



Instagram Training | Session 3

Growing and Engaging Your Audience, Creating Ad Campaigns, and Analyzing Social Metrics

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Growing Your Instagram Following and Engaging Your Target Audience

Growing Your Instagram Following and Engaging Your Target Audience

Nine Tips to Expand Your Instagram Following

Growing a brand requires getting attention from the **right** people at the **right** time. With the right methods, it's possible for businesses large and small to build a social media following and an audience that engages with your content.

But, how do you get **consistent results**?



- ❖ Choose the **right** social media channels to get followers
- ❖ **Optimize** your social media profiles
- ❖ Know **your** best time to post
- ❖ Post **consistently** but with **purpose**
- ❖ Actively engage with your audience
- ❖ Follow your **relevant** brand profiles
- ❖ Gain audience and competitor insight with **social listening tools**
- ❖ **Collaborate** with micro influencers
- ❖ **Drive traffic** from one platform to another

				
Micro < 15K	3.86%	1.63%	17.96%	
Regular 15K-50K	2.39%	0.51%	9.75%	
Rising 50K-100K	1.87%	0.46%	8.37%	
Mid 100K-500K	1.62%	0.43%	6.67%	
Macro 500K-1M	1.36%	0.44%	6.20%	
Mega 1M+	1.21%	0.37%	4.96%	

*data is based on influencers selected and added to influencer lists by Upfluence software users

upfluence

				
Micro < 15K	57.8%	51.37%	10.81%	
Regular 15K-50K	23.57%	11.84%	17.47%	
Rising 50K-100K	7.07%	6.67%	17.98%	
Mid 100K-500K	8.62%	16.43%	32.55%	
Macro 500K-1M	1.40%	4.98%	8.62%	
Mega 1M+	1.55%	8.71%	12.57%	

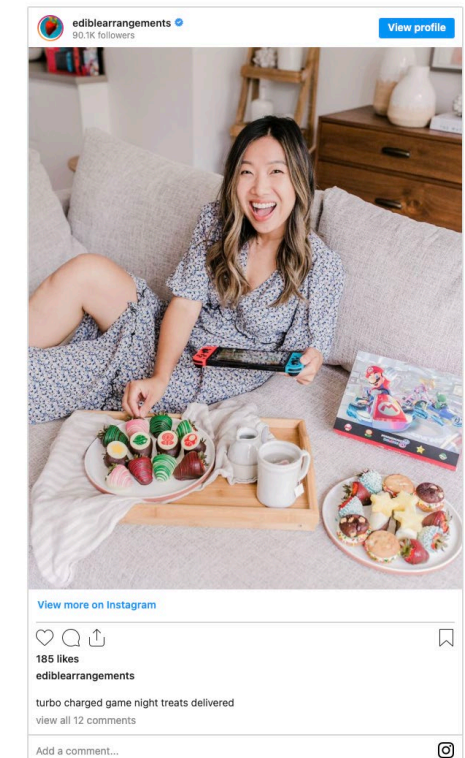
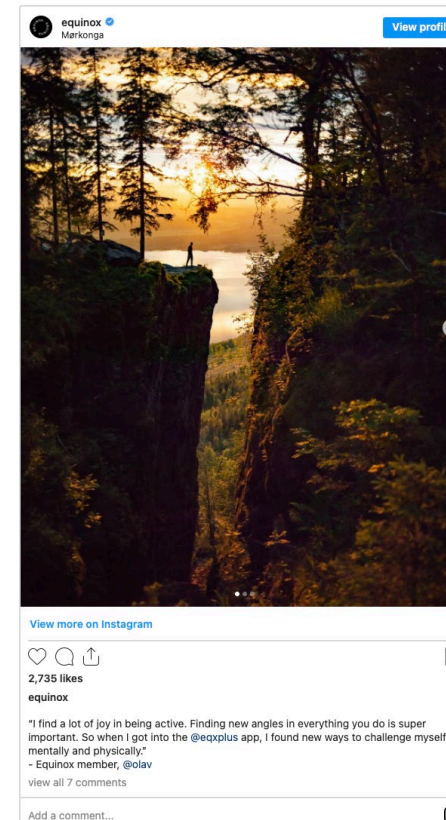
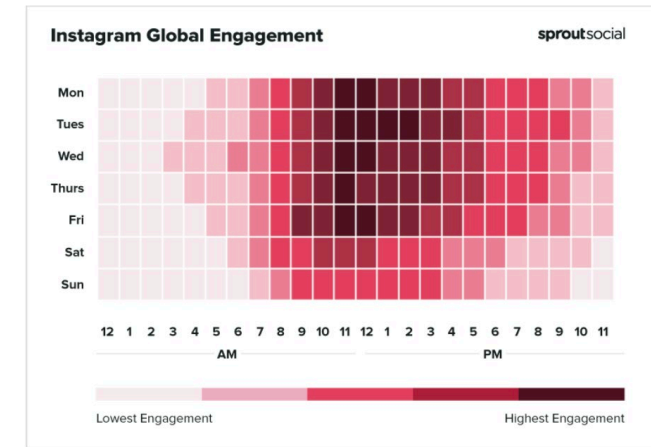
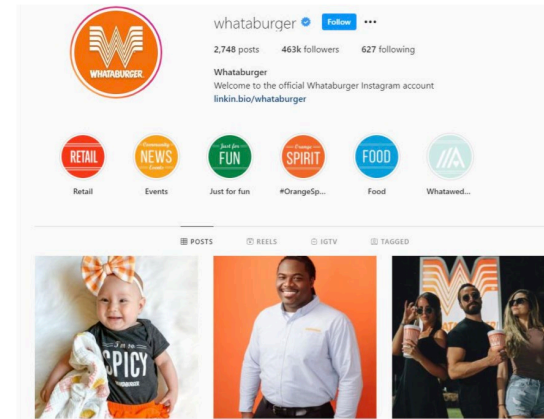
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upfluence

Growing Your Instagram Following and Engaging Your Target Audience

How Businesses Can Engage with Their Audience

- ❖ Maintain a **consistent** feed of **high-quality** visuals
- ❖ Stay on top of Instagram **changes** and **updates**
- ❖ Pay attention to what your audience **wants**
- ❖ Perfect your **timing**
- ❖ Tell **visual stories**
- ❖ Use hashtags to **boost content discovery**
- ❖ Make the most of **games, contests**, and **challenge**
- ❖ Use Instagram paid ads to **expand** your reach
- ❖ Partner with influencers to reach **new audiences**
- ❖ Make **data-driven** decisions





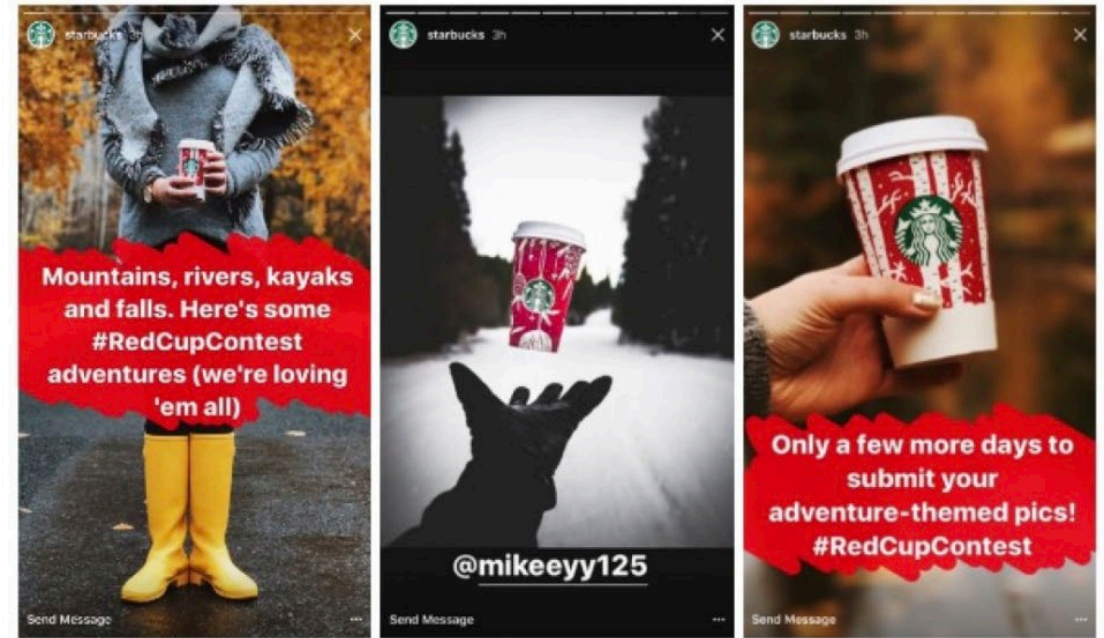
Instagram Advertising: How to Create Campaigns That Stick

Instagram Advertising: How to Create Campaigns That Stick

Instagram Advertising That Works

There are over **one billion** people accessing Instagram each month, with the average user scrolling through the platform for **fifty-three** minutes each day.

You want your brand to be where **people can see it**.



Source: EMGI Group

Instagram Advertising: How to Create Campaigns That Stick

Why Should Businesses be Using Instagram Advertising?

While organic social media strategies are **cost-effective**, they can also be incredibly **time consuming**, rely on a lot of **trial and error**, and can only get your business so far when you're constantly competing with Instagram's **ever-changing** algorithms.

As a **visual** platform, Instagram ads give your business a great way to **show off** your product and make it easier to convert your **followers** into loyal **customers**.

How Much Does Instagram Advertising Cost?

Costs depend on factors such as the **mobile device** your business is targeting, your **demographics**, the **day of the week**, and whether your ad is running during a **major televised event** or not.

Instagram feed and Story ads typically range in price from **\$.0.80 to \$1.30 CPC**.

Instagram Advertising: How to Create Campaigns That Stick

How to Create Instagram Ads

- ❖ Choose your ad objective
- ❖ Name your Instagram ad campaign
- ❖ Choose your ad placements
 - ❖ Location
 - ❖ Age
 - ❖ Gender
 - ❖ Detailed Targeting
 - ❖ Languages
 - ❖ Connections
- ❖ Define your ad budget and schedule
- ❖ Choose your Instagram ad format
 - ❖ Photo ads
 - ❖ Carousel ads
 - ❖ Collection ads
 - ❖ Video ads
 - ❖ Stories ads

Awareness	Consideration	Conversion
Brand awareness	Traffic	Conversions
Reach	Engagement	Catalog sales
	App installs	Store traffic
	Video views	
	Lead generation	
	Messages	



Engagement

Get more people to see and engage with your post or Page. Engagement can include comments, shares, likes, event responses and offer claims.

Post engagement Page likes Event responses

Campaign Name Instagram Planner Ad

Create Split Test A/B test your creative, placement, audience, and delivery optimization strategies. [Learn More](#) ☐

Campaign Budget Optimization Optimize budget across placements. [Learn More](#) ☐

[Continue](#)

Budget & Schedule

Define how much you'd like to spend, and when you'd like your ads to appear.

Optimization for Ad Delivery Post Engagement

Cost Control (optional) \$1000 average cost per post engagement

Facebook will aim to spend your entire budget and get the most post engagements using the lowest cost bid strategy. If you want to set a cost control, enter an amount. [Show Additional Bid Strategies](#)

Budget and Schedule Daily Budget \$11.00

Actual amount spent daily may vary.

☒ Run my ad set continuously starting today

☐ Set a start and end date

You'll spend no more than \$77.00 per week.

[Show More Options](#)

Audience

Define who you want to see your ads. [Learn More](#)

Create New Audience Use Saved Audience

Custom Audiences Add a previously created Custom or Lookalike Audience

Exclude Create New

Locations Location: United States

Age 18 - 65+

Gender All genders

Detailed Targeting All demographics, interests and behaviors

Hide Options

Languages All languages

Connections All people

[Save This Audience](#)

Placements

Show your ads to the right people in the right places.

Automatic Placements (Recommended)

Use automatic placements to maximize your budget and help show your ads to more people. Facebook's delivery system will allocate your ad set's budget across multiple placements based on how they're likely to perform best. [Learn More](#)

Edit Placements

Manually choose the places to show your ad. The more placements you select, the more opportunities you'll have to reach your target audience and achieve your business goals. [Learn More](#)

Devices

All devices

Platforms

☐ Facebook ☒ Instagram ☐ Audience Network ☒ Messenger

Ad Scheduling

☐ Run ads all the time

☒ Run ads on a schedule

Use viewer's time zone

We'll schedule your ads based on the time zone of the person seeing it.

For example, if you select 8am to 5pm, we'll only show your ads to people from 8am to 5pm in their local time.

Monday 12am 3am 6am 9am 12pm 3pm 6pm 9pm

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Every Day

Scheduled hours

Format

Choose how you'd like to structure your ad.

