

The business benefits of Instagram

Using social media to promote your practice is a positive move, but which social media platform is likely to get you the greatest customer engagement? Ivan Adriel, Creative Director at SocialMedia.ie, explains some of the benefits of the photo-sharing social network, Instagram



DELIVERING ENGAGEMENT

At one time, long ago, businesses were able to enjoy an average reach of 16 per cent on their Facebook pages. It was a time when businesses could organically promote themselves by creating entertaining content and using engaging apps. And not only did Facebook allow businesses to do this, but it also rewarded them for interacting with and providing value to their followers.

However, this might as well be a thing of legend, as businesses can no longer see these possibilities. Most are lucky to see a reach of 1 per cent today, a peak that analysts like Social@Ogilvy say will soon dwindle to zero. With the Facebook ship all but sunk, businesses are now on the lookout for a platform where they can actually be seen and heard.

A recent Forrester research study shows that Instagram led the way when it came to delivering engagement. Its study found that top brands' Instagram posts delivered 58 times more engagement per follower than Facebook, and 120 times more engagement per follower than Twitter.

Pets are one of the most photographed categories on Instagram, with 13,206,558 posts with the hashtag 'pets'. You can take full advantage of this audience.

WHAT IS THE INSTAGRAM SECRET SAUCE?

- Engaged community – Instagrammers are passionate about the platform and their love for amazing imagery. You'll reach people who are open to new perspectives.
- A visual medium – Instagram's simple design allows captivating visuals to take centre stage. Each image or video fills the screen with nothing to clutter the experience.
- Beautiful environment – On Instagram your brand's story will be surrounded by other beautiful content in a creative and inspiring environment.

TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED ON INSTAGRAM

1. Be true to your brand: ensure that your imagery expresses a clearly defined personality and voice. Photos from eyeglass retailer @warbyparker never feel overly staged or serious, but instead draw from trends in the Instagram community to reflect the company's quirky creativity.
2. Share experiences: offer a view into the world or lifestyle that your brand makes possible through the eyes of the people who use your products and services. The customer images and videos shared by @gopro prompt viewers to wonder what moments they could capture with a GoPro camera.
3. Find beauty everywhere: show how your company sees the world and make it meaningful to people. @generalelectric showcases the beauty of their technology by transporting people to giant jet-engine factories and remote wind farms, capturing the machines with elegant symmetry and imparting the grand scale of these man-made wonders.
4. Inspire action: start a movement around your brand, whether that means inspiring people to capture photos while running like the #runfree campaign from @nikerunning, or to celebrate a delicious yogurt concoction, as @chobani has done with its #creationaday hashtag.
5. Know your audience: learn what people love about your brand, and explore how you can capture the imagination of new customers. @missionbicycle takes the beautiful simplicity that customers love about its bicycles and uses imagery on Instagram to turn these everyday objects into works of art.

So, Instagram is proving a good investment for Facebook, and its engagement figures for brands is outshining its parent.