

# Instagram for Business



a how-to guide from  
**shout out** studio

## INSTAGRAM FOR BUSINESS

### Executive Summary

Instagram is a free photo sharing application for iPhones® and Android™ devices that enables users to take photos, apply a variety of effects to alter the photos and share them.

Instagram allows amateur photographers to create professional looking photos by choosing one of many filters to change the look of the image. Photos are then shared within the Instagram network or on popular social network sites such as Facebook®, Twitter®, Tumblr® and Foursquare®. The effective use of Instagram in a business context can provide a unique opportunity for consumers and prospects to view your brand in a different light, and perhaps evoke some new emotions that would potentially be overlooked through text alone.

This How-To Guide will outline how to effectively use Instagram for your business and the benefits it can provide, followed by an action plan on how to get started with this fast growing social networking tool.

### How to Effectively Use Instagram for Business

Anyone can download and use the Instagram application but how can businesses effectively use the application to strengthen their brand? Communicating through photos allows you to connect with your audience in a different way (new level) than the usual text methods. There are many ways Instagram is useful to an organization when properly deployed. The following are ways to ensure maximum effectiveness of your Instagram account.

- Engage your audience
  - ✓ **Show your product:** Offer a look at your current products and a sneak peek at what's to come. Not only will this offer exposure to your products, your audience will stay engaged if they are excited about your offerings.
  - ✓ **Show behind the scenes:** Individuals interested in your brand already know what the product looks like. Engage your audience by showing something they have never seen. Look behind the scenes of your office, your employees at work; a more relaxed side of your business. It will allow you to connect on a deeper level with your consumers.
  - ✓ **Show what your products can do and how they are made:** Take photos of the various uses of your product or how other customers are using your product. Show the time, attention to detail that go into making your product, or show the people who actually do the work. Be creative! You work hard to create and develop products that customers love so why not show that side of the story?
  - ✓ **Be interesting:** Share compelling content and align your photos with what you want your fans and followers to notice. They will be more likely to be involved if they are interested in the information you are sharing.

- Frequency

- ✓ **Keep content fresh and interactive:** Adding new and unique photos will keep your followers engaged. Try something new to keep your followers wanting more.
- ✓ **Post often:** Posting frequently is key to keeping your followers engaged. If your account becomes static, you may get lost among the other accounts they follow. If you want to stay noticed, post frequently.

- Host Contests

- ✓ **Increase brand awareness:** Hosting contests are a great way to get your followers involved and increase your brand awareness. The more people you have entering the contest, the more you can spread the word about your brand. Contests can be very simple.
- ✓ **Example:** Ask your followers to use a specific hashtag to have their photos reviewed for the contest. You can choose a winner from the photos linked to that hashtag. Many popular brands frequently host contests of this nature.

### Use Hashtags

- ✓ **Connect with followers:** Hashtags are keywords that relate to the photo you've uploaded. (For example: Redbull often links the hashtag #givesyouwings to their photos). Hashtags can be very effective. It is a great way to connect your followers to your brand. You can also tag people in your photos to further connect with your followers.
- ✓ **SEO (Search Engine Optimization):** Within Instagram, users can search either by user or by hashtag. If something is of interest to them, they will search for photos relating to that interest. The more you use hashtags, the more likely you are to be found during a search. It is a great way to potentially gain new customers through searching for a particular hashtag.

### Integrate with other social media networks

- ✓ **Link them all together:** Instagram allows you to upload your photos simultaneously to other social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Foursquare. It is important to integrate all your networks to ensure the most visibility. Although it seems like additional social network headache, keep in mind you already have to include photos on your other networks therefore you might as well use Instagram as your main photo application.

