50

GREAT IDEAS

INSTAGRAM

FOR BUSINESS

COOK & COOK

50 Great Ideas

Instagram for Business

About the authors

Ben and Jodie Cook have marketed hundreds of businesses online. Jodie founded JC Social Media in 2011 and the company has worked with a wide range of businesses from independent restaurants to global automotive brands.

Jodie has presented to some of the largest companies in the world on the commercial use of social media, was crowned Birmingham Young Professional of the Year in 2014, has been listed in the Drum's "30 women in tech under 30" and Computer Weekly's "rising stars" in tech. In 2017 Jodie and Ben were both listed on Forbes' 30 under 30 "social entrepreneurs in Europe".

As marketing director of JC Social Media, Ben is a full spectrum digital marketing expert with particular knowledge in search engine marketing, conversion rate optimisation and, of course, social media. The combination of these skills helps companies increase and convert overall web traffic, having a significant and measurable impact on the bottom line.

The 50 Great Ideas series was born after the two began discussing the ideas that really made a difference to a company's digital presence. Their aim is to provide simple and effective, actionable tactics for the beginner, intermediate and advanced digital marketer to generate better return from social media.

Introduction

On 9th April 2012, Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger sold their 13-person startup, Instagram, to Facebook for $1 billion. $300 million of this was in cash and the rest was in Facebook stock. Instagram had only been launched 18 months previously.

As of 2017, we know that most Instagram users are between 18-29 years old and 32% of teenagers consider Instagram to be the most important social network. We know that there are 8 million registered businesses using Instagram business profiles and 50% of Instagram users follow at least one business. [Source: Wordstream]

Overall, you'd be mad not to be making use of Instagram to market your business, especially if your company or any aspect of what it does is visually appealing in any way.

Welcome to **50 Great Ideas for Instagram**. Pardon the clichés but, yes, it does what it says on the tin and, in this case, you'd do well to judge a book by its cover. Herein lies 50 unique, effective and great ideas for Instagram.

You may be familiar with some of the great ideas. Some may be relatively basic, whilst others push the boundaries of Instagram theory and everything we know about the functionality of the platform. This is by no means an exhaustive list of things you can try, nor will it explain in great detail each of the ideas. Its intention is to inspire you to try new tactics that will help you achieve your business and marketing goals.

Whilst all the ideas are discreet and useful tactics in their own right, there is logic to the order of the 50 ideas. We've grouped together similar ideas beginning with more fundamental principles around strategy, your audience and profile optimisation. We then take you through some ideas about generating results with content, before exploring some other apps

and ideas that will help you make the most of Instagram.

Note:

All information about the platform and its users is correct at the time of writing and publication but, as you'll appreciate, things move quickly in the world of social media and whilst we'll endeavour to keep things updated, please tell us if something has changed! That would really help. In fact, if you have any comments and thoughts on the book, we'd love to hear them.

Feel free to tweet Jodie @cookiewhirls any time and do check out the other titles in the series.

Happy social networking!

Explaining the ratings Each idea is rated on the ease of its implementation and how effective it is overall. We also indicate how often you should carry out each tactic.

We recommend that you implement some of the tactics immediately since they're essentially profile optimisations. The ideas that can be implemented on a weekly basis tend to form part of your everyday content creation and distribution or effective lead-generation techniques.

The 'effect' rating (from one to five stars) represents the kind of impact that specific tactic has for any given business. We haven't included any less than 2 stars. Anything with four and five stars means they form a core element of your Instagram presence and/or should result in improved reach, engagement and lead-generation over time.

The 'ease' rating represents how quickly and simply the tactic can be delivered. The higher the rating, the easier and simpler the tactic is to complete. A five-star rating means the idea is easy to implement or that the change will make an immediate impact, or both! A one star might represent something that takes a long time to take effect or that perhaps requires in depth knowledge or skill. Yes, there is a one star rated tactic!

What this means is that the 'quick wins', those tactics with a pair of four or five star ratings, should be done as soon as possible. These should be right at the top of your priority list. You can then work on the ones that either require a little more time and expertise or have less of an impact.

We've put together a handy checklist in printable format available from www.jcsocialmedia.com/great-ideas

Idea 1: Make your username the same as your Twitter username

Life will be much simpler for you if both your Twitter username and your Instagram username are the same. Don't have Twitter? Register the same username anyway. This makes it much easier for people to find you and reference you from their social networks or website.

It also means that if someone tags you in an Instagram post that they also share to Twitter, the correct account is tagged. Lots of people and brands set their accounts up so the same content is shared across multiple social networks.

The consistency of your brand across each platform is important, so get this bit right straight away. It also makes it easier for you to refer to all your social media accounts at once rather than having to explain all your different handles!

Pro tip: Don't stop now! Once your Twitter and Instagram usernames are the same, make your Facebook, LinkedIn and everything else the same too. If someone else has your username, add 'UK' or 'HQ' to the end – something that won't confuse anyone and isn't difficult to remember!

When: Do it once Ease/time: 4
Effect: 4

Idea 2: Define your purpose Before you do anything (more) on Instagram, define its purpose in your online marketing strategy. Work from your business goals, down through your overall marketing goals and then those specific to Instagram.

Is there a particular product feature or side to your brand that you want to showcase on Instagram? For example, Apple uses Instagram only to highlight the camera capabilities of their iPhone!

Look at how Instagram can complement your other marketing activities and think about which part of your target audience it will engage. Don't fall into the trap of just 'being on' Instagram and begin sharing content without any direction. Have a plan and even create SMART goals to keep you on track.

When planning your strategy think about the aspect of your business that is most applicable to engagement and interaction. Start as small and simple as possible because you can always add elements on to your content and strategy. It doesn't have to be complicated.

Pro tip: Map out all the social networks you use and their purpose in your business. Be clear on which platforms fulfil which goals and how they all work together.

When: Do this now and reevaluate and refresh every quarter Ease/time: 2 Effect: 5

Idea 3: Personal account or business account?

If your Instagram account is named after your business, then it should certainly be a business account. After Facebook acquired Instagram, the functionalities available to businesses were supercharged. We'll see the power of some of these later.

It's super-simple to do and there are tips and information on instagram.com about its business pages. Find 'settings' and select 'switch to a business account'. You can then add other bits of key information. Your address will be automatically added to your profile as well as the business category of the Facebook page linked to the Instagram Business page. It is not possible to directly share Instagram Business posts to a personal Facebook profile.

If you're an *influencer* or use Instagram in a commercial capacity but have a personal account, the decision to make your account a business account is less clear. If you need additional insights or you need to promote your content, you'll require a business account. It is possible to switch back to a personal account at any point in time.

Pro tip: Facebook has an array of what it calls Blueprint Learning Courses which have a whole section on Instagram. If you're looking to get to grips with the basics, this is a perfect place to start.

When: When you decide your account is a business account!
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 4

Idea 4: Connect your Facebook page Remembering to share from content on multiple social media platforms can be frustrating. Luckily, Facebook and Instagram talk to each other fairly well. Twitter, less so, but we have another ebook that covers that!

