



THE SOCIALTOASTER 2019 GUIDE TO INSTAGRAM



GROW YOUR BUSINESS WITH THE SOCIALTOASTER 2019 GUIDE TO INSTAGRAM

Here's to a new year and a better (online) you. Whether you're just now hopping on the Instagram train or looking to take your Instagram efforts to the next level, SocialToaster has your back. Let's kick off 2019 with the top Instagram best practices and tactics sure to make this year on IG the best one yet - for you and for your followers.

2018 Instagram Updates

As discussed in our previous whitepaper ([available here](#)), 2018 was a huge year for Instagram. The social media platform added a ton of new content and features, and saw a lot of tech changes behind the scenes.

As such, it's no surprise that our list of 2019 best practices include several tips and tactics for utilizing these new features to drive engagement and help grow your audience.

Best Practices for Instagram in 2019

This year, the top brands and influencers on Instagram will be focusing their efforts on one primary metric: increasing engagement with their audience. From engagement, all good things must come, including audience growth and revenue.

As you'll see, many of our top recommendations are designed to help your brand utilize a particular feature to facilitate conversation and foster engagement within your Instagram community. If your entire Instagram strategy is focused on publishing pretty pictures (without engaging in conversation), you'll have a hard time seeing top-level success.

Best Practice #1: Embrace the Story

Instagram Stories have taken the world by storm; nearly [300 million](#) users are interacting with Instagram's Story feature on a daily basis.

Unlike your traditional Instagram profile, Instagram Stories allow you to post multiple updates a day without overwhelming or spamming your followers' traditional newsfeeds. On top of simply posting photos with catchy captions and emojis, Stories allow you to engage with your audience in ways that you can't on the traditional Instagram platform.

Stories allow for:

- Polls
- Instant Reactions
- Countdowns
- Questions
- Location tags
- And other interactive features

Instagram Stories are an additional outlet to let your creative feathers shine. With multiple font styles, colors, stickers, emojis, GIPHYs, and graphics to be used in the space, there's no reason to not have some fun with it. Stories are the one place you don't need to stick to a theme because they're short-lived, lasting only 24 hours.

Best Practice #2: Use the Swipe-Up Feature

Aside from bragging rights, reaching the coveted 10k follower status grants you access to the incredibly useful swipe-up feature.

This feature allows you to link to a website, product pages, or contest pages directly from your Story post! This is a gamechanger for the Instagram platform which traditionally hasn't supported any links other than those found in a user's profile.

To add a link to your Instagram Story (again, only for those with more than 10k followers):

- Create your Story on Instagram as you normally do.
- Tap on the chain link icon that appears on the screen (note you have to have 10k followers to see this icon).
- Include a call-to-action in the Story so that your followers know to swipe-up.

ADDITIONAL TIP: COMBINE THESE BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDED IMPACT! IF YOU SAVE A STORY TO THE STORY HIGHLIGHTS, IT'LL LIVE FOR LONGER THAN THE 24-HOUR TIMELINE. USE YOUR HIGHLIGHTS TO CREATE EVERGREEN OPPORTUNITIES TO SEND YOUR USERS TO SPECIFIC PAGES INCLUDING DOWNLOADS, PRODUCT PAGES, AND MORE.



Best Practice #3: Always Engage with your Audience

We said this earlier, but it bears repeating: true success on Instagram comes from engaging your audience and building your community of true fans.

And because they love you, your fans and followers *actually want to hear from you!* They're not just following you to see your pretty pictures. Don't leave them hanging by just posting and bouncing off the app. Depending on the size of your account, it's not always realistic to respond to every comment; however, you should make a concerted effort to interact, engage, and respond to your followers.

Not sure how to get involved with your audience? Here are some of our favorite best practices:

A) Like Comments

Depending on the size of your account it's not always feasible to respond to every single comment. But that doesn't mean you can't acknowledge them. Liking comments lets users know that you've seen their comment and you appreciate them taking the time to leave you a little love.

