



Instagram Marketing Planner



INSTAGRAM MARKETING PLANNER

On October 6, 2010, a new image-based social network emerged. By December of that year, Instagram already had more than 1 million active users, so clearly people were loving the opportunity to quickly share photos of their day-to-day activities with friends and followers. One year later, and it was boasting more than 150 million uploads, 10 million active users, and a newfound status as the iPhone's "app of the year."

In just 6 short years, Instagram has grown to a powerhouse marketing tool that savvy entrepreneurs are embracing.

- 400 million monthly active users mean that your market is almost certainly using Instagram—and your competitors are, too.
- 26% of adults use Instagram, so while it doesn't have the reach of Facebook (yet) it's definitely a platform worth leveraging.
- A younger crowd—more than half of Instagram users are under 29, and 90% are under 35—if that's your market, Instagram is the place to be.
- 49% of users check their Instagram feed at least daily—that's a lot of eyes on mobile phones!

Not only that, but the platform has enjoyed double-digit annual growth, and it shows no signs of slowing down. Some estimates predict Instagram to attract up to 33% of adults by 2019.

Clearly, now is the time to embrace Instagram and the power it promises as a part of your overall marketing plan.

But Instagram presents some unique challenges, too, and those might have you wondering if it's worth your time.

First, it's completely smart phone driven. Unlike other platforms, you cannot post to Instagram from your computer. In fact, you can't even post to it from 3rd party apps. It's fully designed to attract mobile phone users. So in markets where mobile usage is high (and let's face it, that's nearly everywhere), Instagram is a no-brainer.

It's also image and video centric. Unlike Facebook and Twitter and even Google+, where text updates are still the norm, Instagram demands photos. Text (called captions on Instagram) is secondary—although Instagram is quite generous with their character limit, unlike some other platforms. Keep in mind that even on other platforms, images typically outperform text only updates, so focusing on images in your marketing is probably not a bad thing.

So how can you put Instagram to work in your marketing? It all begins with a profile...

STEP 1: OPTIMIZE YOUR PROFILE

As with any social platform, Instagram asks you to create a profile. This is where new followers will find out more about you, who you serve, and what your personality is like. It's your chance to shine...in 150 characters or less.

It's rather like trying to explain your entire business in a Tweet. And much more difficult than you might imagine.

If you're new to Instagram, your first task is to decide on a user name. Both real (first and last) names and business/website names are acceptable, so you'll probably want to go with your normal branding. If everyone everywhere knows you as jane_smith, then by all means, snag your name on Instagram the same way. If you're known by your business name, go with that.

And if you maintain multiple social profiles—one for business and one for fun on all platforms—then you can do that as well. Basically, choose a user name that:

1. You're comfortable with
2. People will instantly recognise as you

Next step is a great photo. Again, this is going to largely depend on how you're branded on other platforms. Do your fans, followers and clients know your logo, or do they recognise you by your smiling face? Generally speaking, a head shot is almost always a better choice, unless you're Coca-Cola or Nike or some other giant brand.

For your profile pic, be sure to choose one that shows off "your best side." By that, we mean don't choose a photo of you squinting into the sun or sweating on the treadmill—well, unless you're a health coach, perhaps.

Instead, choose a photo that shows off your personality while remaining professional and business-like.

Next, you'll need to work on that bio. Take a look at how the influencers in your market are crafting their bios—not to duplicate them, but to use them as inspiration.

Carrie Wilkerson, for example, uses a series of adjectives to describe herself:

"Encourager, joy-spreader, speaker and business-growth strategist."

By contrast, jewelry business mentors and coaches Tracy Matthews and Robin Kramer use keywords and calls to action in their bio:

"Jewelry Business Experts, Mentors to jewelry designers, FREE trainings, Online courses, Best designer community, Join us for our FREE 14 Day Virtual Sales Amplifier Bootcamp"

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Both styles work, it just comes down to your branding and personality.

Lastly, always include a link back to your website. In fact, power Instagram users take this opportunity to create and link to an Instagram-specific landing page. Offer a freebie of interest to your Instagram followers, and grow your mailing list, too!

