



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO INSTAGRAM MARKETING

Whether you're B2B or B2C, there's a path
to Instagram success.

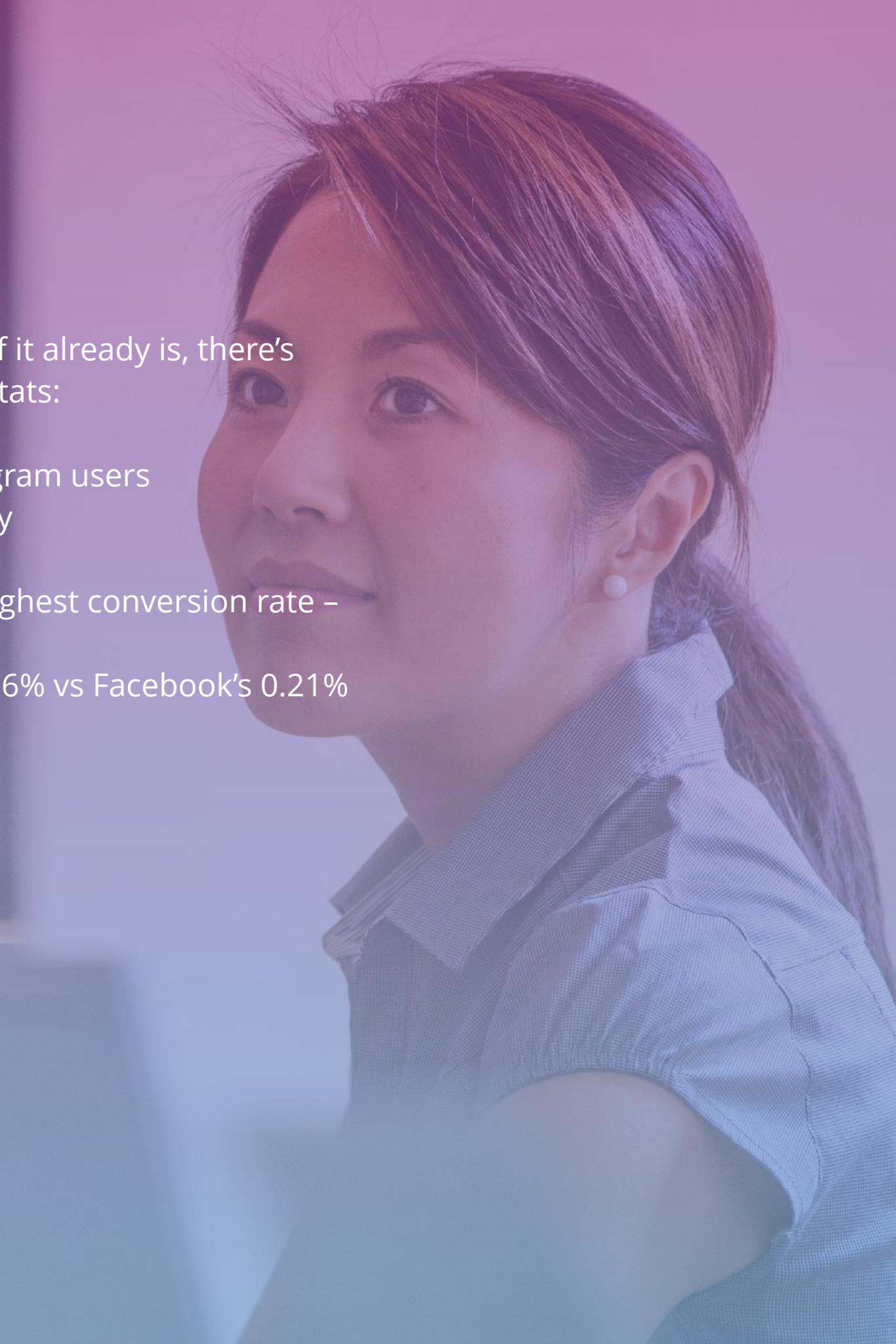
LET'S GET STARTED

If your brand's not on Instagram, it should be. And if it already is, there's always room for improvement. Let's start with the stats:

- Today, there are 500 million monthly active Instagram users
- 95 million photos and videos are shared every day
- Photos earn 4.2 billion likes per day
- Research firm L2 found that Instagram had the highest conversion rate – more than 15 times that of Facebook
- The average engagement rate on Instagram is 2.26% vs Facebook's 0.21% and Twitter's 0.02%

The contents of this guide include:

1. How to set, measure and track your Instagoals
2. Instagram 101: Setting the stage for success
3. Creating, curating and crushing your content
4. Building your following
5. Up your engagement
6. How to stay ahead of the curve



HOW TO SET, MEASURE AND TRACK YOUR INSTAGOALS

SET YOUR GOALS

Before you embark on your Instagram journey, you need to start with one question: Why am I doing this?

Defining your “why” helps you to set measurable targets to track your success. Every business has different goals when it comes to their social media marketing, and different objectives for each platform. For example, you may use Facebook as a means of keeping customers updated on product updates, while your Instagram strategy could be to create brand awareness.

Here are a few examples of some great Instagram goals:

- Generating brand awareness
- Building a community
- Increasing engagement with customers/prospects
- Developing an ‘employer brand’ - this one is especially important for B2B brands

MEASURE SUCCESS

After working out your goals, you need a way to track and measure them. How you measure will depend entirely on what you have set out to accomplish. Instagram has traditionally been harder for brands to track because it doesn't provide its own analytics platform for brands.

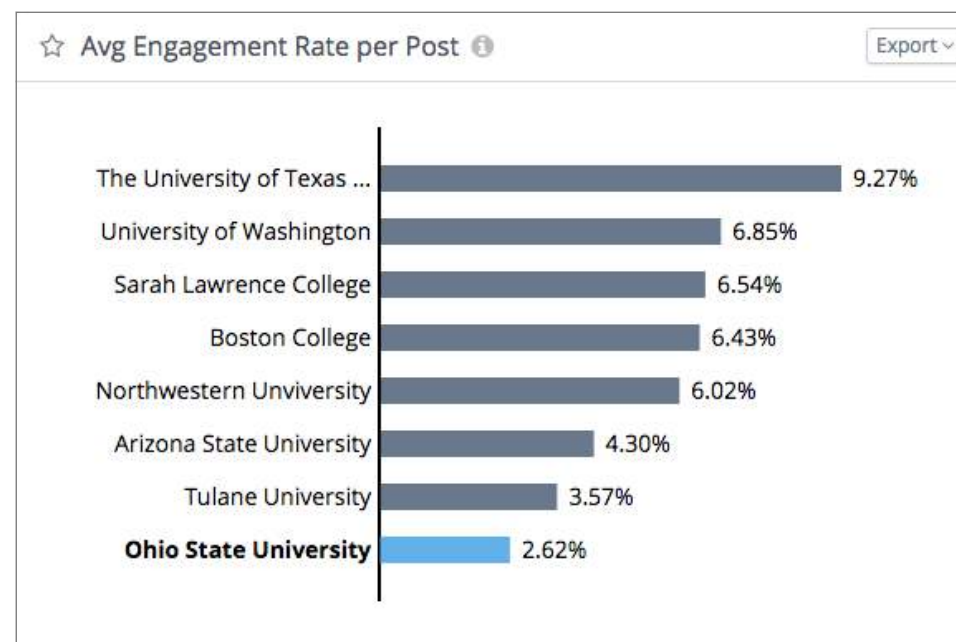
That said, tools like [Rival IQ](#) (#shamelessplug) connect with the Instagram API to pull all their data and display it in easy to use graphs and charts.