B) Respond to Comments

Try to respond to every comment. Even something as simple as responding with a heart emoji or a TY can go a long way towards helping to jumpstart your relationship with an Instagram user.

Not every comment is going to include words and that's okay. You may find that most people are commenting with emojis. Doesn't matter, you should still respond to the comment either by liking it or answering with an emoji or two of your own.

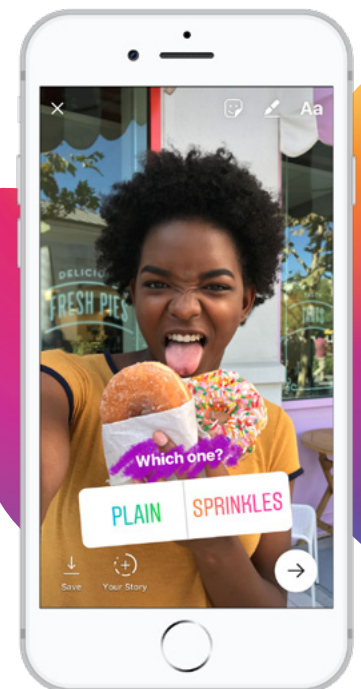
C) Ignore the Trolls

Have you ever heard of trolls? They're not just tiny, bearded men that live under bridges. They live on the Internet too. Trolls are individuals or bots who come to your page to leave nasty comments or engage combatively with your posts and followers.

It is your responsibility to take control of your feed and create a safe place for your followers to engage with each other and your brand. Don't be afraid to block or report anyone causing mayhem and chaos on your posts.

D) Use the Poll or Question Feature on Your Stories

Instagram Stories are a great place to poll your audience with yes or no questions or ask directly for feedback. This type of engagement feature gives your followers a sense of control over what goes on behind the scenes at your brand.