Exercise: Create Your Instagram Profile

My preferred headshot:

My profile (150 characters or less)

My URL: _____

STEP 2: START GROWING YOUR COMMUNITY

Above all else, Instagram is a social network, and that means active participation in the community is a must. That starts by growing your following, and just as in other platforms, this is a two-step process. Ok, it's really 3 steps, but we'll get to the content part in a later step.

For now, we're going to concentrate on finding and following the right people. These will be:

- Influencers in your market
- Your dream clients

This serves two purposes:

1. When you pay attention to what the "influencers" are doing when it comes to content sharing, hashtags, posting frequency and other elements, you'll get a better feel for what works best for your audience.
2. When you pay attention to what your dream client is sharing and commenting on, you'll learn what's most important to them, and that will allow you to reach them more effectively.

And there's a third benefit to finding and following others in your niche, be they influencers or newbies: people follow back.

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Just as on other networks, Instagram is all about being social, so you'll find that many of the people—maybe even most of them—you follow will follow you back. Not only will you be gaining insight into what your clients need and want, but you'll be growing your Instagram following as well.

Exercise: Identify the Influencers

Exercise: Find Your Dream Clients

My ideal client follows (people):

People	Hashtags

STEP 3: #HASHTAGS #MATTER

Perhaps more than any other social network, Instagram relies on hashtags to sort and categorise content. Users who are interested in certain topics can choose to “follow” certain hashtags, just as you might follow other users.

You can put the power of hashtags to work for you by using a careful combination of tags designed to get your content found and followed.

The first hashtags to include are the popular/common types. So if you’re sharing inspirational quotes that might include #inspirationalquotes, #inspiration, and #quote. This will get your content found by those who search on these broad topics. Not everyone in this group will be your ideal client, but that’s ok.

The second type of hashtag to use is those that are specific to your audience or niche. #Podcasting, #WAHM, #virtualassistant, #businesscoach and others like these are used less frequently, but will attract a much more targeted market.

Another hashtag type you’ll want to use is basically just asking for a follow. These include #follow, #followme, and #follow4follow, among others.

Finally, you’ll want to have your very own hashtag as well. This might be your brand name (more on this in the next step) or it can be something you’ve embraced as your own. Using your own hashtag helps to solidify your branding, and gives fans a way to easily follow conversations.

Now it’s worth noting here that it’s not uncommon to see a lot of hashtags on each post. While on some social networks there seems to be a natural limit to the number of tags, Instagram users often feel more is better. And the stats bear this out. There’s no apparent downside to using even a dozen or more hashtags per post, so don’t be afraid to go a little bit overboard.

Exercise: Find Your Hashtags

Common/Popular	Targeted	Follow Friendly	Brand Specific

STEP 4: DEVELOP YOUR BRAND STRATEGY

If you struggle with branding, you're not alone. It's one of those things that feels so murky and vague, it's difficult to point to. Is it a logo? The colours on your website? Your tagline?

It's all of those...and none of them. And that's the trouble isn't it?

Here's what you need to keep in mind when you think about your brand. Done well, branding makes every post, photo upload, and social media update instantly recognisable as your own. It's the thoughtful use of:

- Language
- Colours
- Fonts
- Attitude
- Personality

And for photos, it means remaining consistent with composition, style, filters and other elements.

If you've ever scrolled through your Facebook or Instagram feed, seen a photo or post and thought, "I should send this to [insert friend here]! She'd love this!" only to find that the post is from your friend, then you've seen branding in action.

When a post instantly brings a person or brand to mind, they've nailed their branding. And you can, too.

Start by defining the basics, such as colours and fonts. Use them consistently, across all your social platforms. Next, think about the language and attitude you prefer. Are you a snarky, "no holds barred" kind of entrepreneur, or a loving, kind, nurturing type of coach? Do you drop the occasional F-bomb, or prefer to stay on the G-rated side of the scale?