Once you have the tools in place, you can define exactly what you're going to track and develop some benchmarks against key players in your industry.

See how you measure up

Some ideas to get you started:

- Follower growth over time
- Average post engagement - likes and comments
- Link clicks on your official URL
- Custom hashtag use
- Monitor mentions
- Audience Demographics
- Reach
- Referral Traffic from Instagram (using UTM's)



INSTAGRAM 101: SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

NAIL YOUR AESTHETIC

Social media teams are just that: teams. When you work for a business, there's likely to be more than one person in charge of sourcing, creating and posting your content, so you need to create a style guide that keeps everyone on the same page.

The best Instabranders are those who maintain a consistent aesthetic throughout all their posts.

In crafting your style guide, make sure you develop guidelines for the following:

Color palette

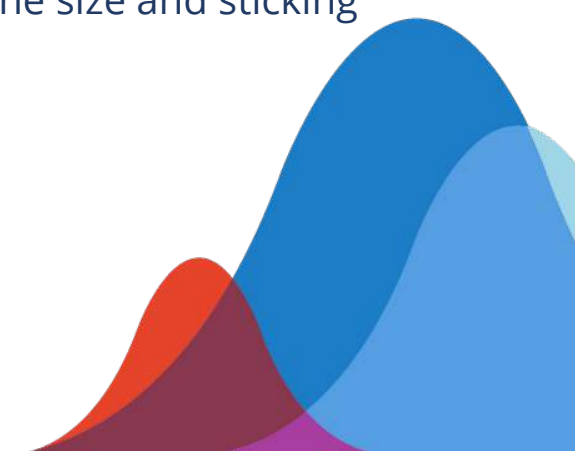
- Will you employ a dominant color?
- Will you use warm or cool-toned filters?
- How does this align with your existing brand palette?

Composition

- How much white space will you use? E.g. many lifestyle brands like to keep their images clean with about 30% white space
- Are you going to be posting landscapes or flatlays? Action shots or still lifes?

Editing

- Will you use Instagram's built-in filters? We suggest you don't - they're limited and often trend towards dark or heavily-saturated tones. Check out two of our favs: [A Color Story](#) and [VSCO Cam](#)
- What about image ratios? Once upon a time, all images had to be square, but now you can go portrait or landscape. We recommend picking one size and sticking to it.

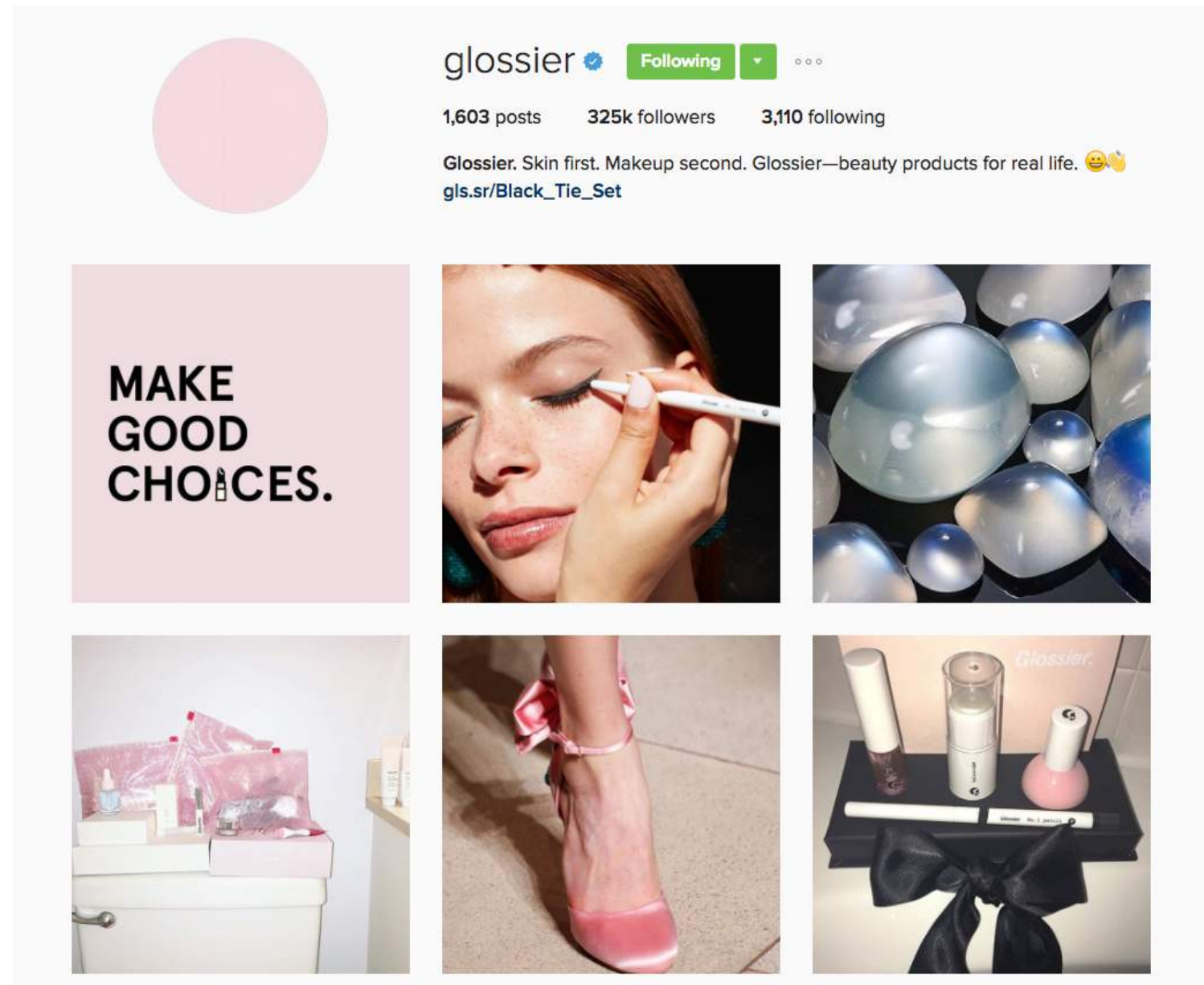


NAIL YOUR STYLE LIKE GLOSSIER

You can see here that Glossier uses photos which highlight their palette of pink, white and black throughout their entire Instagram presence.

