaged followers.

Here's how to get your Instagram profile in tip-top shape:

## OPTIMIZE YOUR INSTAGRAM BIO

Before we get into the nitty-gritty, let's talk about Instagram business profiles. As a business on Instagram with clear marketing goals, we can't stress enough the benefits that come from switching to a business profile rather than a classic personal account.



While personal profiles are all about the basics, when you switch to an Instagram business profile you get access to a ton of advanced features, like Instagram Insights, promoted posts, and a “Contact” button, which makes it way easier to connect with your followers.

Switching to an Instagram business profile isn't mandatory, of course. But it certainly has its advantages. Here are some other ways to optimize your Instagram bio:

## Prezi (official)

### 1. YOUR NAME

The first step to creating good Instagram bios is making sure that your name is, in fact, your name! (By this, we mean the “name” field in your profile, not your Instagram username).

People searching for you on Instagram will likely use your name or your company's name, and consistency lets people know that the Instagram profile they're viewing actually belongs to you and not an impostor. Don't try to be unique, make your Instagram name your company name or as close a variation as possible to be search-friendly.

Born from humble beginnings in Canada's capital city, NRML has emerged to become one of North America's premier streetwear and sneaker boutiques.

### 2. YOUR BACKGROUND

A good Instagram bio accurately explains what your business is and what you do. So if you want to stand out for a particular topic or interest, you should include these details in your Instagram bio as well.

Think about what sets you apart from your competitors. Does your business offer a product or experience that might be of interest to your followers? Not only will including these in your Instagram bio serve as an introduction to new viewers, but it can also determine whether they'll follow you.



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### 3. KEYWORDS

Using keywords won't improve your searchability on Instagram (except, as we mentioned above, your "name" in your Instagram bio) but it will give your account more focus and help you connect with followers who want to engage with your content!

When deciding what keywords to include in your Instagram bio, try to think about both your own core values and the core values of your target audience. Using keywords that target your niche audience will help users better understand who you are, what you have to offer, and whether or not your account is relevant to them!



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### 4. WEBSITE LINK

Unlike other social networks, Instagram is strict on where clickable links can be placed. Currently, Instagram only gives users one clickable link on their profile, and it's the link in your bio.

A lot of businesses use the link to send followers to their homepage or blog, which is great! But for ecommerce businesses that want to send followers to specific product pages, campaigns, or webinars, the lack of hot links is a huge challenge.

One way to get around this restriction is to use a shoppable Instagram feed, which makes it easier to drive targeted traffic to your online store. When one of your followers clicks on the link in your bio, they'll be taken to a web and mobile-optimized landing page that resembles your Instagram feed and displays your Instagram posts as clickable images!

Learn how to build your own shoppable Instagram feed with [Linkin.bio!](#)

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### 5. YOUR EMAIL

While adding a link to your website in your Instagram bio is always a good idea, it's also becoming more common for users to share their email in their Instagram bio.

You can skip this step if you're on an Instagram business profile, as you already have access to a "Contact" button. With the contact button, you have the option to include directions, a phone number, and/or and email address.

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### 6. YOUR BRANDED HASHTAG

Whether you're promoting an Instagram contest or user-generated content (UGC) campaign, including your branded hashtag in your Instagram bio is a fantastic way to drive engagement on your posts. Just keep in mind that the hashtags in your Instagram bio are clickable on the web, but not on the mobile app!

@goop is a modern lifestyle site and shop. Read our stories by tapping our bio link 📌 and then click the post you want to see.

### 7. YOUR CALL-TO-ACTION

The simple act of including a call-to-action in your Instagram bio and inviting your audience to comment or engage can go a very long way when it comes to driving more engagement on your posts.

Make sure that you have a clear call-to-action in your bio, whether it's telling your followers to shop your feed, subscribe to your email list, or buy tickets to your event.

## OPTIMIZE YOUR INSTAGRAM PROFILE

Businesses today spend more time than ever planning the overall aesthetic of their Instagram feeds, and with good reason. Building an attractive Instagram feed is important if you want to get more followers and engagement.

It's a lot like your businesses' website. Whereas a nice-looking feed can give you credibility and shows your followers that you care, an ugly feed can have a negative impact how potential customers perceive your brand.

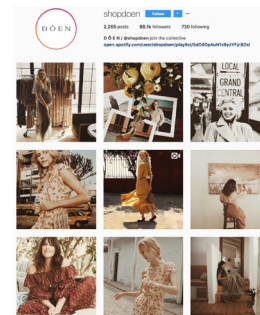
At the end of the day, if you're using Instagram to find and connect with customers, you need to put some effort into the look of your feed. It's as simple as that.

So how exactly does one actually go about building a nice Instagram feed? Here are three key steps:

### 1. YOUR INSTAGRAM AESTHETIC

The look and feel of your Instagram feed is the first impression people get of your business, so it's important to make it count. If your feed looks amazing at first glance, regardless of your industry, you'll grow your Instagram community faster.

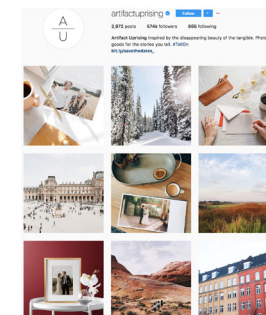
So what makes for a great Instagram aesthetic. Here are three tips:



#### Pick a color scheme

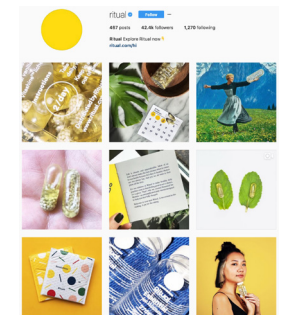
It's important that you have a consistent color scheme for your Instagram feed. What this means is that all the colors in your feed seamlessly go together. This could be a warm and cozy feed, a dark and cool feed, or a bright and colourful feed.

Whatever direction you take, having a consistent color palette is a great way to incorporate your branding into your Instagram feed.



#### Focus on lighting

Lighting is a key element for curation and aesthetic. Think of an upscale magazine that you love to read. Regardless of the subject matter, what ties it together and makes a theme is the lighting and color choices. The consistency of those choices are the ingredients for your Instagram aesthetic.



#### Space out your content

This is probably the hardest part in achieving a gorgeous Instagram aesthetic. You need to know where to put each of your photos and how to plan your feed so that it all blends together.

The goal is to create a depth of field, similar to how you would in photography. You basically want to space out busy photos with a mix of more clean or minimal photos to achieve a nice balance.

#### PRO TIP

Try adding white borders to your images to make this aesthetic work.

## 2. KEEP THINGS CONSISTENT

To help keep your feed flowing naturally, you need to have a [consistent approach to editing your photos](#). This doesn't mean you have to choose one filter and one [filter](#) only, but limiting yourself to a few will help you stick to your chosen aesthetic.

Do you prefer [warmer tones](#)? [Cooler toned images](#)? [Whatever your editing style](#), make sure it's [consistent](#) so that your posts flow within your feed. Even just adding a touch of the same filter each time you post can make your brand and Instagram feed seem more cohesive.

## 3. CURATE WITH USER-GENERATED CONTENT

While more businesses than ever are investing in original content, there's still so much to be gained from incorporating user-generated content (UGC) into your Instagram strategy.