Define your brand hashtags as well. In Step 3 we talked about how and where to use hashtags, but now we want to focus in on brand-specific tags. These might be your company name, as jewelry business coaches @Flourish_Thrive use (#flourishthriveacademy) or they might be keyword-driven, such as @suebzimmerman's #theinstagramexpert. Whatever your hashtags, embrace them, use them, encourage your fans and followers to use them. They will help define your brand and get you found and followed.

Exercise: Define Your Brand

My brand voice is _____ (loving, friendly, professional, snarky, etc.)

My brand colours are:

My brand fonts are:

My posting style is _____ (casual, formal, all-business, personal, etc.)

My preferred photo style is _____ (composed, staged, filtered, candid, etc.)

STEP 5: START (OR JOIN) A CONVERSATION

All of social media is about relationships. It's not about making sales, or getting more followers, or driving traffic. It's about making a real connection with individual people.

This is true for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and yes, Instagram.

All of those other things—the sales and the traffic and the followers—are the result of the connections you make. And the easiest way to make a connection and build a relationship? Join (or start) the conversations.

- Like and share content that moves you
- Give a shout-out to those who inspire you
- Follow the people who have something of value to say and share
- BE one of the people who say and do and share valuable things

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Conversations on Instagram are easy to start, and should be a key component of your Instagram marketing strategy. Here's three simple methods to encourage comments on your post:

1. Ask a question. Yep, it's that simple. Just ask. Ask your followers about their business, what trouble they're facing, what triumphs they've had, what their goals and dreams are, what they're doing to achieve those goals, or even what they had for breakfast.

There's no right or wrong way to ask a question of your audience, and it's the easiest way to get the conversation started. After all, people love to talk about themselves, so just ask.

2. Create "fill in the blank" posts. This is similar to a question, but with a specific style. Rather than asking, "What's wrong with the weight loss industry today?" create a post that says something like, "The biggest issue with the weight loss industry is _____."

Filling in the blank is often easier to do, since it encourages a short, concise answer, not an essay.

3. Caption this. Got a funny, inspiring, curious, or just plain odd photo? Get your creativity on by asking for captions. You'll bring out the best in your followers, and probably get a good laugh, too.

Here's the important part about starting a conversation though: it's your job to respond. Don't resort to drive-by questions you never return to, or your followers will quickly stop responding. Instead, make it a point to thank your commenters, ask for further clarification, offer your opinion about their answers, and generally keep the conversation going.

Exercise: Plan Your Conversational Style

Questions to ask my audience	Fill-in-the-blank questions

STEP 6: BUILD A BUZZ ABOUT YOUR BRAND

The very best advertising for any brand or business is word of mouth. It's authentic, it's perceived as being more trustworthy, and it's free. The trick is to get it going, so that the momentum can build, and for a lot of people, that's no small task.

On Instagram, one of the easiest ways to build and grow a buzz about your brand is to host a social contest. A well-planned contest with a valuable prize can quickly gain massive traction, driving traffic to your site, promoting sales, and earning you plenty of new followers along the way.

Here's how a great contest works:

1. Define the rules. What dates will your contest run? Will you count shares and reward the most? Ask for clever video submissions to be judged by a panel? Require opt-ins and count referrals? Any of these methods can work, as long as you (a) are crystal clear on the rules and (b) avoid making it too complicated.
2. Decide on the prize. If you're selling a high-ticket course or retreat, a scholarship opportunity can be a fantastic incentive. Other potential prizes include coaching calls, gift certificates, books (yours or someone else's), or promotional opportunities (for example, if you host a hot podcast with thousands of downloads, an interview spot might have great value for someone). The key is to figure out what would most motivate your audience, and offer that.
3. Determine the logistics. How will you track participation and decide the winner? Manually? Or by using a software such as Upviral or Wishpond? Both ways work, but if you're counting shares (for example) then it can quickly get unmanageable if you try to do that manually.

One final thought about contests: Each state (and country) has its own laws regarding how contests are run. For example, in most cases you absolutely cannot require a purchase as a means of entry. So if you're asking attendees of your paid membership to participate, you must also allow non-members to play along.