It gives the page a consistent, holistic feel that carries through to their website and product branding too.

In fact, their official profile pic is simply a solid 'Glossier Pink'!



SET UP YOUR INSTAGRAM FOR BUSINESS ACCOUNT

Instagram offers brands the opportunity to go beyond a standard account and create an [‘Instagram for Business’](#) account.

A business account gives you the option to:

- Access valuable insights
- Create a ‘contact’ button
- Get a verified badge
- Categorize your business (this helps people find you)

WRITE A SOLID BIO

The Instagram bio section is super important; it’s the only place on your brand page where you get to use words to convey who you are and what you’re all about. Here are some pointers to get you started:

- Use line breaks! Check out how different **asos’s** bio looks on mobile vs desktop. Line breaks make all the difference in separating their other accounts from their custom hashtag and messaging.
- Change it up with featured offers like **Colourpop**, who are driving action with their free shipping offer in this example
- A picture tells a thousand words (or in this case, an emoji). **Mailchimp** makes it simple and uses three emojis to describe who they are and what they do.
- Don’t use hashtags in your bio because they’re not searchable. The only time to use a hashtag in your bio is if you create a custom tag for your brand that encourages the community to share and engage with you, like **West Elm**.



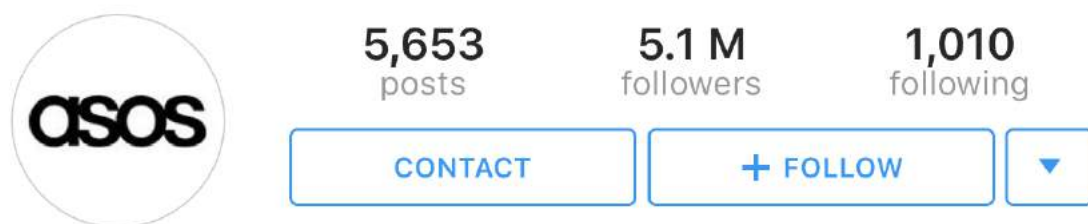
GET YOUR BIO RIGHT




ASOS  [Follow](#)  


5,653 posts 5.1m followers 1,010 following

ASOS Tag your looks #AsSeenOnMe to get featured ⚡ See more from us here >>>  @ASOS_Menswear  @ASOS_Beauty  ASOSfashion Click to shop 
www.asos.do/insta





5,653 posts 5.1 M followers 1,010 following

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See more from us here >>>

 : @ASOS_Menswear

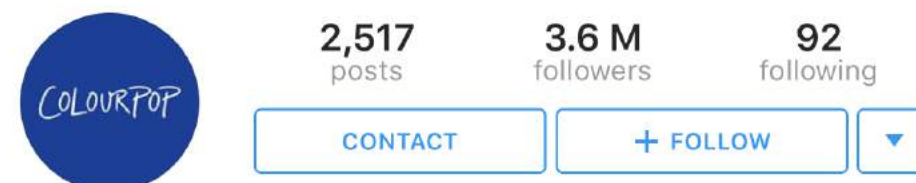
 : @ASOS_Beauty


 : ASOSfashion

Click to shop 


www.asos.do/insta

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London, United Kingdom





2,517 posts 3.6 M followers 92 following

[CONTACT](#) [+ FOLLOW](#) 

ColourPop Cosmetics

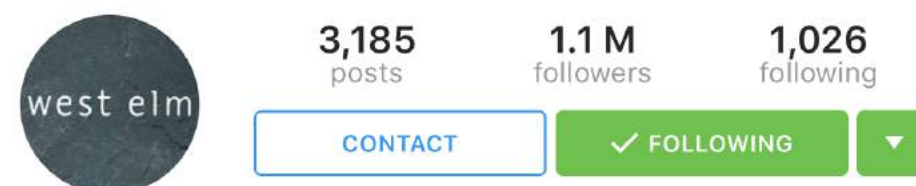
Health/Beauty


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3,185 posts 1.1 M followers 1,026 following

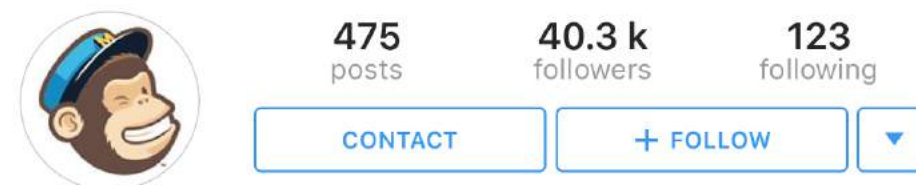
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475 posts 40.3 k followers 123 following

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MailChimp 

Software

    //  Snapchat: MailChimp 

eepurl.com/b5jvrf

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CREATING, CURATING AND CRUSHING YOUR CONTENT

Here comes the hard part. Instagram is a visual medium, so unlike Facebook or Twitter, it's not enough to simply write a witty post and add a link (in fact, you can't use links in your posts at all!). Because of its visual nature, Instagram requires that brands invest more resources in content creation than any other social channel.

Some brands have it easy; fashion companies have huge libraries of professional images they can use; brands like Canon or Nikon have ready-made content that shows the quality of their product and publishers like Refinery29 already have images from their articles.

Not everyone is this lucky. We don't always have a photographer on hand to craft beautiful, consistent imagery to use in our posts. B2B or service-oriented companies can struggle even more - with no tangible product to show off, images can be tough to create.

But don't worry - we've got your back. We've scoured Instagram's best performing brands and developed some clear-cut strategies to help you create compelling content that really resonates.

1. MIX IT UP

Vogue is an Instagram star because their team is smart about using the visual medium to mix and match different types of content like new photoshoots, archived shoots, behind-the-scenes shots as well as values-based posts that align with their core values of enhancing women's rights.



MIX IT UP LIKE VOGUE



VOGUE vogue magazine

Latest product

104k likes

3w

vogue magazine #EmmaStone stars on the cover of our November issue! Click the link in our bio for the full story. Photographed by @mertalas and @macpiggott, styled by @tonnegood.

view all 855 comments



VOGUE vogue magazine

Values-based

163k likes

3d

vogue magazine Women won the vote in 1920. It has taken nearly a century to bring us to the brink of a woman leading our country for the first time. Let's put this election behind us and become the America we want to be: optimistic, forward-looking, and modern. Let's head to the polls tomorrow, and vote. Photographed by @cassblackbird.

view all 763 comments

jazmio As a Chinese I want to Hillary win cuz I know she will put this country to an end 🤔

_brencl @viktorijapelas

oliviaemerzian If you are just voting for Hillary because she is a woman, she does not have much girl power.

oliviaemerzian Trump

lillyselig cool

♡ Add a comment...

