



# 2018 INSTAGRAM: A YEAR IN REVIEW



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## **2018 was a huge year for Instagram.**

Between all the new features, algorithms, and benefits added to Instagram in 2018, the image-based social media platform is almost unrecognizable compared to its earlier days. To familiarize our fellow marketers with the “new” Instagram, we’ve put together this handy guide that outlines the major (and minor) new, exciting, and reworked Instagram features that can help you stay connected, increase your brand awareness, and most importantly, have some fun!

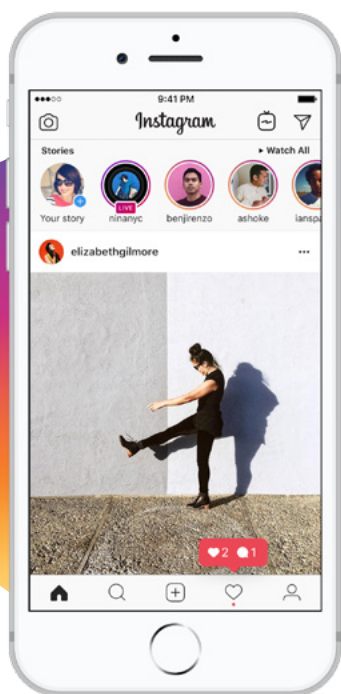
# A YEAR OF CHANGE

## Instagram Founders Leave

The world shook (or so it seemed) earlier this year, when it was announced that Instagram co-founders CEO Kevin Systrom and CTO Mike Krieger were leaving the company after eight years. Kevin and Mike have been instrumental in shaping Instagram into the world's go-to photo-sharing social media platform.

So, what does this mean for the future of Instagram?

With over 1 billion active users, we don't need to worry about Instagram going away anytime soon. No doubt Facebook will continue to innovate and evolve the platform to increase both user engagement and advertising revenue for both tools, as former VP of Facebook News Feed Adam Mosseri has taken over as VP of Product at Instagram.



## Instagram Rolls Out a New Newsfeed Algorithm

Earlier this year, Instagram launched a new algorithm to run our Instagram lives. It dictates what we see, when we see it, and how we see it. The algorithm is king. Much to the dismay of some users, posts are no longer shown in chronological order. Instead, the algorithm chooses what gets published to a user's news feed based on their perceived relationship with your account, the timeliness of the post, engagement on the post, and interest in the post.

This means, within the same viewing session, a user may see a post from two days ago, followed by a post published 17 hours ago, and then a post published just a few minutes ago.

The news is a welcome respite for brands that worry about finding the “perfect” time to post. Instead, brands can focus on creating better quality content that drives high user engagement. Instagram has reported that frequency, following, and usage are the top algorithm-influencing factors. However, brands do need to be conscious of this when posting time-sensitive posts to make sure an older message still resonates with users even after the time has expired.

## The Launch of Instagram TV

To encourage users to create longer original content, Instagram has implemented a new feature: Instagram TV. Available for use as a stand-alone app or within the native app itself, IGTV allows users and brands to create a share lengthy, vertical-based videos with their users.

While some believe IGTV is an attempt to take on the video king, YouTube, IGTV is simply another outlet within the platform for creators to do what they do best— create new content for their fans.

IGTV allows users and brands to create and share videos up to an hour in length, something YouTube does not currently offer. Additionally, unlike YouTube, IGTV displays videos vertically, which is ideal since it's predicted that by 2019, [175.4](#) million videos will be viewed on a smartphone.

Similar to the explore page, which shows you videos and photos that would be of interest to you, IGTV also has a 'For You' section, a section for 'Popular' content, and prompts users to continue watching videos that have been partially viewed. All of these IGTV features offer brands an opportunity to be discovered by new fans and potential customers.

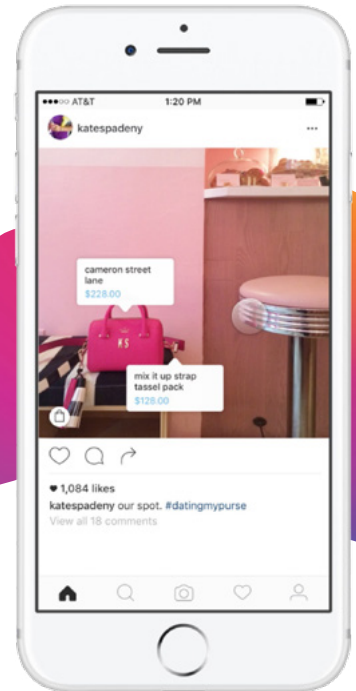
## Shoppable Posts

Have you ever seen a product showcased in an Instagram post and you just had to have it? You're not alone. With the new shoppable post feature, users can now purchase a product directly from your brand's Instagram post.