[Keep in mind that when choosing photos to repost to your account](#), it's important to stay [aligned with your theme and aesthetic](#). You'll want to choose photos that are a natural fit and have a similar color scheme and editing style to your own feed. When someone is looking at your Instagram feed, it shouldn't be too obvious which posts are yours and which photos are UGC that you curated.



### PRO TIP

The most important rule for using UGC is to always [ask for permission before reposting someone else's photo to Instagram](#). And when giving credit, you always want to reference the original photographer in the caption. Simply tagging them in the photo isn't enough.

Check out Later's free [State of Instagram Marketing 2018](#) report for actionable insights, tips, and best practices to grow your business faster!

## OPTIMIZE YOUR INSTAGRAM POSTS

While having a beautiful Instagram feed is critical today, it's important not to overlook your individual posts! Currently, Instagram allows three types of posts: photos, videos, and carousel posts. Here's a short breakdown of each:

### Photo posts

Instagram photo posts continue to be the most popular form of content on Instagram, likely because they're easy to create and edit, and they're super versatile.

### Video posts

While not quite as popular as photos, video posts on Instagram tend to receive a lot of engagement, so it makes sense to include them in your marketing mix.

On top of that, video posts tend to be one of the best formats for driving sales, due to their ability to convey complex stories. That's why so many businesses today are investing in creating promotional video content.

### Carousel posts

While carousel posts were only introduced in mid-2017, they've become a favorite for businesses that want to promote new product lines or share event photos and videos. Carousel posts allow you to add up to 10 photos or videos to a single [Instagram post](#), allowing you to share more without the risk of "spamming" your followers with too much content.



## HOW TO DRIVE RESULTS WITH INSTAGRAM CAROUSEL

Since carousel posts were released in 2017, businesses of all sizes have picked up on the Instagram carousel trend and discovered new and creative ways to incorporate them into their Instagram marketing strategy.

There are three great ways to use carousel posts for your business:

### 1. Launch a new product line

Whether you're launching a new denim line or a skin care business, the ability to share several product photos in a single post is perfect for driving interest and, ultimately, sales.

A great strategy for this is to incorporate both photos and videos into your carousel post. For example, you can lead off with a promotional video that shows your product in action, and then follow up with 2-3 photos of your product for more context.

### 2. Share photos and videos from your events

Regular Instagram users do this all time, but using Instagram carousel posts to show off photos from your events is also a great strategy for businesses!

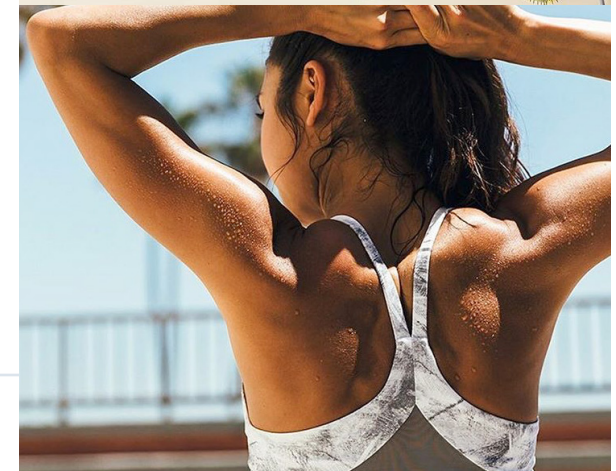
The ability to share multiple photos and videos that capture the energy and atmosphere of your events, without having to spam all of your followers with multiple posts, is a huge advantage.

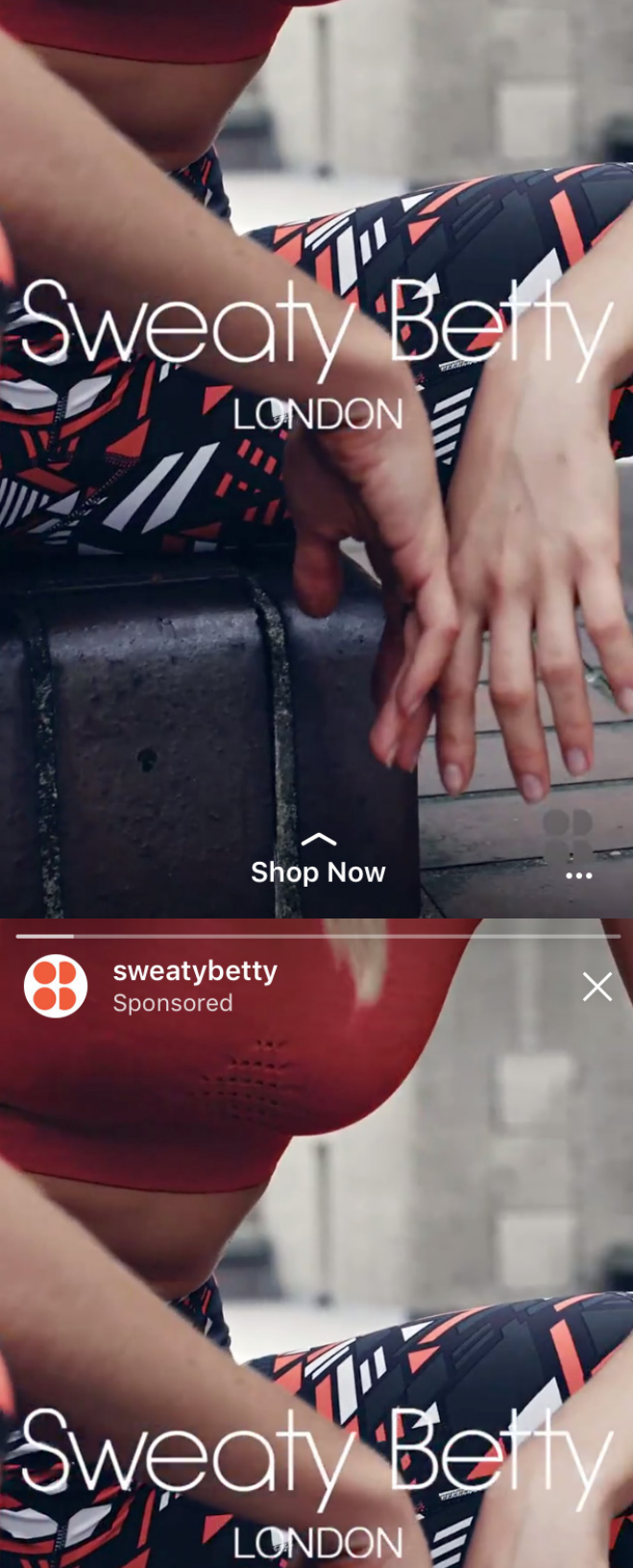
For those who attended your event, it's a great way to tag them in a photo to say thanks and remind them of the fun they had — and for those who missed it, it's perfect for creating FOMO for your next event.

### 3. Showcase before-and-after sequences

This idea for Instagram carousel posts is a little more obvious, but there are just so many applications for before-and-after sequences! For example, you can share a before-and-after sequence of how your products work in real life.

To create before-and-after sequence using Instagram carousel, all you have to do is select your photos and videos in the correct order, write an engaging Instagram caption, and then post to Instagram. You can even share multiple before-and-after sequences in a single carousel post!





## Instagram Stories

**There's no denying that 2017 was the year of Instagram Stories. Instagram's copycat version of Snapchat may not have as many filters, but in 2017 it quickly grew to over 300 million daily active users, which is double the size of Snapchat!**

In 2018, Instagram Stories will become an essential part of your Instagram marketing strategy. In fact, according to [The State of Instagram Marketing 2018](#), 64% of businesses plan to create more Instagram Stories in 2018.

