

Instagram, the new marketing hub for business growth

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If you haven't been living under a rock, then you have certainly noticed how social media has taken over life as we 'used' to know it. The new normal is people walk around with their faces buried in their phones catching up on the latest news and gossip, or following the new age celebrities (YouTubers/influencers) to find out where they are, what they're up to, what they are eating - and more importantly for brands - what they are buying.



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In fact, this is the time that businesses need to capitalise on brand expansion and business growth – and social media platforms – when used correctly – can assist. Let's take a look at Instagram – [2 million](#) plus advertisers worldwide use Instagram to share their stories and drive business results. And [60%](#) of people say they discover new products on Instagram.

Now, as a PR professional, I cannot ignore these numbers – over the last few years, Instagram has grown so much, and today is influencing consumer behaviour – and for any business, this is the perfect tool if you want to raise business awareness and drive your product.

With that said, this is not a one-man job. To fully embrace the fruits that Instagram can offer, a business requires a strong team behind them that involves, PR, graphic designers and digital marketing. However, it can reap benefits – if undertaken correctly – as today Instagram is fast becoming a preferred platform of interaction given how interactive of a platform it has grown into.

And testament to this is the number of business profiles that currently exist worldwide – 25 million plus to be exact. So, there is no doubt that this platform has a lot to offer businesses trying to stand out in all the industry noise – but, don't just dive in – take some time – review your audience (and what they want) and follow some of my easy tips and tricks below – which I believe can take an Instagram business profile to the next level:

- The planning and execution of your Instagram account is central and critical to a robust communications strategy, for any size business. The larger the base, the more critical the content. The strategy behind the account, must start with creation. What needs to be created and why? However, the key is to ensure that all content developed continuously establishes who you are and what you can offer your followers. And because content can be anything, any material that you create and own – whether it's written or visual – ensuring a consistent thread, can be a daunting task, initially. So, make sure you clearly define and outline who you are creating content for, as well as understand how this factors into the decision process of existing and potential customers.
- Instagram must also become part of your digital marketing strategy and must have some budget allocated to it if you want it to work. Because, if we are honest, just opening an account and posting random posts, will not grow your footprint.
- Invest in a team – having a team dedicated to curating your content is what will make you stand out from the rest. This is what will give your brand it's ID online. So, make sure you have graphic designers and copywriters to make your posts or campaign authentic to the brand and campaigns.
- Educate your team – gone are the days when if you have the degree then your set. Technology is ever evolving and reinventing itself. Make sure your team has budget for online courses on any new updated features and how you can leverage them for growth opportunities and fully learning who your target audience is and how you can reach them.
- Explore sponsored or boosted Instagram posts to 'sell' or market your brand or posts. This is another great element to the platform. This way you can also ensure that your post is seen by the relevant target market and in some cases, this can win you more followers.
- If you are a brand that offers a service or sells a product, make sure that your customer service is on point. Just because transactions and interactions have moved online, does not mean you need to slack. Online platforms still need to focus on brand representation and building brand loyalty. For example, if you mention that delivery will take two working days, aim to beat that or make sure that is the exact delivery date, small things like this, can be the deciding factor on whether your customer comes back or not.

And while Instagram is constantly working on ways to improve their platform like the checkout feature that can complete the shopping experience that customers currently have with the shoppable tags available. It is important that a business has a well thought out strategy for using the platform – like anything, make sure you understand the end goal, otherwise, how will you know if your efforts have yielded anything.

Use the report feature available for business accounts to gauge your performance, that way you are aware if you have to tweak your strategy or not. Social media has become a beast on its own and business are seeing huge returns – but only when backed up by a kick-ass strategy.

So, my advice is, if Instagram looks like a platform that your business can join, invest in finding a communications agency that can guide you, correctly, through this exciting journey.

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