Instagram has its own [policies regarding contests](#) as well, so be sure you're following them as well as your state or country regulations. The last thing you want is for your contest—or worse, your account—to be shut down due to a rules violation.

Exercise: Plan an Instagram Contest

Determine your contest goal (shares, referrals, sales, etc.):

My contest prize will be _____

Write out your contest rules:

Decide on your scoring plan:

And any apps you need:

STEP 7: INTENTIONAL POSTING STRATEGIES

Great social marketing doesn't happen by accident. Those who do it well are able to do so because they make sure every post is on brand, always emphasise quality over quantity, and pay close attention to their stats.

But those are not things that come naturally to most people. Most of us are unintentional and rather random in our posting strategies, and that's ok. Developing a plan (and sticking to it) takes time. After all, @suebzimmerman didn't start out as #theinstagramexpert. She built up her knowledge and strategies over time, and you will, too.

Here's where to start:

- Always use hashtags. Revisit Step 3, and remember to include your list of hashtags in each and every post.
- Include a link back to your website when appropriate.
- Be consistent. Most brands post on average 1.5 times per day. More (or fewer) might work for you, but consistency is the key.
- Know your stats. Which hashtags produce the most response? What posting times get the most likes and comments?
- Stay on brand. Ask yourself each time you post, "Is that consistent with my brand?" If it's not, either revise or don't post it at all.

Exercise: Develop an Intentional Posting Strategy

My hashtags	
My posting frequency	
My most important brand considerations	
My most popular post types	
My best performing posts/hashtags	

Other notes about my posting strategy	
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STEP 8: INSTAGRAM ADS

Advertising is a powerful addition to any marketing plan, and Instagram ads are easier than ever, thanks to Facebook.

There are two basic promotions to run on Instagram: free products and paid products.

A free product advertising campaign is designed to build exposure and grow your mailing list. The entire point of the ad campaign is to drive traffic to an opt-in page, so that you can capture email addresses and market to those people over time. This type of ad works well for both people who already know you and for cold traffic.

A paid product advertising campaign is just what it says. You're driving traffic directly to a sales page. This type of ad is more effective with a "warm" audience—or those who already know you. A solid paid product ad campaign should also include a retargeting ad, so that those who visit your page but don't buy will see your ad more frequently. After all, it can take several exposures to build up the trust factor that will ultimately lead a visitor to click the buy button.

For both types of ads, one thing is critical: mobile-friendly landing pages. Never forget that 100% of Instagram traffic is on mobile, so be sure to check (and check again) that your entire funnel is mobile friendly. No screen-blocking pop-ups, no tiny forms, no unreadable text.

With today's landing page creators such as LeadPages and ClickFunnels, that's easy enough to accomplish, but still worth paying attention to.

If you're creating a cross-platform ad campaign (in which your advertising on both Facebook and Instagram) Facebook's ad manager will break out your stats, so there's no need to create and maintain Instagram only landing pages. You'll easily see how many conversions you're earning from all ad placements, as well as your cost per click, cost per conversion, and other metrics. Keeping careful track of these will tell you if Instagram advertising is providing a good ROI.

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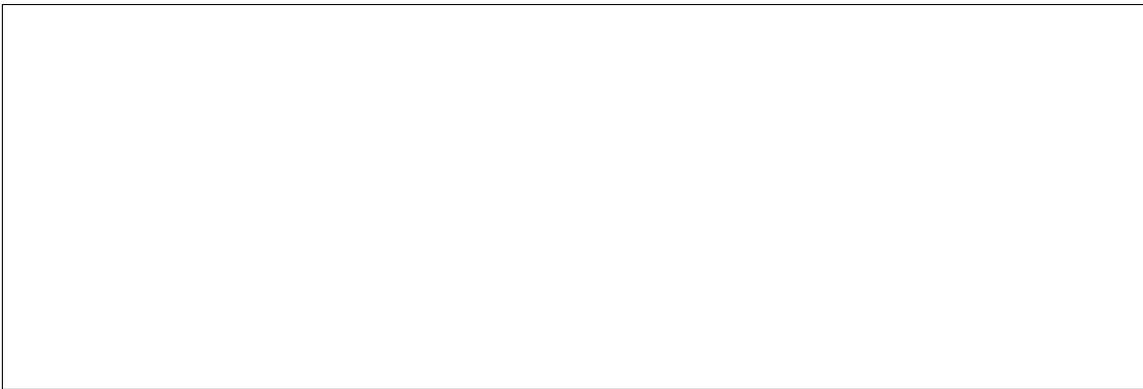
Exercise: Plan Your Ad Campaign

My ad will be for a [free/paid] product.