To connect your Facebook page go to your Instagram profile and tap in the top right, scroll down and tap 'linked accounts', then 'Facebook'. by default, your Instagram account will link to your personal Facebook timeline. To link to a page instead, tap 'share to' and choose a page that you manage.

For every post you share on Instagram that you also want to share to Facebook, post your Instagram post with just a description below, then share on Instagram and also tick 'share on Facebook'. Only once it has sent, go back and edit your Instagram post to include all the hashtags and @mentions you want to include.

The picture will then look much more native to your Facebook feed and is likely to gain more engagement.

Pro tip: You can also add an Instagram tab to your Facebook account, which will allow your fans to see all of your Instagram posts in one go, whilst still on Facebook. Check out [this one](#) and create your own using Iconosquare.

When: Just once, then follow the process above every time you post to both
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 3

Idea 5: Optimise your bio You have precisely 150 characters to make the perfect impression in your Instagram bio.

Personal Instagram bios tend to follow the format of; age, location, job or business interest, then a list of hobbies or adjectives. Maybe some emojis. But if you're running a business account, this won't do.

A business bio should include your one-sentence business summary, focusing on the value you bring to your customers. Next, add some keywords relating to your audience. Are your customers bodybuilders? Vegan? Entrepreneurs? All three?! Make it loud and clear. This makes it easy to find you and for people to decide whether you're of interest to them. Your bio essentially sets the scene for the content followers can expect.

If you have a half professional personal Instagram account, explain how you help people as well as describing yourself. Add a credential at the end, which might include the title of an award won or an online publication you've been credited or listed in. You can format your bio like a list, using emojis as the bullet points if that's your thing!

Remember your bio is the only place you can link out of Instagram, apart from sponsored posts. Make sure you include a link in the URL section of your bio and make the link a good one!

Pro tip: Ensure the page you link to is mobile-optimised, as mobile is what the vast majority of people visiting from Instagram will be using!

When: Now and then revisit quarterly to ensure it's still accurate Ease/time: 4 Effect: 3

Idea 6: Share high-quality content In March 2016 Instagram controversially introduced an algorithm-based feed, so that posts were organised using Instagram's own formula. Previously, Instagram's feed used a chronological ordering of posts, much like Twitter.

Instagram's reason for doing this was that the average Instagram user apparently missed 70% of the content on their feed, and that an algorithm-driven feed would allow users to see the "moments [Instagram] believes you will care about the most."

What this means for you is that high-quality content wins the day. Of course, 'high-quality' is subjective, and in this case is defined by Instagram's algorithm. In basic terms it means posts need lots of likes and comments, in order to signpost to Instagram that it needs to be shared more widely. Following many of the ideas you will read in this book will help you create great content regularly to ensure this happens.

Pro tip: Always choose quality over quantity. Spend time making each image as good as possible, from the moment you take it, through to applying a crop, choosing a filter and adding a caption, hashtags, a location and tagging other users. Make every post count and sending no post is better than a sending bad one.

When: Forever and always Ease/time: 3
Effect: 5

Idea 7: Take square images If you take a photo or video directly from Instagram, it will be square. The native image format for the platform is square despite now being able to share both horizontal and portrait images.

If you are taking an image on your phone when you're not on Instagram, select the 'square' option if you intend to share it on Instagram. In general, share square images because they look best and all images are shown as squares in the grid view.

For every social media platform, create content the way it is meant to be shared on that particular platform. Instagram is no different.

Placing the main subject of the photo in the centre works well in square photos and so does symmetry in general. Other successful composition techniques are diagonal placement and 'leading lines' which are lines in the photo that draw the viewer's attention to the subject. These can be lines from the horizon, buildings or other objects in the frame. Ensure there is enough negative (empty) space in your photos or the image will feel crowded.

Pro tip: Plan out a photoshoot once in a while to ensure high quality pictures following the narrative set by your Instagram strategy. There's no harm in posting similar shots from a different angle. For example, you can make a close-up shot of the same composition.

When: Whenever you share an image Ease/time: 4
Effect: 4

Idea 8: Choose the right filter When Instagram first began life it was called Burbn and it was a check-in app. Burbn quickly became too similar to FourSquare, and the founders decided to pivot to become more focused on photo-sharing, renaming it Instagram in the process. Whilst Instagram was Burbn, the founders realised that a popular feature of the app was the filter feature, which allowed users to add a filter to the images they had added of the places they had checked in to. When they pivoted they focused heavily on this feature, to great success.

The filter is now Instagram's flagship feature, often accredited with making anyone appear to have professional photography experience. Without a doubt, filters make images more appealing; they've been designed to do just that, so you should certainly use them when necessary.

However, don't rely on a filter to make a poor image look half-decent - try to capture a good image in the first place. If you don't need a filter, you don't have to use one! #nofilter There are dozens of filters to choose from. If in doubt, choose a subtle one and try not to over-edit images.

According to a study by Wordstream, 60% of the top brands on Instagram use the same filter for every post, and the most popular filters are Clarendon, Gingham and Juno/Lark.

Find three or four filters that you use consistently. This will save you heaps of time deciding between filters each time and you'll have much better consistency through your content.

Pro tip: For further filter fun, consider using a third party filter app like Cymera, BeFunky, or VSCO.

When: Consider for every image Ease/time: 4
Effect: 4

Idea 9: Use hashtags "A picture paints a thousand hashtags, so use a thousand hashtags". Dom Mazetti, via BroScienceLife on YouTube.

The maximum number of hashtags Instagram allows per post is 30. Research has found that posts with 11 or more hashtags gather engagement well-above posts without hashtags. A study by Simply Measured found that posts with at least one hashtag average 12.6% more engagement than those without.

Hashtags are the main language of Instagram and most searches are carried out based on hashtags. Hashtags on Instagram categorise content, so when you click one you can browse posts that have been tagged with it. How discoverable your content will be depends on how often the hashtag is used, how popular your post already is and how strong your account's following is. The holy grail of Instagram is to appear in the 'top posts' section for a popular hashtag.

For most topics, there are well-used hashtags in existence; you just need to know them. A tool we love is hashtagify.me, where you can type in a word, for example 'digitalnomad' and see the most closely related hashtags to that, including 'business', 'entrepreneur', 'remotework' and 'travel'. Using this tool will help you build up a list of hashtags to use for each post.

Instagram best practice is to add the image, add a hashtag-free sentence describing or explaining it (a caption), then add a blank line or full stop and then add your hashtags. Using variations of each word is fine, for example for a post on powerlifting you might use #powerlifter #powerlifters #powerlifting #powerlift #powerliftinggirls #girlswhopowerlift, because each variation will display in different searches.

Keep track of trending hashtags such as #PancakeDay or recurring ones such as #MotivationMonday and use these with relevant content to increase exposure.

Pro tip: Save your hashtag groups somewhere on your phone, where you can easily copy and paste them into Instagram. This will save you time when creating posts and ensure you don't forget some.