MIX IT UP LIKE VOGUE

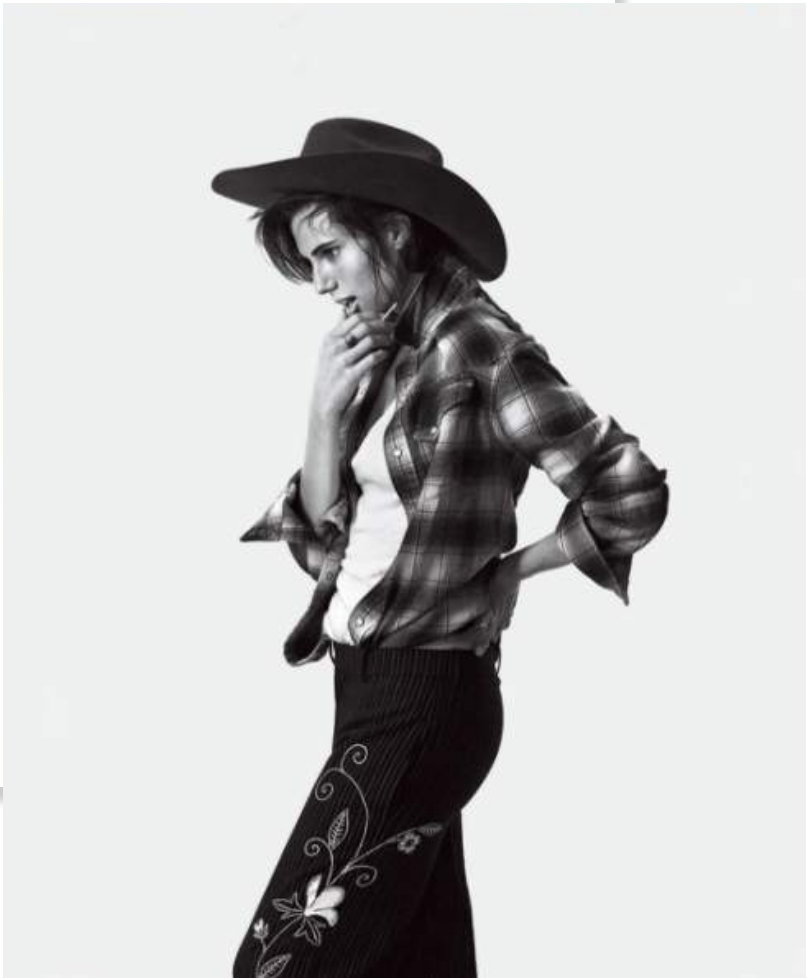


VOGUE vogue magazine

Archival content

122k likes

vogue magazine The best things come in threes. Photographed by @patrickdemarchelier, Vogue, May 1992.



Owned-images

VOGUE vogue magazine

52.9k likes

vogue magazine We're tipping our hats to the best Western shirts in the link in our bio. Photographed by #DavidSims, styled by @tonnegood. Vogue, Oct. 2016.

view all 139 comments

- vahideerell Nice
- outlierslend 😄😄
- tayade.atul Nyc
- felippevier Incredible
- models_daily.outfit 🍷🍷🍷🍷
- someonetotalktowhenlifeishard If you're going through a rough patch in life.. or just need someone to talk to.. Your anonymity and confidentiality is of utmost importance and we ensure to keep it that way. Don't hesitate help is always here.
- underworldthebest Classy
- light_exclusive Wow. 😄 I love this. Where is this at ?

♡ Add a comment...

2. MOVE BEYOND THE PHOTO

While Instagram was founded as a visual channel, some of the smartest brands are using captions to truly tell a story. The New York Times is a classic example of this.

On every NYT post we analyzed, the caption spanned at least 10 lines of text, with many reaching over 25+ lines. It's a deft strategy that has a clear objective of informing and educating users, encouraging comments and enhancing engagement.

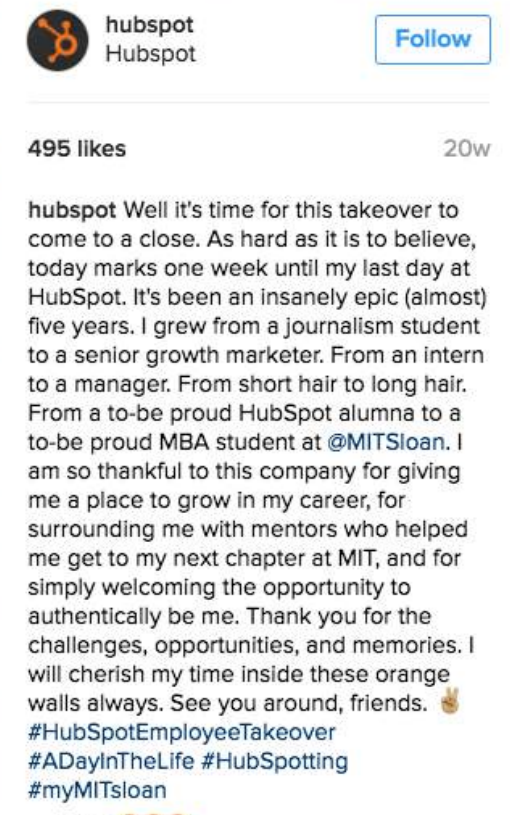


3. HUMANIZE YOUR B2B BRAND

Instagram is the most difficult channel for B2B marketers to figure out. It's not like you can generate leads and drive acquisition through tracked URLs, and most customers aren't going to follow you on Instagram to keep up to date with your products or services (there's an app for that - it's called LinkedIn). So what's a B2B marketer to do?

Make like HubSpot and use Instagram to show the people behind the product. HubSpot's Instagram presence is an inspiring look at the people who work there, creating an Instabrand that targets prospective employees as well as customers who want to be a part of their community.

Go further than just pics of your staff at happy hour and give you handle to a different staffer in a different office each week for maximum engagement.

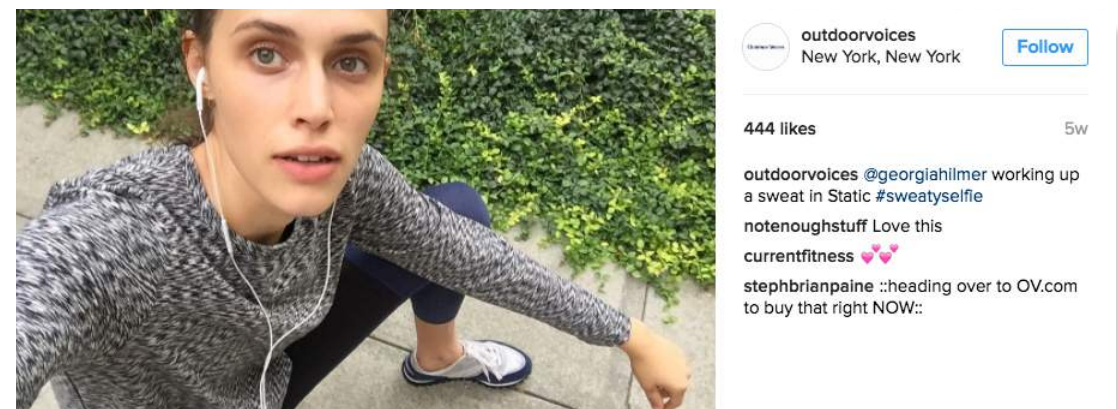


4. LEVERAGE USER CONTENT

Those of us who don't have the resources to constantly create professional images can tap into our Instagram communities for free, high-quality content.

