

A-LINE's GUIDE TO USING INSTAGRAM

Using Instagram to improve
your brand's visibility.

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The A-LINE Guide to Using Instagram

Yes, we know: the list of social media sites you're expected to understand and use seems to be growing. And sometimes it seems that as soon as you learn about one, another one comes along to replace it in popularity. As a small business trying to manage your own social media strategy, all these new sites can indeed seem overwhelming.

But the most important thing to remember about social media sites is that they all serve a different function. There's a reason to use every site, a different audience to relate to, and a different way to promote your brand. Each site has its own tools, tricks, and advantages to help your business become social: both with customers (B2C) and with other businesses (B2B).

One of the fastest growing and most popular sites is Instagram. Instagram is a photo-sharing site, available as an app and online, in which users take photos, apply filters (changes in color and lighting that affect the look of the image), post the photos, then comment and interact with other users. You can follow friends by linking with other sites like Facebook or Twitter, or follow other people or brands that interest you (and you can follow anyone without needing to be accepted).

Why Should My Company Care About Instagram?

Photo-sharing sites certainly sound great for sharing cute pics of your kids and showing off your latest vacation, but why should your company use it?

More than 27% of the population will use Instagram in 2015.

1. Your audience is on Instagram.

Instagram currently has over 77 million users in the U.S. – that means more than 27% of the population will use the site this year. So odds are, your customers are on Instagram now, so its yet another way to reach them where they already are. And the numbers go up if your customers are young and female, so companies with those target audiences should especially take notice.

2. Instagram users engage.

A post from an organizational brand earns 58% more engagement per follower than on Facebook, and 120 times more than on Twitter. So if you truly want your audience liking and sharing your images, you'll get far better results on the site than on any other social media platform.

3. Instagram creates identity.

We've [discussed previously](#) the importance of using images and photos to express your brand and connect with audiences. Instagram allows yet another venue, like Pinterest, where you can share the photos that express your brand, your company and your role in the community.

4. Instagram tells a story.

Building from the identity you can create through photos, Instagram also allows for short, 15-second videos. It's amazing what you can do in a brief video to showcase your brand, your role in the community, and the stories you want people to know about your company.

That said, Instagram is not right for every company. As we mentioned earlier, every social media site has its own uses and audience. If your brand doesn't have a story to tell, if you're not up for sharing personal photos or making your identity more visual, than Instagram likely isn't the place for you. But if you're looking to promote people, sell retail items, look personable or engage with your local community, Instagram has the fans and platform you need.

How To Strategically Use Instagram

If your company is ready to join the site, you need a strategy to promote it. We recommend two simple ways to integrate Instagram into your current marketing strategy.

1. Link Instagram with your company's Facebook and Twitter.

While we usually advise people to not link social media sites—since they each have their own rules, audiences and ways to interact—we make an exception for Instagram. The app allows for a seamless way to post simultaneously on Facebook and Twitter— which means you can upload photos just once, but have them appear on all three sites. Just make sure you check in with each site afterwards to comment, interact and share with your audiences. Remember: a photo means little if you don't start—and then participate in—the ensuing conversation.

2. Create an Instagram feed on your website.

We always recommend that companies include links to all their social media sites in various places on their website. By bringing in a feed, though, you can show your photos without taking users away from the site. An Instagram feed also makes for an interesting, colorful and often fun way for website visitors to see your brand in action.

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Once your Instagram is linked with Twitter and Facebook, check in to all three to comment & engage with your audience after every post.
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Our client [Yoga & Massage](#) is a great example of a brand that uses Instagram successfully. You can access their feed right from the homepage and their regular updates keep users engaged and connected with the brand.

Instagram Tips

As with all social media sites, you need to follow a few best practices to be a good participant. Here are a few important tips:

1. Include hashtags in your descriptions of your photos. You'll get more likes and will attract more followers who search for those tags.

2. Only use photos you have full rights to – either because you took the photos or you purchased the rights to use them commercially.

3. Always link back to your website. You never know how many times a photo will be shared or commented on, so be sure that any audience, on any device, can find you easily. You may want to write your company's name or URL directly onto the image.

4. If you're sharing another company's image, make sure it links back to their site. Treat others how you want to be treated.

5. Don't join if you can't regularly update. You never want to neglect a social media site. If you can't post photos and engage with others at least once/week (two or more times per week is better), then don't join. Focus your efforts on the sites you can more regularly maintain, and add Instagram when your time allows.

Summary

Instagram is no longer a fad—it's a major social media tool that your audiences are using. Take your company onto Instagram as a way to establish identity, share your story and interact with your community. Instagram is yet another tool that will help your business become part of the larger social media conversation that results in loyal fans, referrals and leads.

Do More with A-LINE.

If you'd like assistance with content creation—including help with Instagram and other social media platforms [contact A-LINE](#). Our talented team of strategists and content writers know just how to crank out copy that engages your prospects and increases your site's performance..