When: In every post that you send Ease/time: 3
Effect: 5

Idea 10: Create one big image out of 6 separate posts This is an advanced bit of content trickery, but a good one nevertheless. When one views an Instagram account either on a desktop or mobile, they will always see three images across. There will be no gaps between the images, so they look like a mosaic.

Using this format to your advantage means you can take a large landscape image, split it into six in a photo editor, and share each one out as a separate post.

We've seen it used well with the Instagram account of a restaurant, where an image of a fully-stocked table, all laid out with plates, cutlery, dishes and people was taken from above, edited and rendered and cut into six. The images were then shared one by one, starting from the bottom right hand image and going clockwise.

Pro tip: Within each individual post, signal to your audience that it's part of a bigger picture, and encourage them to visit your profile to see the whole thing in all its glory!

When: Once every few months, when you have an exceptional image to use
Ease/time: 2
Effect: 3

Idea 11: Add to your story As opposed to static images posted to the Instagram feed, an Instagram story is a bit like a showreel video of your day. During a 24-hour period you can add images or short clips to your story, that keep your network updated with the cool stuff you're doing.

Your Instagram story is for the posts that are more like a daily journal of your life, or a day in the life of your brand, and may not make it to being shared as actual Instagram posts. Stories get lots of views so should be considered a valuable content alternative to standard posts.

A story is perfect for demonstrating the 'behind the scenes' side to your business. For example, the daily goings on in your office, what you and your team get up to when you're out and about, or every process before the finished product in a manufacturing or product-based company. For example, a sign company we know uses Instagram stories to show snapshots of the installation process, before, during and after they have worked their magic.

You will see individual viewing figures for each image or video in your story. If the number of views stays roughly the same throughout each entry, you've entertained your followers sufficiently for them to tap to reveal the next picture – well done! If you have lots of views for your first picture and then the number plummets, chances are your network saw the first one and didn't fancy going any further. Tough crowd.

Check out Gary Vaynerchuck's (@garyvee) Instagram stories for some inspiration on some of the awesome stuff you can do with this feature.

Pro tip: Want to add an image or video you took earlier that day to your story? If it's in your camera roll, you can do that. In the Instagram app, tap on the camera icon in the upper left hand side of the screen, and then pull up the screen from the bottom to reveal the pictures you've taken in the last 24 hours. You can then annotate to your heart's content.

When: Whenever you have something truly interesting to share, perhaps multiple times per day.
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 4

Idea 12: Spruce up your story You can annotate your story with text, images, you can draw all over it in different colours, add your location, even add the temperature of where you are. Your story can be completely customised to fit your vibe. Your vibe attracts your tribe.

Stories allow you to put out more rough and playful content than the polished visuals you post on your timeline. You can resize text or stickers by zooming in or out with two fingers. To improve readability you can add a background to the text.

Keep the annotation as simple as possible, and remember for a video that the annotations stay on the screen even as the video moves, so make sure they don't unintentionally obscure any part of it. It is possible to pin a sticker to a fixed spot in the video. After tapping and holding a sticker you use the slidebar to find the right moment. Making a story video usually requires you to tap and hold. You can get around this by swiping left at the bottom of the screen ad tapping "hands-free". Either tap to start a video or tap and hold for a timer that counts down first.

If your story has attracted lots of views and comments and is a quality image, consider taking the next step and actually share it as a post on your Instagram. In this way you can use your story as a testing ground for content before actually posting. After opening your story, click the three dots in the right bottom and tap "share as post".

Pro tip: With a similar exclusivity as stories, it is also possible to send disappearing photos or videos as individual messages to people or to a group. If you create a new group with a maximum of 15 people then you start a group conversation that all group members can reply to. It is possible to send Instagram direct messages to those who follow you or have already approved a message from you.

When: Every time you share a story Ease/time: 3
Effect: 3

Idea 13: Instagram scheduling For our clients at JC Social Media, we use a tool called Hopper to schedule Instagram posts into the future. Hopper is one of the only tools that actually posts content on your behalf. Most Instagram scheduling tools just send you a notification when you can post, which almost completely defeats the point of using them!

Hopper lets you upload either in their mobile app or from a desktop, then add the accompanying text and hashtags and schedule for a specific date and time.

What we love about Hopper is that you can copy and paste hashtags across posts without typing them all in again from the start.

hopperhq.com

Pro tip: Start a theme! Sort your images into themes and post one image from that theme at the same time each week. There's no danger of missing one when it's scheduled, and your followers will get used to the consistency and frequency of your posts.

When: Set it up and you can schedule all your posts once a week Ease/time: 3 Effect: 5

P.s. we are not affiliated with Hopper nor on commission, but we should be!

Idea 14: Instagram LIVE

Just like on Facebook, Instagram gives you the ability to stream live video to your followers. Live video has revolutionized the way some brands and individuals communicate with their audience so it's worth considering.

To start a live video, click the camera icon in the top left of the screen or simply swipe right from the feed. Then tap "live" at the bottom of the screen and "start live video". Note that your followers may be notified when you start a live video unless you turn off notifications.

You can comment on your video and even tap and hold to pin a comment to the top, making it more visible to viewers.

If you're set on doing a live video, an announcement to your followers in a post a short time before may help get more people tuned in.

As with any posts on Instagram, ensure you keep the value of your videos high. Be sure there's something important to say or show your audience (an event, an announcement, a key person in your business, breaking news, an exclusive launch) and, where possible, get the right lighting and a tripod for your phone.

Pro tip: Unlike Facebook, as soon as a live video has ended, it cannot be viewed on Instagram. To get extra video views, share a replay by clicking on 'replay' at the bottom of the video. It keeps all the likes, comments, and views from the original post. This replay is added to your Instagram story and will be deleted at the end of the day.

Users cannot comment on a live video replay. They can respond only via a direct message which you see coming in via the arrow at the bottom right of your timeline. Don't forget to check these messages regularly!

When: When you have something important to say or show at an appropriate time of the day Ease/time: 3

Effect: 4

Idea 15: Tag people in posts, pictures and stories Whenever you share an image or video on Instagram you have the option to tag people. When tapping this option, you will be taken to a new screen that allows you to place a tag on the image and type in the username of the person or brand you want to tag.

When someone has been tagged in a post they will receive a notification.

You might want to tag business partners or affiliates, customers, brands you associate with or use, competition winners, or people you work with or have met at networking events. You could also run a competition and tag the winners in the post announcing them.

Avoid being a tag-spammer. Don't tag people in posts that have absolutely no relevance to them. If you want to draw a specific person's attention to your post it's better to tag them in a comment or send the post to them in a direct message.

You can navigate to anyone's Instagram profile and look at the 'posts tagged in' tab to see images they have been tagged in by others.

Pro tip: You can also tag other people in your story using their Instagram usernames in a @mention. The person you have mentioned will receive a notification, so you can keep track of the stories you have tagged each other in.

This elevates the likelihood of this person seeing the story and is a good way to use stories to keep in touch with people.

When: Each time you share a post with other people or brands in it Ease/time: 2 Effect: 2

Idea 16: Use location services to share and search After taking your awesome photo and applying a suitable filter, go ahead and tag your location. This is a simple way to tell people where you are, without using up loads of location-related hashtags like #StanleyPark #Vancouver #BC #BritishColumbia #Canada, although those are perfectly good hashtags to use.