Carousel

2 or more scrollable images or videos

Single Image or Video

One image or video, or a slideshow with multiple images

Collection

Group of items that opens into a fullscreen mobile experience

☐ Add an Instant Experience

Capture people's attention instantly with a fast-loading, mobile-optimized experience that opens when they interact with your ad. [Learn More](#)



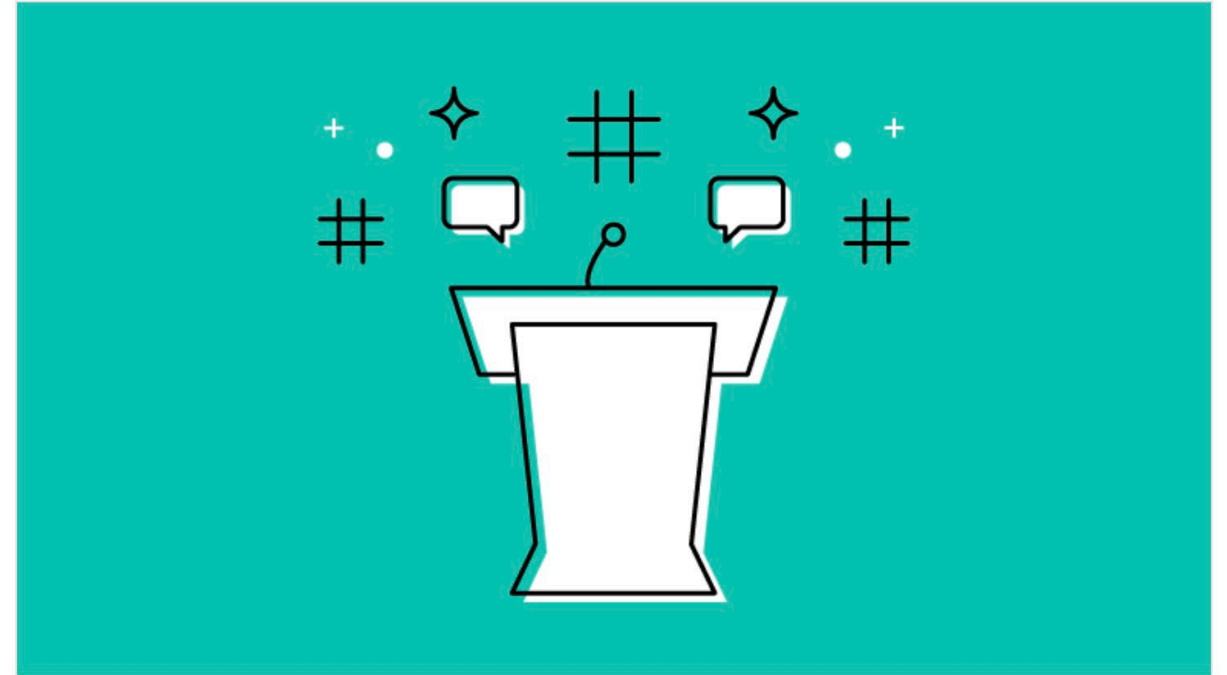
Hashtag Campaigns

Hashtag Campaigns

What is a Hashtag Campaign?

A hashtag campaign is a social media marketing campaign that surrounds a **specific hashtag** that a brand or business **creates** and **promotes**.

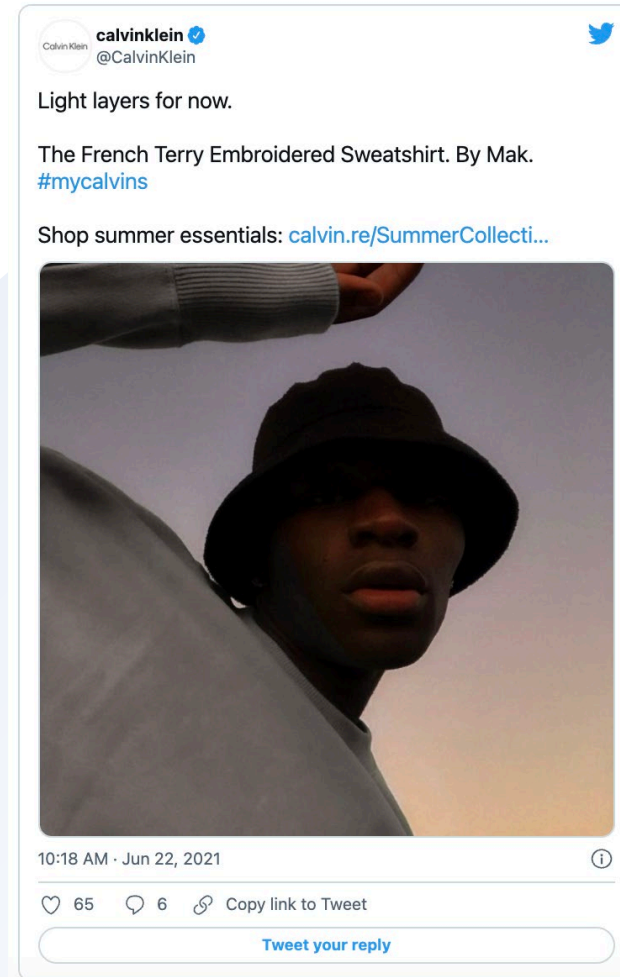
If you create a successful hashtag campaign, you can reach **exponentially more** people on social media than you would with an ordinary ad or organic campaign.



Hashtag Campaigns

Benefits of Hashtag Campaigns

- ❖ **Build** brand awareness
- ❖ **Promote** products, services, and events
- ❖ **Aggregate** information
- ❖ **Increase** user engagement
- ❖ **Collect** user generated content



Hashtag Campaigns

How to Run a Hashtag Campaign

- ❖ **Understand** your audience
- ❖ **Define** your goal
- ❖ Make participation **easy**
- ❖ Choose the **right platform**

How to Track Your Hashtag Campaign's Success

Measure these KPIs:

- ❖ **Posts**
- ❖ **Users**
- ❖ **Engagement**
- ❖ **Reach**
- ❖ **Impressions**



Instagram Analytics Tools

Instagram Analytics Tools

What Are the Best Analytic Tools to Use for Tracking Instagram Metrics?

- ❖ Instagram Insights
- ❖ Sprout Social
- ❖ Iconosquare
- ❖ Phlanx
- ❖ TapInfluence
- ❖ Curalate
- ❖ Union Metrics
- ❖ Bitly
- ❖ Keyhole



sproutsocial

bitly



iconosquare

Keyhole



tapinfluence



CURALATE



Instagram Insights

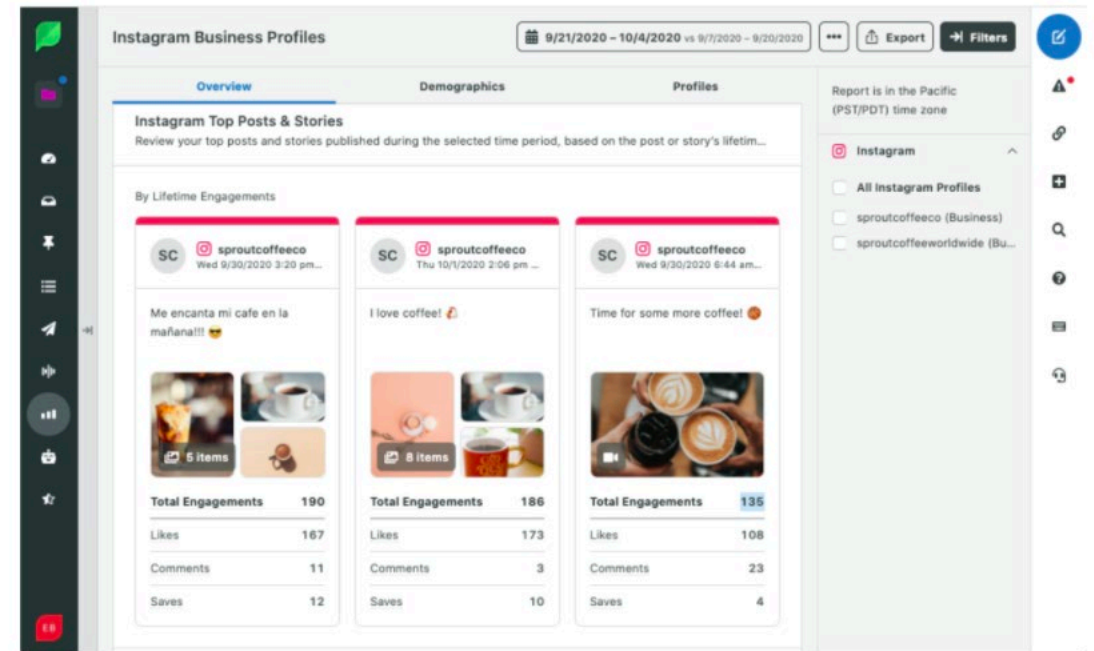
Instagram Insights reports **cover impressions, engagement, reach, and top posts** among other metrics. This data can be broken down from the span of a few months or even years, which is key for historical performance.

You also get access to followers' **analysis and demographics** so your business can find out what percentage of your audience are male/female, age groups, and even where the bulk of them are from.



Sprout Social

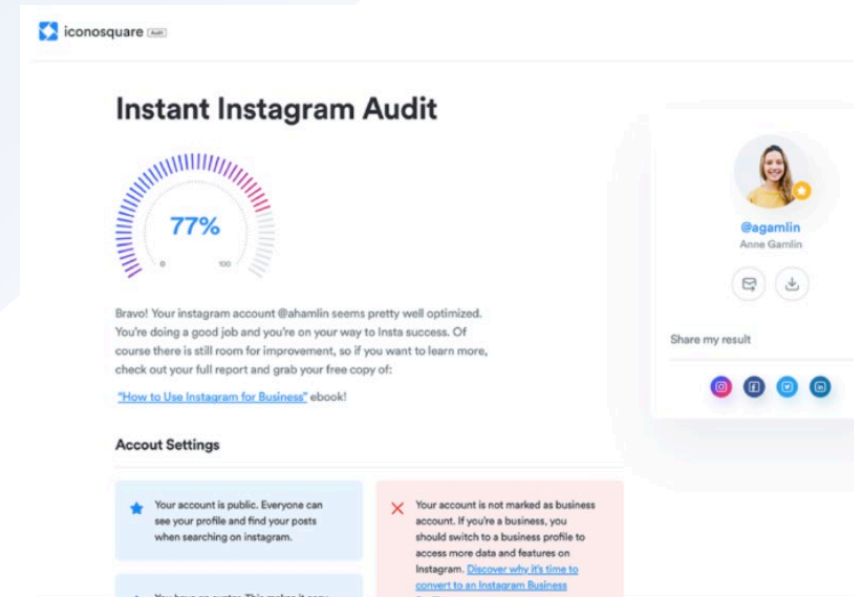
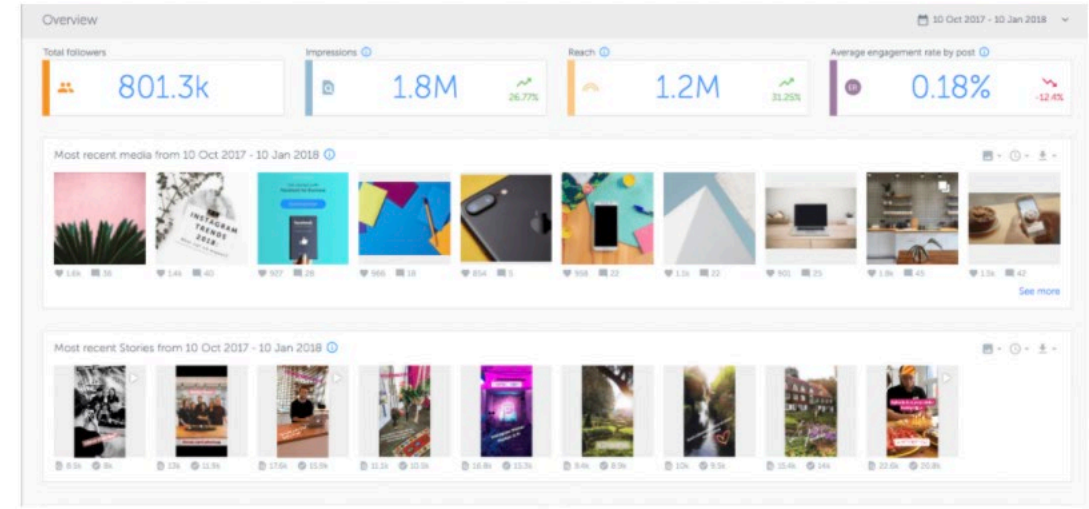
In addition to **empowering** you with intuitive Instagram **scheduling** and **publishing** features, as well as supporting **engagement** through real-time **monitoring**, Sprout enables you to quickly analyze Instagram **data** at both the post and profile level. With Sprout, you can dig even deeper into your Instagram data with **interactive graphs** and **metrics**.



Instagram Analytics Tools

Iconosquare

Iconosquare is an Instagram analytics tool that's tailored for **agencies** and **brands** managing **multiple** accounts. The platform's features include **competitive hashtag** and **growth-tracking**.