Smaller brands like beauty startup Glossier, or athleisure label Outdoor Voices, frequently scour all posts they are tagged in to find shots of real people using/wearing their products.

By reposting these images, you can showcase your products as well as engaging with your community. And the best bit? It takes almost zero time or resources.

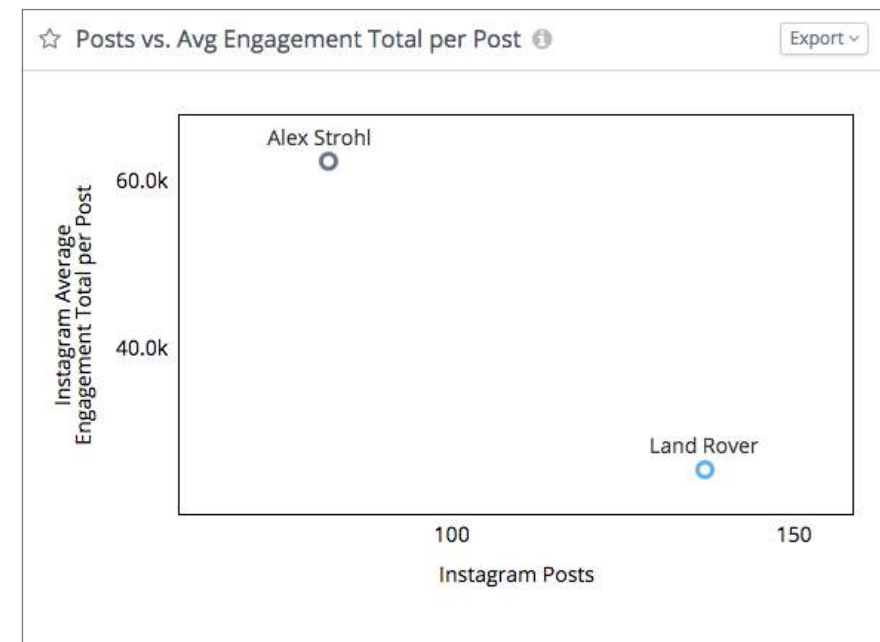
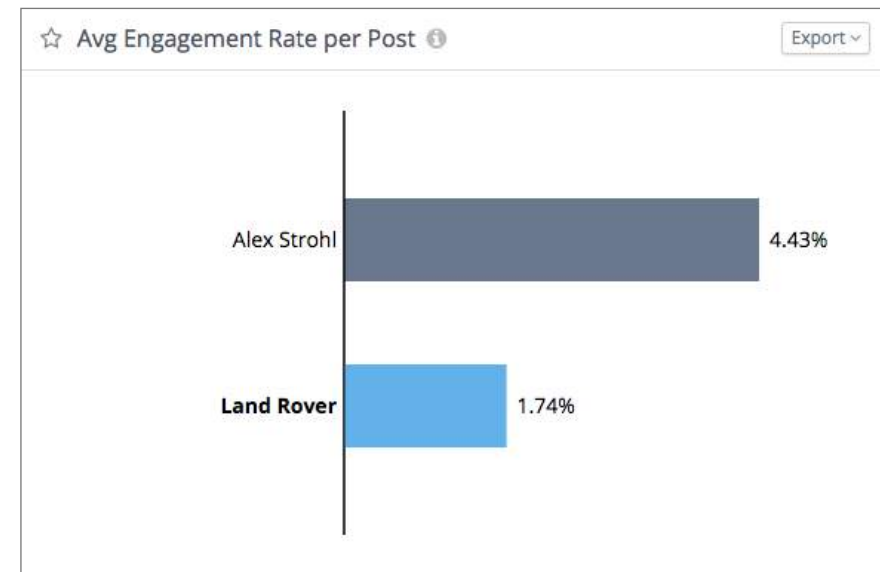


5. TEAM UP WITH INFLUENCERS

Whether you're just starting out or already have a sizable Instagram community, sponsorships can be the most effective way to gain brand awareness and increase your followers. Sponsorships can be as simple as a makeup brand giving a beauty-influencer free products in return for an Instagram post reviewing those products. It's up to your brand to identify the most mutually beneficial deal for each party.

A great example of this is Land Rover's sponsorship of professional outdoor photographer Alex Strohl. Strohl has 1.5m followers, while Land Rover has 1.8m - however Strohl's engagement rate far surpasses Land Rover's (4.43% ave. engagement for Strohl vs 1.74% for Land Rover).

It was a smart move by the brand to gift him with a free SUV for a year, while he documents his adventures and showcases their car in stunning landscapes.



TEAM UP LIKE LAND ROVER




 landroverusa [Follow](#)

7,113 likes 10w

landroverusa We feel right at home as we take in morning views over the Athabasca River. #DiscoverySport #Regram #RG #LandRover #Adventure #PhotooftheDay #Alberta #Canada 🇨🇦 @alexstrohl

stowey23 Yeah @alexandratots that Chevy looks good 😊



 alexstrohl [Following](#)

53.7k likes 14w

alexstrohl Back in Montana for a day... Getting ready for a 2 month long project in Alaska. We weren't able to bring our Defender from Europe for the adventure, but luckily I'll be working with @LandRoverUSA for the upcoming year and they've let us use one of their new Discovery Sport. Needless to say we have already started planning some big road trips, Alaska and beyond...

[view all 267 comments](#)

jaykimkiki Wow!!!