This tactic increases your exposure amongst those seeking content from a specific area as well as adding a layer of interest to your content.

You can also flip this Instagram feature for a different benefit. Search for images shared in a location important for your business.

This is useful if you have a geographically specific business or one with big premises. For example Birmingham's Bullring shopping centre account could look through all images taken there and comment on them, with the goal of engaging with shoppers and encouraging them to return.

This goes for any restaurants or any business with premises; you might be surprised at how many people have already tagged your location!

Pro tip: Use location tagging sparingly; don't feel like you should do it every post and don't tag your home address.

When: When you've taken an image in an interesting location Ease/time: 5 Effect: 2

Idea 17: Plan a series of themed or related content If you've got some great content from an event or a trip, make it a 'content series'. You can even plan content series in advance to make sure you get the right images and help tell a story to your audience.

Instagram doesn't have to be used to share single, unrelated images. Creating a theme keeps users interested in your forthcoming content and more likely to take note.

Use the same filter for each image and try to achieve the same shot framing. Use at least some of the same hashtags and indicate they're part of a series.

This idea also saves you time in deciding what to post or searching for fresh content.

Some examples:

- A law firm that holds a monthly networking event, using Instagram to share photos and invitations to that event at the same time each month
- A clothing brand using Instagram to share daily pictures of new stock items, at a regular frequency with the same framing, filters and borders
- A beauty salon using Instagram to share before and after pictures of happy clients, one per day, using layout and the same format
- A property company using Instagram to share images of new apartments added to their site, perhaps a few per week, with the same description opener

Pro tip: Use your Instagram story to announce the series to your audience, to signpost what they will be seeing over the next few days, weeks or months. It gives them something to look out for!

When: Monthly
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 2

Idea 18: Post short, snappy videos Video is incredibly popular across the internet and social media right now. Instagram is no different, having launched video in 2013 and subsequently extended the maximum length of video uploads. Just like Instagram photos, videos should be filmed square, but other formats are supported.

The quality of your video must reflect your brand. As a gym, for example, a hand-held camera phone video might be perfect to show the highlights of a gruelling strongman class, whereas a luxury watch manufacturer needs something all-together more professional.

Instagram videos need to be far punchier and eye-catching than Facebook videos. Good lighting and bright colours are a must. A quick Google of tips for filming videos will give you loads of ideas to keep the quality high. One is found on Visual Country's Twitter account, where they suggest putting your camera on a towel on a table and then sliding the towel to create an effect of a camera slide!

Examples of videos perfect for Instagram:
- Stop-motion videos of a trip or event
- A short demonstration of a cool product of yours that solves a common problem
- A panoramic video of the place your business is operating that day (consider a film company shooting in the Scottish highlands)
- Selfie videos if you're an influencer and your fans dig it

If you want to add music then make sure it's royalty free. A lot of viewers, however, will not have sound on so ensure that it is easy to follow the storyline without sound. You can add keywords in to help bring across your message. There are also apps for adding subtitles to videos, which we cover later.

When posting your video you can choose which frame is used as the video's cover image. Choose this carefully, as it will make the difference between someone clicking to watch it and ignoring it!

Pro-tip: Videos make very good promoted post content and you can boost

Facebook videos to a targeted Instagram audience. More on this later too.

When: Make around 5-10% of your posts videos Ease/time: 2
Effect: 4

Idea 19: Create great captions for each post It's not all about adding filters and the right hashtags to your photos. Captions are incredibly important, especially in getting posts to perform well in Instagram's algorithm.

Captions allow you to articulate yourself and your brand in a way that's simply not possible through an image and hashtags. Furthermore, they're a great way to inspire comments, likes, and shares, all of which indicate to Instagram that your post is interesting and high-quality – exactly how you get your posts in front of the maximum number of people.

Emojis can add more life to your caption. Just don't go overboard with a sea of emojis to draw attention. You want the caption to be easy to read and not too long unless you need to explain a competition or go deeper into a personal story.

Pro tip: Ask questions and ask for suggestions or opinions. It's the perfect way to get your audience involved.

When: Add a great caption to every post. Ask a question or open up a discussion every four or five posts.
Ease/time: 4
Effect: 5

Idea 20: Stay on brand Sharing content on Instagram is quick and easy and all done from your phone. Whilst posting regularly is key to growing your presence, each post must be in line with your brand voice, image, and ethos.

Be consistent. Even if that consistency is being wacky and 'out there' most of the time. Stick to your topics of interest; don't suddenly begin ranting about politics. You'll alienate your audience.

That being said, definitely make use of trends and buzz around current affairs if they are of interest to your audience and relevant to your brand. For example, in 2016 millions of accounts participated in the mannequin challenge craze whilst keeping the execution on brand. Who knows what the next crazes will be, but think about how you can capitalise on them quickly, before everyone does it.

Ensure your images are similar quality and keep captions in your tone of voice. This consistency develops the trusting relationship you need with your audience.

You could also write down the tone of voice your brand will post out in. Your audience is much more likely to engage with your page and its content if it feels like it's personal. Adopting a voice and personality for your brand on Instagram is a very good idea, indeed, but keep it authentic.

As a general rule, we avoid posting images on topics like religion, and one's political stance on our client's Instagram pages. This may fit your brand if you are a lobbying organisation, religious organisation or a government delivery partner, in which case go ahead! However, for most businesses it will only serve to divide your audience if you go down this route, when in fact you want to unite your audience over their one common interest: your business!

Pro tip: Does your company have its own 'brand guidelines' document, with details of its colours, fonts and logo? Consider adding an Instagram

section, with some dos and don'ts of what is considered acceptable Instagram content. Include details on the crop, backgrounds, caption style, hashtags and filters to use. Ensure every person who has access to your Instagram uses these guidelines.

When: All the time Ease/time: 4
Effect: 4

Idea 21: Post at the right time If someone posts to Instagram but no one's there to see it, does it really get posted to Instagram?

Sharing great content is one thing, but unless you're boosting that content with cash spend, timing is crucial - generating early traction is key to maximize reach. Depending on your audience, posting in the evening tends to work well and most people are on their leisure time.

If you have a business account then you can find a graph in Instagram Insights showing how many of your followers tend to be on Instagram at different hours of the day and on different days of the week. Use this as additional insight but do not take it as gospel.

By using a scheduling tool like Hopper, you can ensure you're consistently sharing content at the optimal time for your own audience.

Pro tip: According to Wordstream, the best time to post on Instagram for the most engagement is 5pm on Wednesdays. However, don't take our word for it! Test images by posting them at different times and monitor the results.

When: Consider for each post Ease/time: 4
Effect: 4

Idea 22: Avoid using product catalogue images You'll see lots of brands share images of their products on Instagram. However, the best posts are absolutely not catalogue-style images; like ones taken for e-commerce product pages.