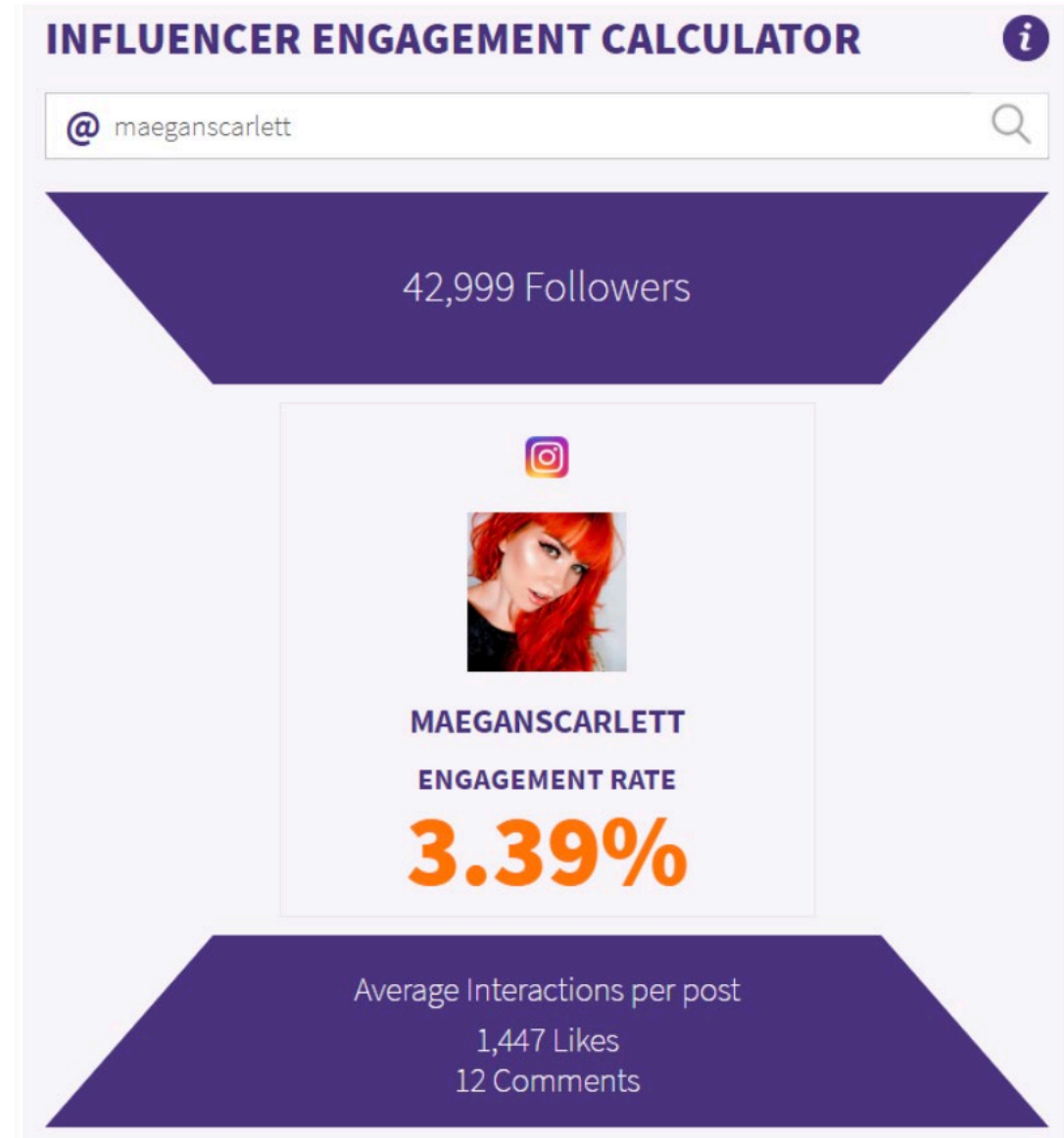


Instagram Analytics Tools

Phlanx

Phlanx's **engagement calculator** analyzes the **engagement rate** of any given Instagram account. Although the tool is marketed as being for influencers, any personal or business account can be plugged in.

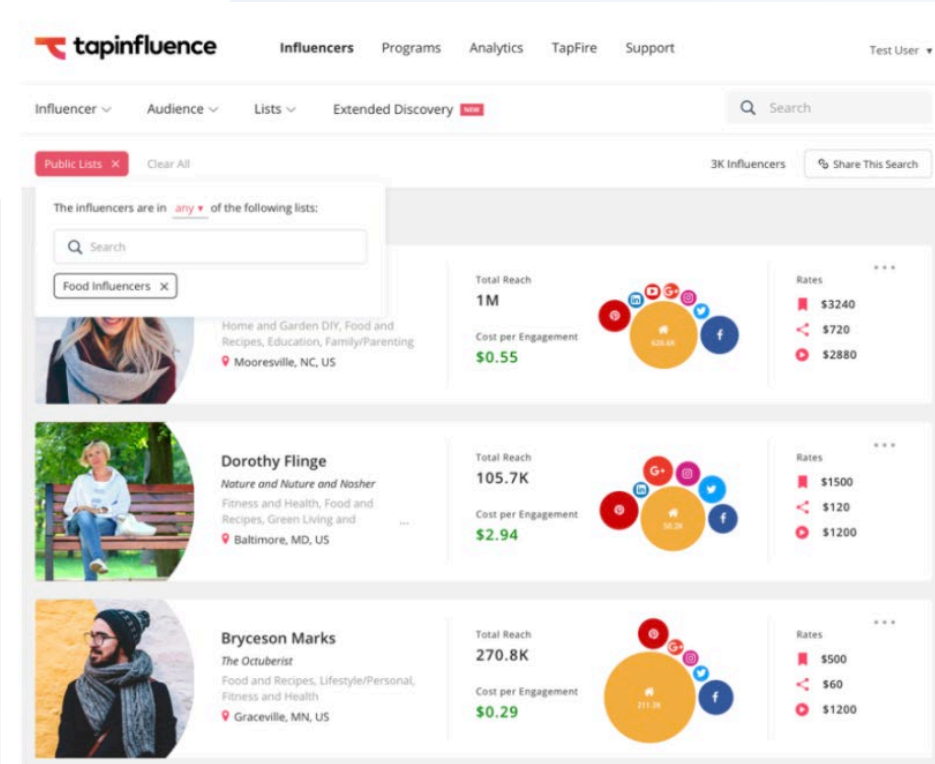
Tools like Phlanx are **invaluable** for spotting accounts with fake followers or determining whether and influencer's posts are receiving legitimate engagement. Phlanx can likewise be used to track **competitor engagement** in edition to your **own account**.



TapInfluence

TapInfluence's platform analyzes a database of over **50,000** influencers to help brands find the right fit for their influencer campaigns. Businesses can search by **industry** or **specific tags** based on what they're looking for.

The platform then provides a snapshot of **various influencers**, including their **rates** and **cost per engagement**.



TapInfluence also provides real-time benchmark reports based on industry data to help brands understand how their own influencer campaigns stack up.

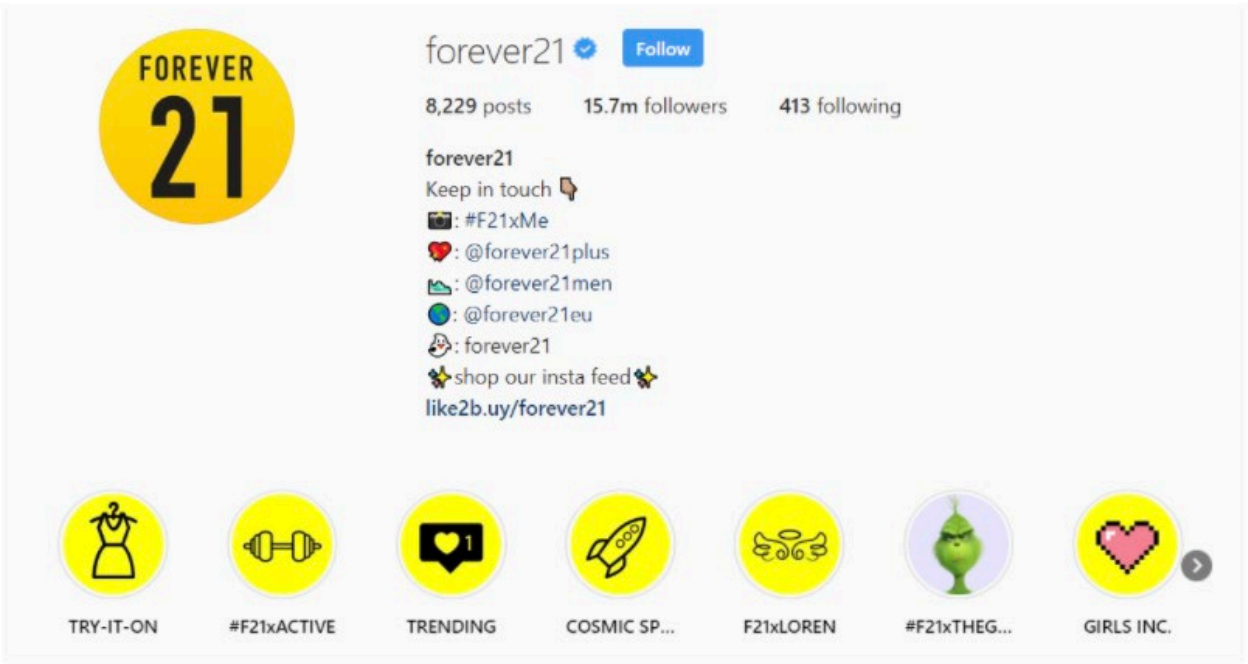
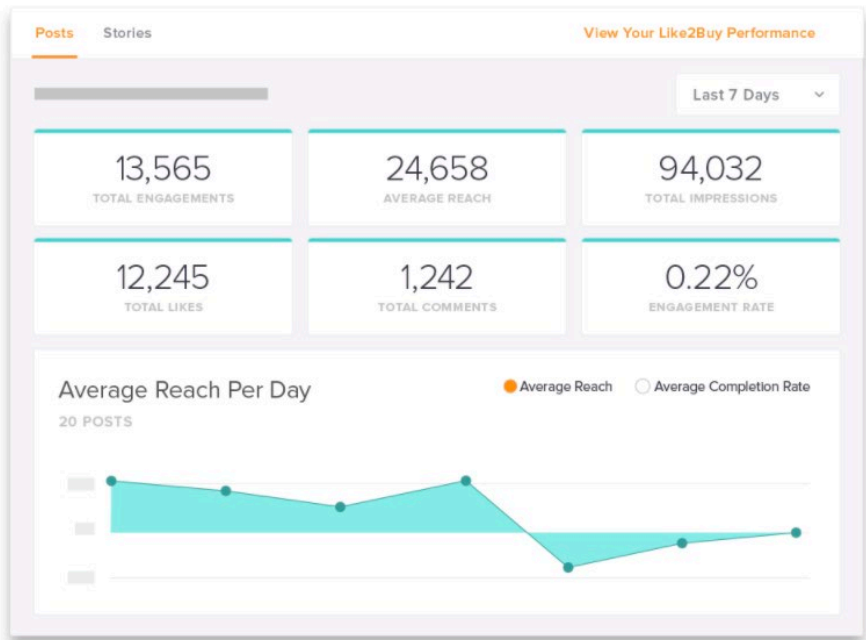


Instagram Analytics Tools

Curalate

This platform **curates** user-generated content to help brands **sell** their products directly from Instagram.

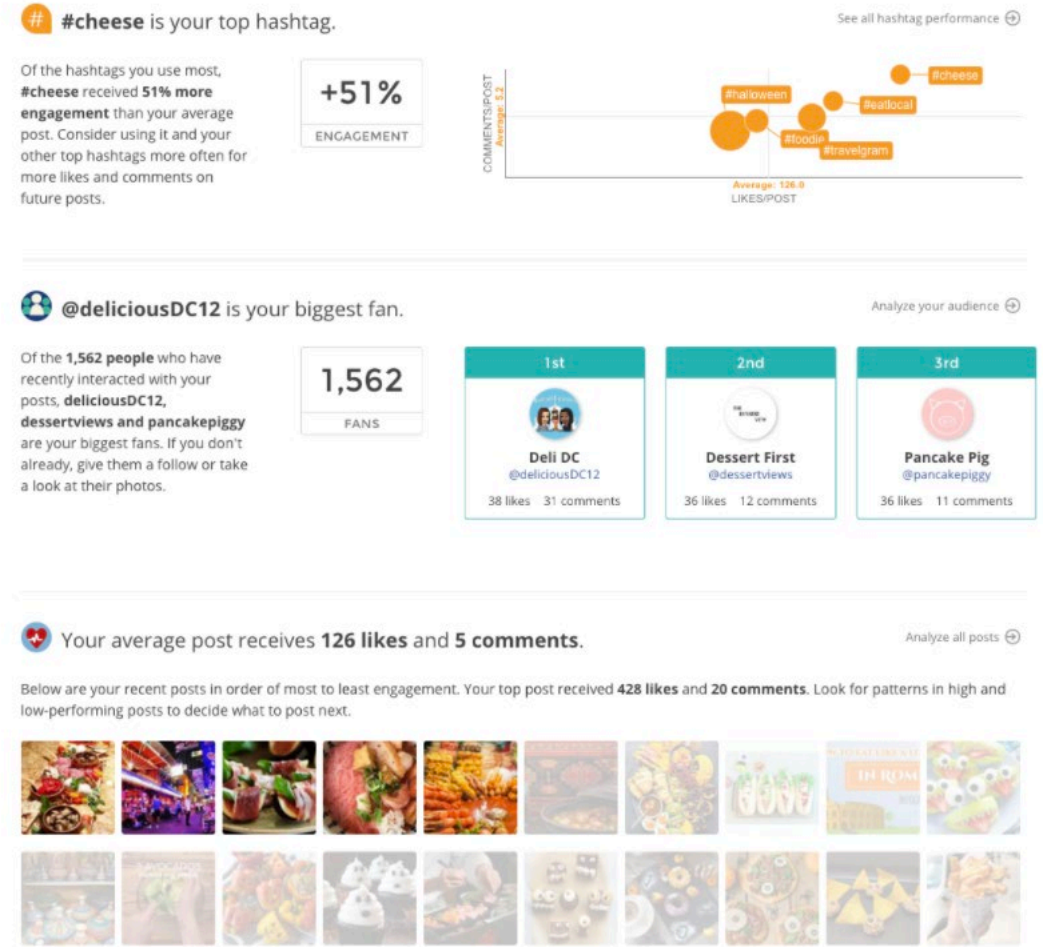
Curalate also monitors **tags** and **mentions**, making it easy to spot **user-generated content** in the wild.



Union Metrics

Union Metrics is a robust marketing **intelligence platform** that helps brands **track** their owned **media** and **industry trends**.

