Instagram for
Entrepreneurs

Building Your Strategy

TYLER J. McCALL

ICONOSQUARE

Instagram & Facebook Analytics and Management Platform

Table of contents

Introduction:

The basics of Instagram for Business

Instagram is a virtual goldmine for marketers looking to boost their business and connect with fans.

It all starts with content. Content that gets you noticed and that your community responds to. Share the right kind of content and your engagement rate will soar. You'll find your posts ranking higher and higher up in your followers' feeds. That extra visibility will boost your engagement further, helping you to become more popular and gain more followers. Why not take this opportunity to start selling your product directly within the platform? You'll see growth for your business in no time – it's so easy!

Oh wait, no it's not!

You might not know where to start. On the other hand, you might already have an Instagram account but you're unsure how to get it off the ground. What does my community want? How do I create engaging content? What's a Business Profile and how can I get one? How do I create a sustainable Instagram strategy that fits into my hectic schedule? If you've been asking yourself these questions then you've come to the right place.

Keep reading!

Instagram does have the potential to grow your business.

That's a fact. But it doesn't happen overnight and is by no means "easy". Growing an engaged Instagram community takes time, so you can imagine that the knock-on effect it will have on your business growth is an

even longer process. But it's worth the hard work.

Before we get into the details though, there's one thing you need to do first if you haven't already.

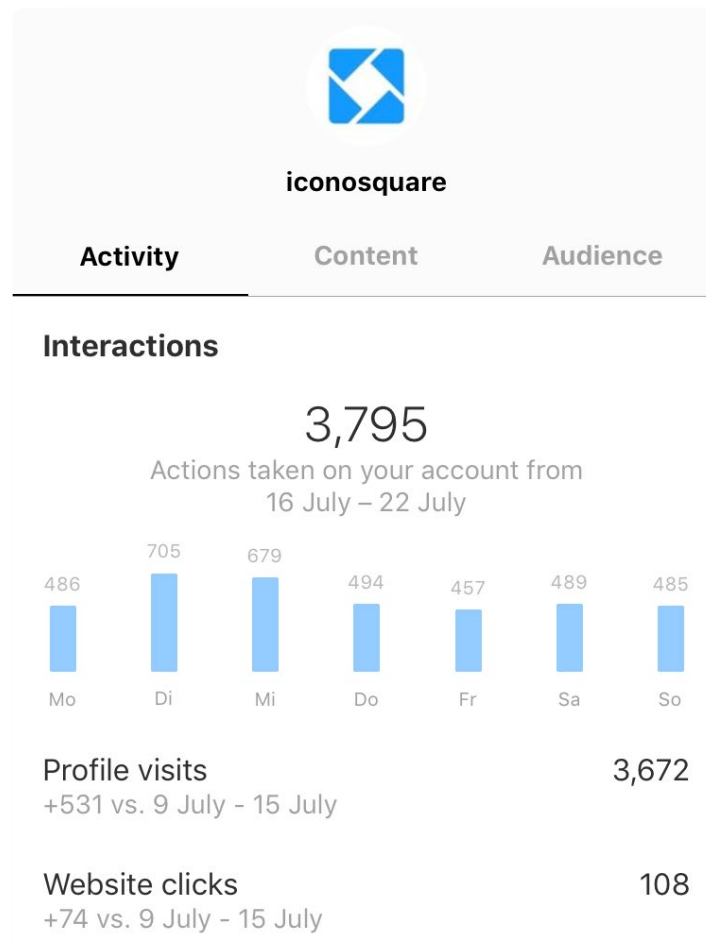## You need to convert your account to a Business Profile.

It's essential. Converting your regular Instagram account to a Business Profile is the first step on the ladder of Insta-success, despite the rumors you may have heard about the switch decreasing your visibility on the platform (lies, all lies!).

In fact, Business Profiles give you access to a whole array of extra tools and features which can only help you to improve your strategy and achieve better results on Instagram. Like the following:

- **Advertising** - Businesses on Instagram can advertise directly within the platform (without the need to go through Facebook Ads Manager) by promoting existing posts to a selected audience.
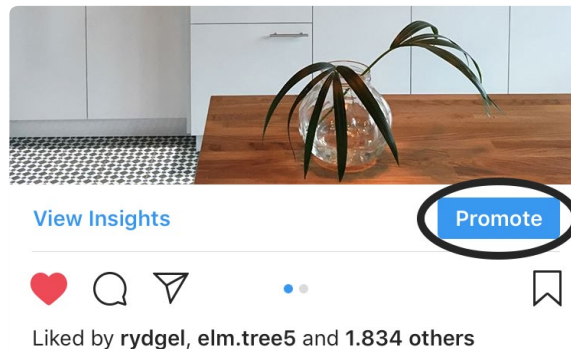
- Analytics - AKA Insights, are available to businesses having made the switch directly within the Instagram app. Insights are a real eye-opener for marketers interested in bettering their performance based on key performance indicators. Combined with in-depth analytics, Instagram Insights provide a great overview of how well your strategy is performing.