Showing the features of a product clearly on a white, grey, or cream background has its purpose. However, these images don't tend to perform well on Instagram because they lack artistic flair and creativity (yes, even with a filter!).

As humans we are constantly adapting to avoid being sold to. In everyday life, we fast-forward the adverts on TV, we avoid the adverts pages in magazines and we zone out when listening to sales pitches. Instagram is no different. A plain white background screams PRODUCT SHOT, and consumers simply don't pay as much attention as they would if it were on a genuine background, in a lifestyle setting.

Where possible, share products in use or in an unusual setting; one that matches the brand. Would Audi share images of its cars in a white showroom on Instagram?

They don't, of course! They share images of their cars on the open road, parked up in interesting settings, set against beautiful mountains. Your product should be no different.

Pro tip: When creating your marketing collateral, create square product images that will light up your Instagram feed. Involve themes of interest to your audience. Say you sell healthy smoothies - what else is involved in a healthy lifestyle? Show people drinking your smoothies at the gym or after a run. Also think about seasonality; beaches on the background in summer and Christmas trees in winter for example.

When: It's rarely the best time to share a catalogue shot!
Ease/time: 4

Effect: 4

Idea 23: Run a competition Competitions are a great way to achieve a range of marketing objectives. There are three main types of Instagram competition:

1. A 'like' or 'comment' to enter competition.

This is the simplest type of competition. Simply explain that this is a competition post, what the prize is, and select a winner from the users who like or comment – ask them to do one or the other of these to enter.

2. User-generated content competition

These take several forms, but in general, you ask users to post images to Instagram using a hashtag or mentioning your brand. They might be in your store or restaurant, or using or wearing your product. Make it something fun and easy to do. Choose a winner from the best or even get people to vote by liking or commenting for added engagement!

3. Email-gated competitions

Third-party apps give you the ability to ask for email addresses in order to enter a competition. Just like any other social media data-capture competition, you'll need to make the prize worth winning because this is a significant barrier to entry. However, those email addresses could be very useful to your brand moving forward, so weigh up the pros and cons.

Pro tip: Really plan out your competitions and get some feedback on them before you start, especially types two and three! For user-generated competitions, get members of your network to enter to get the ball rolling.

When: Weekly to monthly Ease/time: 2
Effect: 4

Idea 24: Film a hyperlapse You will almost certainly have watched a hyperlapse video on social media. A hyperlapse or stop-motion time-lapse is a video comprised of lots of photographs taken using the same framing or focal point, a short time apart. They make for mesmerizing videos and are still super popular on social media, even though the technique was developed back in the 1990s.

Hyperlapses are perfect to show off the setting up of a show, the production of a product, the changes in landscapes (perfect for travel or real estate companies), cosmetics and others. You'll need a tripod and a phone or camera you can set to take images every minute or so. A GoPro works perfectly for this.

You can then make these images into a video using a range of software programmes such as iMovie, Windows Movie Maker or Sony Vegas.

Pro tip: If you have the budget, bring in a video production team. It will save you a lot of time and you'll almost definitely end up with a better quality finish. Make sure they know how to produce a hyperlapse and ask to see examples of their work.

When: Monthly or seasonally Ease/time: 1
Effect: 4

Idea 25: Leverage influencers Influencer marketing is incredibly powerful and Instagram is a great platform for it. At the time of writing, influencer marketing is expensive for brands. The going rate is about £1000 per post per 100,000 followers, and even more than this in some sectors like beauty and cosmetics.

If you have a budget for it, you can search your personal networks or use an influencer agency who will help you come up with a plan. However, if you're looking to be clever about the whole thing and save some cash, you can try a few other tactics.

Influencers know their value, so in order to get some free promotion or promotion in return for your product, you need to find some micro to mid-range influencers (10,000 - 250,000 followers) that suit your product down to the ground and share a target audience. If they genuinely like your product or brand, they're far more likely to give you some help.

Reach out over Instagram, through a contact page on their website, or on Twitter or Facebook, and be prepared to send out samples. Even a single post from the right influencer could generate huge interest in your product.

Pro tip: Shortlist 20-30 influencers that fit your brand and put them into a spreadsheet. Do your research and work out what makes them tick and how is best to contact them. Start conducting some interaction and gentle outreach to get your brand in front of them.

The next stage is to ask if they'd be happy for you to send them your product for them to try. This is where they'll either say 'yes' or 'no', put you in touch with their agent or tell you their prices. You're looking for those few accounts who are happy to do it for free. Remember, you're giving them something for free and some fresh content, so you do have some leverage, here.

When: Keep an eye out for opportunities, try an outreach campaign every 6-12

months.
Ease/time: 1
Effect: 5

Idea 26: Try a Boomerang post Boomerang is a third-party app that produces short looping videos. These are perfect to capture the attention of your audience without the time and preparation outlay of making a video.

Boomerang harnesses the power of GIFs by taking a series of photos, pasting them together and playing them forward and backward. Make sure to hold your camera steady to ensure that every one of the 20 frames counts.

The Boomerang video itself will be short but if it's interesting and you have done it well, people watch the loop several times. This is especially if there's something funny or strange going on which requires a closer look!

Pro tip: Familiarise yourself with Boomerang before you plan to film one. When you're about to shoot, do a few practice runs to really get it right.

When: Weekly
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 3

Idea 27: Use Layout for grouped shots Combine different images together with the Layout app. You can choose up to 9 images from your camera roll or take new pictures right then and there. Layout offers numerous compositions of different images added together in a square frame.

You can also mirror, flip, swap, and resize images so you have a lot of editorial control.

The faces tab allows you to quickly find photos with people in them. After creating a Layout you can save it to your camera roll and share it via other networks.

Pro tip: Sometimes you'll have some shots that you like, but they're not strong enough on their own, or perhaps they need some context. Joining 4 or 9 good images together can make an awesome Layout image.

When: Weekly
Ease/time: 2
Effect: 3

Idea 28: Use Regram Regram is another third-party app that every Instagram marketer should use. Regram allows you to post other people's content to your timeline, just like a retweet on Twitter.

This is a great way to stroke someone's ego, share fresh content with your audience very easily and share posts featuring your brand or content. The latter is a great way to give social proof to your followers and might encourage others to share similar posts in the hope of a regram!

We recommend regramming only the best content from other accounts. If you use the Regram app, the image shared will have that user's username on it – but you should tag them in the caption to credit them for their work. It's also good practice to include 'regram' or 'repost' in the caption.

You can use Instagram's 'save image' feature to save posts that you want to regram later. Find the images you want to regram on Instagram, click 'save image' and then visit your saved images section later, to share them every so often rather than all at once.

Pro tip: If the regram is part of a competition, campaign or event whereby followers are encouraged to post content that you intend to share, explicitly state at the start that submitting an image means that they give consent to the photo being shared and used by your brand.

When: Weekly, but no more than every 5-10 of your own posts.
Ease/time: 5
Effect: 4

Idea 29: Adding text to images We know a picture paints a thousand words but sometimes you need the words, too. The nature of Instagram's API and its simple photo format means that you won't be short of complementary apps to help you do this.