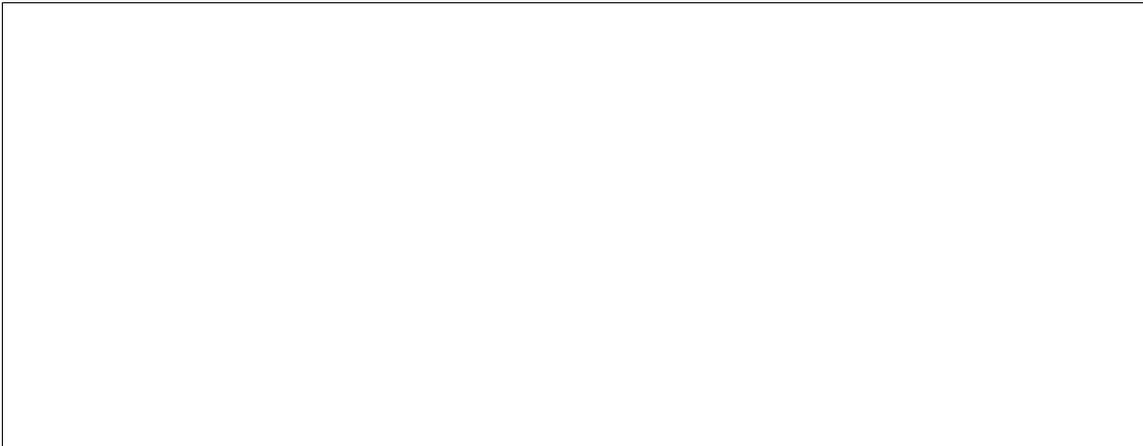
Link to promote _____

Facebook tracking pixels installed and configured [yes/no]

Image to use (make it eye-catching and on brand and 1080 x 1080 px)

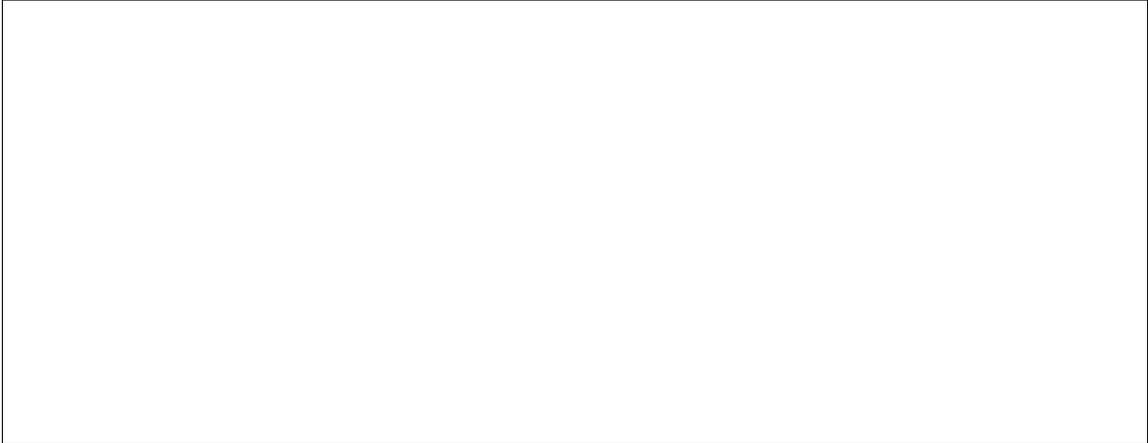


Ad text (300 characters max, no URLs)



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My ad target audience



Don't forget your hashtags!