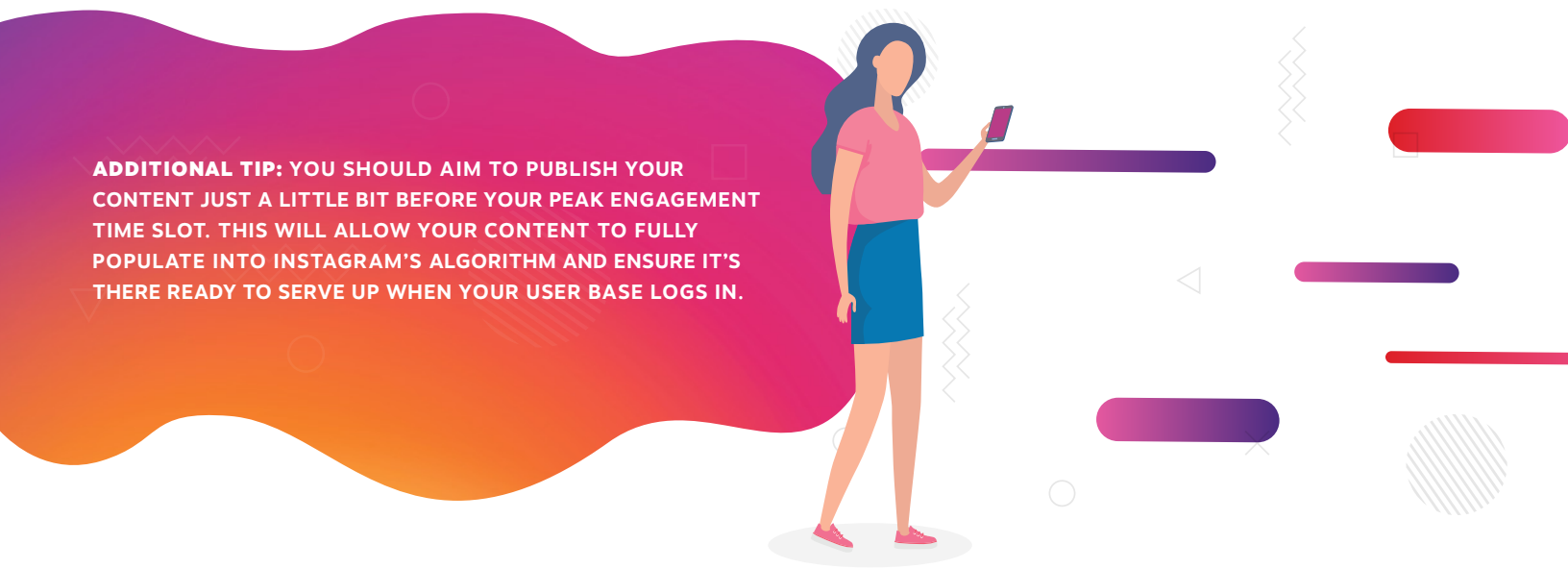


Best Practice #4: Be on Time

In the past, it didn't matter too much what time you posted on social. The ideal times were between 8-10am when people were first waking up, lunch time, and then any time after 6pm. Brands posted in the time slot that was best aligned with their target demographic, and that was that. Now, with chronological order a thing of the past, timing matters.

To determine what time(s) you should be posting, start by taking a look at your Instagram Insights. Your IG page should already be set up as a business page (and linked with your business Facebook page) so that you can collect data on your individual posts and your profile as a whole.

Once in Insights, head to the Audience tab, then scroll all the way down. You'll see two graphs under Followers: one that denotes hours and one for days. These graphs show you when most of your following is on the platform. Use this information to determine when is the most impactful day/time combinations to publish your content.



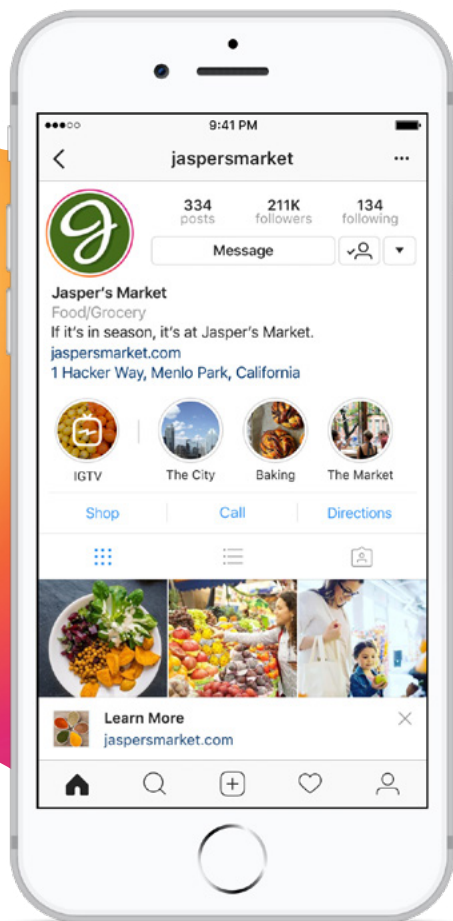
ADDITIONAL TIP: YOU SHOULD AIM TO PUBLISH YOUR CONTENT JUST A LITTLE BIT BEFORE YOUR PEAK ENGAGEMENT TIME SLOT. THIS WILL ALLOW YOUR CONTENT TO FULLY POPULATE INTO INSTAGRAM'S ALGORITHM AND ENSURE IT'S THERE READY TO SERVE UP WHEN YOUR USER BASE LOGS IN.

Best Practice #5: Post Consistently

With so many profiles and brand profiles out there, failing to maintain consistent content, both in quantity and quality, can result in a drop in engagement and audience size. Posting consistently helps train your followers on when and what to expect from your brand on Instagram.