tridapallil @khenniagirola



filmography @__dddd

__dddd Now that's real camping @filmography

jeddperez Woah @belleperez

mazoch Magnifique mec 😊

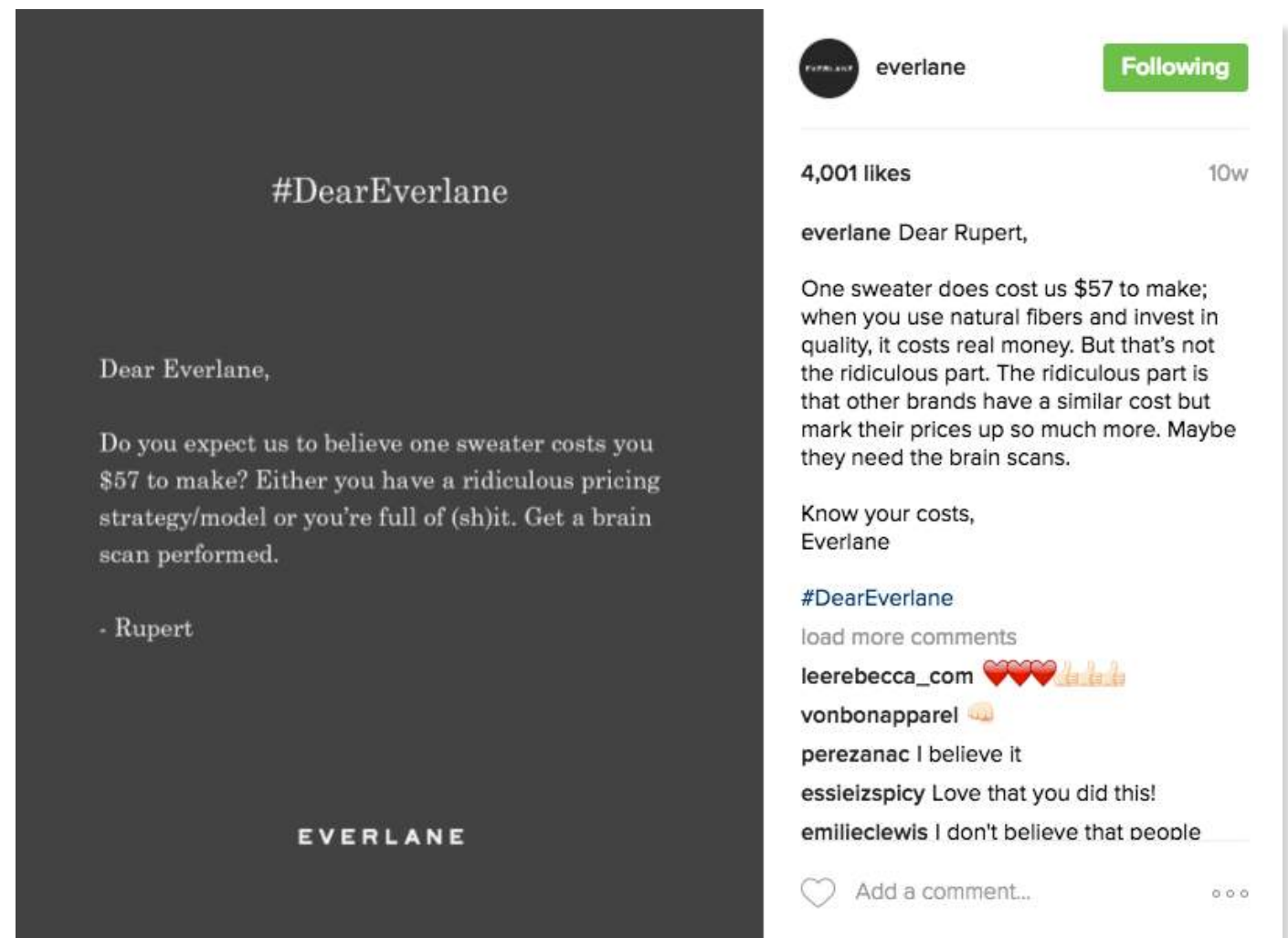
russbishopphoto #optoutside

 Add a comment... 

6. USE YOUR WORDS

'Image' doesn't necessarily mean 'photo'. Some of the most effective Instagram posts are composed of words. You can harness words to convey your brand values and your message in a clear, engaging way.

Just look at Everlane's recent post, where they used a negative review to highlight their values of transparency and ethical trade.



6. BUILD A BRAND ON THE DL

Choose the path less traveled and start with a stealth brand campaign like small New York start-up, [The Wing](#). The Wing started their [Instagram account](#) a year before launching their business, which is a women's social club in Manhattan.

When the account launched, they didn't specify what 'The Wing' was - it was purely a woman-focused account which shared inspiring images in on-trend pastel tones of peach and mint.

Co-founder Audrey Gelman noted in [an interview](#) that their Instagram followers initially "thought it was an online magazine, or they just weren't sure. They were buying into a vibe."

The Wing's following grew rapidly, with women drawn to the aspirational, feminist tone.

When the company announced itself as a women's club and launched in October 2016, women were already bought-in, and lining up to join.



BUILDING YOUR FOLLOWING

Instagram isn't Field of Dreams; you can't operate based on the 'If you build it, they will come' approach. No matter how beautiful, inspiring and meaningful your content is, you won't gain a following without making your posts discoverable and relevant to the audience you're trying to attract.

So, how do you get discovered in a vast sea of content?
Let's get down to basics

#HASHTAGS

Hashtags are the ultimate discoverability tool for marketers. They help potential customers come to you, as opposed to the traditional method of you bringing your ads to them. If you can get your hashtag game right, you'll have a roaring community in no time.

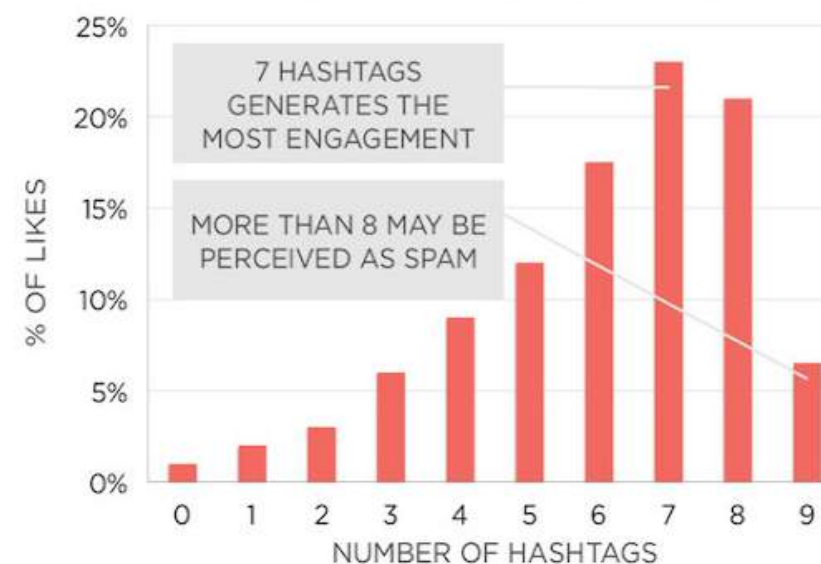
If you're looking for a more strategic way to use hashtags, you can discover all your competitors' tactics using our new [hashtag analysis tools](#).

GET YOUR FREE RIVAL IQ TRIAL TODAY ►

NEVER MORE THAN SEVEN

According to research done by [SocialFresh](#), you're suggested not exceed 10 hashtags per post to deter the perception that your post could be spam. After researching the habits of various brands on Instagram, the optimum number of hashtags for likes is seven hashtags before they negatively affect engagement.

LIKES PER 100 POSTS BASED ON NUMBER OF HASHTAGS



DON'T BE SPAMMY

One approach to maximizing the number of hashtags you're using - without looking like you're a spam account - is to put only a couple of tags in your official caption. You can then comment on the post using whichever hashtags you like, which will get buried once a few people start commenting. Check out how WeWork did it.