iconosquare

Activity	Content	Audience

Interactions

3,795

Actions taken on your account from
16 July – 22 July

	705	679				
486			494	457	489	485
Mo	Di	Mi	Do	Fr	Sa	So

Profile visits   3,672
+531 vs. 9 July - 15 July

Website clicks   108
+74 vs. 9 July - 15 July

- Contact button - Have you noticed the blue contact button on some accounts' profiles? Switching to a Business Profile will give you the option to have one of your own. The possibility of contacting a business directly — through the means defined by the business, such as telephone, street address or email address — makes things simpler for everyone involved.
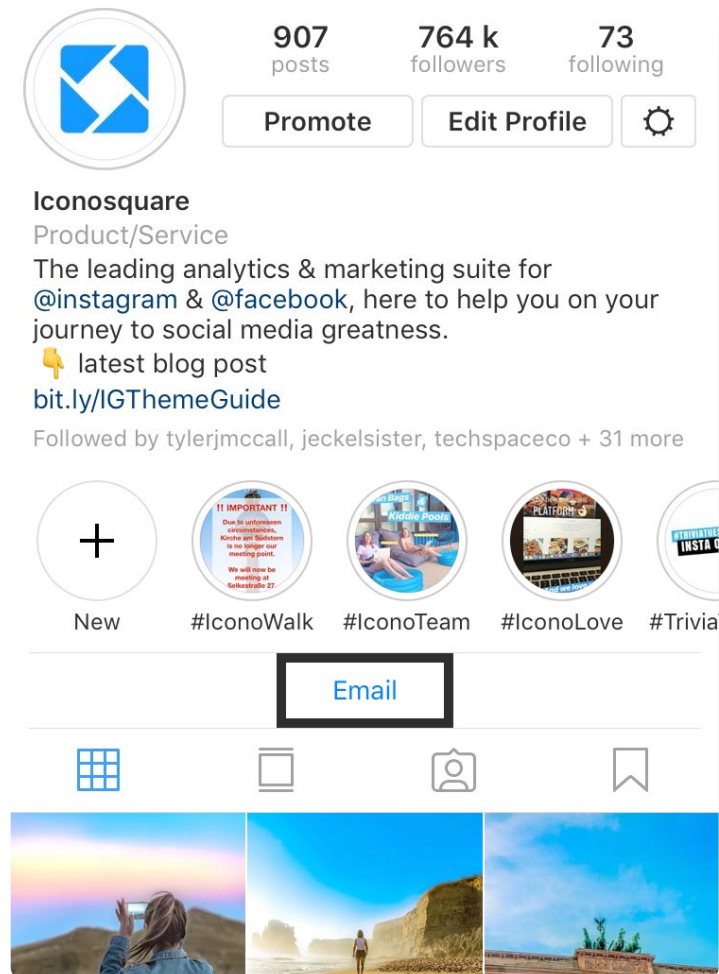
- Mentions tracking - Once you've activated your Business Profile, you can connect to third party apps which offer the possibility of tracking any mention of your Instagram handle throughout the app. Third parties (like Iconosquare) strictly follow Instagram's policies and can only allow users with a Business Profile to track mentions.
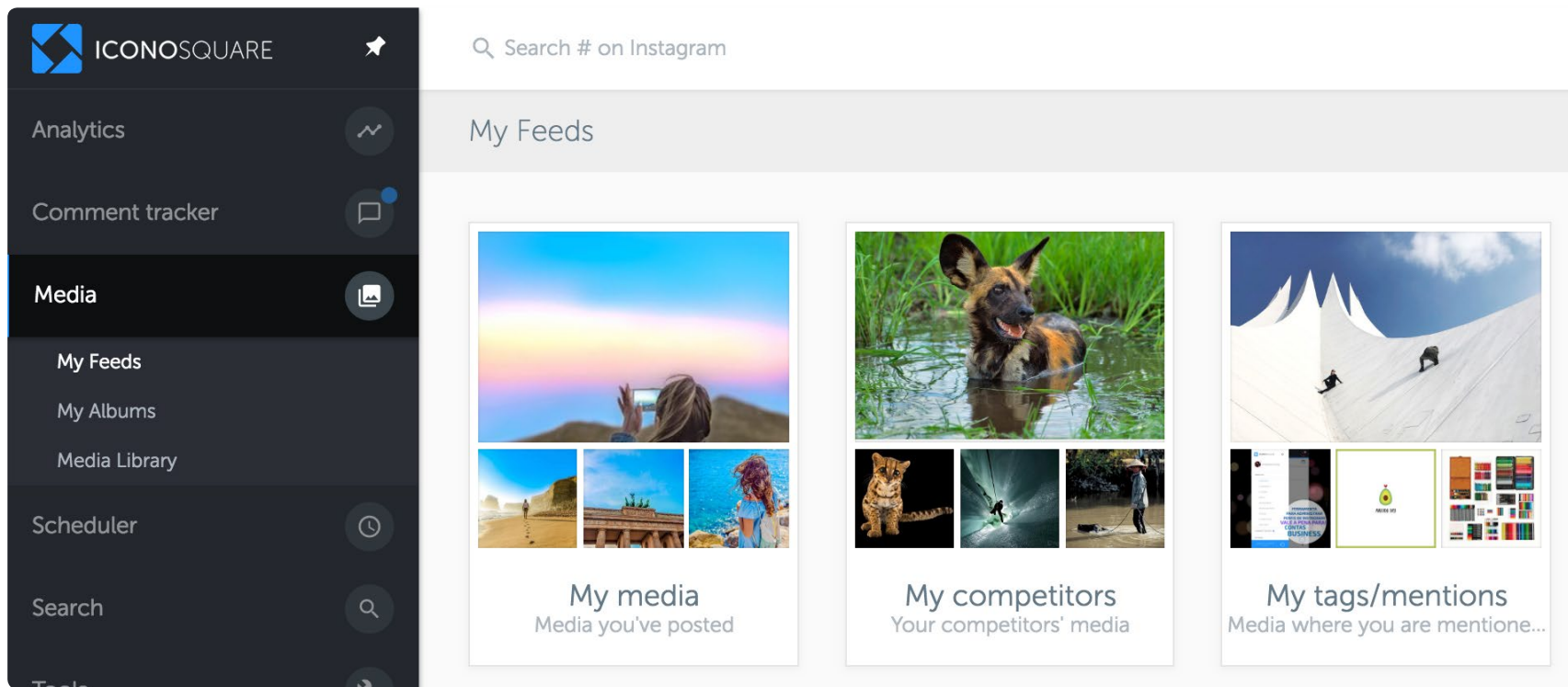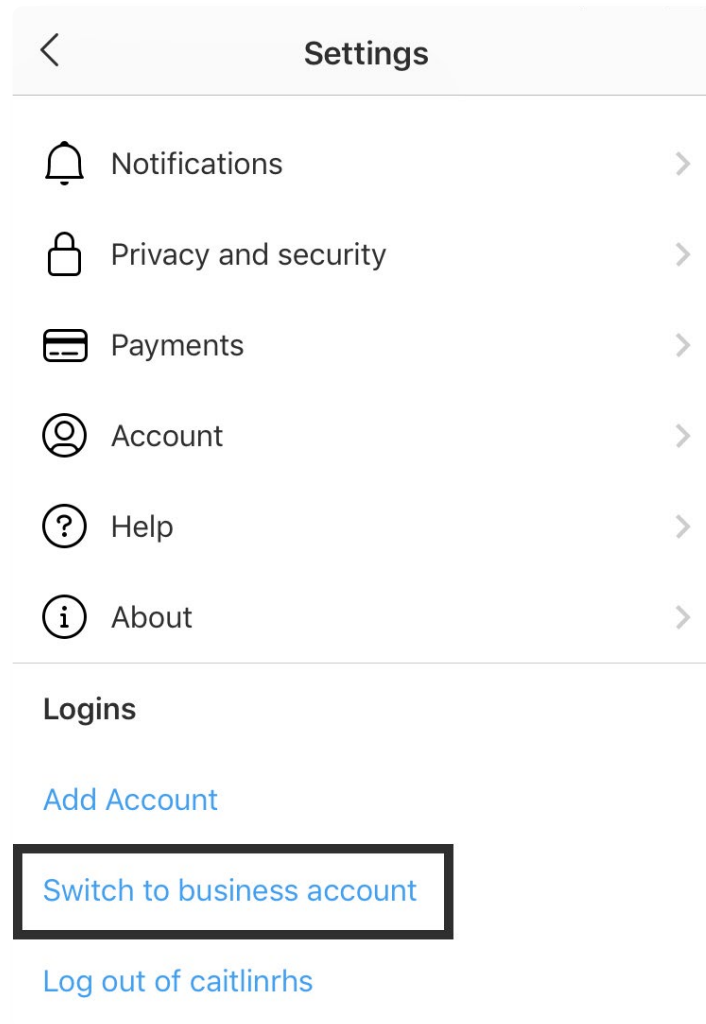
- Post scheduling - Like with tracking mentions, scheduling and automatic posting is a practice reserved for businesses, through the use of third-party apps.
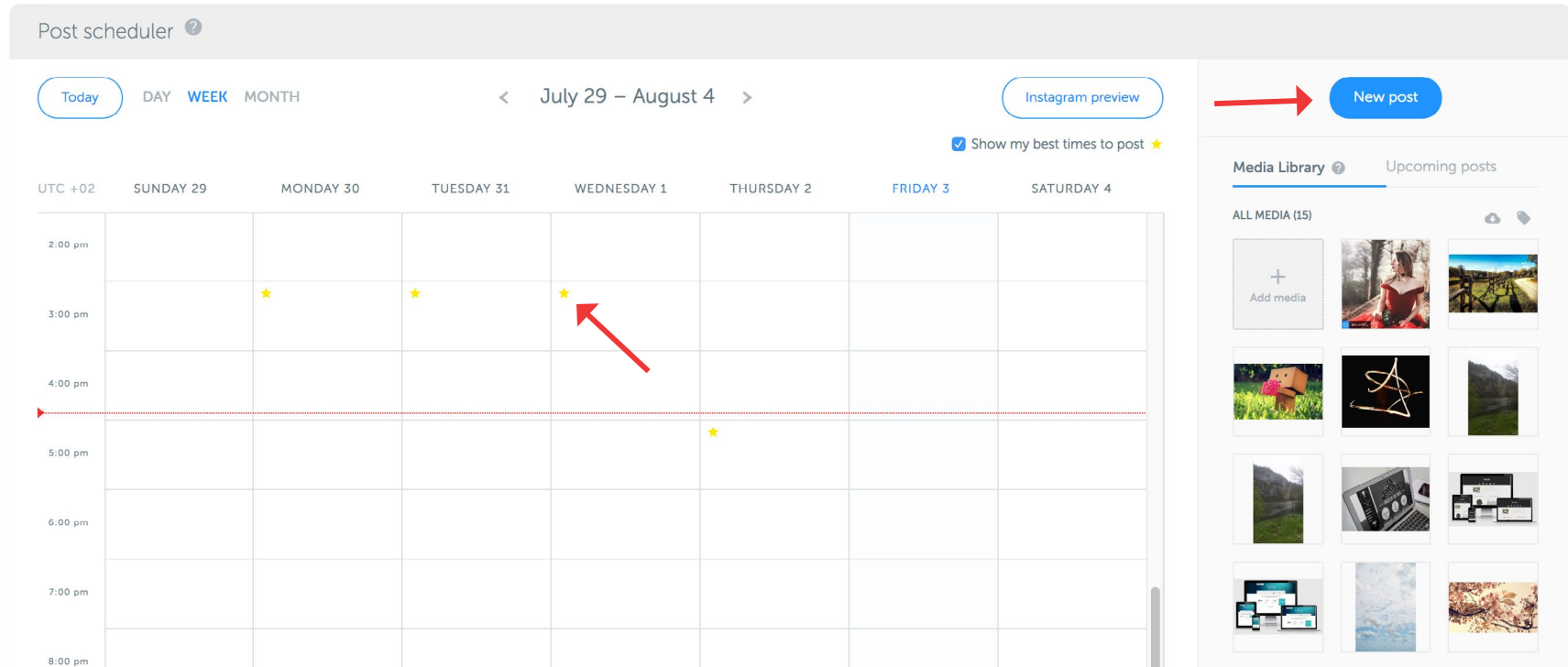
Convinced? The next step is to convert your profile. Here's how:

Go to your options within the Instagram app and select "Settings", then "Switch to Business Profile". You'll then have the option of choosing your industry and defining your preferred method of contact.