We get it though. It's hard to always publish exactly at 11:45am every Tuesday and Thursday. Meetings come up, fires get started, and before you know it, Instagram gets put to the sidelines. Lucky for you, Instagram now allows certain 3rd party apps to schedule and post content on your brand's behalf. These tools make it easy to stay on a schedule even when you're not near your computer, phone, or reliable Wi-Fi.

Friendly Reminder: The ideal posting schedule is still a morning and evening style posting (two posts a day - MAX). The only person who can get away with posting eight photos in one day is Beyoncé and you're probably not Beyoncé. If you have multiple posts you want to publish to Instagram, use the Story feature. That's what it is there for.



Best Practice #6: Pick A Theme and Stick to It

Apps like Planoly help you plan your grid (that's IG slang for newsfeed) a day, week, or even months in advance. Instagram is all about aesthetics and no one likes a messy, ugly grid. This also applies to selecting a filter. If you are going to use a filter, select a couple different ones and only use those filters. Don't turn your grid into a tie-dyed mess.

Not sure what you want your signature theme to be? Shop around! Take a look at what other brands are doing and what users are responding too. Right now, the trend is all about indie blush and natural light.



ADDITIONAL TIP: THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF YOUR INSTAGRAM THEME IS THAT IT STAYS CONSISTENT WITH YOUR BRAND. IF YOU'RE KNOWN FOR BEING EDGY AND IN-FASHION, THEN YOUR IG FEED SHOULD REFLECT THIS BRANDING ELEMENT. LIKEWISE, IF YOUR BRAND IS CLEAN EDGES AND WHITE SPACE, YOUR IG GRID AND POSTED IMAGES SHOULD REINFORCE THIS BRAND ASPECT.

Best Practice #7: Don't be Afraid of IGTV

This vertical video format is still in its infancy, but that doesn't mean big brands, celebrities, and influencers aren't already jumping on board to create a channel for themselves. The best part about IGTV is that you don't need to have a production-worthy studio space to shoot your episodes. Many Instagrammers shoot their IGTV videos in closets, bathrooms, dining rooms, beaches, bars, etc.

IGTV allows brands to upload videos of two different max lengths. Users with less than 10K followers can upload videos between 0:15 and 9:59 in length. Brands with more than 10K followers can upload videos up to 59:59 in length.

Being its own publishing channel within Instagram, IGTV also supports uploaded video files. This means that your brand can create highly stylized and edited videos using your preferred video editing software. No more worrying about going "Live" and getting that perfect shot in a single take.

Our main tip for brands for IGTV? Go episodic!

Episodic content is becoming increasingly popular on the app. For example, National Geographic's IGTV has about 500,000 views per episode. Bloggers like WeWoreWhat and musicians like John Mayer are helping to propel the platform within Instagram.

Embracing episodic content helps to eliminate a lot of the stress brand's feel around IGTV. It takes the pressure off of coming up with ideas and helps to ensure a more consistent experience for the user.

Your episodic content should align with your brand. Some of our favorite ideas include:

- Makeup tutorials
- Cooking tutorials
- Insights into various business practices
- Traditional talk show style episodes
- "How it's Made"
- "A Day in the Life"

ADDITIONAL TIP: NOT SURE WHAT YOUR AUDIENCE WANTS TO SEE FROM YOUR BRAND ON IGTV? USE THE STORY OR ASK A QUESTION FEATURE IN YOUR STORIES TO POLL YOUR AUDIENCE AND GET THEIR FEEDBACK ON THE TYPE OF CONTENT THEY'D LOVE TO SEE FROM YOU.



Best Practice #8: Don't Forget the Hashtag

Hashtags are the primary way that users find new content and profiles to engage with on Instagram. When applying hashtags to your posts, look for hashtags with at least 50,000 tags. Additionally, don't forget to use themed hashtags for the day, month, holiday, etc. such as #mondaymotivation, #throwbackthursday, and #friday.

