



Instagram Stories

FOR BUSINESS

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INTRODUCTION

Since its launch back in 2010, Instagram has gained popularity rapidly becoming one of the fastest growing media sharing applications and social media platforms.

Instagram currently has more than 800 million monthly active users and 500 million daily active users. Among the numerous features that the platform offers is Instagram Stories.

Instagram unveiled Instagram Stories in August 2016. It is an intuitive Snapchat-inspired feature that allows Instagram users to post ephemeral video and photo content temporarily.

The media content disappears after 24 hours. The temporary nature of Instagram Stories is an encouragement to users to post content as is rather than the conventional polished content.

This social media platform can provide numerous benefits and opportunities for businesses at all levels.

INSTAGRAM STORIES BY NUMBERS

Given the popularity of Instagram, the rapid adoption and incorporation of Instagram Stories is not surprising.

As of December 2017, the total number of daily active Instagram Stories users was more than 300 million. Snapchat, which is remarkably similar to the feature, has 173 million daily users.

This makes Instagram Stories almost twice as big as Snapchat despite being relatively new.

This platform is growing at great speeds with more users joining it and using it regularly and more efficiently.

If you are a business owner or

manager, you should be leveraging the power of these numbers if you seek to stay competitive in today's dynamic global market.

WHY THE NUMBERS MATTER FOR BUSINESS

Over 70 % of Instagram users have used the social media platform to look up a brand or business.

This means that the majority of users use the app as an unofficial search engine. By extension, it is safe to say that a good deal of Instagram Stories will use the feature for the similar purposes.

For this reason, Instagram Stories is among the best places to grow brand awareness as well as introducing your products or services.

The numbers mean that you can be able to reach a far larger audience than on most online platforms.

With the right marketing plan in place, this larger audience can translate to more traffic, increased conversions and consequently more sales.

As a business owner, Instagram Stories enables you to promote your brand and products or services to a large audience that is engaged.

The feature also allows you to do so in an authentic and friendly way without overly direct salesmanship.



HOW INSTAGRAM STORIES CAN BENEFIT YOUR BUSINESS

While the temporary media popularized by Snapchat are here today and lost tomorrow, they have a long-term place in the online marketing strategy of any business.

Instagram Stories as a feature has quickly gained ground as one of the best ways to keep your target audience engaged. It also leaves your content open to discovery by new audiences.

If you operate a business and you want to succeed, you will already have a current Instagram follower's base that you share relevant content with.

All these and other aspects make it an excellent social tool that all businesses should leverage. Below are five reasons why.

1. IT CAN BOOST BRAND AWARENESS

The bite-sized stories that you create on Instagram can further brand awareness while inspiring engagement.

The great thing about Instagram Stories as a brand awareness tool is that it requires minimal investment.

Any business can realize branding success with the right social media plan. There are numerous approaches that you can employ to leverage the massive numbers from Instagram Stories to strengthen your brand.

Several effective strategies to achieve this are detailed below.

Find Your Audience

One of the great things about Instagram Stories is that it allows for targeted marketing. Only the users who are already your followers can view your Instagram Stories postings.

This means that you are already working with an audience that is relevant to your business. With Instagram Stories, you are assured that any additional members of your audience will be interested in your business narrative to some degree.

This is quite the opposite of conventional shotgun marketing methods where large numbers do not necessarily translate to brand awareness.

Create Conversations

A brand that is popular is a

brand that is talked about regularly. You can use Instagram Stories to showcase your business personality creatively.

This will give your followers something to talk about thus allowing you to reach out to the pool of 300 million active daily users.

Build authority

When you focus on building authority through sharing real valuable content, you achieve higher engagement rates and consequently improved brand awareness.

Instagram users readily recommend brands they trust to their followers. Instagram Stories allows for raw and unpolished content, which adds to credibility in the long term.

Give Behind The Scenes Glimpses

Today, social storytelling as a concept is very powerful and potent. Internet users prefer interactions with brands or businesses that seem to possess human-like qualities.

As such, you can engage with current and new audiences by providing a brief view into the life of your business.

While planning content is vital, spontaneous snippets of your daily operations can be uniquely beneficial to your business. Instagram Stories enables you to do just that.

Utilize the Instagram Takeover

An Instagram story takeover is an exceptionally effective branding tactic that is less known. This approach can help you reach new audiences within a short period.

It involves formulating a partnership with an influential Instagram user in your industry and having the user take over your account for 24 hours.

This tactic enables the Instagrammer to write their own Instagram Story within that timeline.

An Instagram takeover can offer your brand new voices and significantly boost awareness in the

process. A notable brand that has realized success using this tactic is Birchbox.

There are many other businesses that are allowing users to take control of their account from time to time.

Incorporate it into blogging

Informative, engaging, relevant and regular blog posts make up a large part of an effective content marketing plan.

You can boost brand awareness by finding new ways to present your best content. Instagram Stories is one of the platforms to do so.

This feature allows you to compile short informative articles on numerous subjects as well as develop story updates that are visually stunning.

You can then use them to direct users to the original content. Shopify has utilized this approach to great effect.



2. YOU CAN USE IT TO SUPPORT YOUR REAL-TIME MARKETING STRATEGY

The easy content creating and 24-hour lifespan aspects of Instagram Stories make it one of the best features to bolster real-time marketing.

Real-time marketing is a concept that allows you to capitalize on real-time events by delivering the right messages to the right audience at the right time.