The following apps allow you to add text to photos: Quick
A Beautiful Mess (paid) Tangent

Make sure the text you add matches your brand as far as possible, in the font and the colours used. Consistency is key so stick to your favourite font and positioning over the image. Make sure the text can be read easily over the photo.

Pro tip: Because you can't yet upload directly to Instagram from desktop (correct as of August 2017!) you need your phone set up for Instagram success. We advise creating an Instagram folder on your phone which contains Instagram and all the complimentary apps you will need to use to create and send amazing photos.

When: Every few images, when adding text is appropriate Ease/time: 3
Effect: 4

Idea 30: Search for people on Instagram Instagram's search function is useful for finding many things: Prospects, current customers, inspiration, collaborators, competitors, influencers, and thought-leaders, plus images with specific hashtags or locations. Think of each of these categories as a different search, and use it accordingly.

To search on Instagram, click the magnifying glass and search 'users' or 'hashtags'. Users are searched by both their names and usernames.

When you have found an individual relevant to your business, see who else comments on their posts or is often tagged by this person. It's very likely that you will find more useful individuals relevant to you so just one account can open up a whole network.

Pro tip: To find users you're not yet aware of, try the 'suggest users' feature under 'find friends'. This will show you users that are likely to be of interest based on numerous factors.

When: When following initial accounts or to broaden your horizons Ease/time: 3 Effect: 3

Idea 31: Respond to comments If your content inspires comments from your followers, you're doing a great job. However, don't just bask in your glory. This is your opportunity to engage your audience, make your content go further, and build a community.

Even if the comment is a short compliment or note, you can reply by saying 'thanks' and personalising your reply. If the comment has a negative connotation it is just as crucial to respond and show that you care or offer your side of the story.

The more often you reply to comments, the more likely your fans are to comment. The more they comment, the more signals your content sends to Instagram that your content is awesome. By building a pattern of comments and replies, you'll create a culture of communication on your profile.

Pro tip: Try to be fun and engaging but not desperate. Ask questions when suitable but try to stay somewhat offhand in case you don't get a response.

An app that lets you manage lots of comments and makes sure you don't miss any: MyCommenter. You basically respond to comments then tick them off your list, so that your comments become a to-do list of replying. This is especially good for customer service or managing a large following.

When: When you attract some great comments Ease/time: 4
Effect: 4

Idea 32: Follow (and unfollow) other great accounts Unless you're marketing a major brand or are a super celeb, it's good practice to follow a range of accounts. Only follow accounts of relevance to you and try to build your fan base as you go. Don't be in a position where you follow 2000 accounts but have only 50 followers.

Back this up with engagement such as likes and comments on their profiles. This demonstrates genuine interest and your knowledge of a relevant topic to increase the chance of the accounts checking out your profile and following back.

Here are the types of accounts you should follow:
- Customers
- Collaborators
- Industry influencers/thought-leaders
- Powerful Instagram accounts in the sector
- Prospects
- Super fans in your network

Start with the most relevant accounts to your brand – maybe the top ten in each of the above categories, if applicable.

Besides just following accounts of interest and influence, one tactic is to follow a broader range of accounts (especially potential customers and influencers) with a view to unfollowing them if they do not follow you back within a few weeks.

This tactic is far more effective on Twitter than Instagram, as the mutual following culture is weaker on Instagram. However, it remains a good way of generating some new followers and getting your brand in front of new people, even if it's just the notification they see.

By unfollowing accounts every few days or each week, you'll be able to keep your 'following' number down.

Pro tip: Use apps like InstaFollow, Followers, and FindUnfollow to help you easily take note of new followers and followers you don't follow back. They also keep track of users who are not following you back, have unfollowed or blocked you.

When: Now and weekly Ease/time: 3
Effect: 3

Idea 33: Like and comment on other people's content Liking people's content is super-quick and simple. Every time you see some good content posted by someone you like, double tap to like it. You can like hundreds of pieces of content in the space of five minutes, giving each user a notification of this action.

Whist it takes longer, commenting has a much better success rate when it comes to achieving a follow from that individual. Keep it positive and try not to just write spam like 'great post' or 'keep it up!' – make it more personal. Ideally your comment is insightful or tells the person something about who you are and what you do which makes them want to take a look at your profile.

Pro tip: Commenting on posts that have no or only a few comments gives you the best chance of a follow back. Your comment will get lost if there are dozens already there. Ideally, find image with fewer than 50 likes and only one or two comments.

When: Daily

Liking:
Ease/time: 5
Effect: 2

Commenting:
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 4

Idea 34: Save your favourite posts Saving posts has a few benefits. Firstly, it's a great way to save the best content you see in order to inspire and shape your content strategy moving forward.

Secondly, it may be content you want to regram to your audience. If you don't want to share it there and then, saving the post means you can do it at a later date.

Lastly, you can use saved posts as a CRM or sales tool, a bit like a Twitter list. These accounts might have mentioned your brand in a post or perhaps you want to be reminded to get in touch with this person later.

Pro tip: Diarise to go through all your favourite posts each week or month. This way all that saving doesn't go to waste and you'll be reminded to reach out to that influencer or try your own version of that awesome post.

When: Ongoing, review monthly Ease/time: 3
Effect: 3

Idea 35: Track your stats using insights Here's a list of all the metrics you can track on Instagram: **Overall metrics**

- **Impressions** - Total number of times your posts and stories were viewed
- **Reach** - Number of unique accounts who viewed your posts and stories
- **Website clicks** - The number of clicks to links you've included in your business profile description
- **Profile views** - The number of unique accounts who visited your business profile

You'll also see the following insights about your followers:

- **Gender** - Percentage of male and female followers
- **Age range** - The percentage of followers within one of the seven age ranges.
- **Top locations** - The percentage of followers based in a city or country
- **Followers** - The activity of your followers on different hours of the day and days of the week.

Post metrics:

- **Likes**
- **Comments**
- **Saved** - The number of unique accounts that saved your post
- **Impressions** - Total number of times your post was seen
- **Reach** - Number of unique accounts who saw your post
- **Engagement** - The total number of unique Instagram accounts that liked, commented on or saved your post
- **Video views** - The total number of times your video was viewed

Story metrics:

- **Impressions** - Total number of times your story was seen
- **Reach** - Number of unique accounts who saw your story
- **Replies** - Number of times people send messages through the 'send message' feature
- **Exits** - The number of times someone swiped from one of your stories to someone else's story, or returned to their feed.

If you don't regular assess how effective your work is, it is very difficult to make improvements. There might be some obvious trends, but looking at the data is likely to highlight key things that will help inform your strategy moving forward.

Pro tip: Instagram Insights provide a lot of data, but what is most important to you? Define key performance indicators and check their development on a regular basis.

When: Weekly Ease/time: 3
Effect: 4

Idea 36: Use Google Analytics to measure web traffic from Instagram Whether you use Instagram's business insights or not, Google Analytics can give you an instant snapshot of how much traffic is being directed to your site from Instagram. However, traffic to your website from an app is classified as 'direct' on Google Analytics, and Instagram is an app! This means all that data is grouped together with traffic from other apps and people just typing in your URL. Not ideal.