Settings

🔔	Notifications	›
🔒	Privacy and security	›
💳	Payments	›
👤	Account	›
❓	Help	›
ⓘ	About	›

Logins

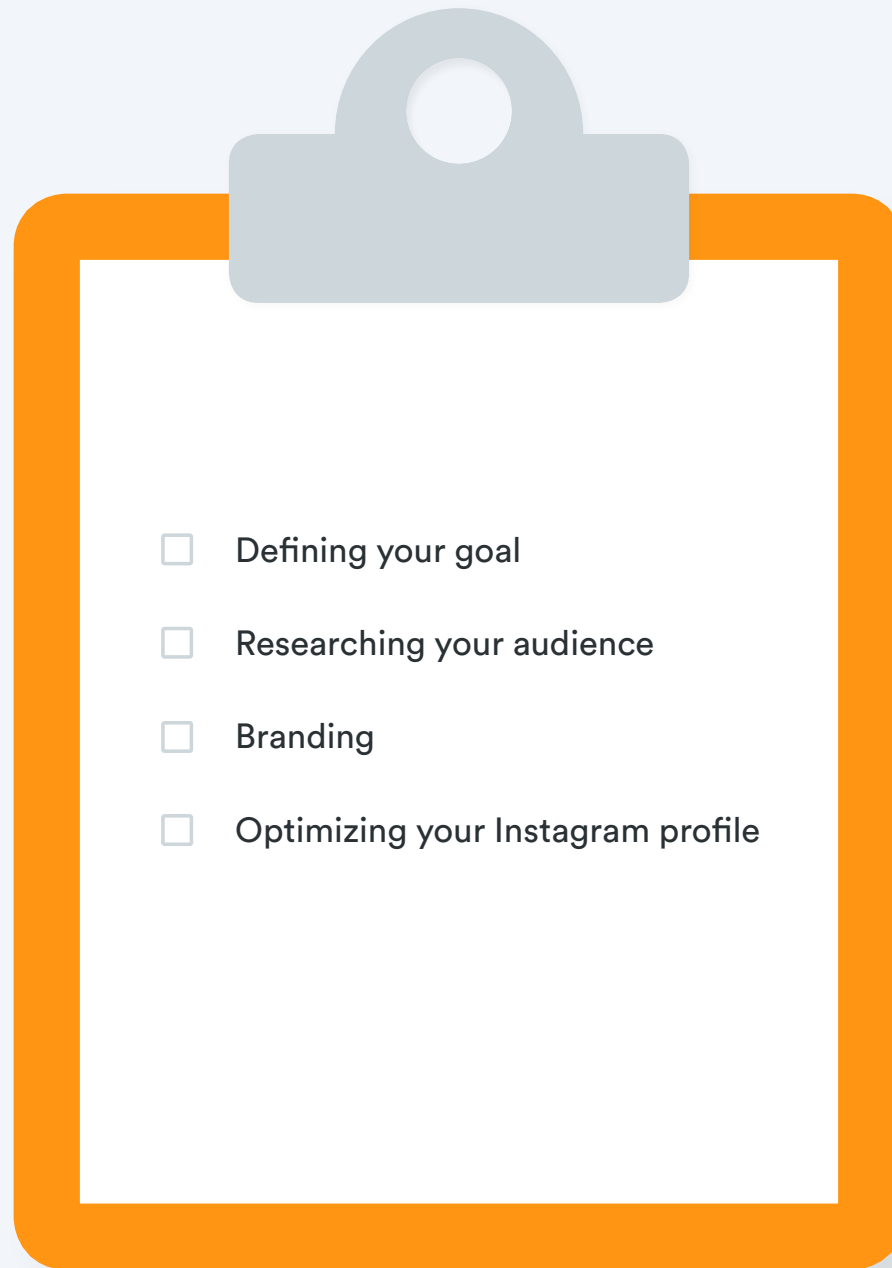Add Account

Switch to business account

Log out of caitlinrhs

Now you have the first step down, it's time to look at the fundamentals of building your Instagram strategy.

Chapter 1:

Defining your goal
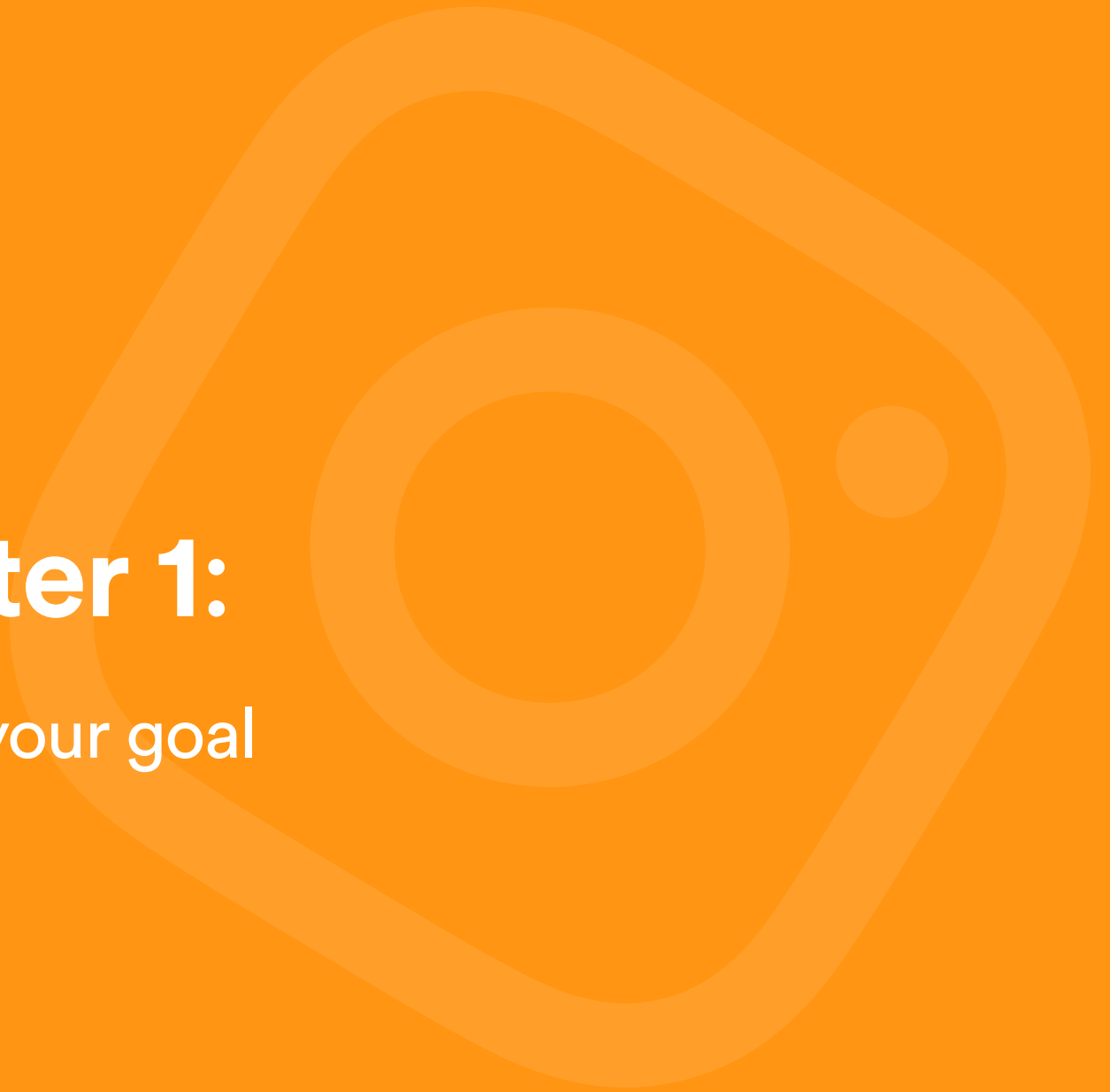
- [ ] Defining your goal

- [ ] Researching your audience

- [ ] Branding

- [ ] Optimizing your Instagram profile

Defining your goal is the first step in building a successful Instagram strategy.
As an entrepreneur putting everything into getting your business off the ground, it's likely your overall goal is to use Instagram to make money.

That's a super simplified version of what you want to achieve, but for the sake of staying focused and building your strategy around one goal, it's helpful to strip things back.

So, how are you going to monetize your Instagram account?

Most likely, it's going to be by driving traffic to your website where visitors can either buy your product or book your service, or to long-form, gated content to generate leads that you can nurture until they are ready to buy from you.

You could craft a strategy that involves bringing your long-form content to Instagram in the shape of carousel posts, Instagram Stories, Instagram Live videos, and IGTV episodes. Or, you could focus on keeping your followers on Instagram and use direct messages to build relationships, qualify your leads, and pitch your products and services.

tylerjmccall • Follow
Chicago, Illinois

tylerjmccall There's more to Instagram than a pretty picture - double tap if you agree! 🙌
•
Instagram works best when you realize that it was never about the picture in the first place *record scratch*. 😬 Wait. What?!
•
Yep! That's right. Instagram was never about the photos. It was never about looking on brand or having a hashtag aesthetic.
•
Instagram started as a platform for people to share moments that made up their life. Their honeymoon. Dinner with their family. Their kid's soccer game. A night out with their girlfriends. Or videos of their dog doing things dogs do.
•

1,341 likes

JULY 12

Log in to like or comment. ···

Instagram Marketing Strategist Tyler J. McCall prompts his followers to sign up to his Instagram Masterclass through the link in his bio.

In either instance, website traffic, leads generated, Instagram engagement, and sales will be your KPIs, or key performance indicators.

KPIs allow you to evaluate your success in relation to your goal, and give you a clear understanding of what you need to improve in order to achieve it.

Your KPIs will, naturally, depend on your goal, and only you can know the exact numbers you need to be able to say "I did it, I achieved what I set out to achieve".

For example, if you're starting out with 10 sales per month, you might be aiming to double your sales and reach 20 sales per month, at least in the first quarter. If you're already generating 100 sales per month, you might have more time and money to invest in generating 5x the amount of sales.

Only you will know what's attainable for your business.