It was among the rising marketing trends of 2017. Since ideas in real time marketing have to be developed by the minute, Instagram Stories is the perfect fit.

One of the main benefits of this marketing form is that it allows you to capitalize on

trending topics. A simple look at the social media arena today reveals that Instagram is a major driver of trending topics.

As such, you can use Instagram Stories to create messages that are centred around current events as they happen and real-time customer feedback.

This allows you to reach the target audience at the right moments. For instance, if you are hosting a business-related event such as a sale may encourage interested people to attend.

Also, it helps those who are not able to attend experience some connection to the business. This can be a great motivation factor for future attendances.

Instagram Stories can also help internet users to shape stories about your brand as you write them.

Real-time marketing is still relatively new regarding widespread adoption. Pairing it up with Instagram Stories can unlock marketing opportunities that will ensure your business stays competitive.

3. IT HAS FEATURES THAT ARE CONSTANTLY EXPANDING AND EVOLVING

The Instagram Stories ecosystem exhibits game-changing modification or additions every other time.

Just two months after its launch in 2016, the function received a new feature in the form of live video functionality that allowed for short live broadcasting.

In January 2017, Instagram introduced skippable ads in between stories. 2017 saw the introduction of numerous features and additions to Instagram Stories.

These include augmented reality sticker feature, Story Search, Stories feedback with Instagram effects, highlights and Instagram polls.

Given the dynamic nature of the social media platforms, Instagram users can expect more periodic changes and updates in future.

For a business, this translates to unique marketing opportunities and avenues as the changes occur.



4. IT HELPS MAINTAIN RELEVANCE TO FOLLOWERS' FEEDS

In June 2016, Instagram reformed its feed moving from the time-based feed to an algorithmic feed.

The app's algorithm analyses engagement metrics that Instagram considers indicative of the delightful content.

These metrics include how fast and often the audience views content as well as the number of comments, likes, saves, and shares.

For this reason, having stories that appear at the top of your follower's feeds can help your brand to remain top-of-mind.

If your story is very popular, it can appear at the top of the explore page. Consequently, this helps your brand gain a much more extensive reach.

**Utilizing live
broadcasting will
have a similar effect
since users receive a
push-notification.**



5. IT CAN DRIVE USER TRAFFIC THROUGH LINKING

The large numbers of daily active Instagram Story users constitute a great source of user traffic.

One of the biggest cons of Instagram for business was the restriction imposed on the addition of links to posts. The updates made to Instagram Stories changed this.

Instagram users with verified accounts can post links within their stories seamlessly. The feature is also available to business profiles with at least 10,000 followers.

Instagram Stories linking gives one more reason why business owners or managers should invest in an Instagram business account.

You can link back a high-visibility post to your website, blog as well as products and services.

Such backlinks drive relevant user traffic to your additional online platforms offering quality leads that can lead to paying customers.

STEP BY STEP GUIDE ON HOW TO USE INSTAGRAM STORIES

Instagram Stories has a very user-friendly design thus making it fairly easy to use. Below is a comprehensive step-by-step guide on how to use the feature if you already have an Instagram account.

- Find the Instagram app on your device, open it and sign into your account by keying in your username and password.
 - Locate and tap the Snap Story button. It is situated at the top-left corner of the screen and is indicated with a plus sign with a circle surrounding it.
 - Enable camera and microphone. This step is necessary if you have never taken a photo or video within the Instagram app.
 - Tap Enable' and Allow' on the appearing prompts to grant the app permission to use your camera and microphone. This will bring you to Instagram Stories camera mode.
- Tap the white circle close to the bottom of the screen to take a photo. To begin capturing a video, tap and hold the white circle. Releasing the button ends the video.

- The Instagram Stories camera screen has five capturing options to choose from including Live, Normal, Boomerang, Rewind and Hands-free.
- After capturing a video or photo, you can draw on the media by tapping the marker icon located at the top right corner of your screen.

Tap the done button at the top-right corner of your screen once you are done.

- You can add a caption to your media by tapping the "Aa" button. This will open your keyboard. Once you have typed the caption, tap on the screen to include it in your photo.
- To add filters to your photo, swipe right or left on the screen to browse various filters.
- Save your photo by tapping the arrow pointing downwards on the bottom right corner of your screen.
- In order to add the media to your story, tap the checkmark inside the white circle. Your followers will then be able to view your content.

You can also post content directly from your camera roll. Simply swipe down on your camera screen to select the content.

You can only add the content saved to your Camera Roll during the last 24 hours. You can get around this restriction by screen-shotting older content.

If you need to delete certain elements from your post, tap and drag the elements to the trashcan button at the bottom of the screen.

It is also possible to delete your entire post. To do this, tap the "X" icon in the upper left corner of the screen.

Any additions can be made to your Instagram Story by tapping on the "+" icon on the bottom left corner of the screen.

Once you have posted your story, you can swipe up on the screen to view some basic analytics including viewership data on your content.

SUMMARY



Instagram Stories and similar functions are relatively new and evolving as a content format.

That being said, it does promote creativity and authenticity while also provoking the fear of missing out on any business owner.

Within a strategic content plan inspired by an ultimate business goal, you can take your business to a new level using this social media platform.

Instagram Stories brings additional freedom and flexibility as internet marketing tool and set to be influential for years to come.

Its dynamic nature ensures that business owners will have reasons to leverage it.

RESOURCES



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