However, you can overcome this by using a tracking link, which you put together with a [URL builder](). This will give you a long, quite ugly, URL to pop onto your Instagram bio. Use a shortener (usually provided in the URL building tool) to make it look prettier and use that instead. This means that all traffic from Instagram in going through unique URL and can be tracked.

Of course, you could have an Instagram-specific landing page like mywebsite.com/instagram, which you send people to (make sure you noindex that page, though).

This gives you the power to see how much traffic hits your site from Instagram and how that changes over time. Compare month on month data for trends.

Pro tip: Track how the volume of web traffic tallies with the frequency you post. Are there specific times of the day that seem to get folk clicking your link? This will help inform your strategy moving forward.

When: Set up the link now, track monthly Ease/time: 3
Effect: 4

Idea 37: Use Google Analytics to see where your Instagram-driven web traffic goes Once you've followed the process of idea 37, you can dig deeper into the analytics for more useful insights. Take a look at where this traffic goes once its hit your website or Instagram landing page.

Does this traffic stick around or does it bounce away? Which call-to-action do users follow on that page? If you don't know where the traffic is going, you can't be sure if Instagram or your website is doing its job!

You may need to send people to a different landing page or modify the existing one. Try different calls to action and value propositions. It might even be the case that you're sending the wrong people to your site so you need to adjust the content you share on Instagram to appeal to a slightly different audience.

Pro tip: Set up 'goals' on Google Analytics. These can range from people visiting a certain page or number of pages, or making a purchase. As an ecommerce site, you can set one up to see how many people have purchased as a result of finding you from Instagram.

When: Set it up now, revisit monthly or after a certain campaign Ease/time: 1 Effect: 4

Idea 38: Select the right privacy setting Unless you share very sensitive material or there is a very good reason for keeping your account private, you should have a public Instagram account. A private account basically means that people request to follow your account and you either grant them that access or not.

We've seen private accounts work for very high-end luxury brands; not high-street luxury like Rolex, but personal, bespoke services. Examples include a high-end personal jeweller or a luxury interior designer who only work with a select group of individuals.

Otherwise, your account should be public. Be mindful, however, that this means anyone can access your content including your stories; even people who don't follow you and even people without Instagram!

Pro tip: Having a public profile means that anyone can comment. If a comment is truly harmful then you can choose to delete it. Do not go overboard deleting all negative feedback however. It puts you in a much better position if you reply to the comment and show your strength and involvement.

When: Now
Ease/time: 5
Effect: 5

Idea 39: Research your competitors Competitor analysis should be a fundamental element of your social media strategy. Competitors provide you a wealth of knowledge and experience before you post a single piece of content – even if it's just examples of what not to do!

Choose your five top competitors or companies operating in a very similar space with a similar target audience. Scrutinise their Instagram profile and content over the past 12 months. This gives you an equivalent five years' worth of experience.

Find patterns in this content. What works? What doesn't work? Which types of content could you easily replicate with your own style? How often do they post? How do they engage with their audience?

All of this helps shape a winning strategy and cuts out a load of trial and error on your own account.

Pro tip: Find accounts of a similar size to yours or slightly larger to get the best comparison and insight into what will work for you. Alternatively, work out which accounts get the highest like and comment rates per follower, rather than looking at sheer follower numbers. The latter can be misleading and isn't always a sign of great content.

When: Now and then quarterly Ease/time: 2
Effect: 4

Idea 40: Boost posts from Facebook to Instagram Since Facebook acquired Instagram, you can promote your content across both platforms. You'll need to link your business accounts in order to do this (see earlier in the book for how to do this) and all paid ads are set up and run through Facebook.

Some ads might be better suited to Instagram or may generate a better user response there. For some posts, you might not know which platform will be best until you try. When creating your ads, simply select where your boosted post should be distributed and include Instagram.

Make sure the post is image-led and that the image is original and eye-catching. Stock images that might work fine for a Facebook-only promotion won't do on Instagram.

Ensure you use a unique link so the promotion is trackable. Always give a single clear call to action that matches the button.

If you regularly spend money on Instagram ads, make sure you record absolutely everything you spend. You can then analyse your cost per like, cost per click, etc., and work out where your budget is best spent.

You could record this in a basic excel spreadsheet or use Facebook's own adverts manager, in the Instagram section to see the difference from month to month.

Pro tip: Boosting an Instagram competition or launching a hashtag campaign (idea 47) is a great way to maximize reach and engagement.

When: Try now, then weekly or monthly as your budget permits Ease/time: 3 Effect: 3

Idea 41: Edit your bio link depending on your campaign Remember, Instagram wants its users to stay on Instagram and, therefore, only allows you to link outwards in your bio or in paid promoted content. That's why the bio link is so important.

As per ideas 5 and 35, you need a link in your bio and it could be a tracking link or to a specific landing page.

To gain even more clarity about the success of individual campaigns, you should change this link for each campaign period. This gives you a very clear indication on which campaigns worked best.

This helps because if your campaign is not all through paid adverts, and your bio link is the important link, you'll be able to see results in Google Analytics at a glance, rather than having to set the time frames precisely. This is super-important if your campaigns last only several hours or a couple of days.

You'll then be able to look at the metrics for mydomain/insta-campaign-x/ in your Google Analytics in order to assess the results.

Pro tip: Create brand new landing pages for each campaign (at a different URL so the link changes). This trains users to expect fresh content when they click through your bio link, which will elevate your web clicks moving forward. This also enables you to test which type of landing page works best for your audience – you can A/B test colours, images, calls to action and value propositions.

When: For short sharp campaigns Ease/time: 2
Effect: 3

Idea 42: Use carousel ads on Instagram Carousel ads show users a range of images they can rotate through. This means that viewers can swipe through a maximum of four images on their phone. At any point in the swiping process they can click the link to visit your website.

These carousel ads are a paid advert feature and this particular format is great at generating click-throughs. These ads are designed and promoted via Facebook so simply select 'carousel' as the advert type.

These types of ad work especially well for e-commerce businesses where clicks are king and funky product images give users the opportunity to buy what they see. Choose a range of images and products because you never know which one will spark the imagination of your audience.

Pro tip: Study the results of all ads closely. Did the ad work better on Facebook or Instagram? Which images attracted the highest number of clicks? To which audience do ads tend to perform the best?

Data-driven iterations mean that, over time, you can make drastic improvements to the return on investment of these campaigns, which can be the difference between business success and failure on social media.

When: Try one now and see how it goes, then run as your budget permits.
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 5

Idea 43: Use contextual product placement Whether this is in your own content or in that of influencers who are helping you out, contextual product placement is a great option.

Opposed to overt promotion in posts, having your product or brand somewhere in an image, without it being the focus of the image, is a powerful marketing tool. Product placement has been huge advertising business for decades on TV and in films, and Instagram is one of today's platforms of choice.

Some of Instagram's top influencers choose contextual product placement because it's so much less intrusive than an obvious promotion. With increasing scrutiny on paid advertisements through influencers on social media, this discreet option is ideal.