But hey, maybe monetizing your account still seems a way off, even if it is something you want to do in future. That's perfectly okay!

If this is the case, you might set yourself a shorter term, more manageable goal for the time being. You could instead focus on:

OR
- **Increasing your reach and boosting your brand awareness**
- **Building a community**.

Both of these goals will help you lay the foundations for monetizing your account in future.

1.1 Creating a roadmap

The main thing to remember is, when choosing goals, don't spread yourself too thin. Trying to do it all often means that you don't get anything done and while you can have multiple goals in the backlog.

It's also helpful to **tie your goals down to a limited time period** as it helps you make them more realistic. So, to go back to the earlier example, your goal would be to sell 2x the amount of products you sell **per month** within **a period of 3 months**.

Simply put, you should set a realistic time-frame to ensure your goals are achievable and measurable.

Next, you need to plan out a **roadmap to reach your goal**. How are you going to get there? What tactics will you use to achieve it? You can use a number of tactics to achieve your goal. At the end, your roadmap should be looking something like this:

"I want to drive 2x more sales per month in 3 months by implementing the following 5 tactics:

Running optimized ads targeted for clicks and sales

Driving traffic from Instagram Stories to special offers

Collaborating with an influencer for an indirect sales campaign

Optimizing the link in my bio and measuring traffic and sales from it

Creating sales-oriented content for the feed on Instagram

Your tactics are probably going to vary slightly over time, depending on your audience and what proves to get you the best results - **obviously, you won't (and can't) know this straight off the bat**.

To decide on the best tactics to start with, consider which are most likely to help you achieve your goal, alongside those which your target audience are likely to respond well to.

Of course, this is going to require some audience research, which is an essential step to defining and developing a successful Instagram strategy for your brand.

Chapter 2:

Researching your audience
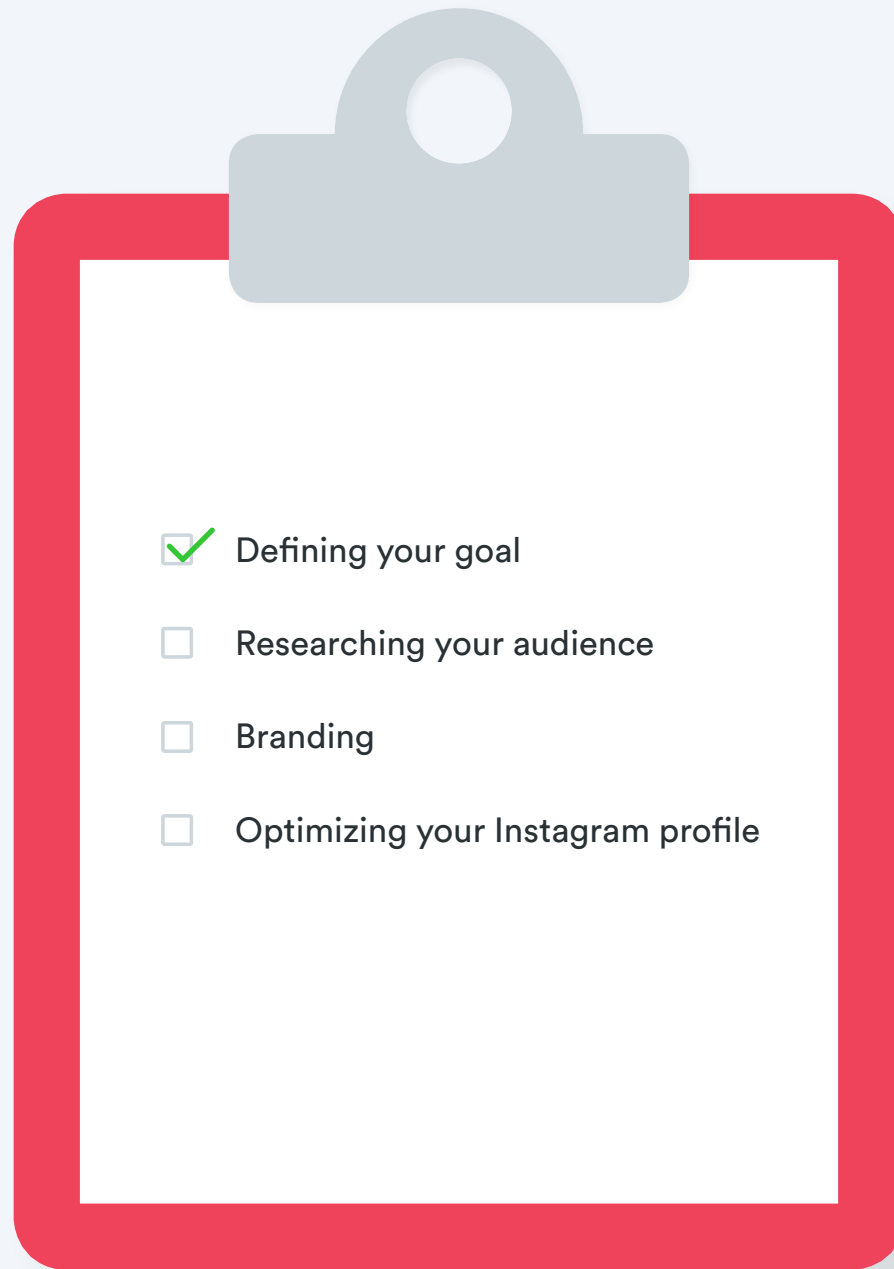
- ✓ Defining your goal
- ☐ Researching your audience
- ☐ Branding
- ☐ Optimizing your Instagram profile

Hopefully, you'll have done your marketing research before deciding to focus your attention on Instagram, and you know that Instagram is where potential clients or customers are hanging out. The next step is to grab their attention with some killer content!

When defining and developing your Instagram strategy, you really want to focus in on a specific persona. Everything you do on Instagram should be tailored to a persona, or "ideal Instagram follower". It sounds pretty obvious, right? But it can be tempting to try and create something for everyone, or simply leave this kind of research at the bottom of your to-do list, because there are also a million other things that need your attention.

Well, you can't skip this step! Creating content without a specific persona in mind is like throwing darts in the dark and just hoping to hit bullseye. With that in mind, let's move on to how to define and target your ideal Instagram follower.

2.1. Defining your ideal Instagram follower

An ideal follower will be likely to:

Engage with and comment on content they enjoy
Share content, tag their friends in posts, and save your posts for later
Take action, such as visiting your site, based on your posts
Watch your Instagram Stories and respond to your questions
Catch you on Instagram Live
Check out what you're sharing on IGTV

Most importantly, your ideal Instagram follower will also always be a customer!

It kinda goes without saying though that it's up to you to inspire and motivate your ideal follower with content that is designed with them in mind. And for that, you first have to understand what makes them tick.

Your job is to think about what motivates them, what other interests they have, what their goals and priorities are, and start to build up a detailed persona that you can keep in mind when you're creating content.

No doubt this will develop or shift as you learn more about your audience, but it's a key starting point.

You might also have other requirements that are directly linked in to the type of business you're running. For example, if you're a brick and mortar store and you don't (yet) sell online, your ideal follower will probably

be local to the area of your business. Consider these kinds of details to build up a realistic and "fleshed-out" persona that will actually be helpful to you.

2.2 Checking out your competitors

One of the most accessible ways to gather information about your target audience on Instagram is to check out your competitors' accounts. A benchmark of the content being shared in your industry is essential to gauge what works with your target audience.

By paying close attention to what your competitors' audiences are responding to most, and more importantly *how*, you'll gain a deeper understanding of what's likely to work for your own Instagram account. Not only that, but checking out what others are doing on the Instagram scene can also help you to spot gaps in content which you can fill!

Another trick to getting a better read on your audience is to follow businesses and brands that they're a fan of, that offer or sell something completely different to you. If you run a handmade business, think about identifying a few restaurants or coffee shops that your active and engaged followers love, and look at their content for inspiration. Or, if you know that your ideal follower is obsessed with a particular type of service or product from a certain store, follow those brands and see what you can learn from their content and strategy.

For example, if you're selling luxury wedding planning services using Instagram, then look at what BMW or Nordstrom or Veuve Clicquot are doing on Instagram and see what you can learn from their strategies.

How are they attracting the type of client that you want to attract and how can that inspire your content?