Here's how it works:

- First, you'll need to set up your profile as a business profile.  
Having a business profile is going to be helpful for many features.
- Connect your Facebook business page to your Instagram account.
- Create a catalog of your products through Facebook.
- Wait for your account to be reviewed. Your account must comply with Instagram's business policies.
- Add your product stickers or tags on Instagram.
- Create a shopping post!

Right now, only physical goods are available for sale through Instagram's shoppable feature (no services). Users can find your store on the Explore page as a category tab. You can find out more information about how to set up your shop's page in the official [Instagram Business Set Up Guide](#).



## Recommended Posts

To help users find new and exciting accounts to follow, Instagram has rolled out the Recommended Posts feature. Users can now see posts from accounts they aren't following.

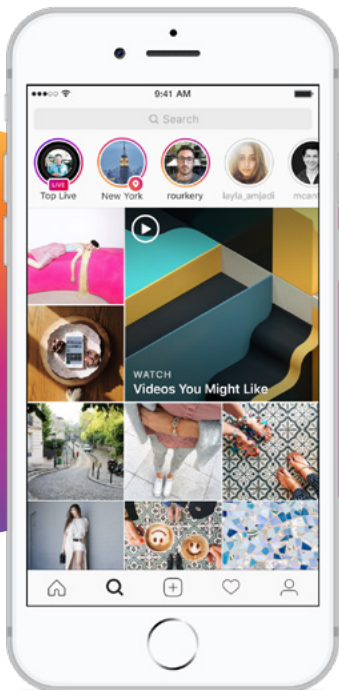
However, this isn't the same as sponsored or paid ad posts. Users will only see recommended posts once they have been caught up with their regular feed.

*The feature is still being tested and has not become a permanent feature on Instagram.*

## Explore by Topics

Foodies, fashionistas, and pet lovers rejoice! You can now choose to view photos and videos on Instagram based on your topics of interest. Your interests are based on your likes and accounts you follow.

As a marketer, you can take advantage of this feature to find audiences of interest by utilizing specific or popular hashtags under each topic. Be sure to look for hashtags with at least 100,000 tags or more. The more tags a hashtag has, the more likely your content will be seen.



## Instagram API Changes

As the result of some very public misuse of user information, Facebook and Instagram made major changes to their APIs in an attempt to protect user data and privacy earlier this year.

An API, short for application program interface, is a way for apps to talk and interact with Instagram. While the change was great for user privacy, the marketing world was shocked because it was sudden and left many third-party apps broken and unable to communicate with Instagram.

Here's a closer look at what the API changes mean:

- Instagram bots are officially dead. No more auto following and unfollowing accounts.
- Instagram "likes" are now private, meaning third-party companies can't see what posts a user liked or not. This will mainly affecting shopping apps that kept track of your interests based on your Instagram activity.
- Apps that help you analyze your Instagram followers, or someone else's followers, no longer work. This includes any apps that showed when someone unfollowed you.
- Since Instagram likes are now private, you can now only search for user-generated content (UGC) by hashtag.
- You will no longer be able to post or delete comments from anywhere except with a personal account.

## Automatically Schedule Instagram Posts

To the applause of thousands of marketers around the world, Instagram has (finally) started to let business accounts schedule posts! Platforms like SproutSocial, Planoly, and Buffer now let social media managers schedule and publish posts on their own time. No more worrying about missing that "perfect" posting time.

## Mute Accounts

There are certain rules of etiquette when it comes to friends and family on social media. It's considered rude to not follow your close friends and family. But, let's be honest, you don't always want to see their Stories or photos, which is why Instagram has implemented the coveted 'mute account' option.

Now users can mute an account, allowing them to no longer see that account's photos *without* having to unfollow that account, thus avoiding family or friend drama (thanks Insta).



## Instagram Stories Updates

Instagram not only came for YouTube this year, but they also took a swing at Snapchat through their highly interactive and engaging Stories feature. Let's look at what Instagram has added to the Stories feature this year:

### Type Mode & New Fonts

Instagram added new fonts including Classic, Modern, Neon, Typewriter, and Strong.

### Add GIFs on Instagram Stories

One of the most exciting and most anticipated additions to Stories are the GIFs. GIPHY teamed up with Instagram to create a library of high-quality GIFs for users to play with.