Whilst it's less direct than a 'hey, look at this product I am using today', the semi-subliminal brand building is equally powerful over time. It will also look way less like you've asked or paid for a mention and more like the individual genuinely uses or wears your product. (In saying this, make sure you follow the guidelines defined by the Advertising Standards Agency).

This goes for your own content too, remember. Don't always have your product front and centre. Be creative in sharing great, value-adding content and still getting your brand in there somewhere.

Pro tip: Bear in mind how Instagrammable (yes, that's a word) your products are when you design them. Choose bolder colours and bigger fonts so even if they're not front and centre, people will be able to make them out.

When: When you're doing influencer outreach and in some of your own content
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 4

Idea 44: Add Instagram to your website Make sure you link to your Instagram profile from your website. It should go without saying that your site should have social media buttons situated prominently on your site, and your site should be mobile-optimised Remember, whilst people will be able to see your Instagram profile from a desktop if they click the Instagram icon, they're much more likely to become a follower and interact with you if they've navigated there from a mobile device. This is why having a good mobile site is important from several perspectives.

If you keep Instagram updated regularly with great content, consider adding your content feed to your website. There are many ways in which you can do this, either in the footer, the sidebar, or as a block on your homepage.

Pro tip: Instagram changed its logo in 2016, so make sure any plugins or icons you use contain the newer one!

When: Get an Instagram social media button now. Consider a feed in due course.
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 3

Idea 45: Encourage Instagram sharing offline Encourage users to share their experience with your product or service on Instagram. You can do this by printing "Instagram me!" on packaging but there are also subtler ways. If you have a physical location such as a restaurant then you can write down small hints encouraging customers to take a picture of their food or drinks. It is said that more and more people even choose their holiday destination according to "Instagrammability".

The power of "Instagrammable" (there's that word, again) physical locations or products must not be underestimated. Implement small nudges to make the most of this and suggest the hashtags people should use.

Having an especially Instagrammable object or wall in your venue, or even a Polaroid frame to encourage people to take photos is perfect to inspire user-generated content.

Pro tip: When launching a competition or campaign or Instagram make sure to promote it offline too. By referring to this specific campaign you will further grow your Instagram audience.

When: Ongoing
Ease/time: 2
Effect: 4

Idea 46: Get users to use a hashtag and regram their content This is a content idea that lots of brands use to source user-generated content. Create a hashtag (check it has not been or is not currently used for anything major) that people can use that means you'll regram their content.

This is a great incentive for people to share an image of your product and use that hashtag. It's good content for your account and it's a good way to build up engagement and an active community on the platform.

Dubai tourism board's Instagram account shares the five best #MyDubai Instagram posts each day and Apple have a #ShotoniPhone hashtag from which they share their favourites. On a smaller scale, Tikiboo Fitness share images of happy customers that use #tikiboofitness.

Pro tip: Go a step further by making these images into graphics for your website or even print media. Why not let pictures taken by users tell your story? You can integrate these pictures into all sorts of campaigns.

When: Ideally, this is an ongoing campaign Ease/time: 3
Effect: 5

Idea 47: Try out Boomf Boomf is a neat little company that allows you to have nine images from Instagram printed on marshmallows. Whilst this seems random, they make awesome gifts and can be a perfect way of getting yourself in front of a prospect or thanking a super-fan.

The marshmallows, themselves, are likely to get some shares from the recipient, which is a great way to increase your reach. It's the perfect way to bring Instagram into the real world and is a great branding exercise!

Pro tip: If you've held an event, Boomf is a great (and tasty) way to share some images from the event as a reminder or 'thank you' to guests.

When: As required Ease/time: 2
Effect: 3

Idea 48: Get some real life feedback This is a much-overlooked element of social media strategy. Have you ever asked your network for some honest feedback on your Instagram content?

Whilst your 'like' and 'comment' metrics give you very practical feedback, it is generally quantitative feedback – it don't necessarily explain why a piece of content was great or why someone chose *not* to like it. Do you know what kind of content your audience would like to see?

Getting genuine, descriptive feedback about your content is probably the fastest way to make significant improvements to your Instagram presence. People will generally be pleased to give feedback and be flattered that you asked their opinion.

Pro tip: Get serious about this by creating a Survey Monkey or Google Form questionnaire with a range of questions. Send this out to 20 people you value the opinion of and get them to be brutally honest. You can collate the answers and see instant trends before adjusting your strategy accordingly.

When: Now and monthly Ease/time: 4
Effect: 5

Idea 49: Assess the role of Instagram in your life …and business.

Like any form of marketing or life pursuit, taking time to reflect is a wonderful thing. Three to six months spent implementing all these ideas will see you create a solid Instagram presence for your business.

As always, record your input and the outcomes. Remember that there is both a time and brain-space cost to marketing, plus any cash spend on content creation or advertising spend.

What is the *opportunity cost* to all of this Instagram marketing? Is this generating a better return that other marketing channels? Does it have other, less tangible, benefits that make it worthwhile?

Be honest with the impact that Instagram has on your life and your business. Social media is addictive so you certainly want to stay on the right side of it – leverage other people's addiction to it, but don't get caught up in something that's not working for you, and monitor how it affects your mood or wellbeing.

Pro tip: Create a marketing channels spreadsheet, if you don't already have one, and complete all the data from time input to cash input, to web clicks generated to tracked sales. Work out Instagram's true value to you and your business.

When: Now and then quarterly Ease/time: 2
Effect: 4

Idea 50: Cross-platform promotion We've already discussed how linking Instagram from your website is a good move and a few 'in real life' ideas, but an in-depth analysis from idea 49 should tell you where Instagram fits into your marketing structure.

If you have a feel for which platform is your strongest, either in terms of increasing reach or generating sales, leverage the other platforms to direct people there. For example, you may find that Facebook is where you generate the most reach and gain new followers, but promoted posts on Instagram is how you make sales. Use Twitter to get people to Facebook, then use Facebook to get people to Instagram!

It may be that each platform serves a unique purpose or attracts a particular segment of your audience. Understand which plays which role and cross-promote accordingly.

Pro tip: Run an Instagram competition and promote it on Facebook, Twitter and even your website to get users to follow you on Instagram.

When: Assess now and quarterly. Cross promote monthly as necessary.
Ease/time: 3
Effect: 3

Final words

So there you have it. 50 great ideas for Instagram that will get you on the path to greater social glory. We hope you've enjoyed them and that you put some of them into action right now. We'd love to know your thoughts on the book and if it's helped you, we'd be really grateful for a review on Amazon.

Remember we've put together a handy checklist in printable format available from www.jcsocialmedia.com/great-ideas.

Look out for the other titles in the 50 Great Ideas series including Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and easy SEO. Jodie Cook also penned **#Winning at Social Media, it's all about the interaction**. #Winning is an in-depth look at social media theory and prescriptive tactics to use on Twitter and LinkedIn to find and engage with members of your target audience.

You'll find more great tips and ideas for social media on the JC Social Media blog.

Thanks for reading.

Jodie and Ben.