So what explains Instagram Stories' huge success? Well, it partly has to do with the growing popularity of ephemeral video. More and more businesses are seeing the value in creating short-lived video content, whether it's fun and lighthearted or more business-focused. But it also has to do with the number of great features and capabilities that were added to Instagram Stories in 2017. From geo-stickers to clickable links, Instagram invested heavily in Stories last year and it really paid off.

Here are three Instagram Stories features that are perfect for businesses:

## 1 INSTAGRAM STORIES LINKS

Prior to a recent update, only verified accounts on Instagram could add links to their Instagram Stories. But that's all changed now! Today, any Instagram business account with 10,000 or more followers can add links to their Instagram Stories.

It's no surprise that tons of businesses have been quick to adopt this feature. The ability to add links to your Instagram Stories has totally changed the game for businesses. Whereas you only had one hyperlink to work with on Instagram before, with Instagram Stories you can easily drive traffic back to your website or blog.

If you have access to this feature, we definitely recommend using it.

### PRO TIP

The "See More" call-to-action is quite small and can easily go unnoticed, so it's a good idea to call it out using text, arrows, or some of the other design feature on Instagram Stories.



## 2 INSTAGRAM STORIES HIGHLIGHTS

Another big Instagram Stories feature of 2017, Highlights were only added in December last year, but they've already made a big impact for businesses. Unlike regular Instagram Stories that vanish after 24 hours, Instagram Stories Highlights are curated clips grouped together by you and live permanently on your profile until you delete them.

They appear directly under your bio and above your Instagram feed and will play as a stand-alone story when someone taps on it. The feature is literally front and center on your profile.

Instagram Stories Highlights are an extremely valuable addition to an Instagram business profile, because they allow brands to easily curate and showcase the content they want users to see first.

You can think of Highlights like a movie trailer for your Instagram feed. They're a creative way to express yourself, show off products, drive traffic, and market your business!

Using Instagram Stories Highlights is a great way for you to attract new followers, too. Using Highlights you can showcase what your business is, what you offer, and why someone should follow you.

For example, if you're an e-commerce store, you could create Instagram Stories Highlights for different product lines so future followers can instantly understand what you sell.

When Instagram first introduced stickers to Instagram Stories last December, they were more fun than useful. But since that time, Instagram has added a ton of new functionalities to location and hashtag stickers.

Now, when you search for a location or a hashtag on Instagram, you can also see live Instagram Stories for that tag. For example, if you're posting a story from the Empire State Building, add the location sticker to it! Your story could then end up in the Empire State Building's Instagram story, or it could end up in the overall New York City story. This gives you more exposure on Instagram and can potentially lead to more Instagram followers!

## HOW TO USE INSTAGRAM STORIES FOR BUSINESS

Using Instagram Stories for business is now an essential part of any Instagram marketing strategy, and can help you drive engagement, interact with customers, and show your products in action. That being said, it can be hard to find ideas for Instagram Stories and come up with ideas of what to post. Need some inspiration?

Here are four ways that businesses are using Instagram Stories for business:



### 1. Promote your products and/or services

The natural “tapping” progression of Instagram Stories makes it a great place to build anticipation around new products and/or services.

All you have to do is fill up your story with photos of a single product at every angle, on different people, or in different environments, and then hit your followers with a promo code or call-to-action (CTA) at the end!

If you have the ability to add links to your Instagram Stories, this is a great place to do it.

### 2. Build a more engaged community

Like with regular posts, if you're using Instagram Stories for business, it's good to post a mix of fun, lighthearted content and promotional content.

Instagram Stories is a pretty relaxed place in general, and the quality standards are a lot lower than they are for regular posts, so don't be afraid of posting something goofy: a short video of your office dog or a picture of your team out for post-work drinks!



### 3. Run an Instagram Stories takeover

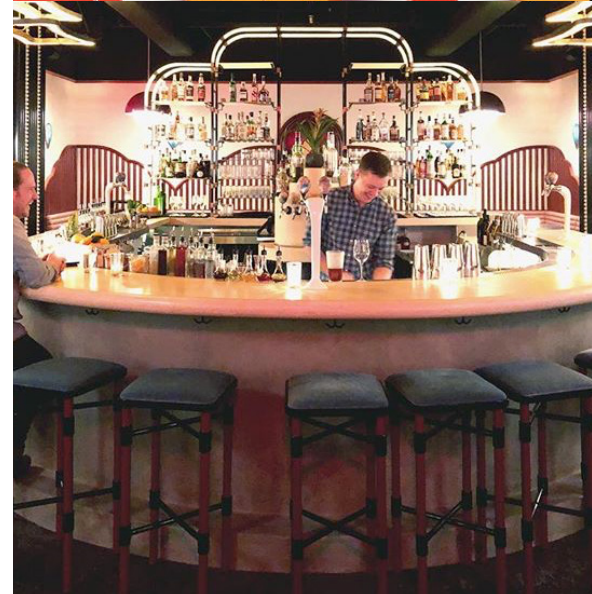
An easy way to switch it up on your Instagram story is to do an Instagram story takeover or invite someone to guest host your story.

Having regular guest segments is an awesome way to bring both variety and consistency to using Instagram Stories for business. To try it out with your own business: you can choose someone from your company for a “day-in-the-life” story, or you can partner with other businesses in your industry to swap stories for the day. It will help vary your content and keep your customers coming back for more.

### 4. Gather follower feedback

Have you ever wanted to survey your Instagram audience about their interests, likes, dislikes, and more? Instagram recently launched new interactive poll stickers on Instagram Stories which let you ask questions and see results from your followers as they vote.

The great thing about poll stickers is that there are so many business uses. Whether you want to collect feedback on your products, crowdsource ideas, or simply entertain your followers, poll stickers offer an entirely new way to engage with your Instagram audience.



# Instagram LIVE

2017 may have been dominated by Instagram Stories, but the future looks bright for live video. If you haven't already, we recommend getting acquainted with the feature soon. According to a [recent survey](#), while only 22% businesses went "live" on Instagram in 2017, 55% plan to use the feature in 2018.

The idea of going "live" on Instagram is, understandably, pretty daunting for most businesses. While Instagram Stories gives you the option of publishing pre-recorded video, there are no "retakes" on Instagram Live.

But the fact is that Instagram Live has huge value for businesses. When used correctly, the feature can be an incredible channel for driving new followers and engagement, as well as your larger business goals.

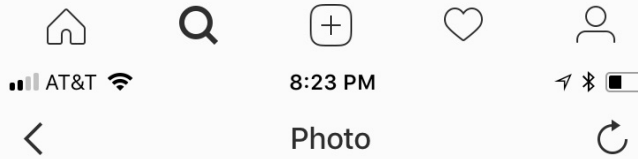


17,846 likes

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This is especially true thanks to two new business-focused features for Instagram Live:

1

## SHARE YOUR BROADCAST ON INSTAGRAM STORIES

Prior to a recent update, [Instagram Live videos could not be replayed or shared after the broadcast](#). And while it created a sense of urgency for viewers to tune-in, there's a ton of value in being able to share your live videos post-broadcast.

[Once your Instagram Live video ends, you'll see a "Share" button at the bottom of the screen](#). It's as simple as that! [Your live broadcast will then live on your Instagram Stories for 24 hours, unless you decide to add it to your highlights](#).