Anything that makes it easier to audit your social media presence for free is a plus. Like Iconosquare's free Instagram analysis tool, brands can use Union Metrics to gain a **better understanding** of their **account analytics** at a glance.

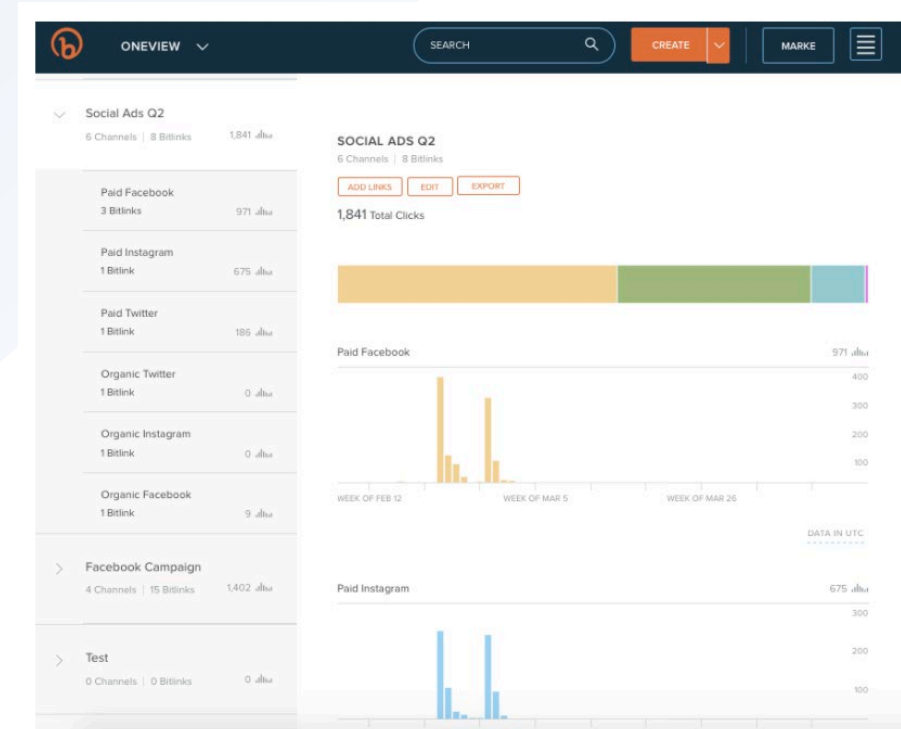


Instagram Analytics Tools

Bitly

Bitly is a tried and tested **link-tracking** tool that's fair game on Instagram for budding businesses and big brands alike.

Bitly breaks down your **bio click links** and can be used in conjunction with **Google URL builder** to provide an in-depth **performance report** of your **campaigns**. Bitly can be used to **track** links that are included in your paid Instagram campaigns.

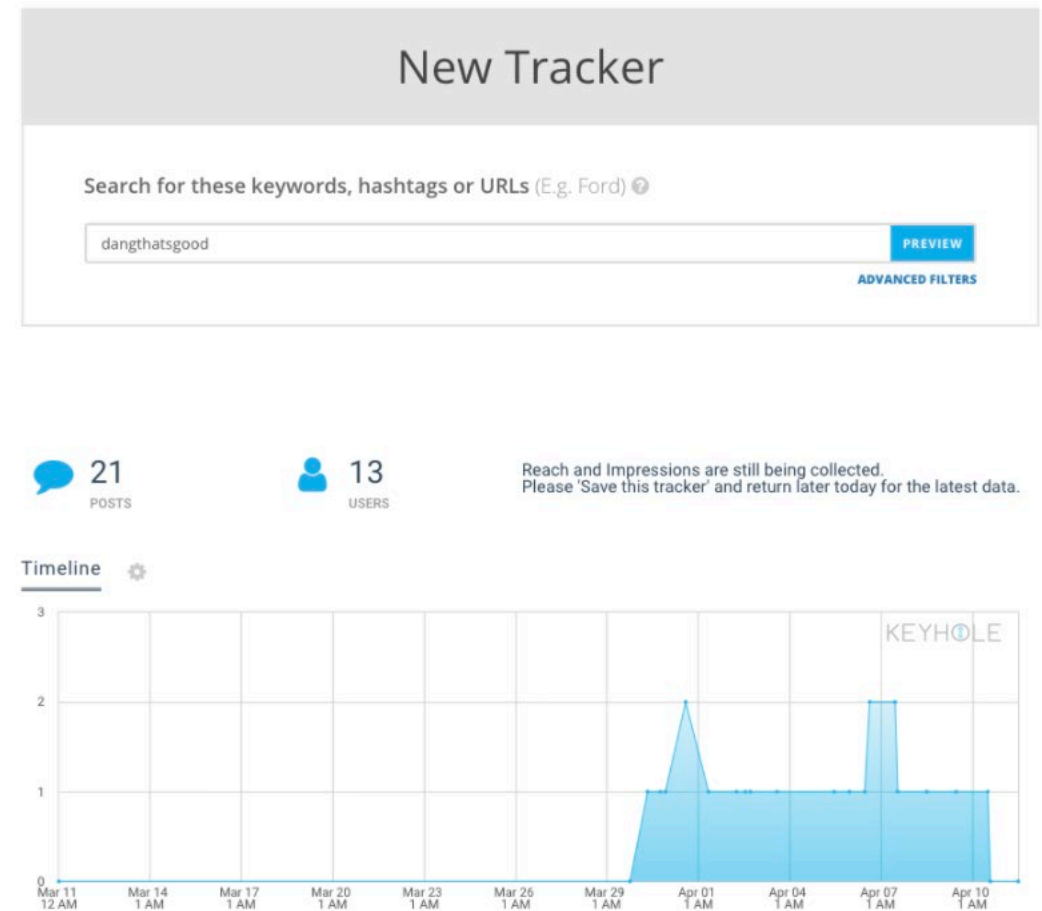


Instagram Analytics Tools

Keyhole

Keyhole provides **real-time** hashtag tracking for Instagram, which is perfect for social media **contests, brand campaigns** or other marketing efforts involving **hashtags**.

Keyhole shows additional data such as **the top posts** containing your **hashtag**, the most **engaging posts**, and **related hashtags**.





Essential Instagram Metrics to Measure Performance

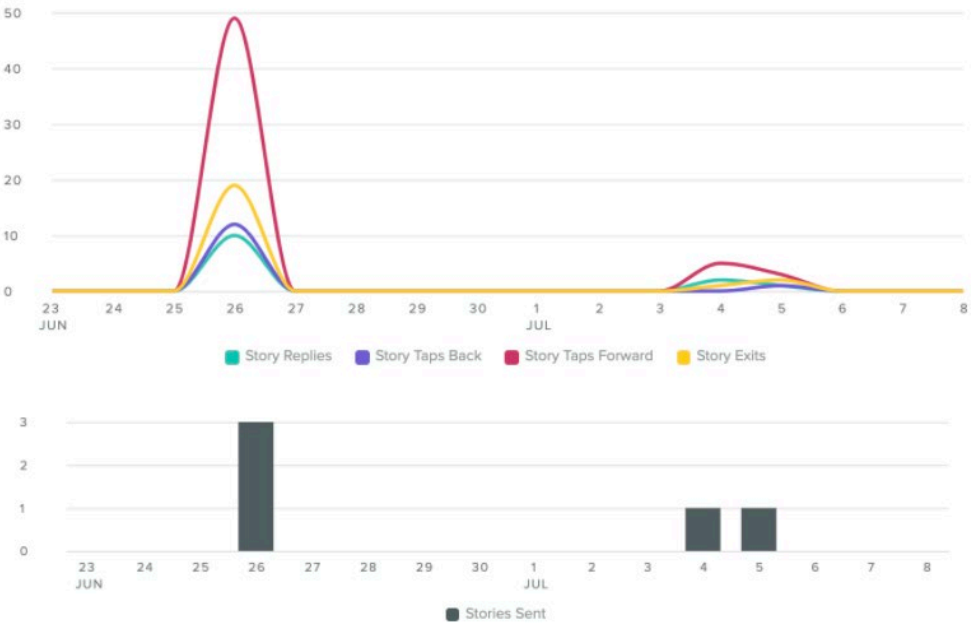
Essential Instagram Metrics to Measure Performance

Seven Essential Instagram Metrics to Measure Performance

- ❖ Engagements per follower
- ❖ Follower growth
- ❖ Comments received
- ❖ Reach
- ❖ Most engaged hashtags
- ❖ Referral Traffic
- ❖ Instagram stories metrics

Engagement Metrics	Totals	% Change
Total Engagements	84	↗ 100%
Likes	75	↗ 100%
Comments	7	↗ 100%
Saves	2	↗ 100%
Story Replies	0	→ 0%
Profile Clicks	0	→ 0%
Engagement Rate (per Impression)	13.7%	↗ 100%

Story Performance, by Day



Thank You

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Questions?



STRATEGIC INSTAGRAM MARKETING: GROWING AND ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE, CREATING AD CAMPAIGNS, AND ANALYZING SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS

SESSION THREE

PRESENTED BY: LOCALHOP SOFTWARE

SPONSORED BY: FARMINGTON DDA AND OAKLAND COUNTY MAIN STREET

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Overview

In this strategic marketing session, LocalHop will give insight into the successful methodology of maintaining audience engagement, how to create lucrative advertising campaigns, the best tools to use for Instagram analytics, as well as the importance of tracking social metrics. By the end of this session, business owners and affiliates will have a comprehensive understanding of how to build audience engagement and following, have the necessary tools to develop successful ad campaigns, and recognize the necessity of social metrics.

Growing Your Instagram Following and Engaging Your Target Audience

Growing a brand requires getting attention from the right people at the right time. There are a few ways to do this: Pay for ads on Google. Publish more SEO content. Or, master the art of social media marketing. Curious about the latter? Then building an effective social media following is key. With the right methods, it's possible to build a social media following and an audience that engages with your content. But how do you get these results consistently (Sprout Social 2020)?

Nine Tips to Grow Your Social Media Following

Choose the right social media channels to get followers

With so many social media channels available, you can't be everywhere all the time to market your brand. Today, it's about being where your audience is and engaging with them there. So your first step is to find out who your audience is and which social channels they prefer. You can gather this information in several ways:

- ❖ Interview or survey your prospects and customers
- ❖ Use social listening tools to find where discussions in your niche are happening
- ❖ Search for niche groups on various platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Reddit)
- ❖ Find your competitors (they chose their social media platforms for a reason)
- ❖ You can also read reports online that share platform user and usage trends for Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, and others.

Once you know where your audience hangs out, it's time to learn the platform so you can start making content that attracts followers. What type of content performs best and why? This will determine if the social media channel is right for your brand. For instance, if your audience uses Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, you may find Facebook is the better choice. If you don't have a "visual" brand or industry, you'll struggle to create the visual content needed to perform well on these channels (Sprout Social 2020)..

Optimize your social media profiles

You know where your audience is. Now it's time to build and optimize your brand profiles to attract a following. Here's how to do so:

- ❖ Upload a professional photo, logo, or video for added appeal. Make sure it's the correct size for the platform. Each has its own picture size requirements. For instance, on Twitter, your photo should be 400px by 400px.
- ❖ Use the same image across your profiles, so your audience recognizes your pages.
- ❖ Choose handles that are the same or similar, so it's easier to find you across channels.
- ❖ Be discoverable via search by targeting specific keywords your audience uses. Add them to your bio and description areas.
- ❖ Include links to your website, landing page, and other social profiles. Be sure to test the links to ensure they work.
- ❖ Fill out all areas of your profile completely.
- ❖ Bonus: Untag yourself from inappropriate posts to protect your reputation (Sprout Social 2020).

Know *your* best time to post

What's the best time and day to publish social media posts? It depends on your industry, the platform, and your audience. You'll find a ton of posts and reports covering the ideal times to publish posts across various social media platforms. But this doesn't mean it'll work for your specific account or industry niche. This is why it's critical to find your best time to post. Look at your social media metrics on the platform or software you use to track this data; it'll provide insights into the days and times your posts get the most clicks, shares, and comments. Use this to guide your future publishing schedule, get eyes on your content and ultimately build a social media following that is highly engaged (Sprout Social 2020).

Post consistently, but with purpose

You've probably heard a lot of rumors and myths about how often you need to post on social media to guarantee results. But there's more to publishing frequency than how often you post. It's about consistency and value. If you're posting daily, but your audience doesn't find

your content helpful, inspiring, or actionable, then they won't engage with or follow your accounts. If you're struggling to find engaging social media post ideas, try these simple tips:

- ❖ Ask customers what type of content they enjoy using surveys and polls. This gives insight into what topics interest them and, more importantly, what doesn't.
- ❖ Look at analytics data to see what types of content perform best. Are people clicking on images? Videos? Links? Text only? What kind of content gets shared the most? How many likes does each piece receive? Which pieces generate the highest engagement?
- ❖ Study each platform to see what types of content perform best on each.
- ❖ Look at competitor activity to see what types of posts they share. Do they focus on product launches? Customer service updates? Sales promotions?

After finding content ideas, use a tool like Sprout Social to automate your social media calendar, so you can schedule your content weeks or even months in advance. This can help you nail the right mix of content types and align with marketing themes like upcoming campaigns. Scheduling social media content that is intentional and driven by data and insights will pay off in attracting an authentic, engaged audience of social media followers (Sprout Social 2020).