2.3 Evaluating your approach

Once you've built a small following on Instagram, the best way to find out what your audience wants to see is simply to ask them. You can:

- Use Instagram Stories polls to discover what your followers' main goals and pain points are.
- Ask questions in your captions to encourage specific responses that will help you to create more relevant content.
- Go Live on Instagram to give your followers the chance to have a conversation with you!
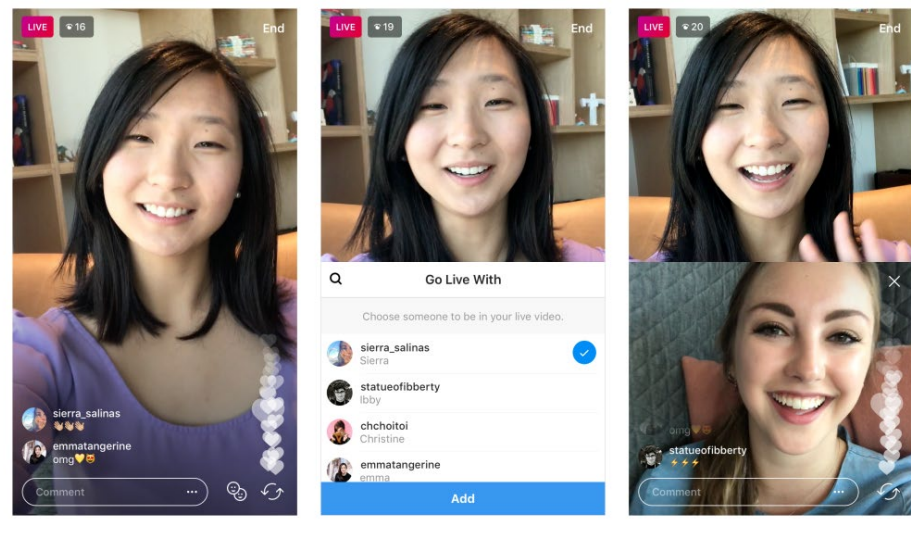
You'll learn more from interacting directly with your community than through any other type of research.

But how do you know straight away if your content is really resonating with your audience once it's out there?

Simple: Engagement.

" Engagement is what you're looking for, because engagement is what helps your account to thrive and become profitable."

So make sure you do right by your Instagram community by sharing content they will be happy to engage with, and don't bore them with uninteresting, dull posts which will make them scroll straight past you, or worse, unfollow.

Here is a great example from UK bakery **@pollenbakery**, a small business posting relevant content and getting really good engagement in terms of both likes and comments.

This post from **@tylerjmccall** shows that a compelling caption with a relatable photo can get your followers talking and engaging.
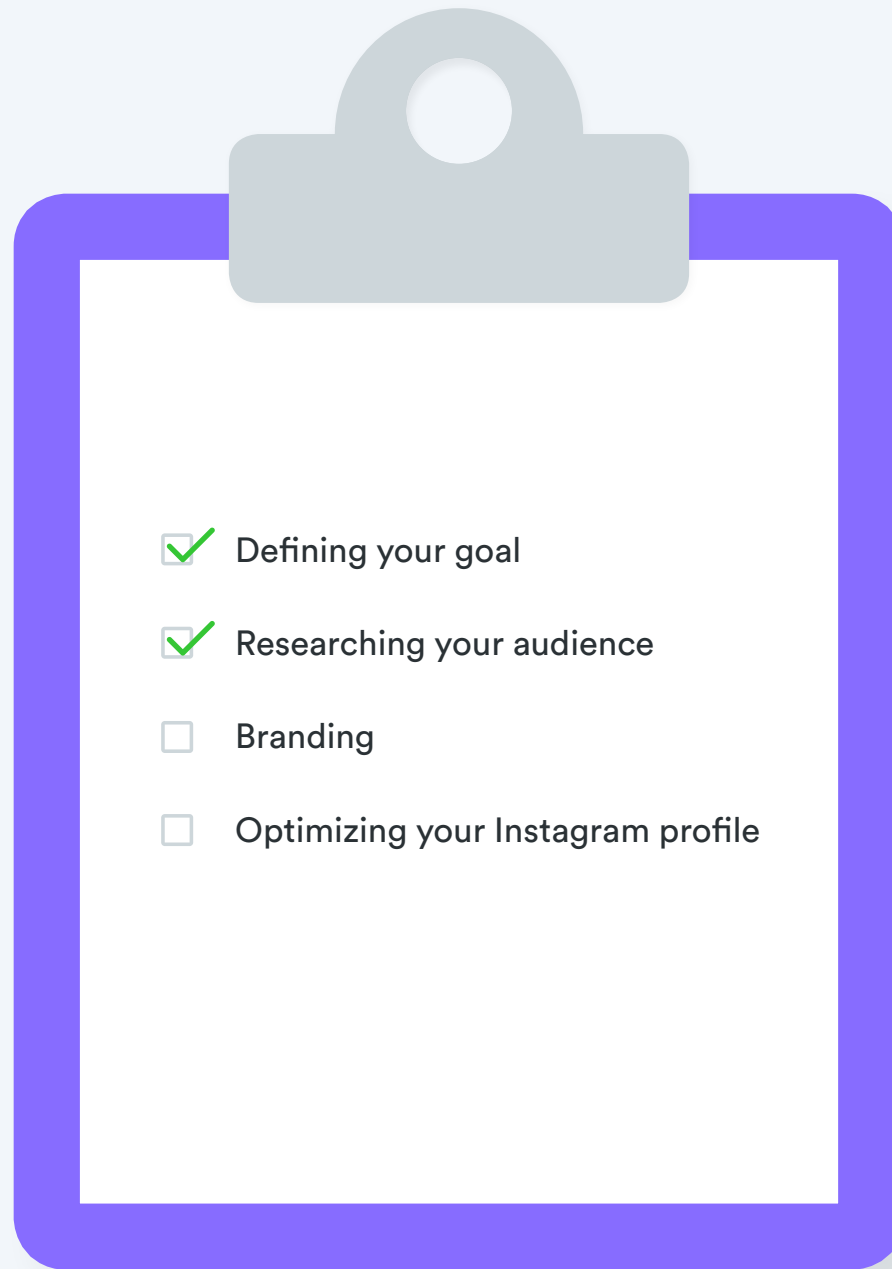

I'm sure tons of ideas are already starting to fly around your head. But hold on a second! We need to proceed carefully and strategically if we want to develop an effective, long-term Instagram strategy.

Don't worry, we'll go through it step by step.

Chapter 3:

Branding

- ☑ Defining your goal
- ☑ Researching your audience
- ☐ Branding
- ☐ Optimizing your Instagram profile

Your strategy should encompass everything you do on Instagram – so there's a lot to think about! If you have a grasp of your target audience and a clear, measurable goal in mind, you can build out from that. However, remember that your strategy will require regular reassessment as your understanding of what your audience enjoys develops and you figure out what converts.

Basically, don't get too comfortable!

To recap: the fundamental considerations when developing your Instagram strategy are:

- Your goal
- Your KPIs
- Your audience

Now, it's time to hone-in on your branding!

First thing's first, what does your dream Instagram feed look like? Picture it in your mind 'cause that's the one we're going to build!

It's easy to look at accounts that are already absolutely killing it and think "I'm never going to be able to do that" or "my feed will never look that good", but you don't know unless you try!

This is how you should approach the challenge of creating a feed other people will be envious of, step by step:

3.1 Defining the style and tone of your account

The style of your feed will totally depend on your audience and the type of content you post. You might have a clear idea of the 'typical' Instagram feed that has become common on the platform: muted tones, carefully orchestrated flat-lays, plenty of white space...This is what a lot of lifestyle bloggers and creatives tend to go for when creating their feed, and to be fair, it does look good.

But while It's true that there are certain visuals which perform well on Instagram, **you shouldn't just copy what has gone before**. Sure, draw inspiration from your competitors and similar accounts in your niche, but also try to bring some of your own creativity to your feed.
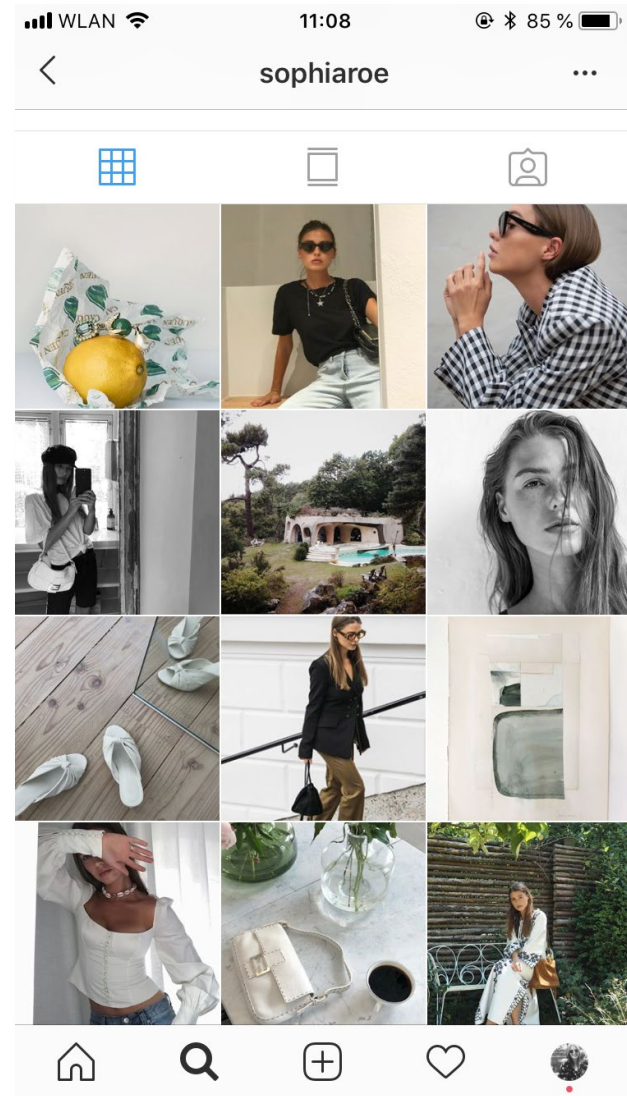
@sophiaroe

" Sure, draw inspiration from your competitors and similar accounts in your niche, but also try to bring some of your own creativity to your feed."

