



MILLENNIAL MUSINGS

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Mastering your Insta-brand

INSTAGRAM FIRST BURST ONTO THE SOCIAL MEDIA scene in 2010, but its status as a powerhouse tool for brands is a more recent development. B2B and B2C companies alike are rapidly integrating the photo sharing app into their marketing strategies, and with good reason – Instagram has more than 400 million monthly active users, who collectively share more than 80 million photos a day.

And the platform is growing as some of its competitors stagnate (sorry, Twitter). Emarketer projects Instagram usage will grow 15.1% in 2016 versus 3.1% growth for the entire social media sphere. Whether your business is well-established on the platform or you're just getting started, here are a few best practices to keep in mind:

Set your goals. What do you hope to achieve for your business by joining Instagram? Sell more product? Increase your brand awareness? Engage with your customers? Establishing measurable business goals will guide your day-to-day presence on the platform.

Find your voice. Based on your goals, your Instagram may be more product-focused, veer toward “behind the scenes” posts that give customers an inside look at your business, or both. Once you determine your content, establish your brand identity. Do curated images or rawer photos communicate your brand message more effectively? Do playful captions suit your brand's voice, or does a formal tone work better?

During a seminar at the winter Las Vegas Market, Justina Blakeney – founder of lifestyle blog The Jungalow and a design partner with Loloi and Selamat – said curated, saturated images best reflect her brand's bohemian vibe, but she shares one personal photo for every three processed shots.

Shoot for mobile. Blakeney also encouraged her seminar attendees to “shoot with the medium in mind.” Instagram is a mobile platform, so visualize how your images will look on a phone as you play with camera angles and image size. Square and vertical images appear larger – and more captivating – on a mobile screen.

Know your apps. Depending on your brand's voice, some third-party apps beyond Instagram's own photo editing options can help enhance your images. A few of my personal favorites are Snapseed for processing, Pic Stitch for collages and Color Pop for color and black and white special effects.

Maximize the profile link. Unlike other social networks, Instagram only allows you to link outside the platform in one place – your profile bio. So if one of your goals is to boost engagement outside of Instagram, change that profile link frequently. If you have a new online catalog to promote, make your profile link a direct link to the catalog, share an image of the cover and use your caption to direct followers to tap the link in your profile for the full catalog.

Engage, engage, engage. Though dynamic images drive Instagram, effective captions are also crucial. Tagging other users such as your vendor partners and including relevant hashtags like #interiordesign captures followers' attention. A Simply Measured study found captions with at least one @ mention yield 56% more engagement, while posts with at least one hashtag net 12.6% more engagement.

Check back next month for more business-friendly social media developments. ■



MAGNOLIA HOME

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