Actively engage with your audience

Social media isn't a bullhorn—it's a form of two-way communication. Use your platform to talk to (not at) your audience. You can do this by responding to comments, liking/commenting on photos, sharing relevant articles, answering questions, and sparking new conversations. This shows your audience you're engaged with their interest in your brand, whether it's responding to urgent customer service questions or just showing appreciation for positive shout-outs. Audiences on social generally expect a fast response time on social, so make sure your team is set up for success. This is easier to manage using social media tools like Sprout that alert you when you receive tagged comments (Sprout Social 2020).

By actively engaging with followers, you're doing something impactful for your business:

- ❖ Building lasting relationships.

- ❖ Connecting with your audience humanizes your brand, and it's key to transforming followers and customers into loyal advocates (Sprout Social 2020).

Follow relevant brand profiles

Engaging with your audience on social media is a great start. But if you want to extend your reach, then follow relevant brands in your industry (excluding competitors). The goal is to find other brands with similar audiences you can engage with publicly. Share their posts and add value to conversations with meaningful comments. Doing this frequently enough will build your brand's visibility and potentially your follower count. Should you do the same with competitor profiles? Nope. Following and engaging with their content will increase their reach, which is counterintuitive. If you want to gain an edge with insight into your competition, use competitive analysis tools or social listening to delve deeper into what audiences want (Sprout Social 2020).

Gain audience and competitor insight with social listening tools

Social listening tools enable you to tag specific keywords, and then find relevant posts published on the social platforms of your choice. This is essential to monitoring conversations within your industry. Plus, you can keep an eye on what your competitors are doing without following their brand profiles. For example, you can see their posts, what others say about them and the sentiment of those posts. What do you do with all this data once you've gathered it? You can boost your social media strategy by publishing high-quality content that targets similar themes and platforms as your competitors. Notice they're getting lots of engagement on Instagram Stories and videos? Then consider adding these formats to your publishing mix. Or, maybe they're not doing so well with their infographics. Now you know to steer clear and avoid adding it to your content strategy (Sprout Social 2020).

Collaborate with micro influencers

Another way to extend your reach and build an authentic following is to work with micro influencers (less than 50K followers). Why micro and not macro influencers (500K to 1M followers)? There are several reasons why micro influencers can be a perfect fit for brands, especially those just starting out on an influencer strategy or those looking to target a precise niche:

- ❖ Affordable rates (some will even do free collaborations in exchange for a free product or service)
- ❖ Higher genuine engagement (macro influencers have a ton of followers, but the engagement isn't always high or authentic)
- ❖ More influencers (believe it or not, smaller influencers tend to have closer relationships with followers, so there's higher trust when they recommend a brand) (Sprout Social 2020).

So how do you choose the right influencers to collaborate with? Here are a few things to consider:

- ❖ **Audience:** Are they targeting the people you want to connect with?
- ❖ **Engagement:** Do they get regular engagement, and what type (comments and shares are worth more than likes alone)?
- ❖ **Reach:** How many people see their social media posts? Compare this to their engagement rate.
- ❖ **Quality:** Is the content valuable to your target market? Does it align well with your brand values?

If anyone knows how to grow a social media following, it's an influencer. So don't overlook the potential of partnering with the right ones for boosting your follower count (Sprout Social 2020).

Drive traffic from one platform to another

You regularly publish on Instagram and are seeing great results. Your followers are growing, and more people are engaging with your content. But you're not seeing the same on TikTok. Why? Maybe your audience doesn't know it exists. Cross-promotion is an excellent social media strategy for driving traffic from one social network to another. By cross-posting your content you can help highlight the different types of content followers could get if they connect with you on other platforms. It could be more visual content on Instagram, detailed professional content on LinkedIn or shorter, viral-ready videos on TikTok. Leverage your current top platforms to build your following on other social channels (Sprout Social 2020).

Grow more social followers with the right strategies

If you're committed to growing your brand using social media, building an authentic and engaged follower base is one of the most important first steps. By taking the steps outlined here, you can encourage new social media followers to like and engage with your brand. Remember, it's about the quality of your audience, not its size. So continue finding ways to bring value, and the followers will come (Sprout Social 2020).

How to Engage Your Audience

With Instagram being the most frequently accessed social network among U.S users, brands can't afford to not be on Instagram. But it's not enough to simply create an Instagram profile for your brand and leave it at that. Your presence on the platform should serve a purpose and deliver some kind of business value. To make Instagram work for your business, following some best practices can help you get ahead of the game. This involves steps to grow your brand visibility on the platform, gain new followers and drive audience engagement (Sprout Social 2020).

Maintain a consistent feed of high quality visuals

When it comes to Instagram, visuals are everything. A badly photographed image or a poorly-designed graphic isn't going to cut it. You need high-quality images and videos that stand out and instantly attract your audience. Make smart use of colors and filters so your images not

only look great but also give a consistent look and feel to your entire Instagram page. Ideally, you should stick to color combinations and visual styles that fit your brand persona.

Stay on top of Instagram changes and updates

Instagram is constantly evolving, which means brands have to always stay on top of the latest trends and features. This will give you the foresight to leverage these changes and updates ahead of your competitors. The platform has added on to popular content options like Stories and IGTV to introduce features like Reels and Instagram Shopping, which brands can use to engage their audience or drive store conversions. Moreover, it has even enhanced existing features to introduce trends such as augmented reality filters to Instagram Stories. Brands can even create custom AR filters to promote audience engagement and gain better visibility. Staying on top of all these updates will allow you to capitalize on them as soon as possible and find new ways to engage your audience (Sprout Social 2020).

Pay attention to what your audience wants

Even if they don't explicitly express their thoughts, your audience's behaviors and actions can tell you a lot about what they want to see. Use insights from your social media analytics to find out what kind of content they like to interact with. Social insights can help you answer questions like: Which content formats see the most engagement? What kind of approach works best in getting them to comment? Does it help to include questions in your captions? Answering these questions and others that help you connect with your audience will help you come up with some interesting post ideas to use in your content calendar. Adapt your Instagram content strategy to provide your audience and potential customers with exactly what they want to see (Sprout Social 2020).

Perfect your timing

Although the Instagram algorithm changes constantly, one thing that has remained consistent is the priority on engagement. Posting at the right times when your audience is active can translate to a boost in visibility and engagement. The goal is to post your content at the

right time when users are most active and most likely to engage with it. Sprout Social conducted a study on social media usage, and the data showed that Tuesdays were usually the best days to post, with peak hours being 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. However, the specific optimal times may vary depending on factors like where you're located, which industry you're in and how your audience behaves (Sprout Social 2020).

Tell visual stories

For your brand to leave a lasting impact, it has to be memorable. And that's where storytelling comes in. Instagram is the perfect platform to create intriguing and captivating visual stories about your brand. Start creating visuals to tell engaging stories about your brand history, your customer stories, your employee experiences or your brand impact. Equinox uses this approach to tell a story about fitness as a lifestyle. The brand leverages Instagram to share captivating visual stories that tie into their brand slogan of "It's Not Fitness. It's Life." On their grid, their images fit in with ongoing brand visual themes that feature bold, sophisticated color palettes, striking photography and integrate fitness into inspirational lifestyle images (Sprout Social 2020).

Use hashtags to boost content discovery

Hashtags are your best friends on Instagram. They help your content show up in the search results of said hashtags and in the Explore pages of people who've viewed or interacted with similar content. So hashtags on Instagram are a great way to boost content discovery and overall brand visibility. Make the most of niche hashtags and industry-related hashtags that can help you hone in on the right audience. Picking the most used hashtags globally or regionally may mean you just get lost in the noise—targeting meaningful hashtags relevant to your product or service is more likely to get your content in front of potential customers. And don't forget to share branded hashtags to encourage user-generated content (UGC) (Sprout Social 2020).

Make the most of games, contests, and challenges

One of the top Instagram best practices to generate tons of engagement is using games, contests and challenges. These tend to be highly engaging as they involve directly encouraging audience participation. If you throw in a reward with your contests and games, your audience is more likely to get involved since they have an opportunity to get prizes from brands they follow or that relate to their interest. You could create fun quizzes and trivia games to get your audience to comment. Or you could run giveaway contests that involve people liking, commenting, sharing or tagging their friends in the comments.

Many contests also involve getting people to create UGC, which will further put your brand in front of their followers and give you a stock of content to build up your publishing calendar with. Similarly, you could create challenges that involve your followers taking a certain action. This can be anything from putting together a makeup look around a certain theme or dancing in a particular choreography. Encourage them to share content that shows them performing the challenge, which drives more brand visibility as they use your relevant branded hashtags and tag your account (Sprout Social).

Use Instagram paid ads to expand your reach

Organic brand reach on social media can be more challenging than ever with how active the platform is. While Instagram fares better than other major platforms, an Ignite Social Media analysis found that out of 150,000 followers, only 14,100 will see an organic post in their feed. You can bolster your visibility and better promote your Instagram using paid ads. Paid targeting can help your content gain reach beyond current audiences who see it in their organic, algorithmically served content and find new potential customers. Use paid ads to target highly relevant users who are likely to be interested in your product and content. Instagram advertising allows you to get your brand in front of the right people using a number of highly granular targeting options. This means you can attract new followers and new customers alike. Even if you don't want to invest in paid ads on a regular basis, make sure it's part of your strategy when ramping up a new campaign or trying to grow your account's reach (Sprout Social 2020).

Partner with Influencers to reach new audiences

With the ability to reach hundreds of thousands of people through their posts, influencers can add fuel to your Instagram promotion efforts. Influencer marketing is another way to get your brand in front of new audiences, and the trust that audiences have in influencers' recommendations can be a huge boost to your customer base. When partnering with influencers, it's crucial that you work with people whose audience base overlaps with yours. In other words, make sure you only partner with influencers who can reach your target audience. This typically means people who've built an influence in your industry or a related niche. For example, vegan food influencers for brands that produce eco-friendly and organic products (Sprout Social 2020).

Make data-driven decisions

Last but not least—don't underestimate the power of data. If you want to make Instagram work for your business, best practices such as tracking your post performance and measuring audience engagement are vital. As long as you know what to look for, data can inform your content strategy and your marketing decisions. Here are a few ideas:

- ❖ Track comments and post performance to see how your audience is responding to a particular style of post. Then use those insights to modify your Instagram content strategy.
- ❖ Make data-driven decisions on what influencers you should partner with based on the people that your target audience follows and looks up to.
- ❖ Monitor Instagram trends to gain foresight on how to craft timely posts, adapt your campaign or create a new one.
- ❖ Measure audience engagement to see how your campaign is performing. Then look for opportunities to improve, modify or replicate your campaign for best results.

Tracking your data gives you precise insight on what's working and what strategies aren't taking off, allowing you to continually refine your approach. Using data effectively means that you're not only producing content and campaigns for Instagram, but creating an invaluable

source of learnings about what works for your brand and customer base along the way (Sprout Social 2020).

Instagram Advertising: How to Create Campaigns That Stick

If you're looking for ways to revamp your Instagram strategy, look no further than incorporating Instagram advertising into your plan of action. While this tactic requires some capital to put behind it, there are plenty of reasons for brands to try it out. There are over one billion people accessing Instagram each month, with the average user scrolling through the platform for fifty-three minutes each day, and you want your brand to be where they can see it.

What is instagram advertising?

Instagram started offering ad spots to select businesses after it was acquired by Facebook in 2013. After they opened Instagram advertising to all businesses in 2015, it grew exponentially, and by 2017 reached one million advertisers. Instagram advertising is managed right inside of Facebook's Ads Manager, giving advertisers access to a plethora of targeting options, as well as making it possible to create ads for both platforms at the same time.

- For Instagram-only ads, you can create ads that appear in your audience's feed as well as Story ads that play in between user Stories as users tap from Story to Story (Sprout Social 2020).

Why you should be using Instagram advertising

While organic social media strategies might seem cost effective at first, they're time consuming, rely on a lot of trial and error, and can only get you so far when you're up against ever-changing social media algorithms. This is why it's so important to focus on a social media strategy that incorporates both organic and paid tactics. This way you get the best of both worlds. You're actively engaging with your audience and posting content to your Instagram feed, but you're reaching out to an even larger audience who might not know about your brand yet with paid ads. As a visual platform, Instagram ads give you a great way to show off your product, and with Instagram shopping, you can even make it easier than ever for people to convert to customers right off the bat (Sprout Social 2020).

How much does instagram advertising cost?

Instagram advertising costs depend on several different factors like the mobile device you're targeting, demographics, day of the week and whether or not your ad is running during a major televised event. It all comes down to your target audience, which is why it's so important to know your Instagram demographics. Another factor that affects ad cost is the ad's placement. While Facebook's right column ads tend to be the most expensive, both Instagram feed and Story ads are some of the cheapest placement options, ranging from about \$0.80 to \$1.30 CPC. (cost per click)

So how do you go about fitting this into your current marketing budget? It's important to focus on your key goals and objectives for the year and only dedicate money to ads and campaigns that help your bottom line. Put money behind posts and content that you already know perform well organically. Test everything to see what performs best, and dedicate most of your ad spend to that. Make sure to measure your ad success and take note of anything that didn't do as well as you'd hoped (Sprout Social 2020).

How to create Instagram ads

As mentioned previously, you create your Instagram ads right inside the Facebook ads manager. This makes it easy since you get to manage your Facebook and Instagram ads all in the same place. To get started creating your first Instagram ad, log into your Facebook account, head over to your ads manager and start a new campaign.

Choose your ad objective

Once you create a new campaign, your first step in creating Instagram ads is going to be choosing the objective behind your ad. There are many different choices, broken down into three categories – Awareness, Consideration and Conversion. The ad types available to choose from are:

- ❖ **Brand awareness:** Ideal for reaching users who would engage with your ad and to bring general awareness around your brand.
- ❖ **Reach:** This is for brands trying to get ads in front of the most people possible.