Aim to do something a bit different that stands out, always keeping in mind what your audience will enjoy. Think about the message you want to send out, the style of image/video which suits your brand voice, the colors, filters and patterns you imagine filling your feed as well as the tone of voice you want to use for your captions.

As you're getting started, don't become too obsessed with having the perfect photos all the time. Too often, business owners use "not having the perfect photo" as an excuse for not posting on Instagram at all! Remember: done is better than perfect. And, as your strategy changes and your Instagram skills get more and more refined, you can improve your content.
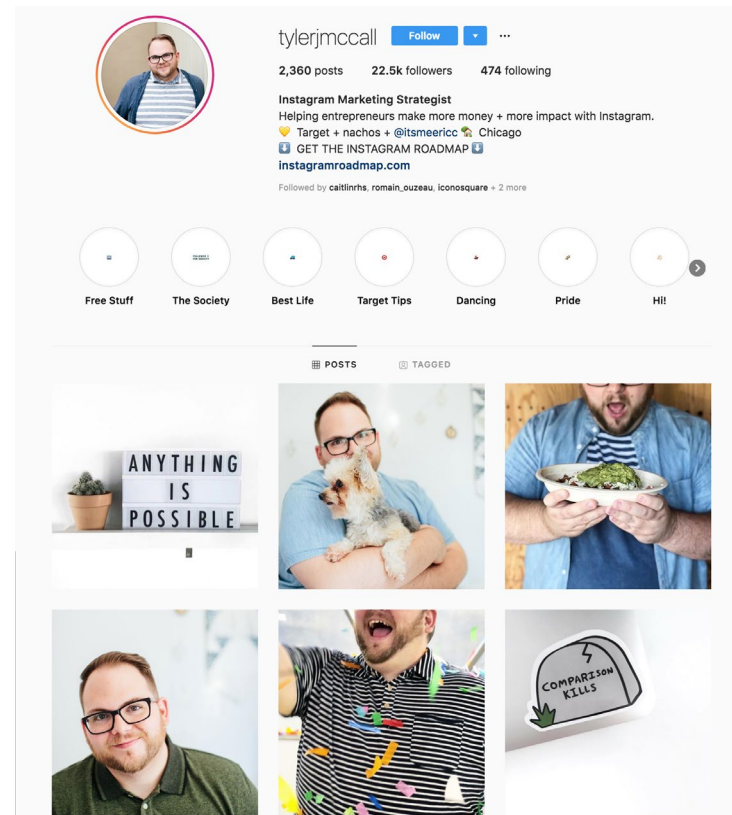
@tylerjmccall knows that a personal, humanized feed with 'behind the scenes' photos and inspirational quotes works for him. He creates content that makes his followers feel like they know him - like he's an old friend - so selling is easy.

3.2 Perfecting your captions

Is your business targeting a millennial crowd? If yes, you can push the boundaries a bit with your captions. You can be very informal, quippy, and even a bit snarky – a sense of humor is a great way to connect with an audience that appreciates authenticity and openness.
Take this example from oat milk brand, Oatly:
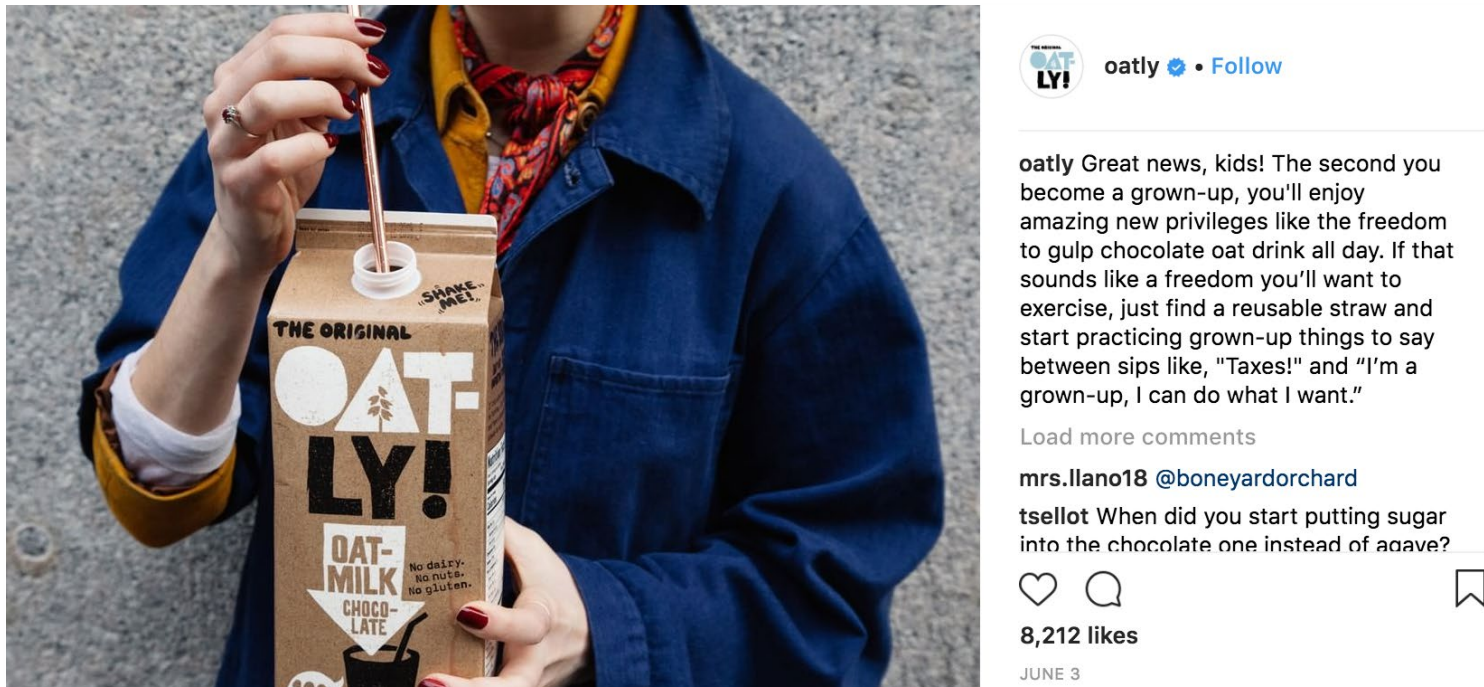
*Oatly create a fun anecdote around their product, perfectly targeted to their millennial audience.*

If your audience is from a more corporate background, that doesn't mean your captions have to be overly-serious, but you'll want to use language that positions your brand as one worthy of being taken seriously.

Etihad are known for being a luxury airline with many business travellers splashing out extra for a flight. Check out the wording in their caption here – it's aspirational and interesting without being too stiff, but it's miles away from Oatly's casual, dry tone. Whatever your niche, you can take inspiration from a range of businesses and the tone of voice they use to inspire and engage their audience.
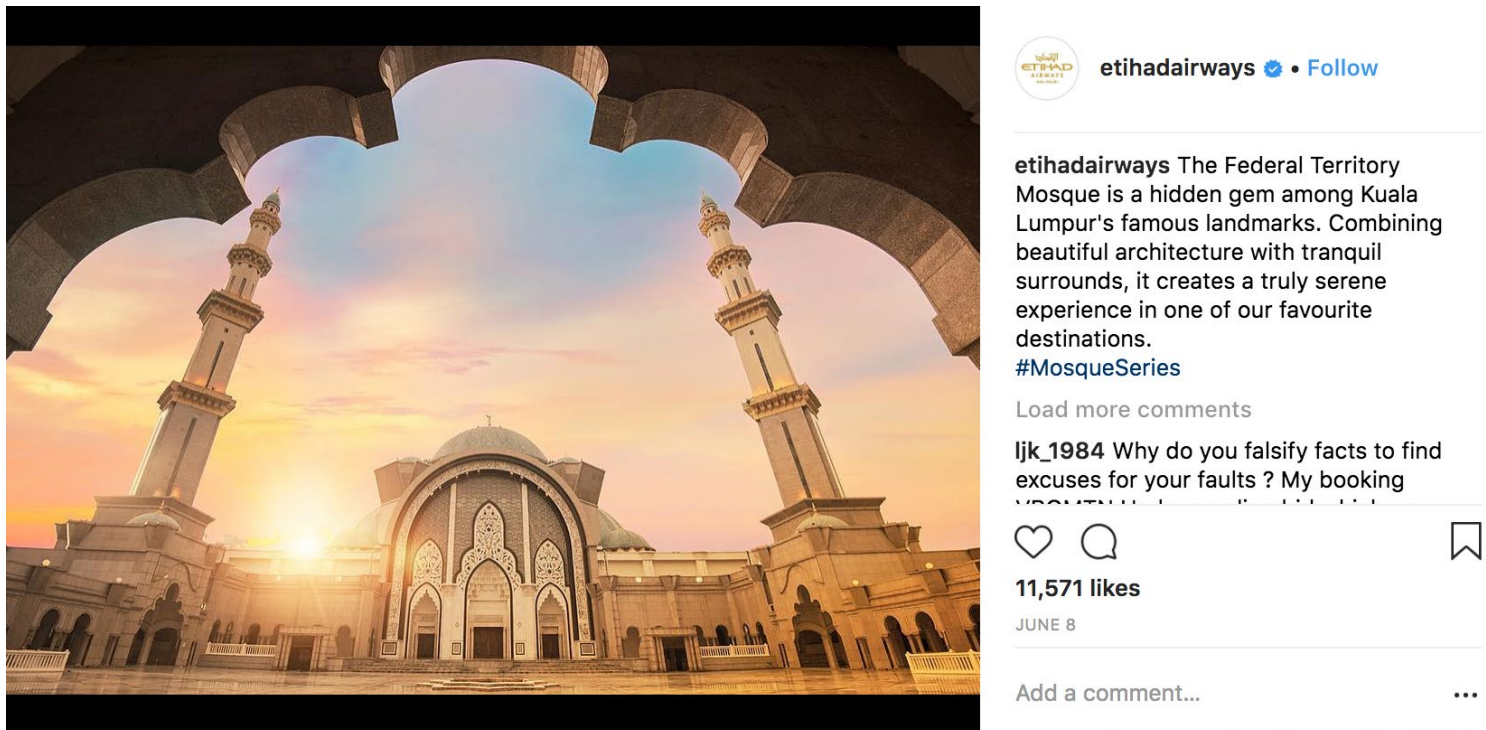
Ethihad's TOV is aspirational and interesting without being too stiff.