2

## ADD GUESTS TO YOUR INSTAGRAM LIVE STREAM

Instagram added another feature to Instagram Live recently that allows users to add guests to their live streams.

The feature works by letting people who are streaming a video to add anyone who is watching the video at that moment, by clicking on the "Add" button in the corner of the screen. When a person gets added, he or she joins you in a separate window below yours on the screen.

Not only can co-hosting an Instagram Live boost the engagement on your broadcast (by reaching a larger pool of users), but it also opens the door to [co-marketing campaigns](#) where two businesses or influencers partner to promote a product.



## HOW TO USE INSTAGRAM LIVE FOR BUSINESS

If you're hoping to achieve some larger business goals with Instagram Live, such as driving sales or increasing sign ups, it's really important to have a strategy in place. Like Instagram Stories, Instagram Live is a relaxed place and you can get as creative as you like! But with all that room for creativity, it's a good idea to have a solid game plan.

### 1. Tease or launch new products and/or services

A recent trend on Instagram Live is for businesses to use the channel to tease or launch new products. And why not? It's the perfect place to create a ton of hype around your products. Whether you're unveiling a new product line or teasing a future launch, Instagram Live is a great place to drum up excitement around your business.

To make use of this strategy in your live broadcast, take your hottest product and deliberately release very few details about it. The mystery will drive your followers into a frenzy! After the teaser, ask viewers to sign up for more information on your website. This approach gives your live video an element of exclusivity, which can encourage people to act immediately, increasing the number of leads you get.

### 2. Run Q&As, workshops, and tutorials to collect emails

There are a ton of different formats that you can follow during your live broadcast, including Q&As, workshops, and tutorials. Each of these formats are valuable and bound to get you a ton of viewers. But if you really want your business to benefit from Instagram Live, use it as a way to collect emails.

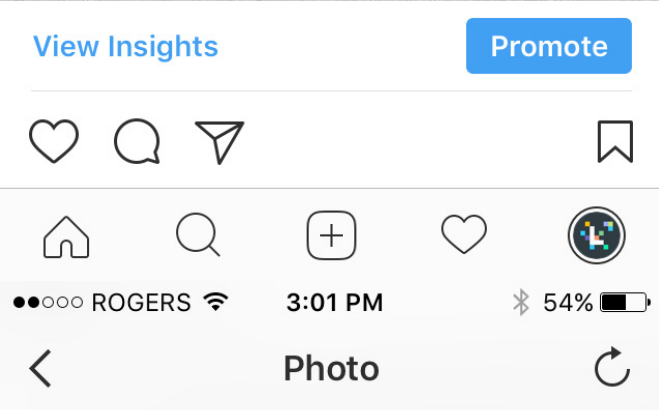
One of the best ways to do this is to ask your followers to submit questions beforehand. You can do this by sending your followers to a landing page with an email form (share the landing page URL in the lead-up to your broadcast), or by providing an email address where viewers can send their questions.

### 3. Promote your sales & campaigns

While Instagram Stories is considered "ephemeral," there's really nothing more ephemeral on Instagram than live video. Use this to your advantage by creating a sense of urgency to watch your broadcast!

One of the best ways to boost your viewership is to promise limited-time-only promotions that you're only going to offer during the broadcast. If you have a giveaway, discount, promotion, or other campaign that you want to offer to a select few, announce it beforehand! And when you go "live," share the coupon or discount code with your viewers.





# Instagram Influencer Marketing

Did you know that over \$1 billion dollars was spent on Instagram influencer marketing in 2017? It shouldn't come as a huge surprise. Instagram influencer marketing has proven to be an easy, inexpensive, and super effective way to grow your business on Instagram.

And as the Instagram algorithm continues to limit the reach of some businesses, we only expect influencer marketing to grow in popularity.

So what makes influencer marketing so effective? Well, it has to do with trust. Influencer marketing removes the barriers of traditional advertising because the customer is introduced to your business from a trusted source (the influencer) on an authentic, casual platform (Instagram).

When an influencer recommends a product or service on their channels, it can come across as a trusted recommendation from a friend. So it's a great way to raise awareness about a new product line or campaign you're running.

## PRO TIP

It's important for both influencers and businesses to disclose their partnerships and sponsored Instagram posts according to the FTC's guides. Currently, the only FTC compliant hashtags are #sponsored and #ad. However, you can also disclose your partnerships by using a unique partnership hashtag like #YournamePartner."

## THE RISE OF MICRO-INFLUENCER MARKETING

Influencer marketing may have grown in popularity thanks to Instagram, but you don't have thousands of dollars to cash in on this trend.

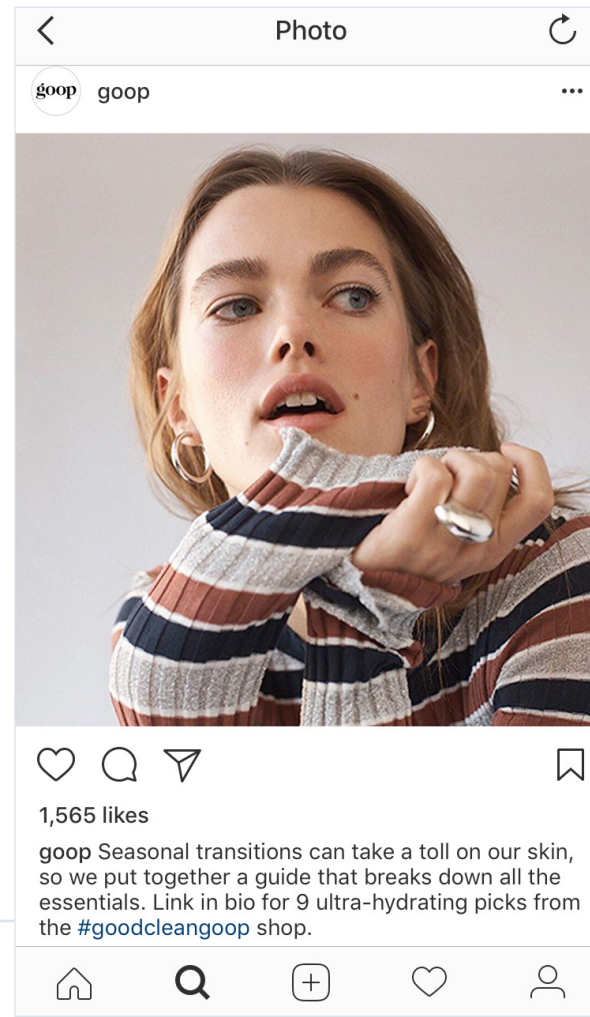
Micro-influencer marketing is officially the next big thing, and brands are already finding success in working with Instagram accounts that have smaller followings.

So, what exactly is a micro-influencer? It depends on who you ask, but generally a micro-influencer is someone who has significant, but not massive, social media following. This could range from anywhere between 1,000 and 100,000 followers.

While Instagram influencers have attained a sort of "celebrity status," micro-influencers are more like everyday consumers, so they tend to be very relatable and trustworthy.

But there's another perk of partnering with micro-influencers. Two separate studies by [HelloSociety](#) and [Markerly](#) discovered that influencers with a smaller following tend to retain higher levels of engagement than top-tier influencers, and both studies noticed a drop in engagement rate as the audience size increases.

This means that an Instagram post from a micro-influencer will likely be seen by a larger percentage of their following, so you could potentially reach more people through 20 Instagram posts than you could by investing in 1 Instagram post with a large influencer.



## HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT INFLUENCERS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Finding the right influencers for your marketing campaign can be a big challenge, but creating clear goals helps. For example, if your goal is to rack up a lot of engagement, it might make sense to partner with micro-influencers with smaller audiences but higher engagement rates. If you're trying to increase your brand awareness, metrics such as reach and traffic will be more useful.

Not sure where to start? Here are four things to keep in mind when deciding whether or not to partner with an Instagram influencer:



### 1. Check their Instagram engagement

When an influencer has a high engagement rate, it means their followers are paying attention and taking action on their content. That's why most businesses and Instagram agencies use engagement to evaluate who is an ideal influencer.

Generally, you want to see an engagement rate of 2-3% on influencers' posts. A ratio of 4-6% is excellent, while posts in the high tens and twenties are considered "viral."

### 2. Check their quality of followers

It goes without saying that you should be aligning your business with influencers who have "pull" with your target audience. For example, if you're a fitness brand, it makes sense to partner with influencers who share a similar audience to your ideal customers, such as yoga instructors or powerlifters.

Aligning your business with an influencer who has "pull" with your target customers is one of the best ways to get in front of the right eyes, increase your brand awareness, and showcase your products in a creative way.

### 3. Check their number of followers

As we discussed above, the number of followers an influencer has isn't quite as important as it used to be -- especially now that the Instagram algorithm seems to be impacting the engagement of larger accounts.

As we've learned over the past year, engagement rate tends to decrease as follower count grows. So influencers with fewer followers often retain higher engagement rates on their posts, while influencers

with large audiences tend to see decreased engagement rates and less direct communication with their followers.

All of that being said, it's definitely not a bad idea to partner with influencers with big followings! Just make sure they're a good fit for your business.

### 4. Budget requirements

Something else to keep in mind when deciding which influencers to partner with is how much they charge.

According to a [recent survey](#), it's actually very common for businesses to "gift" free products to influencers rather than paying them a flat rate. In fact, 77% of businesses report giving free products and/or services in exchange for sponsored posts.

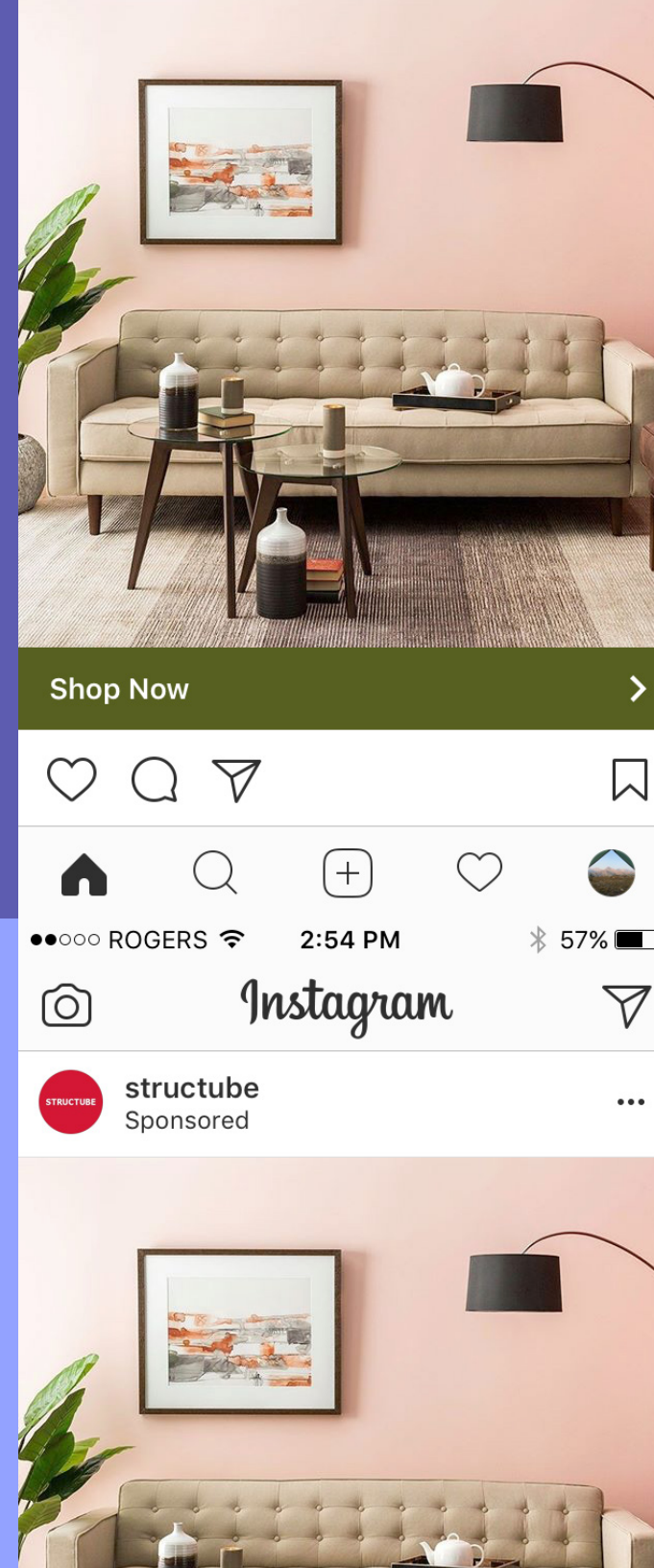
This isn't always the case, however. Some influencers only accept flat rates, while others charge based on the number of sales or leads they create for the business.

# Instagram Advertising

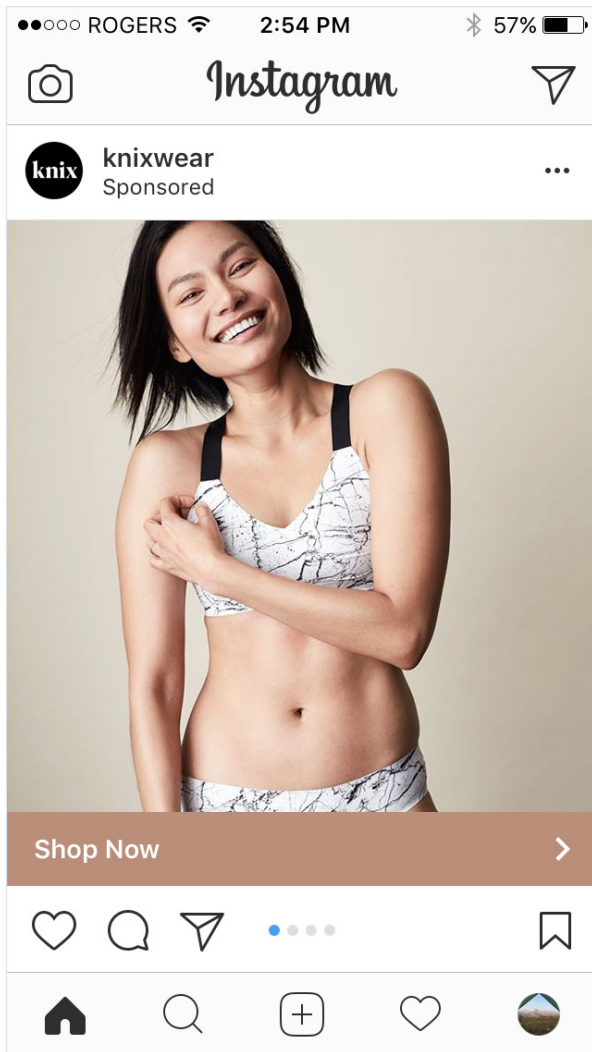
Instagram is often lauded as the social media platform that most influences people's shopping habits -- especially in the fashion, beauty, and style-related industries. So it makes a lot of sense to run Instagram ads that help connect users with your ecommerce products.