- ❖ **Traffic:** If your goal is to get users to visit a site, landing page or app, a traffic goal is perfect.
- ❖ **Engagement:** If you want users to like, comment or share your ad, it's best to set your objective to engagement.
- ❖ **App installs:** This goal is for brands directing users to the app store to download or purchase apps.
- ❖ **Video views:** In-stream ads play in users' feeds to show production, product launches, and behind-the-scenes footage to visually entice users into watching.
- ❖ **Lead generation:** Trying to simply find people interested in or somewhat curious about your brand? Set a lead gen goal.
- ❖ **Messages:** This encourages users to interact with your brand to answer product questions, provide support or complete purchases.
- ❖ **Conversions:** If you're looking for direct sales actions on your ads, such as adding payment info or making a purchase, conversions is the ideal goal.
- ❖ **Catalog sales:** The format is for brands showing products from your product catalog (must set one up to use this format), which then targets your audience.
- ❖ **Store traffic:** This is perfect for those promoting multiple business locations to drive more in-store visits.

Be smart about picking your objective. If you choose an objective that doesn't make sense, like creating a traffic ad for a video or a messages ad for an Instagram placement, your ad will likely be denied. Plus, you don't want to waste your ad budget by choosing an objective that doesn't make sense for the content you're putting within the ad (Sprout Social 2020).

Name your instagram ad campaign

After selecting your ad objective, the screen will extend to allow you to name your campaign. This is the best way to keep track of your ads within the Instagram ads manager, so I highly recommend you name each campaign with intention. What are you promoting? Is it a monthly ad? Add which month you're creating. Include the name of the promotion. Find a naming method that works for you and helps you to easily find your ads and track their

performance. You can also choose to get started on a split test ad and try out different variations, as well as decide to optimize your budget across ad sets or not.

A split test, or A/B test, allows you to test different ad variations or ad sets against each other, allotting the biggest budget to the ad that performs best. Campaign budget optimization will automatically distribute your ad budget across your ad sets. You can choose to do this, or manually set how much each ad set should spend based on your own past testing and results (Sprout Social 2020).

Choose your ad placements

Although selecting your audience comes first on the page, it can actually be a good idea to scroll past it at first and choose your Instagram-only placements. Different ad features are available for different placements, so getting this out of the way is a good idea. All you have to do is uncheck Facebook and Audience Network from the platforms to ensure your ad will only be running on Instagram (Sprout Social 2020).

Target your audience

Ah, now the good part. Targeting your audience is where you get to dive into the nitty gritty of Instagram advertising. You don't want to waste money by trying to target anyone and everyone. This is your opportunity to really nail down the demographics, interests and behavior of your brand's target audience.

You're able to target the following audience categories in the ads manager:

- ❖ **Location:** Choose or leave out audiences based on extremely specific locations down to postal codes and addresses or by broad areas such as global regions or countries.
- ❖ **Age:** Select your specific age range (spanning from ages 13 all the way to 65+).
- ❖ **Gender:** Choose between all genders, men or women for your ads.
- ❖ **Detailed Targeting:** Broken into three subcategories:
 - Demographics let you include or exclude people based on life styles, employment and education.

- Interests filter users based on Pages liked, activities attended and related topics.
- Behaviors target purchasing, activities and travel intentions.
- ❖ **Languages:** Only needed if you're targeting audiences speaking a specific language that is uncommon in that area.
- ❖ **Connections:** Select users who are already connected to your app, event or page.

You're also able to create custom audiences based on pixels that you've placed on your website. These will be users that have visited your website, or perhaps a lookalike audience of people who have similar behaviors and interests (Sprout Social 2020).

Define your ad budget and schedule

When it comes to setting your Instagram ads budget and schedule, you have full reign over when your ads run and how much will be spent on them. First of all, you need to choose between a daily budget and a lifetime budget. Daily budgets allow for your ads to run indefinitely while spending up to your allotted amount each day (you can still set start and end dates), while lifetime budgets will run for a set amount of time. If you choose a lifetime budget, you can also select a specific schedule for your ads to run. Perhaps you want them to only be shown on weekdays or weekends. You're able to manually choose the days and times your ads will be shown to your target audience (Sprout Social 2020).

Choose your instagram ad format

Once you've completed the last three steps, click continue to head over to your ad creation dashboard. This is where you'll upload your content, write your ad copy and publish your ad. This is also a good time to give our Instagram ad sizing guide a second look as well to ensure you're uploading the correct sized ad assets. Different formats are available based on the ad objective you chose at the beginning of this guide, but the basic Instagram ad formats are:

- ❖ **Photo ads:** These include a single image, so you want to make sure it's a good one.

- ❖ **Carousel ads:** These allow users to horizontally scroll through multiple images or videos on their mobile device.
- ❖ **Collection ads:** These give users the ability to purchase products directly from the ad.
- ❖ **Video ads:** These are video clips that can be from 3 seconds to 60 seconds long.
- ❖ **Stories ads:** These can be photos or videos that run in between user Stories as people tap through the Stories they follow (Sprout Social 2020).

Hashtag Campaigns

If you're looking for a new campaign idea to help increase engagement and brand awareness on social media, try hashtag campaigns. Hashtag campaigns help make it easier for your brand's message to spread, so long as they're done properly and make sense for the platform and the audience. To help you determine if a hashtag campaign is the best idea for your brand, we're going to cover what exactly a hashtag campaign is, the benefits of this type of campaign, how to run one and how to track its success (Sprout Social 2020).

What is a hashtag campaign?

True to its name, a hashtag campaign is a social media marketing campaign that surrounds a specific hashtag that a brand creates and promotes. This is a great way to generate awareness around a brand, product, launch, event and more. To run one of these campaigns, your brand would select a hashtag that best represents the campaign and share content related to and featuring that hashtag. The point is to get your customers to also pick up and start using the hashtag on related content in order to reach an even wider audience. If you create a successful hashtag campaign, you can reach exponentially more people on social media than you would with an ordinary ad or organic campaign. You can also increase engagement with the followers that do participate and share your hashtag within their own posts.

It's a great opportunity to further build your brand and increase followers, but you can also use hashtag campaigns as a way to show support for various social issues that reflect your brand mission. There are a few different types of hashtag campaigns, from event hashtags to

product launch ones or even those that simply ask questions surrounding a central topic and get your audience's thoughts and opinions (Sprout Social 2020).

Benefits of a hashtag campaign

Build brand awareness

Hashtag campaigns are great ways to get the word out about your business to a much wider audience. If you're a relatively new or smaller brand, consider using hashtag campaigns simply as a way to generate awareness. A similar example from a bigger brand would be the #MyCalvins hashtag campaign put together by Calvin Klein. For a brand awareness hashtag campaign, you'll typically always want to work your brand name or a highly unique product or service name in there somehow, so that anyone who comes across the hashtag will start to get acquainted with your business.

In regard to Calvin Klein, they include it in several different posts as a way to get their audience excited about owning their own "Calvins." And many of their customers do also post pictures using this same hashtag, spreading it around even further. While this started as a campaign several years ago, Calvin Klein and their audience still uses the hashtag regularly, showcasing the longevity of brand-specific terms and slogans (which are often easy to convert into hashtags!) can have for your brand (Sprout Social 2020).

Promote products services and events

You can also use hashtag campaigns as a promotional tool to showcase your business's product and service offerings, as well as upcoming or annual events. You'll see this tactic used a lot with new movies that are coming out, but it's a successful strategy for businesses to utilize as well, especially when launching new products, services, facets of a business, etc. One example of this was by Adidas when they launched their new Originals line. They used the hashtag #ORIGINALis across Instagram while also partnering with a number of celebrity influencers to increase the reach of their campaign. The brand now has its own Adidas Originals Instagram profile, proving how successful the launch was for building audience knowledge of and excitement around the line's unique identity (Sprout Social 2020).

Aggregate information

Hashtags are searchable, so creating a hashtag for your audience to use in order to hold a discussion about a topic is a great way to aggregate information into one place. Twitter chats are one great example of this, but you can also ask your audience thought-provoking questions and use a hashtag to keep track of all the responses and discussions. One great example of this that brands can emulate comes from Jimmy Fallon's The Tonight Show, where they regularly ask viewers to share funny stories and other information using different hashtags. They'll then pull tweets that use those hashtags to share on the show.

Think of ways that your brand can use hashtag campaigns to aggregate information, whether funny or serious. To get an idea of a humorous brand hashtag campaign, Charmin's #TweetFromTheSeat campaign used their Twitter account as well as their followers to incorporate the hashtag to make jokes in line with the brand's signature humor about their product (Sprout Social 2020).

Increase user engagement

Successful hashtag campaigns are great for generating user engagement and getting your followers to tweet or post about your hashtag. Since the whole point of a hashtag campaign is getting your audience to spread the word, you need to make sure you make it easy and accessible for your audience to maximize engagement. You also want to carefully search for and vet any potential hashtag ideas you have in advance. Make sure you're not using common phrases not already being widely used in general conversations, which could dilute the impact of your campaign. This is another reason to look to your unique product, brand and service names for inspiration.

Finally, be careful to read through how your hashtag looks combined as a single term with no spaces and different stylings. While it might look readable when capitalized in your

official brand style, you can't always control how audiences will type it, and over the years some brands have gotten surprised by unintended alternate readings or spellings (Sprout Social 2020).

Collect user generated content

Use a hashtag campaign that gets your customers to create and share photos that feature your products. In turn, your brand can share that content on your own channels as user-generated content. One great example of a hashtag campaign that generated tons of awesome Instagram photos was RYU's #WhatsInYourBag campaign. This centered around a photo contest that ended up increasing their follower count to well over 40,000 and helped them generate a ton of photos to share on their own social feeds (Sprout Social 2020)

How to run a hashtag campaign

Now that you know the benefits and have seen a few examples of successful hashtag campaigns, let's talk about how you can run your own.

Understand your audience

Make sure you know where your audience is and what kinds of content they like to interact with so that you know what type of hashtag campaign to run. Keeping up with social media demographics is just one part of this. You also need to have a clear customer persona set for your target audience so that you understand their online behavior patterns and can create a campaign that they'll be most likely to engage with (Sprout Social 2020).

Define your goal

Are you trying to make sales, increase awareness or simply generate some engagement? The end goal of your campaign is going to determine the type of hashtag and campaign you're running. If you want to generate engagement, consider creating a hashtag campaign meant to aggregate information or help your audience have fun with your brand. You could also use this as a chance to run a photo contest centered around a hashtag, like we discussed with RYU. If

you're looking to increase awareness around your brand, make sure you include at least part of your brand name within the hashtag. Try to come up with a good play on words that you can have fun with on social media. And if you're trying to ramp up sales, keep your hashtag campaign focused on a specific product or service that you can promote. Try to get customers to join in by sharing photos and tweets about their own experiences with your brand (Sprout Social 2020).

Make participation easy

If it's difficult to interact with your hashtag campaign, your audience won't do it. Simple as that. This means you don't want to require too many steps. This is the same rule of thumb for social media contests. Don't make it hard to enter or participate. It should be as simple as posting a photo or writing a tweet and including your hashtag. When you start trying to add additional steps, like specific guidelines for the types of posts, or asking them to go somewhere for a photo, you're asking a bit too much from your followers and you're not likely to see the level of engagement and reach that you otherwise would (Sprout Social 2020).

Choose the right platform

Your last step is to choose the right platform for launching your hashtag campaign. You'll likely be choosing between Twitter and Instagram as these are the two most popular platforms for hashtags. Since these two social networks are very different, deciding which platform is going to be best should be pretty straightforward. If you plan a photo-based hashtag campaign, you'll want Instagram. If you plan a text or conversation-based hashtag campaign, you'll want Twitter. However, you could always launch a multi-channel hashtag campaign as well that covers all the bases and reaches an even wider audience (Sprout Social 2020).

How to track your hashtag campaigns success

Once your hashtag campaign has been live for awhile, you'll want to do some measuring to track its success. The KPIs (key performance indicators) you might want to keep in mind are:

- ❖ **Posts:** How many posts were created using your hashtag?

- ❖ **Users:** How many different users interacted with your hashtag?
- ❖ **Engagement:** How many likes, shares, clicks and comments did your hashtag receive?
- ❖ **Reach:** How people's feeds did your hashtag show up on?
- ❖ **Impressions:** How many times did your hashtag get viewed?

Keeping an eye on these different metrics can help you determine the success of your campaign or what might need to be adjusted in order to improve performance. You can use a tool like Sprout Social to understand how often your campaign hashtags are being used and engaged with compared to others your audience is interested in (Sprout Social 2020).

Instagram Analytics Tools

How to analyze metrics and adjust content strategy accordingly

Instagram used to be a black hole in terms of third-party marketing tools. Fast forward to 2021 and times have changed. From social listening to engagement metrics, businesses on Instagram are spoiled for choice when it comes to Instagram tracking apps and tools. Zeroing in on the right Instagram analytics tools can be tricky, though. The platform's recent surge in popularity coupled with frequent changes to its API (application programming interface) makes it difficult to find a reliable, long-term solution.

Given the diversity of the platform and its content, it's oftentimes best to have multiple sources of Instagram insights on deck based on your priorities. Maybe you're focused on Stories and user-generated content. Perhaps you're frequently running ads and influencer campaigns. Regardless of your goals, the following combination of free and paid Instagram reporting tools can help you step up your data-tracking game ASAP (Sprout Social 2020).