3.3. Sourcing quality images

Captions are one thing, but sourcing imagery is a whole other ball game. Unless you have a skilled-photographer by your side, or you can boast of having decent photography skills yourself, finding the right images for your Instagram feed can be hard work. It can take hours of scrolling through pages and pages of stock photos to find "the one".

But it doesn't need to be this way!

To find high-quality photos that don't actually look "stocky", check out **Unsplash** and **Stocksnap.io**. They offer a range of images for free, and you're bound to find something suitable whatever your niche.

If you don't mind spending money to get the best quality photos, **Stocksy** is your best bet. As you would expect for a paid service, the quality of the images is higher, and the variety is much wider.

Alternatively, you can create your own visuals using templates that you can edit and adapt to fit your own style. Tools such as **Canva**, **Easil** and **Venngage** offer great Instagram post templates (Easil also offers a range of really cool Stories templates too).

There are plenty of other ways to find great content for your feed, from reposting content from other accounts that you - and more importantly, your audience - love (with permission, of course), to running UGC campaigns and sharing the content you collect from those.

3.4. Building a consistent feed

What's key to remember is that, in order to create a killer feed, your visuals need to be consistent and they need to work as a whole. Think of your Instagram feed as a complete outfit, and the individual posts as pieces of clothing. You'd never team stilettos with tracksuit bottoms (hopefully), because it just wouldn't look quite right!

No doubt you already know that creating a consistent Instagram feed is difficult when you're relying on a varied mix of UGC, stock imagery, templates and reposts. But, there are a few things you can do to tie all of your content together and give your feed a balanced, consistent feel.
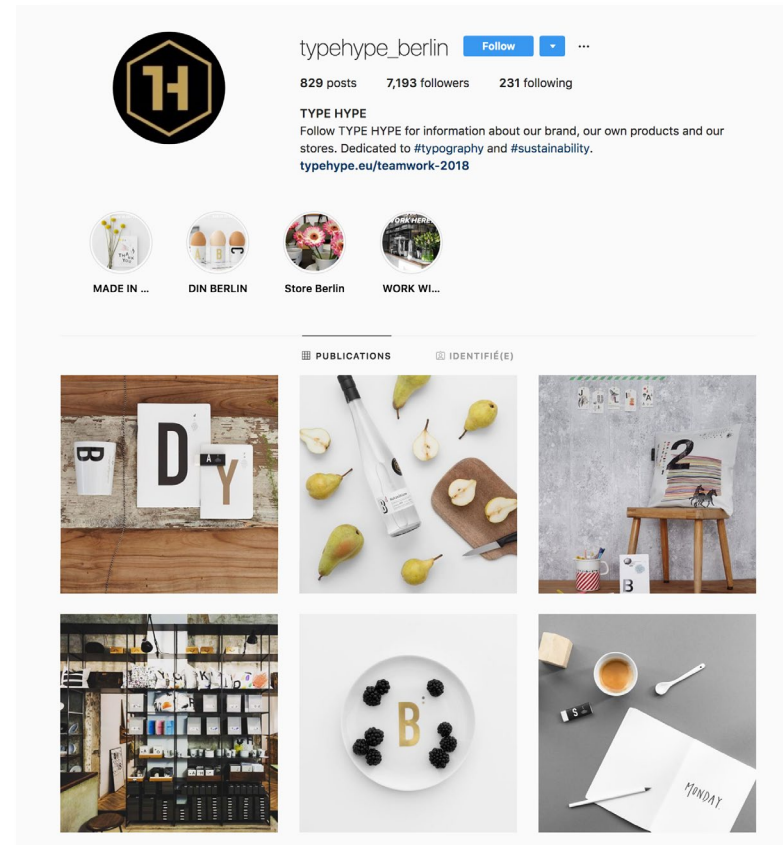
@typehype_berlin know how to create an on-brand, consistent feed

1. Use the same filter across all of your posts (or buy a preset)

An easy way to maintain consistency throughout your feed is to use the same filter on every photo. You can also buy **preset Lightroom filters from Instagram influencers** to be sure that the filter you're using is actually going to look professional. Alternatively, if you have a great camera and a good eye for visuals, you don't need to edit your photos that much at all. Simply stick to switching up or down the light and shadow on each photo so that they have a similar hue and tone.

Apps such as **VSCO** and **Snapseed** are great for editing photos if you don't have the knowledge (or the budget) to use more advanced editing programmes such as Lightroom.

If you want a detailed step by step on editing your photos for Instagram, Here's how Instagram Strategist and Educator Tyler J. McCall does it:

"First things first - I create 95% of my content myself using my iPhone (and I just recently upgraded to the iPhone X; so, I've been living without portrait mode until now. Now, editing photos for Instagram starts with a great photo.

The first thing I'm always paying attention to when I'm capturing content is the lighting. Poor lighting is your biggest enemy in ending up with a beautiful, bright, bold, and stand-out Instagram post. When I'm taking photos, I'm looking for bright light that fills the entire photograph. I want to make sure the light is as natural as possible - I'll typically take my photos by a window, on a covered patio, or outside on a cloudy day (the diffused light is incredible when overcast).

If I'm inside and taking photos, I'll get as much light from outside as possible and turn off any overhead lights so I don't end up with weird competing colors (natural light is more white and blue while interior lighting is typically more orange or yellow).

Once I have a photo I'm happy with (which takes a few tries, don't be afraid to experiment here), I get to editing!

The first thing I do is pull the photo into Snapseed and work on any weird color variations or issues with brightness or contrast. I love that Snapseed has a selective editing tool that allows you to pick different parts of the photo and adjust brightness, contrast, shadows, and some other aspects of the image. I'll also use Snapseed to make sure the image is cropped correctly.

Once I'm finished in Snapseed, I'll pull the photo into **FaceTune** to make any fine edits. Now, I use FaceTune for photos whether there is a person in them or not! FaceTune has some incredibly helpful tools for whitening parts of the photo that may have lost their brightness in editing (things like white backgrounds, paper, teeth, etc.) as well as tools for adjusting the color of parts of the image.

The last app I use is **TouchRetouch**. I typically pull an image into the app to remove things like power lines, outlets, light switches, signage, or fly away hairs (it happens to the best of us).

Once I'm finished with the image, it heads into Instagram where I make a few final tweaks to give the photo my signature aesthetic. That includes turning down the warmth (my feed is cooler, more blue, and more white), sharpening up the image (so it looks more crisp), turning up the highlights (so everything appears brighter), and making any final tweaks to the shape or size of the image".

