

Reconsider Social Media: MAKE INSTAGRAM YOUR PRIMARY NETWORK

By Mathew Perosi



Over the years, Facebook has changed their newsfeed and profile layouts due to the popularity of different types of media. Several years ago, we were all content to post text only status updates. As memes became popular, the layouts changed to favor image updates. As smartphone photography gained popularity, the layouts changed to favor photos uploaded from mobile devices. Recently, the newsfeed transitioned to favor video files and live video broadcasts from smartphones.

Every new permutation of Facebook requires some relearning of the system, creating new challenges for non-marketing professionals. Experimenting with the new changes takes time and creativity. Unfortunately, training classes for the most recent Facebook changes are usually several months behind. This continuous retraining could leave someone wondering if they should even bother with the complicated Facebook network anymore.

Maybe, as a business and business owner, you should save your time and stop relying on direct posting to Facebook. Continue with the ads, but stop worrying about posting to your business account.

Instead, turn your attention to Instagram. Although owned by Facebook, this social network is a very simple visual platform. Photos and videos are up-front on Instagram. Each photo can --and should-- have a description, but no one will read that description if the visual isn't captivating. Using it is as simple as snapping and uploading a photo from your smartphone.

Instagram gained popularity quickly, surpassing other social networks, with their ease of applying colorful filters to photos. Suddenly anyone could be a brilliant weekend travel photographer. You can even transform a basic, simple photo to a stunning work of art with one of the built-in color filters. Uploading a photo without a filter will look drab on Instagram, and they won't get a lot of attention. Filters can easily turn a dull gray sky into one that looks like it is on fire; while regular sunsets can be transformed into brilliant arrays of color.

Of course Instagram isn't just about wanderlust photos and sunsets. Every industry has figured out how to visually represent the usage of the products and services sold. Over the last few years, many jewelry designers have already discovered Instagram as the best place for them to build their brand awareness. They've done this by showing eye-popping photos of their jewelry, matching it with clothes, lifestyles, and life events. In other words, Instagram is a good place to post photos depicting the customer experience.

Many businesses feel that everything they post to social media should be marketing related. However, marketing on social media isn't about direct sales or selling; it's about customer engagement. Engagement refers to any method you use to talk to a customer. Communicate, don't sell.

Communication isn't just words; it's also photos and videos. Although occasional event and sale announcements might work on Facebook, direct marketing doesn't work on Instagram.

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Instead, this is the network where you provide visual aids that show customers how to enjoy the items they buy. You can build a good following on Instagram with that visual story telling of the customer experience, and the life journey associated with the jewelry you sell.

You don't have to be a great photographer to use Instagram; you just have to be a willing to take photos. Although the built in Instagram filters can turn a dull photo into an attractive one, there are many other apps that can create interesting visual effects that will capture more attention. I currently use 11 additional apps to enhance or quickly edit my Instagram photos. Each app has a purpose and I don't use them all at once. I'm always looking for better and faster apps.

Through the use of these extra apps, I'm able to transform photos into paintings, make them look like stained glass windows, and even overlay two photos seamlessly. I once struggled in Photoshop to create the perfect images for Instagram accounts I managed, but the apps I'm using now are easier, and create faster results than Photoshop.

These apps also allow for a lot of creative freedom, and they are fun to use. "Fun" isn't often a work associated with online marketing, but it should be. Don't just think of Instagram as another social network where you just post photos. Make it fun for yourself. Use the latest photo editing tools to create something that you like, and then post it. If you're having fun making the photos, then your followers will enjoy looking at them too. Instagram allows you to cross post your photos to Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Flickr, and Swarm. Although I post to Instagram several times per day, for the accounts I manage, I've found the best tactic is to cross post to Facebook only once per day. I usually cross post every photo to Twitter and Tumblr. I reserve Flickr for the photos that I'm really proud of; and I only post to Swarm when I want a photo to specifically be related to a location. I invite you to use the same strategy and modify it as needed.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the importance of hashtags on Instagram. Although your imagery is the most important part of Instagram, hashtags are needed to gain new followers. The hashtag conversation is too big for this editorial, so send me an email and I'll gladly send you hashtag reference information and share the names of each photo app and how I use them.



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Matthew Perosi reports the latest Internet trends and methods that are most relevant to the jewelry industry in his newsletters, videos, and blog available through jwag.biz. Tap into the more than 1,500 free newsletters to guide you towards better usage of websites, social, and mobile. Matthew invites your feedback and questions at matt@jwag.biz or 973.413.8211. Many questions from TRJ readers have turned into great newsletter topics.



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