Instagram Insights

Instagram Insights reports cover impressions, engagement, reach and top posts among other metrics. This data can be broken down from the span of a few months or even years, which is key for historical performance. Plus, you'll get access to followers analysis and demographics so you can find out what percentage of your audience are male/female, age groups and even where the bulk of them are from. Knowing who you're speaking to on

Instagram is undoubtedly beneficial. You might have a target audience in mind that you want to reach, but the only way to truly know who's engaging with your posts is by looking through your Instagram analytics.

As a side note, Facebook's ad manager is another native tool that analyzes paid posts. With more and more brands investing in paid social, such metrics can keep you from sending your ad spend down the drain. The good news? Facebook has some of the most robust and in-depth social media ad analytics out there. Simply put, brands have plenty of data to determine the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of their Instagram ads (Sprout Social 2020).

Sprout Social

In addition to empowering you with intuitive Instagram scheduling and publishing features, as well as supporting engagement through real-time monitoring, Sprout enables you to quickly analyze Instagram data at both the post and profile level. With Sprout, you can dig even deeper into your Instagram data with interactive graphs and metrics. Sprout's got you covered with analytics right out of the box and an option to increase the power of your data with Premium Analytics. With Premium Analytics you can dive headfirst into your Instagram insights and surface trends within the metrics that matter most. And with a suite of intuitive reporting options, it's easy to create a custom detailed, presentation-ready report with the data that matters most to you.

Whether you're examining hashtag trends to inform future content or evaluating team performance to optimize operations, you can do it at scale by measuring everything from follower growth to engagement across different products, brands or locations simultaneously. Of course, it wouldn't be a complete solution without a focus on Instagram's other important content types like Stories and IGTV. Along with metrics specific to Stories, such as clicks, saves and replies, Sprout helps you make sure your Stories are impactful in the long run by giving you long-term insights versus the two-week snapshot Instagram provides natively. You can also compare how your IGTV views and comments are stacking up to the rest of your Instagram feed by checking out these metrics all in one place with Sprout's unified solutions (Sprout Social 2020).

Iconosquare

Iconosquare is an Instagram analytics tool that's tailored for agencies and brands managing multiple accounts. The platform's features include competitive hashtag and growth-tracking not unlike that of Sprout. Beyond its full-blown analytics platform, Iconosquare also offers a free Instagram audit for business profiles. This tool ensures that your profile is "complete" and sticks to the platform's best practices. The audit assesses your 30 most recent posts as well as your general account settings (Sprout Social 2020).

Phlanx

Unlike some of the more in-depth Instagram reports on this list, Phlanx is pretty straightforward. Phlanx's engagement calculator analyzes the engagement rate of any given Instagram account. Although the tool is marketed as being for influencers, any personal or business account can be plugged in. Engagement rate is calculated by dividing the number of likes and comments a post receives versus an account's follower count. There is no magic number in terms of what a brand or influencer's engagement rate should be, although a ballpark of ~3% is considered good to average. Tools like Phlanx are invaluable for spotting accounts with fake followers or determining whether an influencer's posts are receiving legitimate engagement. Phlanx can likewise be used to track competitor engagement in addition to your own account (Sprout Social 2020).

Tapinfluence

Speaking of influencers, Instagram analytics apps can be used to identify social media influencers directly. And that's exactly what TapInfluence does. TapInfluence's platform analyzes a database of over 50,000 influencers to help brands find the right fit for their influencer campaigns. Businesses can search by industry or specific tags based on what they're looking for. The platform then provides a snapshot of various influencers, including their rates and cost per

engagement. Having all of this data in one place helps save a ton of time when vetting influencers. TapInfluence also provides real-time benchmark reports based on industry data to help brands understand how their own influencer campaigns stack up (Sprout Social 2020).

Curalate

The boom of social selling via user-generated content signals the need for Instagram analytics tools that keep you informed on your best-selling products. Case in point, you've probably seen a "Like2Buy" bio link, haven't you? These links belong to Curalate, a platform which curates user-generated content to help brands sell their products directly from Instagram. The trackable "Like2Buy" link enables brands to track the ROI (return on investment) of their social campaigns. In addition to engagement and sales metrics, Curalate monitors tags and mentions, making it easy to spot UGC in the wild. Dedicated social selling platforms like Curalate do double duty of determining your most valuable content while also assessing the direct financial returns from your Instagram campaigns (Sprout Social 2020).

Union Metrics

Union Metrics is a robust marketing intelligence platform that helps brands track their owned media and industry trends. Aside from Union Metrics' full suite of features, brands can take advantage of the platform's free Instagram Account Checkup tool. The checkup provides a detailed report including your top hashtag, analysis of your most dedicated followers and average post engagement. Anything that makes it easier to audit your social media presence for free is a plus. Like Iconosquare's free Instagram analysis tool, brands can use Union Metrics to gain a better understanding of their account analytics at a glance (Sprout Social 2020).

Bitly

As illustrated by Curalate, your Instagram bio is incredibly valuable real estate. Tracking your bio link is a must-do for monitoring the success of your social campaigns. This rings true whether you're trying to sell products or simply drive traffic to your site. Bitly is a tried and tested link-tracking tool that's fair game on Instagram for budding businesses and big brands alike. Driving traffic to a specific landing page? Bitly breaks down your bio click links and can be

used in conjunction with Google URL builder to provide an in-depth performance report of your campaigns. Beyond bio URLs, Bitly can also be used to track links that are included in your paid Instagram campaigns (Sprout Social 2020).

Keyhole

Instagram reporting tools that measure past performance are the norm, but it's also helpful to analyze real-time data as well. Keyhole provides real-time hashtag tracking for Instagram, which is perfect for social media contests, brand campaigns or other marketing efforts involving hashtags. Besides seeing how many times a hashtag has been used, Keyhole also shows additional data such as the top posts containing your hashtag, the most engaging posts and related hashtags (Sprout Social 2020).

Essential Instagram Metrics to Measure Performance

As with any marketing strategy, keeping tabs on the performance of your various initiatives is essential, including on Instagram. But when it comes to digging into your Instagram metrics, it may not always be clear where to start or even which are the most important. To get started, focus on your why (Sprout Social 2020).

Why do you need to track your Instagram metrics?

If you manage your Instagram account without ever looking at your analytics, you'll be left in the dark when it comes to understanding the results of your efforts. These efforts likely coincide with company or department goals (or even just your own Instagram KPIs/Key Performance Indicators), which will naturally help inform which Instagram metrics you should be reporting on. Therefore, when answering the "why," you'll also reveal your key IG metrics to report on.

Seven essential Instagram metrics to measure performance

Engagements per follower

- ❖ **What this metric tells you:** Engagement with your content relative to your follower count.

While it may be tempting to compare your Instagram performance to that of the big guns (think Oreo, Starbucks, Nike, etc), you don't want to do that unless your audience size is roughly the same. Why? Because brands with millions of followers should be racking up thousands of likes. However, if you have a couple thousand followers you're naturally not as likely to accrue similar results in sum, but that doesn't mean you're not still performing exactly as you should be. And that's where engagement rate comes in and can help make sure you're evaluating your account fairly. The formula for measuring engagement rate on Instagram looks something like this:

$$\diamond \text{ Total Engagements / Follower Count } * 100 = \text{Engagement Rate}$$

Reporting on this metric over time will give you a sense of overall performance trends, though you can certainly calculate it for specific posts as well to get an idea of the types of content that resonates with your audience (Sprout Social 2020).

Follower growth

$\diamond$ What this metric tells you: You're doing something right!

When evaluating a growing (or shrinking) Instagram follower count, context is important, especially if you're experiencing random spikes or drop offs due to something like a one-time promotion or paid social ads. Make sure to measure your follower count over time and keep the above context examples in mind so you know exactly what has contributed to the growing numbers. Ideally you're seeing sustained, gradual growth over time, which indicates that people are liking what they see from your content and they want to make sure they see more of it.

Additionally, understanding what is or isn't working is also essential within the context of your overall Instagram marketing strategy and KPIs for Instagram because you'll want to make sure you know the types of content to continue creating and which may need tweaking. Though total followers may be seen as a vanity metric to some, it ultimately represents the potential reach of your content, which impacts the performance of other IG metrics like engagement so continuing to focus efforts around organically growing your audience is still as important as ever (Sprout Social 2020).

Comments received

❖ **What this metric tells you:** How engaging your content is

There's a major difference between likes and comments when it comes to evaluating Instagram performance metrics. Likes are fairly easy to dish out and oftentimes you can't be 100% certain a post was truly seen by your followers. With comments, it's crystal clear. Whether positive or negative, comments left on your posts are an indication that your content had some kind of impact, or at least enough for the individual to take the extra step to leave feedback. This type of engagement, especially when positive, is a strong factor in community building and establishing a loyal fanbase. Anyone can double tap with ease but those who go out of their way to comment are the ones to keep an eye on (Sprout Social 2020).

Reach

❖ **What this metric tells you:** How many people are seeing your content

If you think reach sounds a lot like impressions, you're not alone. These two metrics are similar but confusing enough that we've dug deeper into these topics in great detail via Reach vs Impressions and Instagram Impressions (if you're inclined to learn more). To keep it brief here, all you need to know is that your Instagram reach indicates actual views of your content while impressions means it was displayed but may not have generated a click or any other form of engagement (Sprout Social 2020).

Most engaged hashtags

❖ **What this metric tells you:** Hashtag performance

While the fickle Instagram algorithm may sometimes wreak havoc on your content strategy, hashtags have proven to be one of the most reliable ways to keep your momentum going. By using hashtags that are relevant to your industry or what your audience is searching for you can help keep reach and engagement in check. Instagram users can include up to 30 hashtags on each post, but be sure to use that quota wisely through research and learning from performance over time. You may be surprised by how often less is more when it comes to hashtags (Sprout Social 2020).

Referral Traffic

❖ **What this metric tells you:** Instagram's impact on your website traffic

Referral traffic describes the people who come to your domain from other sites, without finding you on a search engine. When someone visits a link from social media or a website and they end up on your site, Google analytics recognizes the visitor as a referral. You can also use UTM codes to track precisely where these visits come from. A common tactic for social media posts involves linking out to a website's specific landing page, product page or even just the home page depending on the type of action you'd like your followers to take upon seeing your post. But on Instagram this can be a bit more challenging because the only place to display a clickable link is inside your bio. You also have the option to include URLs within your captions, but either way, tracking referral traffic from Instagram can be tricky (Sprout Social 2020).

Instagram Stories Metrics

❖ **What this metric tells you:** How popular and engaging your Instagram Stories are

Arguably one of the most essential components to current Instagram marketing strategies involves the use of Stories. These are useful in a number of ways, most notably because they provide another dimension of content for your audience. The disappearing nature of the photos and videos gives you even more freedom and flexibility than your feed does. When it comes to Instagram Stories, there are a few good metrics to keep tabs on such as Story Replies, Story Taps Back and Forward, Story Exits and Impressions, among others (Sprout Social 2020).

Instagram Glossary Terms

Algorithm: The algorithm is a procedure that helps make calculations. Instagram algorithms decide where and to whom to display a certain post. Many factors are considered by the algorithm before displaying a certain post to someone. Every time you make an action on Instagram (post something, like comment or share contents, do research), the algorithm records

it and uses the information to customize your feed. In the same way, analyze the behavior of your followers and decide IF and in which position shows your contents to them.

App: Abbreviation for “application”. It is a software application downloaded to your mobile device that provides access to the Instagram site.

Archive: Hiding old posts without deleting them. By “archiving” a post, you can take an old post of yours off of your profile without deleting it. You’ll be able to see the archived post by tapping “Archive” (found under the three horizontal lines at the top right-hand corner of your profile), but no one else will be able to see it.

Audience: The followers of a page are the audience. A good audience has common interests in specific topics (usually the main topic of the Instagram profile) and the analysis of the audience is the most important part of the digital marketing strategy. Knowing your audience allows you to create content interesting and suitable for your audience, using a tone of voice close to them. Your audience is your potential customers.

Bio: Every user has the opportunity to create a personal bio. This is a section wherein you may describe yourself or business and also link to a website of your choice. This is the only place on Instagram that allows for active links. So, be sure to include your website link or a link to a product you are highlighting. It can be wise to swap this link out periodically, using it to highlight a recent blog post, a specific page on your website, or any specific link you want people to view. If you aren’t able to regularly update the link, then it should remain a link to your primary website.

Boomerang: A story feature which is a burst of photos that loops backward and forwards.

Bot: Instagram Bots are automated actions that make actions like press the like button, leave copy and paste comment, follow and unfollow profile, to get your attention. If you come across random comments on your posts or a slew of likes seconds after you post a picture, a bot was probably involved in the process. The best thing to do is to ignore the bots. If they’re posting spam or inappropriate content, you can report and block them as well.

Branded hashtags: Hashtags that are unique to a brand, often using the company name. Belk uses the hashtag #BelkStyle so customers can post photos of Belk products all in one place.

Another popular hashtag is by Aerie: #aeriereal. Branded hashtags are a good way to source user-generated content.

Brand Representatives: People who represent a brand on social media. Small companies often put out a call for brand reps — regular people (not big influencers) who get a discount or free merch in exchange for posting about the brand. This can help expand a company's reach and is also a good source of user-generated content.

Business/Creator Profile: Instagram offers 3 different types of profiles: personal, business, and creator. The main difference is that a personal account doesn't show any statistical data, while the statistics are available for business and creator profiles. Business Instagram accounts are meant for brands and other businesses and offer the possibility to add additional Call-to-Action buttons like book an appointment, contact customer service, make reservations, or buy a product. Creator Instagram accounts instead are for influencers and content creators show some slightly different statistics and have the specific button to declare the contents created in collaboration with a brand. We recommend setting the Instagram profile of your company as a Business profile and work with Influencers that have a Creator profile, avoiding the ones that still have a personal profile, since they won't be able to provide you a report of their marketing activities.