Whatever your goal, whether it's making sales, reaching new audiences, or improving the engagement on your posts, you need to get friendly with Instagram advertising.

Running your own Instagram ad campaign isn't that difficult, but it can be intimidating to many businesses that haven't done it before. If you're just getting started with Instagram ads, you can check out our [step-by-step guide](#) to running your first Instagram ad campaign.







### PHOTO ADS

**Most effective for:** Increasing engagement

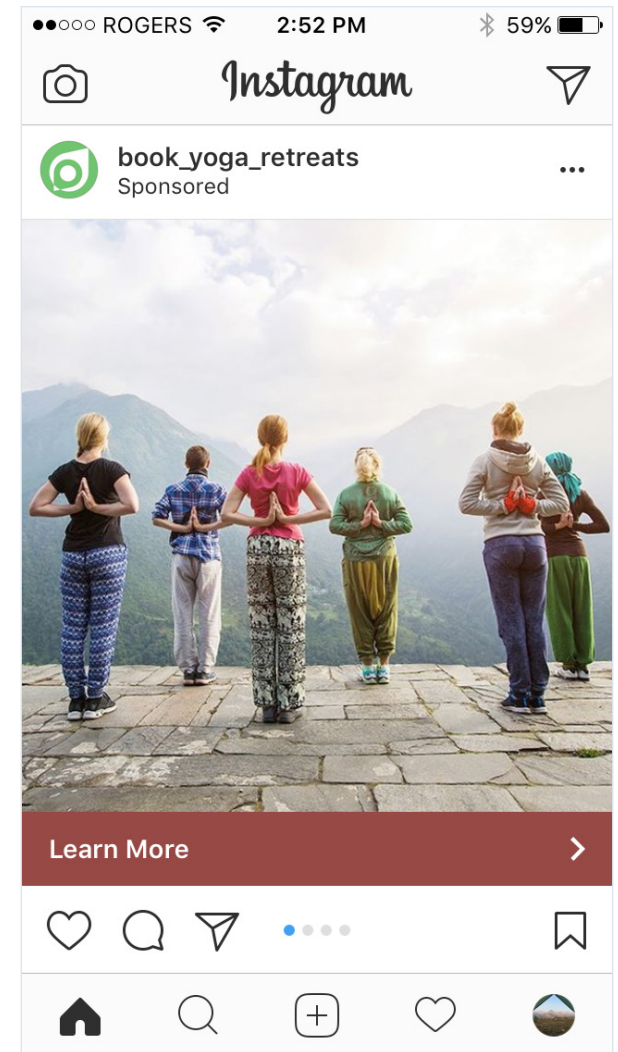
**Least effective for:** Collecting leads



### BOOSTED POSTS

**Most effective for:** Increasing engagement

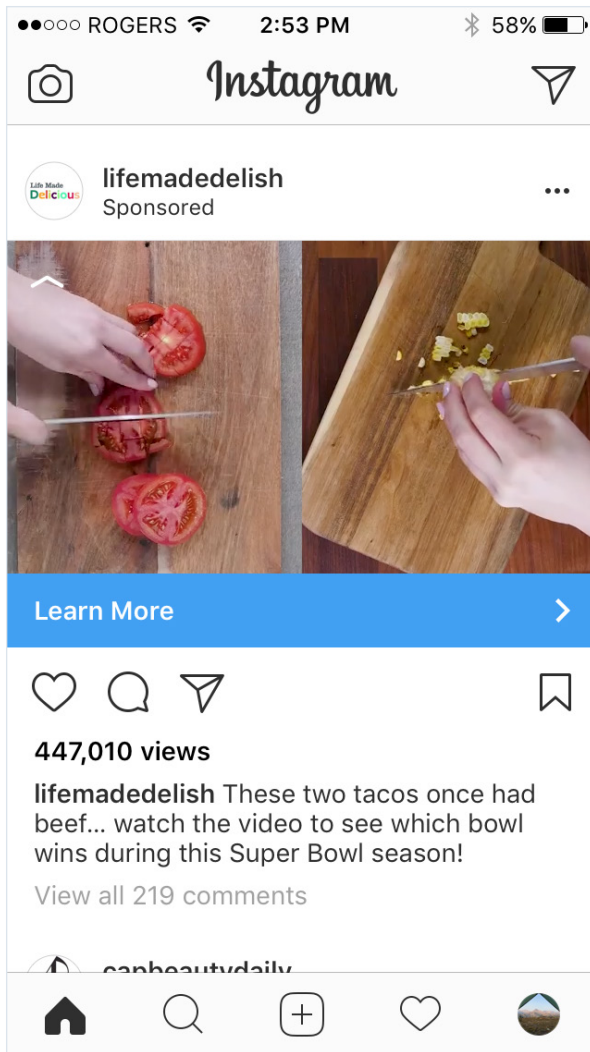
**Least effective for:** Driving sales



### CAROUSEL ADS

**Most effective for:** Driving sales

**Least effective for:** Collecting leads



## VIDEO ADS

**Most effective for:** Driving traffic and sales

**Least effective for:** Collecting leads



## INSTAGRAM STORIES AD

**Most effective for:** Increasing engagement and driving sales

**Least effective for:** Collecting leads

## BOOSTED POSTS ARE BECOMING THE NORM

With organic reach on the steady decline, it's becoming a lot harder for businesses to achieve a high amount of engagement on their posts without any kind of paid support or strategy. That's why more and more businesses are boosting their regular Instagram posts to reach a wider audience.

While regular Instagram ads have been around for a while, they do require a small level of expertise to get started. Running your own Instagram ad campaign isn't that difficult, but it can be intimidating to many business owners who haven't done it before.

The good news is that boosting Instagram posts is super easy!

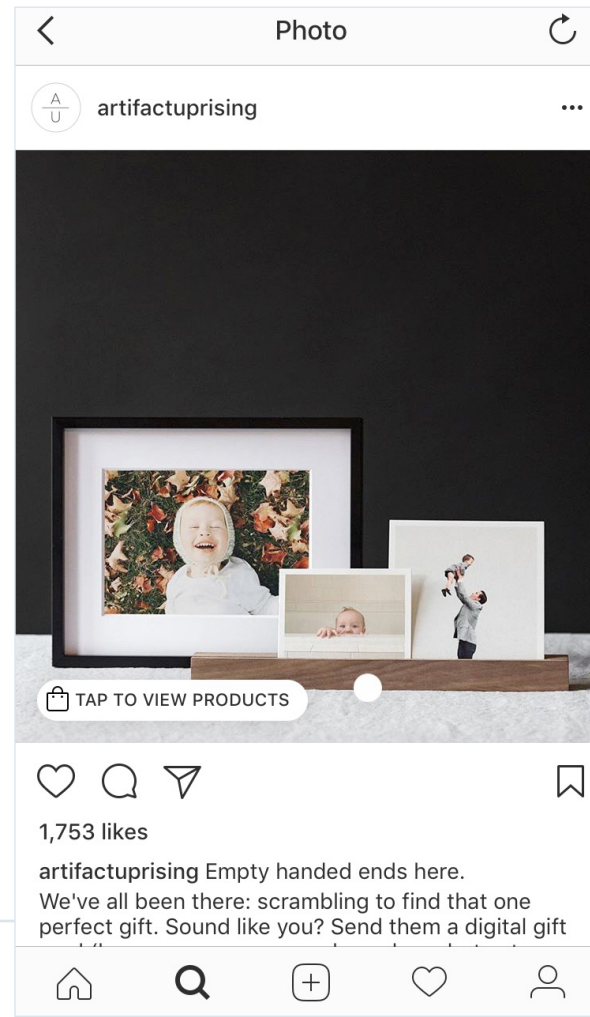
You don't need to create complicated Instagram ads in Facebook business manager like you do for other ad types. All you have to do is create an Instagram post like you normally would and then hit the "promote" button once it's live.