### API

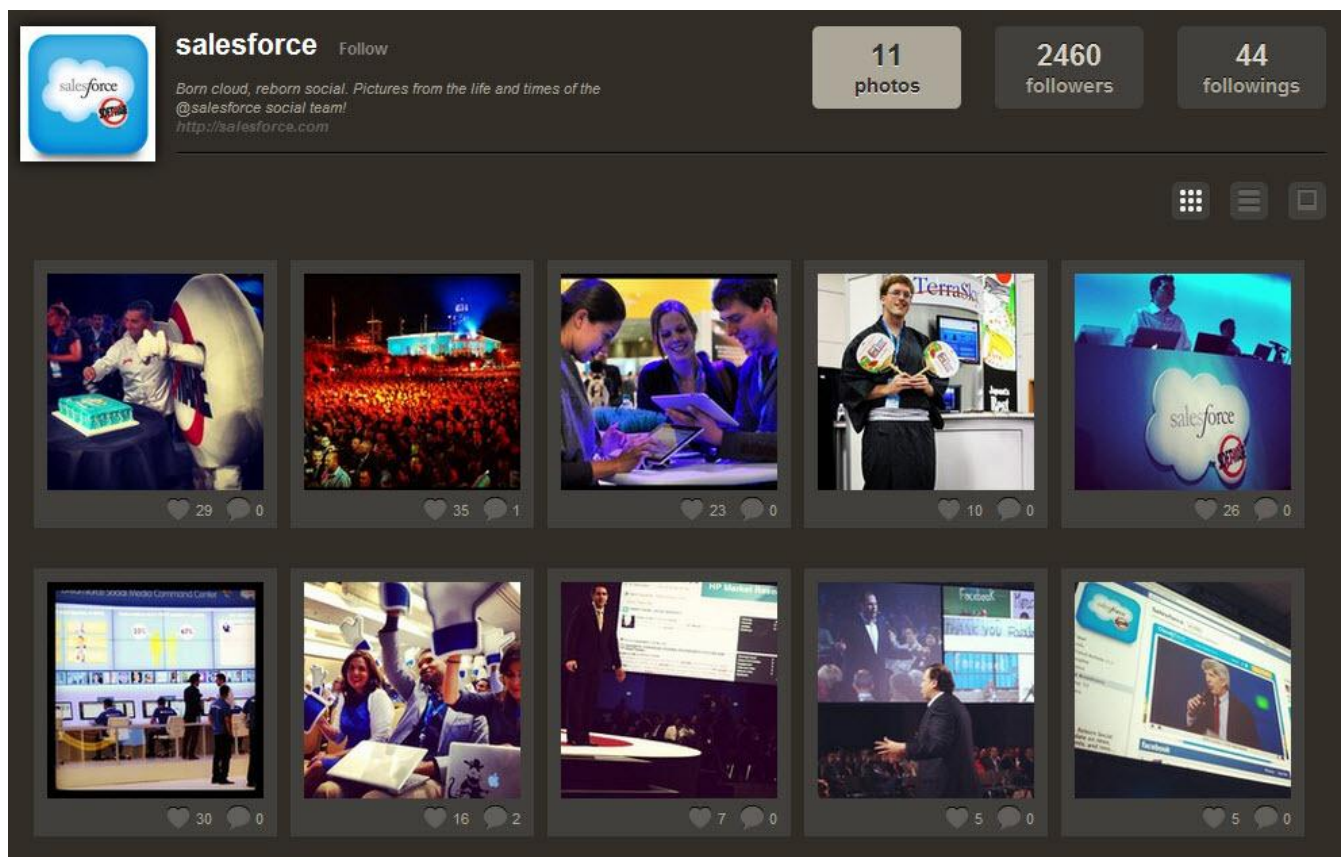
- ✓ **From Mobile to Online:** Instagram offers an API, so any programmer can pull photos and aggregate them in a number of ways. Users can sign up for (download) the API on the Instagram website. It allows you to integrate Instagram photos with your own website. You can organize photos by time, place, user or tag. Using the Instagram API can help you create compelling campaigns using the large volume of photos shared on Instagram every minute.

- ✓ **Example:** A popular example of using the Instagram API is singer Moby. To release his new album, he built a website that displayed photos on a world map. Users were asked to upload photos of their hometowns and tag them a specific hashtag which were displayed on his website.