Caption: Instagram Caption is the description that appears underneath a photo. It might include a call to action, a funny quote, or explain the story behind the picture. Captions are almost 2,000 characters long and up to 30 hashtags can be included here. The wittier the better. It is best to keep these short and sweet as only the first few lines of the caption will be visible when scrolling. Remember, any links posted in captions will not be live, so it is best to post links in your bio and reference them in captions.

Comment: A comment is when someone posts a reply or response to your photo. A comment is considered a Level Two engagement, meaning that users have chosen to actively participate in your page. The more comments you have, the more quality engagement you have on your site. But watch out for spam and robot comments!

Community: When referring to the audience, Instagram uses the term “community”. It means that the followers of a profile are really close-knit and a strong relationship between the brand/influencer and the followers is established.

Direct Message: Instagram DM’s are private messages between invited users. DM’s don’t apply to your engagement rate, but they are a great method of building engagement and trust with your followers; conversations over DM can make users more likely to come see your other posts. Responses to your Instagram stories also come to you via direct messaging.

Double Tap: The term double tap or double tapping is simply another way to refer to “liking” a post, since double tapping an image on Instagram is a method of liking it. Inviting people to double tap a photo you posted is a method of increasing engagement.

Emoticons/Emojis: Any various small images, symbols, or icons used in text fields in electronic communication (as in text messages, email, and social media) to express the emotional attitude of the writer, convey information succinctly, communicate a message playfully without using words, etc. The function of emoji, as [emoji developer Shigetaka] Kurita describes it—adding subtle emotional emphasis to a sentence in text—isn't too different from that of emoticons, the frown and smiley faces that people have been making out of punctuation since the mid-1990s.

Engagement: Engagement simply refers to people interacting with each other on social media. These interactions are what makes social media social. Replying to comments and doing an Instagram live Q&A, for example, are methods of engaging with your audience.

Engagement Rate: This ratio is defined by calculating the total number of likes and comments received on a post and dividing it by the number of followers of the account that posted. There are also some marketing tools that analyze Instagram profiles and include in this ratio all the actions made by followers, like sharings and savings. A good engagement rate indicates a strong relationship between the Instagram account’s owner and followers and is one of the indicators of effective power to influence the audience.

Exits: The number of people who left your Story. Exits refers to the number of people who left your Instagram Story without watching it to the end, either by skipping to the next person’s story, going back to their main feed, or closing Instagram altogether.

Explore page: A section of Instagram that recommends posts for you. The Explore page can be found under the search tab and offers up a curated collection of fresh posts for each user based on the type of posts you typically interact with. From a business standpoint, the Explore page can be very helpful — if your posts have geotags and get a lot of engagement, they might appear on that page for some users, giving you more exposure.

Filter: Instagram’s filters are one aspect that makes the network unique. Filters give users the opportunity to automatically enhance their photos and even add frames to them. Currently, Instagram gives users 20 filters to choose from.

Fake Followers: Fake followers are fake social media profiles that were set up with the intention of mass-following other social media accounts for money. These accounts are usually inactive, meaning they don’t engage with your content. On rare occasions when they do get active, they often spread spam-ridden posts ranging from silly memes to fake news. If a digital marketing company promises you to increase your followers in a short time, they are probably going to buy you fake followers. Sure, your number of followers will grow, but not the number of your potential customers and you’re going to reduce your engagement rate and lose credibility. If you want to really grow your Instagram channel, avoid this type of service, and choose an honest digital marketing agency that offers you an Instagram strategy customized for your business.

Follower: A follower is someone who is “friends” with you on Instagram and could potentially see your posts in your feed. The more followers you have, the larger your audience. It is extremely important to work on growing the number of followers you have, but you need to do so in a way that attracts genuine followers, not those who would have no interest in your business or products.

Follower Growth Rate: The percentage of new followers an account gains. Your follower growth rate is simply a way to track how many new followers you receive over a certain time period. You can find this growth rate by comparing the number of new followers (i.e. 200 in the last week) to the number of existing followers. This statistic can help you figure out whether you’re doing a good job of attracting new users (which is something you should actively be working on).

Following: The people that an Instagram user follows.

Gallery: A method of sharing up to 10 photos in a post. When you post an Instagram “gallery,” you create a post with multiple photos and/or videos. Your followers will be able to swipe through the images.

Geotags: The tagged location of the post. When you geotag your post, you select a location, and that location shows up just under your account name. Geotagging posts is a good way to help more people find them.

Handle: An Instagram handle or IG handle is another term for username — the name used on Instagram to define a specific profile. On your profile, your Instagram handle can be found at the very top in black lettering. When you sign up for Instagram, choosing a username is one of the very first things you’ll do. Sometimes Instagram usernames are an actual name or business, such as @harrystyles or @nike, while other times a username does not relate to someone’s actual name.

Hashtag: A word or phrase with the # symbol placed in front, making it searchable. When you type the pound symbol (#) and then add a word or phrase immediately after, that’s a hashtag. Hashtags are searchable tags and a way to categorize posts, so it’s important to use relevant keywords that will help more people find you.

Highlights: Instagram Stories saved to your profile. On your Instagram profile, there’s a section for highlights in between your feed and the “Follow” button. You can save photos and videos that you’ve posted to your Stories to these highlights.

Home: The Home screen is the list of activity of all the users you follow. Also referred to as your news feed.

IGTV: A video service where users can upload videos up to an hour long. Great for tutorials, seminars, and recorded sessions. IGTV, often called Instagram’s answer to YouTube, is a video service that allows videos up to 15 minutes (or up to an hour for accounts with more followers). You can access IGTV by tapping on the small TV on the top right-hand corner of your Instagram feed.

Impressions: The total number of times your post has been viewed. Impressions are a little trickier, because they can occur multiple times per user. Reach measures how many unique users have seen your post; impressions count the total number of times the post has been seen.

That means one person could look at your post three times, resulting in one number added to your total reach and three added to your impressions.

Influencer: Someone who produces content for a large audience, often in a specific niche. An influencer creates engaging content for their follower base; most influencers are focused in one specific domain, such as fitness or beauty. Generally, influencers have over 10k followers.

Influencer CPM: The cost and value of an influencer. CPM stands for cost per mille, or cost per thousand. So influencer CPM is a way to measure the cost of an influencer plus how much value they bring. If someone has 200,000 followers and a CPM of \$20, it would cost \$4,000 to create a sponsored post.

Influencer Marketing: A form of social media marketing where influencers promote products or services. Companies will often partner with influencers and have influencers promote a product or service on Instagram so that person's followers will learn about the company.

Insights: A section of statistics that helps you learn about your audience, your content, and how it's performing. Instagram Insights help you see where your posts are going, how people are discovering them, and even little details such as the time of the day when the most people interact with your content. These insights can help your content strategy become more focused.

Instagrammers: What you call people on Instagram also known as the Instagram community.

Instagram live: A live video for your followers to watch. With Instagram Live, you can livestream a video and then download it and save for later. Live videos are a good way to further connect with your followers and keep them updated. If using this feature, be sure to allow a bit of lag time at the beginning of a video so that people will have time to join your stream. Make sure that no major announcements are made at the beginning of the video since people will not be able to go back to the beginning or to replay the video.

Instameet: A gathering or meeting of local Instagramers to take Instagram photos.

Instavideo: Often used to describe the Instagram video feature.

Story Interactions: The number of interactions in the statistics of stories indicates all the actions made on this single story. Could be a profile visit, a tap on a hashtag or geotag, or a reaction to the story.

Latergram: A post that doesn't make it to Instagram until days after the event happened. A latergram occurs when you post a photo of something at a later time than when it actually happened; these posts are commonly hashtagged #latergram.

Like: Tapping the heart button to acknowledge a post. Liking a post is the same thing as double-tapping it. You acknowledge that you see and appreciate the post, and whoever posted it gets a notification that you liked it.

Memes: A humorous image or video that spreads quickly across the Internet. You probably already know what a meme is, but did you know memes can be hugely helpful for engagement on Instagram? Meme Monday posts (or memes any day of the week) can add some flavor and personality to your feed and often get more engagement than typical posts.

Nametag: A way for people to immediately follow your account. You can find your Instagram nametag by tapping the three horizontal lines in the upper right-hand corner of your profile and then clicking "Nametag." This nametag is scannable, so people can find your profile by simply scanning the tag instead of typing in your username and searching.

Newsfeed: Your home screen, where you can view posts from people you follow. By tapping on the house icon on the bottom left corner of the app, you'll reach your newsfeed, where new posts from the people you're following will collect. This is the page that automatically opens each time you open the app.

Notifications: Alerts that announce new social media activity. Notifications keep you updated on how many likes and comments your posts have received, plus anywhere someone has mentioned your handle. It's important to respond to messages and comments quickly when you get a notification — that increases engagement. If you go to your settings and click 'notifications', you can turn notifications on and off for your profile.

Organic Reach: The number of unique users who find and view your content without following a paid promotion. Your organic reach consists of people who find your page by themselves, from a webpage, or through friends. For small businesses who don't have the budget to create a promotion, focusing on organic reach can be a great strategy.

Paid Reach: The size of the audience reached by a sponsored post on Instagram. Paid reach is the opposite of organic reach; your paid reach is made up of the user views you received through a sponsored or paid post. With paid reach, you can target a certain demographic.

Pod Groups: An Instagram pod is a group of users who all agree to comment on and like posts created by the other members, with a goal of mutual growth. Instagram pod is rarely a valuable long-term strategy. The central involvement you'll get will be from people that you're asking to interact with your posts. This means that the results of your campaigns will be skewed, people that interact with your post just because they HAVE to but are not really interested might raise your engagement rate but are not potential customers and you'll receive a lot of comments all similar that look like spam and make your trustability fall down.

Polls: A multiple-choice question in your Instagram story. You can create polls on your Instagram story to engage with viewers. They're fun and effective because not all interaction on Stories is visible to viewers, but the results of a poll are.

Popular hashtags: Commonly used hashtags that may reach a wider audience. Popular hashtags (such as #love, the most commonly used hashtag on Instagram) might be helpful, but be careful, because your post could easily get lost in the shuffle. If you use popular hashtags, make sure they're relevant instead of just including them for the heck of it.

Post: Any video or image content uploaded to an Instagram profile.

Product tags: An image tag that lets users view a product. You can create shoppable posts on Instagram by selecting a product tag when you upload the photo — the process works just like tagging a person. Then post viewers can tap the product tags to see more details about the product and purchase it from your online store. (Note that, in many cases, products need to be available in your Shopify store and your Facebook catalogue.)

Profile: This is your account information on Instagram. Your profile consists of your name, username, bio, profile photo, and your photo gallery.

Reach: The number of unique users who find and view content. Organic reach consists of people who find your page by themselves, from a webpage, or through friends. For small businesses that don't have the budget to create a promotion, focusing on organic reach can be a great strategy. Paid reach is instead the people reached by a specific advertising campaign.

Regram: Reposting someone else's post. When you regram somebody's post, you can either screenshot it and post it again, or use an app to repost it. Don't forget to ask permission, and then include the hashtag #regram and give the original user credit.

Rewind: Is a feature you can use to record your story video in reverse.

Saved Posts (Archived posts): A way of keeping posts you want to look at again. You can save a post by tapping the banner icon at the bottom right, just above the caption. This will save the post to your library, accessible on your profile. As you scroll through your Instagram feed, you may want to save posts that you can draw inspiration from later.

Shopify: Shopify is a Canadian multinational e-commerce company headquartered in Ottawa, Ontario. It is also the name of its proprietary e-commerce platform for online stores and retail point-of-sale systems. The Shopify platform offers online retailers a suite of services including payments, marketing, shipping and customer engagement tools.

Sponsored Ads: A paid promotion that shows up in users' news feeds. Instagram ads might look like a typical post at first glance, but if you look more closely, you'll see the "Sponsored" mark. Sponsored ads show up in users' news feeds just like any other post, except these types of posts are actually a paid promotion instead of being an organic post.

Stickers: Fun little images you can add to highlight or give character to your stories.

Story: Twenty-four-hour posts found at the top of the Instagram news feed. Stories can be pictures or videos; they appear at the top of the Instagram newsfeed and, unless you save your Stories as highlights, they'll disappear after 24 hours. Instagram Stories have several interactive features such as polls and reactions.

Superzoom: An Instagram Stories feature that zooms in and creates sound effects. Superzoom is a fun way to make a dramatic, silly video on Instagram stories.

Tag: To attach someone's username to a post. The term "tagging" generally refers to tagging someone directly in an Instagram post — i.e. their username shows up on the photo — instead of simply mentioning them in the comment section. When you tag someone in a post, the picture will show up in a designated section on their profile.

Theme: Visual consistency on your Instagram feed. Many Instagram accounts choose a certain theme to follow as they post images and graphics — that might be pastel colors and lots of

flowers for one brand, or a darker theme with lots of black and grey for another. Staying consistent with a theme can help your feed look more appealing to potential followers.

User-generated content: Content (photos or videos) created by fans of a certain brand or celebrity. As a brand, you either make products or provide a service. When your customers post pictures of themselves using that product or service, that's defined as user-generated content, or UGC. Often, brands will look for user-generated content and ask permission to repost it, like Aerie did here with this photo from a follower.

Website Traffic: A metric that tracks website visitors who come from your Instagram. One of your big goals with Instagram should actually be to get people off Instagram and onto your website, where the sales happen. By using Google Analytics to track the number of website visitors you're getting from Instagram, you can see whether or not you're doing a good job of this. Get web traffic through either pointing people to the link in your bio or adding a swipe-up link to your stories.

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