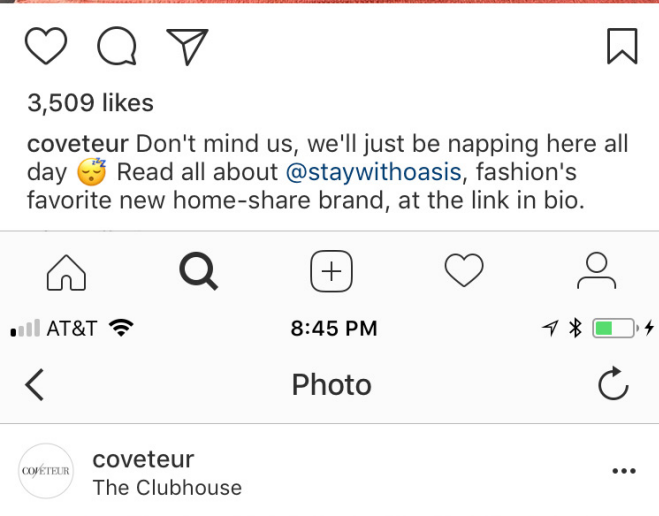
Instagram already pulls in a "similar audience" that you can share the post to, or you can easily create your own audience in the app by choosing an interest, age range, and genders you want to promote to.

Once your post has been boosted, it appears in the feed like a regular post, the only difference being the "sponsored" notation at the top and the call-to-action button.

# Apartment hunting feels like

(FILL IN THE BLANK)





# Tracking Your Instagram Success

In order to be successful with Instagram marketing in 2018, you need to really understand your audience and content performance. In other words, you need to start tracking your Instagram analytics.

Of course, diving into your Instagram analytics means more than just finding out which photo, video, or story performed best. Truly understanding how your content performs -- by tracking key metrics over time -- is invaluable to developing a robust content strategy for Instagram.

For example, if you're running an Instagram account for an ecommerce business, you may want to investigate how different product photos perform against each other. By tracking engagement data such as likes, comments, or clicks, you'll have a clearer understanding about which type of product photos perform best.

Whatever your goals, tracking your Instagram analytics will allow you to better understand your audience's wants, improve your content, and ultimately drives more traffic and sales.

## INSIGHT

With the new Instagram Insights API, you can expect more robust Instagram Analytics tools to come in 2018, like Instagram Stories Analytics, and you won't be limited to viewing your analytics in the mobile app.

## INSTAGRAM METRICS TO TRACK

### Impressions

Impressions are the total number of times your photo, video, or story has been seen. This number includes users scrolling by in their feed, clicking through your business' profile to view a photo, or viewing content directly through an Instagram DM.

### Reach

Like impressions, reach also shows the total number of views but rather than calculate it by total eyes on your content, it narrows it down unique users' views only. On Instagram, these metrics will likely be very similar due to Instagram's lack of in-platform public sharing functionality.

### Engagements

This is the total number of unique accounts that have liked, commented, and saved a particular photo or video. Note that it won't count multiple comments from the same user, which could happen in the case of giveaways where users tend to post multiple times to better their chances.

### Engagement Rate

Engagement rate is the percentage of followers or viewers that engage with your posts. Generally, if you want to calculate your average engagement rate for Instagram, you would divide the number of likes and comments by your follower count, which will give you a percentage.

### Follower Growth

The native Instagram Analytics in the app will tell you how many new followers you gained this week, but it doesn't allow you to view your follower growth over time. Follower growth is how many followers you have gained or lost in a certain amount of time, which is important for understanding how quickly (or slowly) your account is growing.

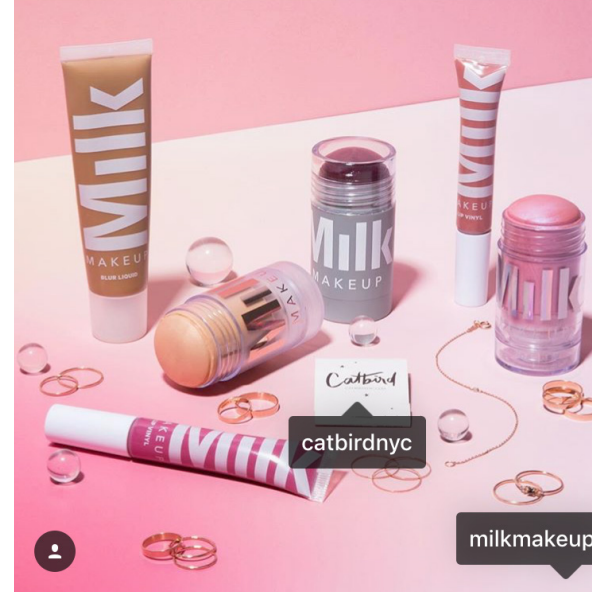


## INSTAGRAM STORIES ANALYTICS

Despite its growing popularity, few businesses are tracking and measuring the performance of their Instagram Stories. It could be that story engagement simply isn't as tangible as referral traffic or follower count. But in any case, establishing clear goals and KPIs for your Instagram Stories content is important if you want to get the most from the feature.

Start by switching to an Instagram business profile for more in-depth metrics. Along with impressions and reach, you can also track your Stories' exits and replies from the past two weeks.

And if you have the ability to add links to your Instagram Stories, we recommend using a third-party tool to track your clicks separately in Google Analytics (Instagram Insights doesn't currently track URL clicks on Instagram Stories).



# Growth Strategies for Businesses on Instagram

Now that we've covered some of the more important aspects of Instagram for businesses, let's look at three tried-and-true strategies for businesses to grow their accounts.

