Instagram Power

Build Your Brand and Reach More Customers with the Power of Pictures

Jason G. Miles
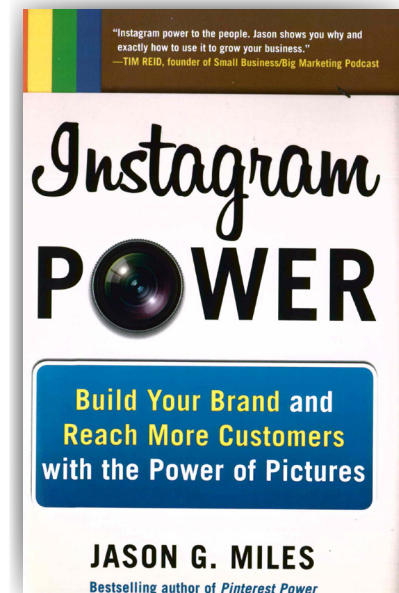
KEY CONCEPTS

Small businesses must market themselves on mobile platforms in order to stay in touch with established customers and reach out to new ones. To use Instagram effectively for marketing purposes, marketers must keep the following concepts in mind:

- Instagram is the only social network platform designed specifically for mobile devices like smartphones.

- Photographs are Instagram's primary networking medium.

- Instagram has five tabs: Home, Explore, Camera, News Feed, and Profile.

- A *hashtag* is a word or phrase preceded by the "#" symbol. It is a tool for categorizing photos.

- To be effective on Instagram, businesses should engage with more than five customers, plan to launch more than ten products in the short term, and realize a 20 percent pricing premium.

- Before starting to use Instagram, businesses should establish a basic marketing plan that includes an anchor, an offer, a visual curator for images, and "chemical X" as an enticement.

- Adopting daily engagement habits on Instagram is critical to a successful media marketing strategy.

- Display ads with evocative images and powerful calls to action are very effective on Instagram.

- Multistep ad campaigns with the *AIDA* format (**A**ttention, **I**nterest, **D**esire, **A**ction) are a natural fit for Instagram.

- Integrating Instagram with an online business website encourages customer migration and enables product sales. Integrating Instagram with one or more online social media platforms increases followers exponentially.

INTRODUCTION

Instagram Power is the latest in Jason G. Miles's "Power Book" series, which explores various marketing strategies using social media platforms. *Instagram* is a unique platform because it was designed for and

operates almost exclusively in the mobile milieu. Users interact primarily by posting photos rather than text. The book discusses the basics of the Instagram app, as well as a variety of strategies for leveraging it as a powerful marketing venue for both businesses and nonprofit entities alike.

Part 1: The Mobile Migration

The Mobile Native

Instagram is a social network for smartphone users. In less than two years, more than 100 million people have joined this photo-posting site. Additionally, at least one-half of the leading brands are currently marketing through Instagram.

Instagram is the first major social network designed specifically for mobile devices powered by cellular technology. Its primary function is sharing photos. First, a user selects an image and uses the Instagram application (app) to edit it as needed. If desired, the user adds a description that may include a *hashtag*, a word or phrase preceded by the "#" symbol. Then, by uploading the prepared image, the user shares it with followers and makes it available to the Instagram community. Viewers can "like" the image, comment on it, or share it with others.

Marketers employ Instagram differently than personal users. They not only engage their "tribes" of followers, but also prospective customers looking for their products and services. They launch products by posting pictures on Instagram, and they integrate this mobile app with business presences on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and company websites.

Instagram offers several unique advantages over other social media sites:

- It works flawlessly on mobile phones.
- Because it is not based on conversations, it is much quicker and easier to use.
- Content has a longer shelf life.

Get Clicking on Instagram

To get started using Instagram, users need a cellular-based mobile phone or other device, such as a tablet or computer. After downloading the Instagram application, users must create an account with a username and password, as well as a profile. However, before

launching a campaign on Instagram, marketers should pay particular attention to the terms of service as they relate to business activities.

Instagram features five basic tabs:

1. The *Home* tab displays a feed of the latest photos uploaded by users and the people they follow. It also shows likes and comments.

2. The *Explore* tab is a portal to new users and topics. It shows popular images and lets users search for specific businesses, celebrities, friends, or hashtags.

3. The *Camera* tab is a shortcut for posting and editing photos. Taking or uploading a picture engages the camera editing screen where users can crop, rotate, border, filter, or add effects to images. They can also add metadata such as captions and hashtags.

4. The *News Feed* tab displays a user's recent likes and comments. The "Following" view of the page shows a summary of the activities of those the user is following.