### Mention Stickers to Tag Accounts in Your Stories

@-ing someone just got a lot more fun. Tag someone in your Stories with an interactive sticker.

### Focus Portrait-Mode Camera

Finally, you can take awe-inspiring photos right from the Instagram camera.

### Repost Instagram Stories

This is great for cross-promotion. Share your fans' or favorite brands' Stories in your story.

### Tag Locations to Stories

Use the tag location to notify the location as well as have the opportunity to be seen by others who are searching that location tag in that location tag's stories.

### Re-share Posts to Stories

Share your followers' posts or tagged photos of you in your Stories. A great way to cross promote.

### Upload Bulk Photos and Videos

Can't decide which photo you want to share? Carousel photos allow you to upload up to 10 photos or videos. You can upload photos and videos in one post.

### Share Songs from Spotify

Share your amazing music tastes with your followers.

### Share

#### Go-Pro Footage

Easily share your exciting Go-Pro footage from events or activities with your followers.

#### Emoji Slider Polls

Learn what your followers think about new products or services instantly with the poll feature.

#### Superzoom Effects

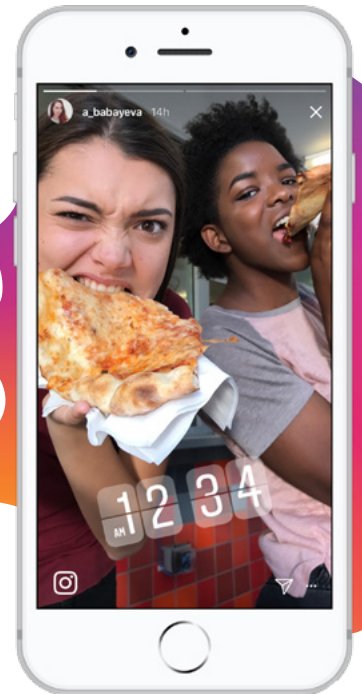
Zoom in and out for a fun way to share what's happening in front of you.

#### Question Stickers

Get quick feedback about potential products or services instantly.

Stories are a great way to share content multiple times a day without spamming your followers' news feeds. Stories also help increase your visibility. It's unlikely that you're going to maintain a consistently strong relationship between you and your followers. As a result, you might fall off their radar for a while. Thankfully, Stories help remind your followers to check out your page.

Another benefit of Stories is being able to post "less-polished" content. Visuals, compositions, and awe-inspiring photos are essential for a good looking grid. But because Stories are fleeting (only lasting 24 hours) you can share content in real-time without having to worry if it looks amazing or not.



## Add Username and Hashtag Links to Your Instagram Bio

You can now add clickable links and hashtags to your Instagram business profile, a perfect tool for guiding users to predetermined branded hashtags. The only downside of the clickable hashtag is that your profile is still not available for search through that hashtag.

For example, let's say you have the hashtag #SudsNScrubs in your bio. If someone were to search that tag, your profile would not come up in the search. If you had other photos tagged under the #SudsNScrubs tag then those photos will come up and people can find your profile.

## Instagram Verified Badges

In the past, the Instagram verified badge was elusive. It seemed as if you either had to be a major celebrity or know someone at Instagram. Now, accounts with massive followings can request a verified badge. Simply send the request through "Settings" in the Instagram app.

## Anti-Bullying Filters

While most of the photos posted to Instagram are designed to be inspiring and bring people happiness, there's a small sector of individuals who use the app to share hate messages and bully others. Now the app will hide hate accounts, hate messages, and remove hate posts. Users can even turn off commenting on their post to keep hate-talk to a minimum. In terms of engagement scores, this feature should be used sparingly. Use your best discretion to determine when this would be best for your brand.



# THE FUTURE OF INSTAGRAM

If this year has proven anything, it's that digital marketing is constantly evolving. Tactics that worked over the past several years might very well fall flat at a moment's notice. **To succeed, brands and marketers need to stay on top of the ever-changing digital marketing landscape and adjust their marketing strategies accordingly.**

## STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Not an expert in Instagram? Don't worry, the team here at SocialToaster is here to help! We help our clients navigate the technical and social challenges of Instagram every day, so if you're still not sure how to maximize all the exciting new features Instagram has to offer, drop us a line!



Call us at 855-62-TOAST (855-628-6278) or email us at [sales@socialtoaster.com](mailto:sales@socialtoaster.com) and we'll put together an individualized plan to help you get the most out of your Instagram account.