## Real World Examples

### B2B - Salesforce®

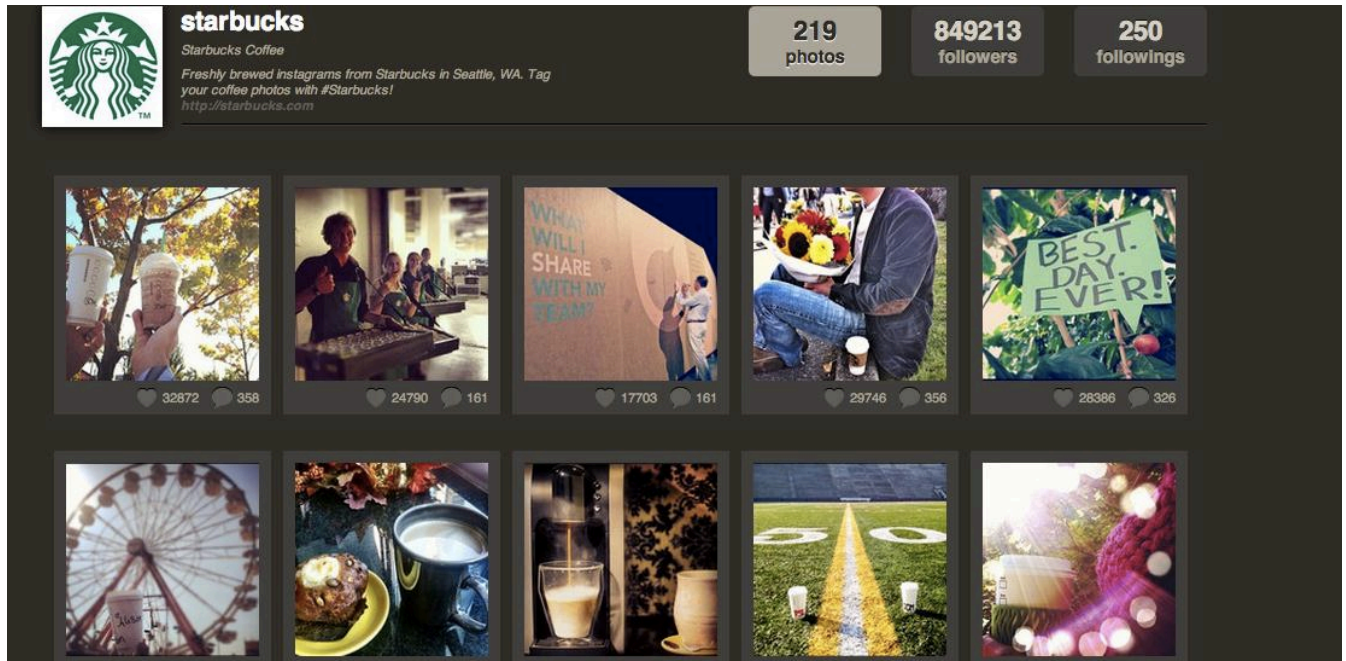
Salesforce is a great example of a B2B company using Instagram for their business. With Instagram, Salesforce promoted an event called Dreamforce™ X that took place in September. They posted “7 reasons why you can’t miss Dreamforce X” in pictures to attract industry attendees. By mentioning their celebrity speakers, they were successful in stirring up interest in the event. You can see here in the photo that by adding only 11 photos, they already had more than 2000 followers. This is a great example of increasing brand awareness and exposure. It also shows that Instagram can also be used successfully for event marketing.





### B2C - Starbucks

Starbucks is one of the top brands on the Instagram network boasting over 800 000 followers. They increase brand awareness by creating an emotional connection with their followers. They post in store experiences and allow customers to tag their coffee images and then share them on Facebook. From the photo below, you can see that they do not limit themselves to only pictures of their product but creatively show a different side of the company and promote their product in a fun and engaging way.



## Benefits for Business Use

### Increase Exposure and Brand Awareness

- ✓ Instagram is a huge platform for communicating your brand with over 30 million members of the Instagram community. Instagram allows you to show a more intimate side of your brand that perhaps users have never seen before. Using photos in a fun, unique and casual manner is a new way to communicate the fundamentals of your brand that would not have been communicated through text. Contests are a great way to increase your brand awareness and connect with your current and potential customer base. Using hashtags is also important to grow your exposure throughout the entire Instagram community.

### Lead Generation

- ✓ Using hashtags frequently is the key to generating leads. The more keywords you link to your photos, the higher your SEO becomes on Instagram. You may gain new customers or followers through hashtag searches that could be used as lead generation. Hosting community contests or promotions is also a great way to gain valuable leads. Carefully monitor your new followers, as they often are sales qualified leads.

## Action Plan

### 1. Set-Up Instagram

- Download the app for free on your mobile device.

### 2. Take your first photo

- Take photos directly through the Instagram app (camera icon) or import them from your camera roll.

### 3. Add a filter

- Choose from 18 different filters to give your image a new look. Ranging from black and white to old fashion sepia tones. Each filter has a different border and creates an original look for your photo.

### 4. Add Hashtags or Tag a person

- Hashtags are very important to connect with your audience. Adding a relevant hashtag to your photo improves your SEO in that category. Potential leads may search a relevant hashtag and can lead to your photo. Always include a hashtag.
- Not only can Instagram members search hashtags, they facilitate business searches as well. Look for existing hashtags to find users or influencers that align with your brand.
- Tag individuals in your photos. You can tag friends, employees or other organizations. The more connected you are with others, the better.

## **5. Connect to social media**

- When you are ready to upload a photo, Instagram prompts you to share it on other social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. The more exposure you have on your sites, the more traffic you will have. Your other social networking sites require photos for visual stimulation; you might as well use Instagram to link them all together.
- Let your Twitter and Facebook followers know that you are now on Instagram!

## **6. Follow users**

- Start following people in your industry to let them know you are out there.

## **7. Search tags**

- Search relevant #hashtags to see what people in your industry are posting. It is also a good way to find new people to follow and what popular topics are.

## **8. Start Sharing!**

- Start sharing your photos frequently on all social networking sites. See where it can take you!

## **Bottom Line**

Instagram is a creative way for businesses to gain exposure and communicate a brand to current and potential customers. As one of the fastest growing social media channels,

with over 30 million members, it represents a great opportunity for business to tap into a new pool of customers. Although adding another social networking site may seem overwhelming, Instagram is very simple, easy to use and connect to your existing social media networks. Give it a try, see where photo sharing can take you; you may be surprised.