5. The *Profile* tab is probably the most important tab for marketing. It provides access to all of the account management functions, including:

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- Modifying sharing settings
- Modifying privacy settings
- Managing notifications
- Clearing search history
- Managing save options
- Logging out

Instagram established a website in 2012 that also offers helpful marketing functions. For example, users can access *badges*, or html codes, that they can position as needed to link their business websites to their Instagram accounts.

Hashtags: Organizing a Chaotic World

The hashtag concept originated with Twitter, and many other social media sites have since adopted it. On Instagram, adding a hashtag to an image groups it into a particular category, helping it attract attention from interested followers. Using hashtags also helps entrepreneurs identify new sales prospects and broadens their viewer bases.

Users who create their own hashtags become thought leaders who rally others to share and participate. Simply putting a "#" symbol in front of a word or phrase makes it a hashtag. Hashtags should be:

- Memorable.
- Easy to understand.
- Not already in use.

Hashtag creators and users must keep in mind that:

- Hashtags help businesses reach broader audiences.
- Hashtags identify others in a common industry or niche market.
- Hashtags help marketers keep up with industry trends.
- Hashtags have the potential to release negative sentiments or to be open to multiple interpretations.
- Incorporating brand names requires proper authorization.
- Creating more than 10 hashtags constitutes overuse.

Why is liking so important? People are focused on themselves, and as the old saying goes, 'People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.' Liking shows them that you care.

Part 2: Marketing on Instagram

An Instagram Marketing Plan

Most businesses can benefit from using social media as a key sales tool if they take the time to learn how to use it effectively. The *5-10-20 test* is a good way for businesses to decide whether to market via Instagram. First, they must engage with more than five customers. Secondly, they must plan to launch more than ten products in the short term. Thirdly, they must be able to realize a pricing premium of 20 percent or more within their markets. Having a social media presence is significant in realizing a premium price for goods or services.

Choosing Instagram as part of a social media marketing strategy gives businesses a critical mobile component that reflects the movements of their followers. However, before plunging into Instagram, users who represent businesses should develop a basic marketing plan. A good plan consists of four components:

About the Author

Jason G. Miles is vice president of advancement at Northwest University in Seattle, WA. He is the author of the "Power Book" series, featuring books that detail social media marketing strategies for home-based entrepreneurs. He works one-on-one with businesses through his marketing consultation practice and frequently speaks at business conferences and workshops.

1. An *anchor* is a well-crafted profile. In order to have authority and credibility it must include:

   - A professional headshot or corporate logo.

   - A greeting.

   - A statement about the user's role in the company.

   - A description of what the company does.

   - A credibility indicator.

   - A description of the types of photos the user will post.

   - A call to action.

   - A link to the user's website.

2. An *offer* encourages existing customers to find and follow the user on Instagram. For many, it may be their initial introduction to the app.

3. A *visual curator* decides what photos to share according to the company's marketing strategy. Things to consider include:

   - How often to share images.

   - The type of images to focus on.

   - The best times of day or night to share.

   - Editorial standards for images.

   - Who will post, approve, and implement the marketing plan.

4. *Chemical X* is the ingredient that entices others to join an Instagram tribe. It could be an insider's look at the company, a view of the user's private life, or a preview of upcoming products.

Recent statistics indicate that roughly 5 million images are shared every day. In the first two years of Instagram's existence, over 4 billion images were shared.

The Social Network Hiding Inside Instagram

Instagram is often referred to as "social media lite." This means that it involves minimal conversation. However, it does engender maximum engagement since the photos people post remain available for viewing for a long time period. The social sharing component is the basis for a marketing plan, but marketers must post photos that answer the needs of their tribes.

Recommending that followers and prospects join Instagram positions a marketer in an advisory position, which helps build a trustworthy brand. It also provides followers with new, fun ways to engage with a business and its products, as well as new chances to invite friends on board.

Finding people and firms to follow on Instagram is a positive marketing move for businesses. They can choose from two key groups:

1. The group with existing customers at its center. Expanding from that group is each customer's followers. This could encompass thousands of users.

2. Those who use the hashtags that are associated with the user's niche business group or industry. These users share interests in common with the business and are good prospects.

Reaching new followers can be as simple as liking or commenting on their photos. Leaving a sincere compliment or asking a question about the photo is even better. Also, responding to comments that others leave opens a dialogue.

Keeping a tight focus on an Instagram media strategy is critical to success. To do this, businesses should adopt positive daily habits, such as:

- Posting two or three pictures.

- Following 40 people.

- Liking 100 pictures.

- Unfollowing 20 people who are not followers.