HACK A HASHTAG

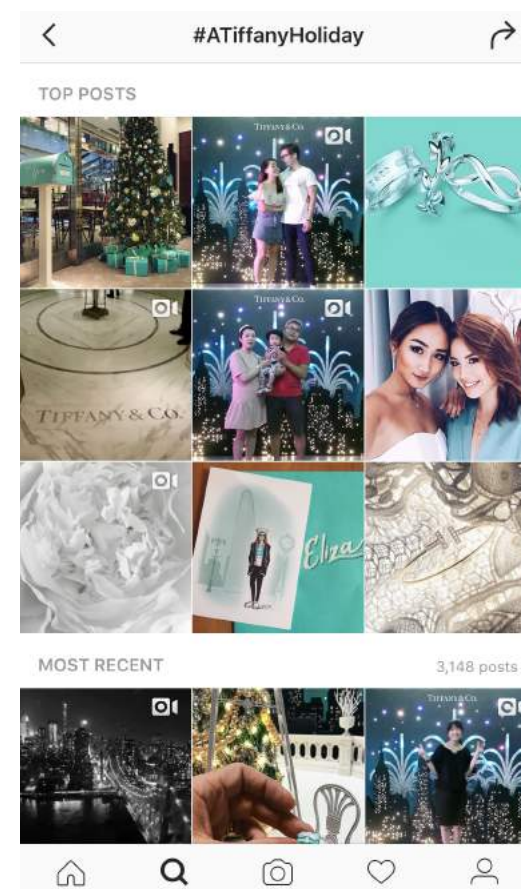
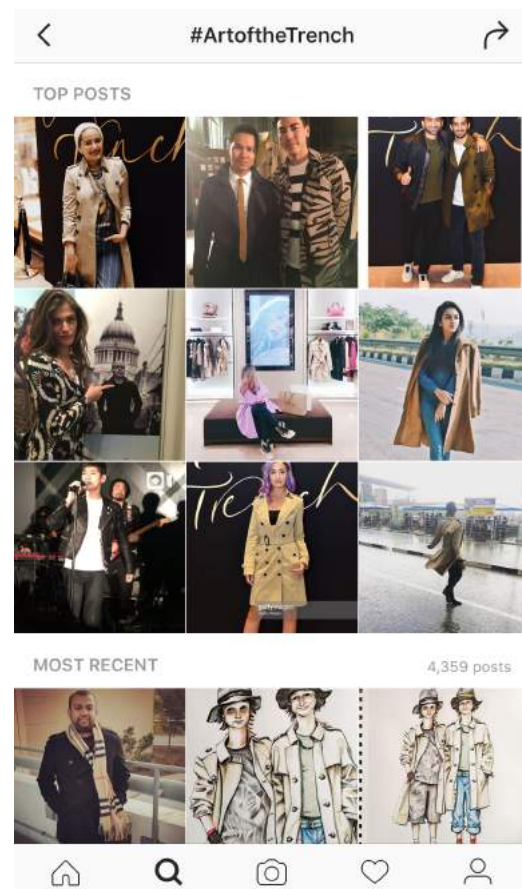
There are often special hashtags for events that see rapid growth and engagement. Make like the Guggenheim and find a way to connect your brand to a timely event.



5. UP YOUR ENGAGEMENT

CREATE CUSTOM HASHTAGS

Once your brand is established on Instagram, it's time to consider custom hashtags to help broaden your following and build engagement. Make sure any custom hashtag you create is unique, memorable, and speaks to your brand. Most brands create custom hashtags that are a play on their name, e.g. #ArtoftheTrench (Burberry), #InstaKors (Michael Kors) or #ATiffanyHoliday (Tiffany & Co.). Oh and don't forget, like Twitter and Facebook, make sure your hashtag is easy to spell and use capitalization for readability.



ASK QUESTIONS OR START A COMPETITION

The best way to get people commenting and tagging your posts is to give them a reason to do so. Brands with high engagement tend to ask something in their posts - take Whole Foods for example. Almost all of their posts begin with a piece of user-generated content, followed up with a question and custom hashtag like #MyHolidayTradish to track answers and engagement. Similarly, Starbucks uses their #redcupcontest to get users engaged and involved.



STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE

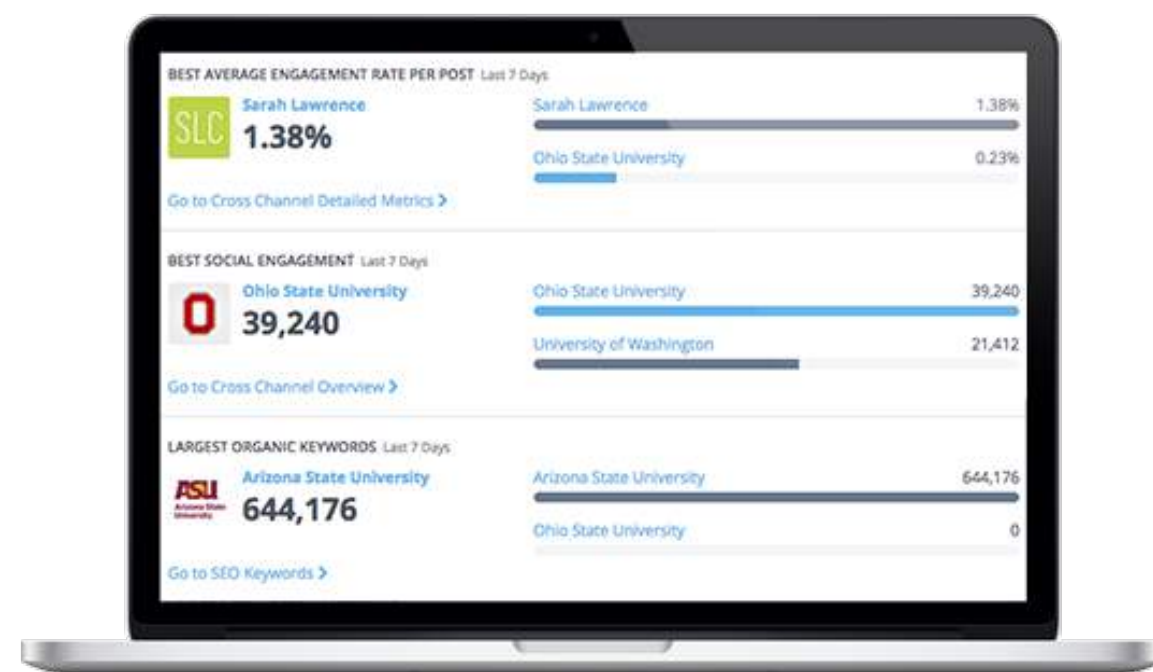
Your Instagram is up and running, your followers are growing and your community is engaged: what now?

REVIEW AND RECALIBRATE

Remember all those metrics and goals you set when you were starting out?

It's time for a big review. You may have begun with a simple goal of hitting 20,000 followers - now that you've hit your target, is it time to pivot to a more engagement-focused strategy?

Set yourself a goal of increasing average engagement per post. Your overall social media strategy will help inform these goals, but the most important thing is to never forget to check in regularly and learn from your reports - then go do better.