## 1 CREATE AN INSTAGRAM HASHTAG STRATEGY

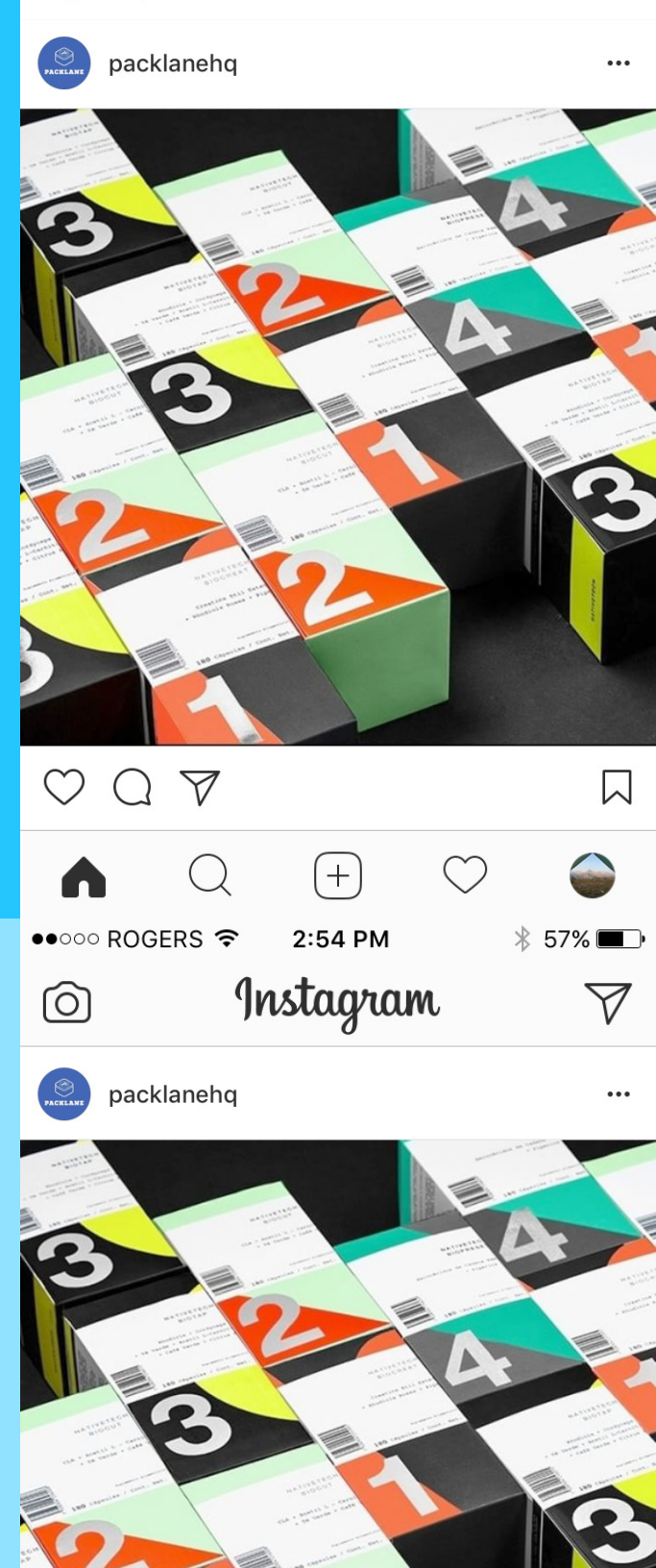
Instagram hashtags became a controversial subject in 2017 thanks to [the "Instagram shadowban" that essentially hid users posts from showing up on hashtags](#). [If you were using the same 30 hashtags over and over again, Instagram would indicate this as "spammy" behaviour](#).

But Instagram hashtags are still an effective way of getting more eyes on your content, and creating a solid Instagram hashtag strategy should also be a top priority for any business that wants to get more engagement on Instagram.

It's important to think of hashtags like categories. Where do you want your Instagram post to show up? If you're an ecommerce business that sells sunglasses, it makes sense to use relevant hashtags that expose you to Instagram users who might be interested in buying your products.

In other words, you [need to choose hashtags with a purpose](#). [Instead of tagging posts with general hashtags like #love or #happy, choose hashtags that describe your business, the purpose of your account, your target market, and your location](#).

Learn how to implement an effective Instagram hashtag strategy with Later's [Instagram Hashtag Strategy Guide!](#)

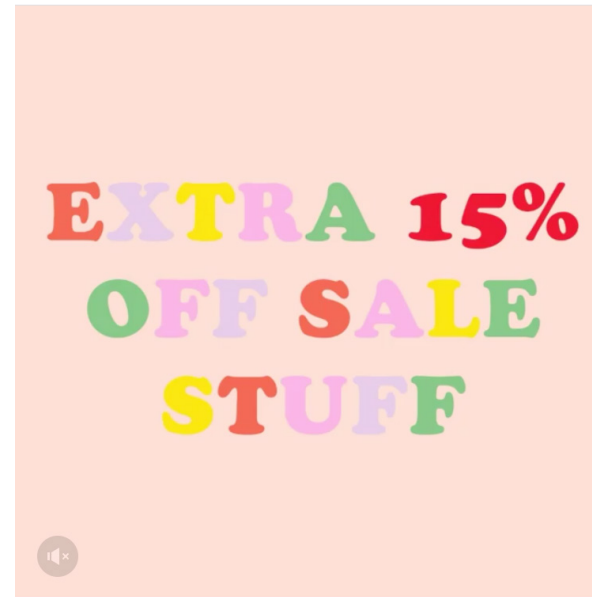


Running an Instagram contest or giveaway is a fun and easy way to promote your business and gain exposure on Instagram.

If you're looking for an effective Instagram contest idea, try partnering with another business or influencer. It's a great way to promote your Instagram contest to both of your audiences, and also share each other's followers. Start by looking for a cool business to partner with, and then organize a 3-5 day giveaway where Instagram users are rewarded with prizes for following both accounts, and tagging their friends in the comments.

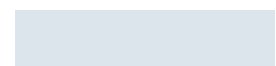
Here's a quick breakdown of our proven Instagram contest formula:

- 1. Partner with a brand or influencer with a similar target market and audience**
- 2. Choose a prize that gets your community excited**
- 3. If you're partnering with an influencer, have them host the contest on their account (if you're partnering with a brand, you can determine the best account to host the contest)**
- 4. Create clear rules: to enter, follow @youraccount and @yourpartner and tag X # of friends in a comment**
- 5. Run your contest for a short period of time: no more than 5 days, ideally 2-3 days**



Once the Instagram contest is over and you've selected a winner or winners, you should see a massive boost in your Instagram followers -- but that doesn't mean your work is done! You need to pay attention to your new followers and make them feel like they're a part of your community. Otherwise, you risk losing them.





3

### USE INSTAGRAM STORIES HIGHLIGHTS TO CONVERT VISITORS INTO FOLLOWERS

The new Instagram Stories Highlights feature is perfect for introducing your potential followers to what you're all about! Think of each highlight as a movie trailer for your business, products, or services.

Highlights give you an opportunity to court new followers with your best content, and give them a sense of what they can expect and what your business is all about. Plus, by optimizing your Instagram Stories Highlights, you can even make sales straight from your profile from people who aren't even following you!

It all comes back to creating an engaging Instagram profile. Your goals with Highlights (as with your Instagram bio and feed) is to entice new visitors to hit the "Follow" button. By creating great Highlights that show off your brand appeal, you can easily convert new visitors into followers!

# Conclusion

As Instagram continues to grow and evolve as a marketing platform, it's more important than ever for businesses to build effective Instagram marketing strategies. And that means having a thorough understanding of the Instagram marketing landscape and measurable insights into what works and what doesn't.

At the end of the day, businesses of all types have so much to gain from building a presence on Instagram, whether it's growing an engaged community, reaching new customers, or even making ecommerce sales.

**It just takes a little effort!**



Learn how to tie your Instagram marketing into the rest of your funnel strategy with a free [Inbound Marketing Assessment from HubSpot](#).



Ready to put your Instagram marketing plan into action? Join [Later.com](#) and start scheduling your Instagram posts, collecting user-generated content, planning your feed, and more!



LATER APPROVED INSTAGRAM PROFILES FEATURED IN THIS EBOOK:

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