Catalysts for Growth

Having around 1,000 fans is enough to make a small business user look legitimate. Larger entities have a larger threshold of legitimacy. To avoid "failure to socially thrive" syndrome, users must take an active approach to managing their Instagram accounts from the very first day. This approach involves five specific catalysts for growth:

1. Offering new services to existing customers.

2. Taking social action that occurs within a specific niche.

3. Presenting high-quality images.

4. Avoiding ad profile presentation.

5. Avoiding poorly chosen images.

A Copywriter Walks into the App Store

Instagram offers several opportunities for users to add text, both on and off the images. *Off-image* information includes metadata, profile names, comments or responses to comments, and image captions. *On-image* content consists of descriptive information added to the images themselves. This could be a logo, a product or brand name, pricing, a launch date, or a final sale date.

A copywriter's basic Instagram tools include:

- Profile name

- Real name

- Image

- On-image writing

- Image caption

- Comments

Copywriters create a single logical outcome: a purchase. By engaging the potential customer throughout the process, the copy maintains agreement and engagement. The final step is sending customers to the business site where they can complete their purchases.

Part 3: Bonding and Branding on Instagram

The most popular Instagram images are those that evoke emotion, such as love, desire, or urgency. Having followers who are truly interested in the products or services is essential to successful emotional appeals.

Instagram for Nonprofits and Service Providers

Organizations that do not market a product but do have a story to tell can benefit from the Instagram format. Volunteers and fundraisers can show off Instagram images wherever they go. Instagram also lends itself to text donations since it is a phone app. Having a mobile presence also eliminates funding losses due to lost connections as more and more people move to a mobile environment.

Marketing a service on Instagram is also effective. However, service providers must position their

brands with images that show how they are unique. They can share their brand stories through photos and captions. They can also post photos that explain what they do, either up front or behind the scenes.

Branding on Instagram

Marketers can also use Instagram to enhance their established brands. A brand represents the thoughts and emotions that people have about a company. Well-developed brands drive sales, while poorly developed brands can do real damage to a company. Logos and images are brand triggers that evoke emotional responses. Business marketers can use Instagram to strengthen their brands primarily by selecting images that identify various brand attributes. By combining brand attributes with customers' positive experiences, marketers will reinforce an already strong brand.

When you have a large following on Facebook, for example, your wisest social strategy is to migrate as many of those users to another social media platform as quickly as possible.

Part 4: Selling on Instagram

Display Ads on Instagram

By combining effective copywriting, images, and a powerful call to action, posting *display ads* on Instagram is just as effective as a traditional marketing campaign. Even a very direct "salesy" ad is effective if it appeals to a tribe. Some factors that make a display ad appealing include:

- Images that represent people in the demographic.

- Humor.

- Showing rather than telling.

- Avoiding clichés.

- Simplifying.

- Starting with the image.

Effective display ads prompt action. They explain the unique selling proposition of a product in a unique way. They also make the product the star of the ad, use urgency to make sales through limited offers, explain how a purchase meets the needs of the customer, and detail the product's benefits.

Using the Power of Free

Any business that sells products or services can leverage the power of "free." Giveaways offer several advantages over discounts:

- They do not cheapen an item's value.

- Customers perceive them as promotions.

- They have extremely high impacts on customers.

- Giving one item away for free is often cheaper than discounting several items.

- It is easier to calculate in advance the cost of a giveaway than the total cost of discounts.

- They give marketers the opportunity to collect contact information from business prospects.

Special offers and coupons are also options for leveraging the power of free. Contests engage customers. Some businesses also offer free digital products in exchange for prospects' contact information. This practice attracts customers and guides their actions.

Savvy marketers include company information with any free product. Mission statements, founding stories, philosophies, product line information, and future plans are all good items to include.

Is it true that every prospective customer in your niche or industry is just three introductions away from learning about you? If that's true and if Instagram can help make the connection, then your future will certainly be bright.

Multistep Campaigns

The *AIDA* marketing formula—which includes **A**ttention, **I**nterest, **D**esire, **A**ction—involves unveiling product details over an extended period of time. This method attracts people's attention, piques their curiosity, creates a desire to buy, and then calls them to action. First developed in 1899, AIDA is a natural fit for Instagram.

A visual product launch is one way to incorporate the multistep AIDA campaign. Marketers can post Instagram photos as their primary campaign content. Then, they can share an image of the new product to attract attention. Sharing behind-the-scenes photos of the product's development can also catch people's interest. Showing the product before it is available builds the desire to own it, and once it becomes available, a simple call to action is all it takes to start selling.