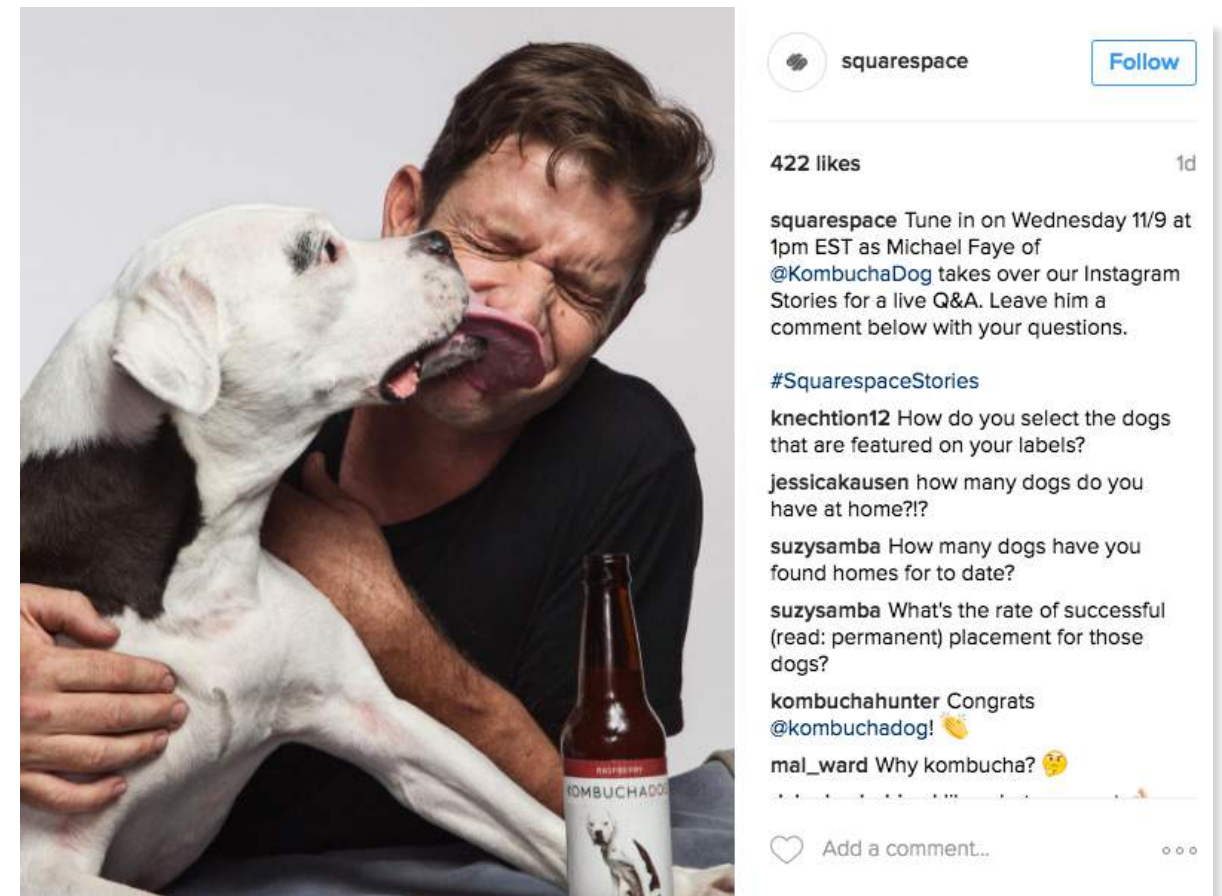


GET MORE SOPHISTICATED

Getting your Instagram account right is one thing, but Instagram Stories are a whole other story (see what we did there?). Video is a difficult medium to master because it requires even more resources than images do. Instagram Stories, however, have a lower bar when it comes to quality.

While regular videos on your brand page are expected to be somewhat professional-looking, consumers don't expect the same when it comes to Stories. Why? Because Stories, like Snapchat, are a more instant, personal form of communication, appearing and then disappearing in 24 hours.

You can use Instagram Stories to show users the people behind your brand, do cross-promotions or takeovers and generally increase your relatability.



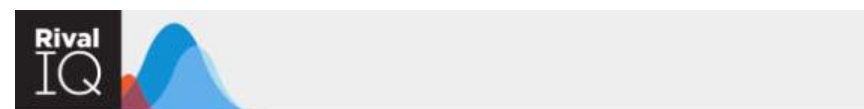
KEEP UP WITH COMPETITORS

Competitive intelligence should be a top priority for your social media marketing team. When you know what the competition is up to, you can learn from what they do well (as well as any crushing social media #fails).

This enables you to jump on trending hashtags, stay ahead of their messaging and keep developing Instagram content that kills it.

[Rival IQ](#) lets you create your own competitive landscape so you can track who's getting more followers, who is engaging better with users, the hashtags they're using and how you compare.

You'll also receive alerts when something significant happens in your landscape, so you'll always be ahead of the curve.



Notable Activity Alert

From Nov 13, 2016 - Nov 14, 2016
In Your Landscape: Higher Ed

Arizona State University grew their **Instagram Posts Engagement Total**
Discovered on Nov 14 2016

+620% vs. Previous 7 days	8,871 Nov 8 - Nov 14	1,232 Nov 1 - Nov 7
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These are the top **2 posts** that drove this growth. View more in [Rival IQ](#).

 Join us as we honor military veterans and active duty members during ASU's Salute to Service celebration 🇺🇸🇺🇸 #Repost @sundevilrewards · · · Today, let's #BlackOutUtah 🇺🇸 UTAH vs ASU #PitchforkSalute 📍 Sun Devil Stadium, 7:30pm 📺 FS1 📻 [foxsportsgo.com](#) 📻 Arizona Sports 98.7FM 📻 TuneIn Radio: ASU Sun Devil Radio Network

Likes	Comments	Engagement	Audience Engaged
2.18k	16	2.19k	4.42%

Nov 11 2016 - [View on Instagram](#)

New Belgium Brewing changed their **Instagram Bio**
Discovered on Nov 8 2016

Previous Bio	Current Bio
👉 Must be 21+ to follow. 📺 Snapchat @NewBelgium 📺. Hit the link to learn more about Roll With It and to find a screening near you.	👉 Must be 21+ to follow. 📺 Snapchat @NewBelgium 📺. Hit the link to <u>find your local polling location.</u> #ElectionDay 📺

View in [Rival IQ](#)

ABOUT RIVAL IQ

Rival IQ is an easy-to-use tool that helps you:

Understand Your Social Landscape

Track results across all social profiles, including engagement, in influencers, social bios, and sentiment—for you and your competitors.

Gain Competitive Insight

Conduct competitive analysis in minutes. Monitor your industry, create benchmarks, and evaluate competitor activity in time to respond before the market shifts direction.

Simplify Access to Data

Find comprehensive analytics for all major social channels and the web, both for your company and your competitors - all from one source.

Get your free trial ▶