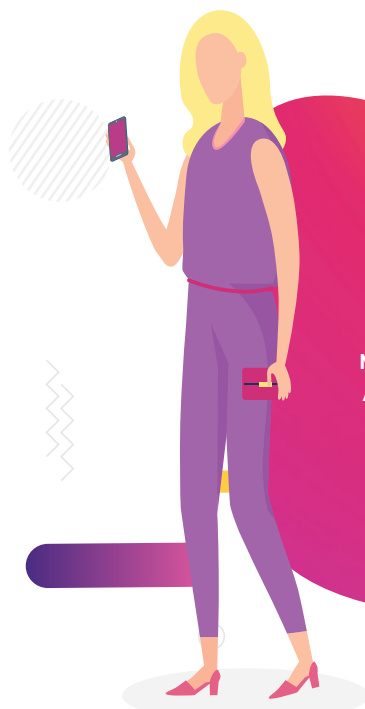
Keep in mind that Instagram has recently implemented a new update where you can have up to [30 hashtags](#) per post. You're welcome to add extra hashtags in additional comments. However, if you have more than 30 in your initial post, Instagram won't allow your post to upload.

Best Practice #9: Share the Love

If you're looking for ways to improve your engagement rates, then user-generated content (UGC) is exactly what your page needs.

Brands that share user-generated content on social media see a [28%](#) higher engagement rate on that post when compared to standard brand posts. So, keep your eyes out for user-generated posts featuring your content and don't forget to check your tagged photos tab to see if any of your fans has tagged your account in one of their recent uploads.

Something else to think about, when you share UGC on your Stories or even on your grid, you can help to inspire others to create content on your behalf. Publicly sharing UGC helps to communicate to your community that you appreciate their creativity and willingness to tag your account.



ADDITIONAL TIP: NEED SOME UGC LOVE? JUMPSTART YOUR COMMUNITIES' CREATIVE JUICES BY HOSTING A UGC CONTEST ON INSTAGRAM. OUR SOCIALTOASTER PLATFORM MAKES IT EASY FOR YOU TO MANAGE AND MODERATE A UGC CONTEST. YOU CAN EVEN AUTOMATICALLY AWARD ENTRIES AND POINTS TO USERS THAT PARTICIPATE IN YOUR CONTEST. OUR SOFTWARE AUTOMATICALLY PULLS IN POSTS THAT UTILIZE YOUR CONTEST HASHTAGS, MEANING THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPEND HOURS SEARCHING THROUGH INSTAGRAM TO IDENTIFY AND MANAGE YOUR CONTEST ENTRIES.

Best Practice #10: Add a Call-to-Action

Whether it's in your Stories or your standard Instagram post, always add a call-to-action (CTA).

Common CTA's on Instagram include:

- Check out the link in our bio!
- Peep our Story for more info.
- Visit the site to enter our contest.
- Swipe up to learn more!

Adding a CTA to your posts lets followers know what action they should take after interacting with your content. A call-to-action also induces a sense of urgency in users, as they may only have a limited amount of time to grab their favorite items or take advantage of a hot new deal you have running.



IN SUMMARY

Instagram can be an effective tool for businesses and brands looking to curate a brand image, and drive awareness, engage with fans, followers, and customers, and generate conversions. With the right strategy and a willingness to evolve with the platform, companies can take advantage of the dense visual nature, variety of features, and dedicated user base Instagram has to develop a vital, living piece of their digital and overall marketing efforts in 2019 and beyond.



ABOUT SOCIALTOASTER

SocialToaster is an award-winning fan advocacy agency with digital and social media engagement solutions for all business sectors and sizes. SocialToaster delivers value to our clients by providing a communications solution that makes it easy to activate and engage audiences on social media, transforming customers, employees, and other stakeholders into a community of active advocates and ambassadors.

Our industry-leading platform combines an intuitive and patented sharing process with a variety of rich features to meet a wide array of social media marketing, communication, and engagement objectives for nearly every industry.

For more information visit www.socialtoaster.com.