Part 5: Integrating Instagram into Your Online Marketing

Integrating Instagram with Your Website

While businesses use social media platforms for marketing, they must still drive customers to their e-commerce websites to close sales. Businesses can also invite their website customers to join their Instagram tribes. Because Instagram users can establish web profiles, computer users can enjoy the app online. Conversely, mobile users can go to a business website by clicking the URL link on the company's Instagram profile. For this reason, business entities need to make sure their websites translate well on mobile devices.

The primary purpose of a business website should be selling products and/or collecting contact information. If the purpose is sales, the primary metric is *revenue per visitor*. If the purpose is information capture, the metric is *names per visitor*. These metrics measure how well the website is accomplishing its purpose.

The classic sales funnel illustrates an effective method for achieving a healthy metric. Each sales step is a ring in the funnel. The goal is to funnel sales toward closure as efficiently as possible. The largest ring is the target market and the next largest represents site visitors. Some visitors become prospects, and some prospects become shoppers. Shoppers funnel down to buyers, and then some buyers become customers. Ideally, most customers become raving fans.

Instagram as Part of Your Social Strategy

Most businesses would be hard pressed to be present on every social network. However, being present on several sites gives businesses a hedge against losses should one of the sites change terms of service or shut down. Migrating followers from one platform to another is also insurance against loss. Additionally, by gathering customer emails through promotions and giveaways, a business can build independence from social networks that are owned and operated by others.

One of the biggest advantages of multiple social network use is the ability to migrate followers. Some strategies include:

- Sharing all social networking addresses on the primary business website.

- Sharing links to Instagram and Facebook images on Facebook and Twitter.

- Posting Instagram photos to Facebook.

- Launching new social media pages via an email newsletter.

- Running a contest to migrate followers.

Strategies like these can create a social snowball that increases a business's tribe exponentially.

Local Marketing with Instagram

Because Instagram connects people by interests and locations, it is a perfect tool for local marketing. A business can use location-based information via smartphone GPS technology or location-related hashtags. These functions create six tools that businesses can use to engage locally:

1. *Geotagging*, or sharing geographic information, via the Photo Map function on the Home tab.

2. *Photo walks*, or people joining together to walk and take pictures.

3. *In-event sharing* by using a hashtag at a special event, fundraiser, or activity.

4. *Social rallies* that bring people together with special hashtags.

5. Local contests.

6. Coupons and special offers.

PART 6: TOOLS FOR LEVERAGING YOUR INSTAGRAM EXPERIENCE

Complementary Apps and Websites

Plenty of apps are available to help businesses market products or services via Instagram. Apps like Webstagram and Carousel are web-viewing tools for Instagram. As of 2012, Instagram began offering its own desktop viewing app as well.

Instagallery, Padgram, and Flipboard are apps that adapt Instagram to the iPad screen. Tablet users can opt to download Instagram directly, but it is primarily designed for the smaller smartphone format.

StickyGram, Blurb, and Instagoodies are a few of the apps that help users convert Instagram images into postcards, calendars, books, and other physical products. Businesses use them as giveaways or sell them as products.

Apps such as Instagram Downloader and Instaport help users manage, organize, and save Instagram images. Instamap is a geotagging app for tracking photos, and the Instatag app is a hashtag management utility.

Photo-editing apps like Photoshop Express or Poly-Frame help users edit images before uploading or creating image collages. LensLight is an app for adding lighting effects to photos after taking them.

Analyzing Your Instagram Work

The level of follower engagement depends largely on factors that marketers can control. Setting a goal for followers, customers, and purchases helps businesses focus on engagement strategies. Tools like Google Analytics and Statigram let marketers know how they are doing and what they need to work on. These types of apps provide windows into follower behaviors, helping businesses optimize marketing impact.

Conclusion

The success of a business depends largely on its ability to cross over into a mobile format. To optimize the new Instagram social marketing platform, business brands must be fresh, images must be vibrant, and marketers must be creative. A business with an established brand and marketing plan can fairly easily transition into the rapidly growing mobile marketplace.

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FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Estimated Reading Time: 4–5 hours, 232 pages

Instagram Power by Jason G. Miles is a user guide for small business marketers. Throughout the book, Miles provides case studies of small enterprises that have used Instagram to build their customer bases, sell products, and reach wider audiences of pros-

pects. Because the book goes into considerable detail about how to set up an Instagram account and use its features, it is also a useful guide for individuals who want to find out what the mobile app does and how to use it. Miles provides "Power Tips" in each chapter that summarize content and offer new insight. He also includes mobile screenshots to illustrate many of his marketing concepts in practice. At the end of each chapter, a feature called "The Snapshot" provides readers with a brief review of the materials and concepts that were covered. Readers who have never used Instagram would benefit from reading the book from cover to cover.

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