## 2. Use borders/Whitagram consistently if you do use them

Using borders to make your photos pop is a great idea – if you use them consistently. If you're a fan of Whitagram, make sure that every time you edit a photo to add a border you choose the same dimensions. Otherwise, you're going to end up with a cluttered and chaotic feed, rather than the refined feed you set out to create.
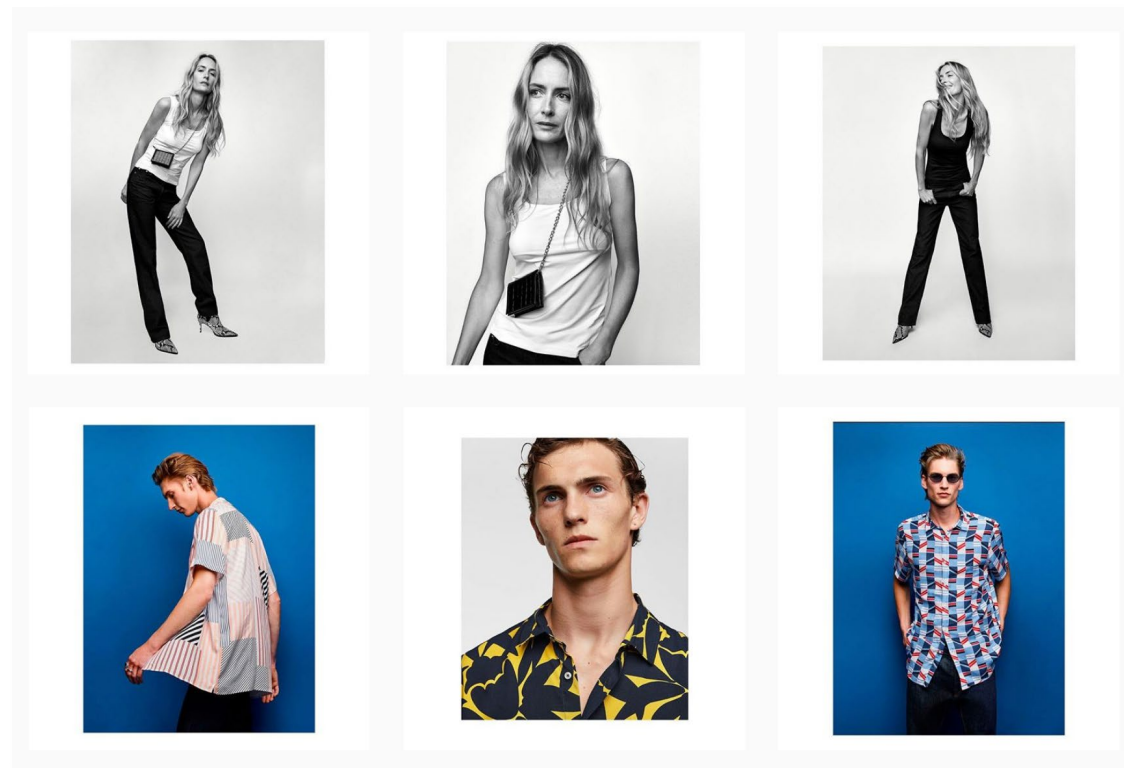
This example from Zara shows a balanced feed created using white borders of equal proportions

**3. Plan your feed in advance using an app such as UNUM or Plann**

Finally, there are loads of great editing apps out there to improve the quality of your Instagram photos, as well as planning apps – such as Plann and UNUM – which allow you to plan and rearrange your content to create an Instagram feed that works together visually.
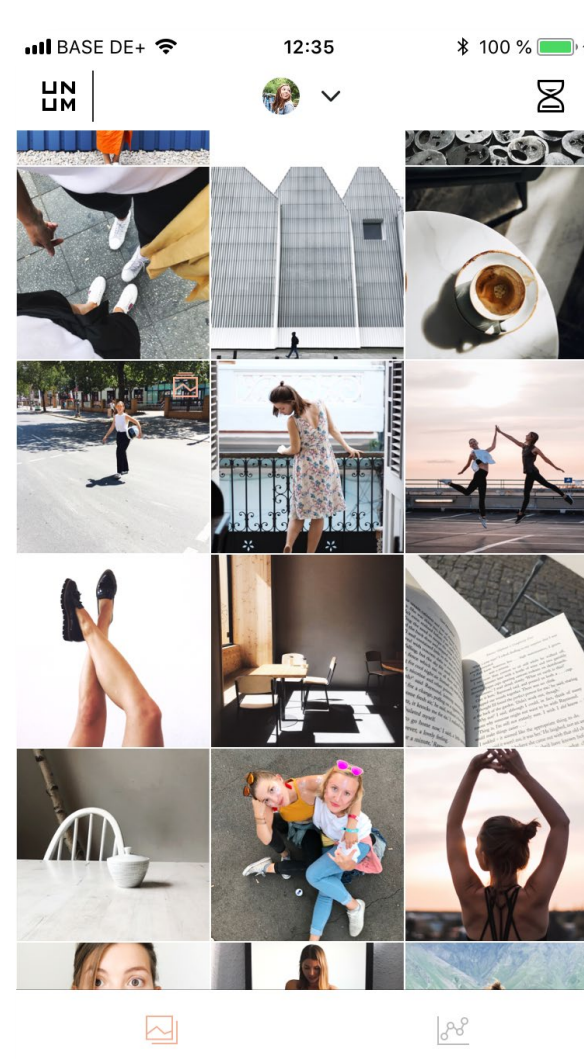
Chapter 4:

Optimizing your Instagram profile
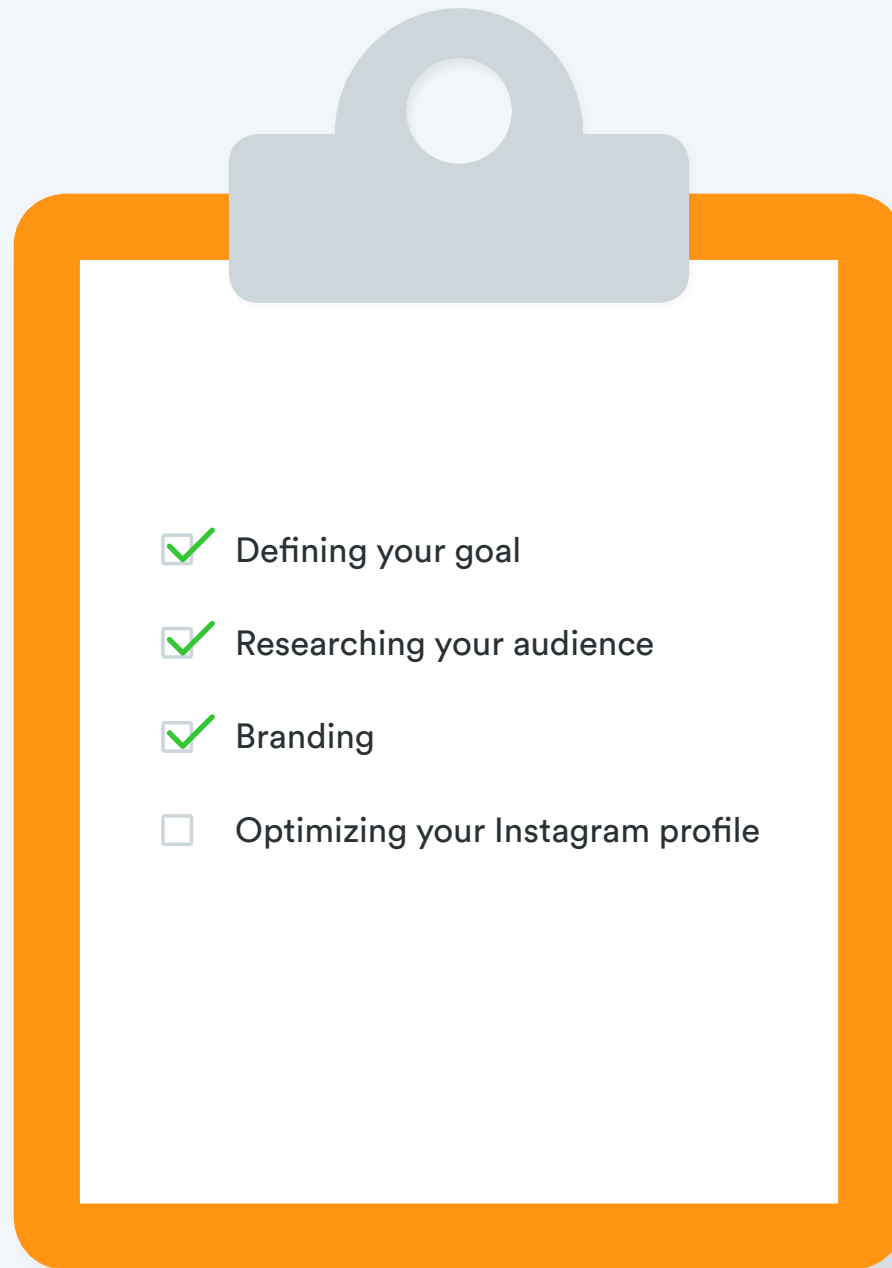
- ✅ Defining your goal
- ✅ Researching your audience
- ✅ Branding
- ☐ Optimizing your Instagram profile

Next, up: optimizing your Instagram profile.

But what does that actually mean?

Here's a checklist of everything you need to do to get the most value from your profile, down to the very last detail.

4.1 Instagram profile checklist

The perfect Instagram profile should include:
(see right)

4.2. Step-by-step to optimizing your Instagram profile

1. A quality photo that reflects what you're about

First and foremost, your Instagram profile photo must represent who you are. Your logo is an easy solution because it helps you stay visually consistent across all of your channels. However, to humanize your brand and build a connection with your audience, go for a photo of yourself! If you are your brand, e.g. you're a consultant or a freelancer, you absolutely have to put yourself out there.

☑ **A**. A quality photo that reflects what you're about

☑ **B**. Your real name

☑ **C**. Keywords

☑ **D**. A CTA to your blog or website

☑ **E**. The right business category

☑ **F**. Action buttons

☑ **G**. Contact info

Instagram profile checklist

The more you share your image, the more recognizable you will become, and this will strengthen your brand and help you create a stronger connection with your audience.

2. Your real name

To ensure people can find you, make sure that the name you share on Instagram is in fact your name, not your Instagram username. Because people who search for you on Instagram will use your real name or your company's name, matching your name to your Instagram handle **decreases** your searchability. Which is obviously not what you want!
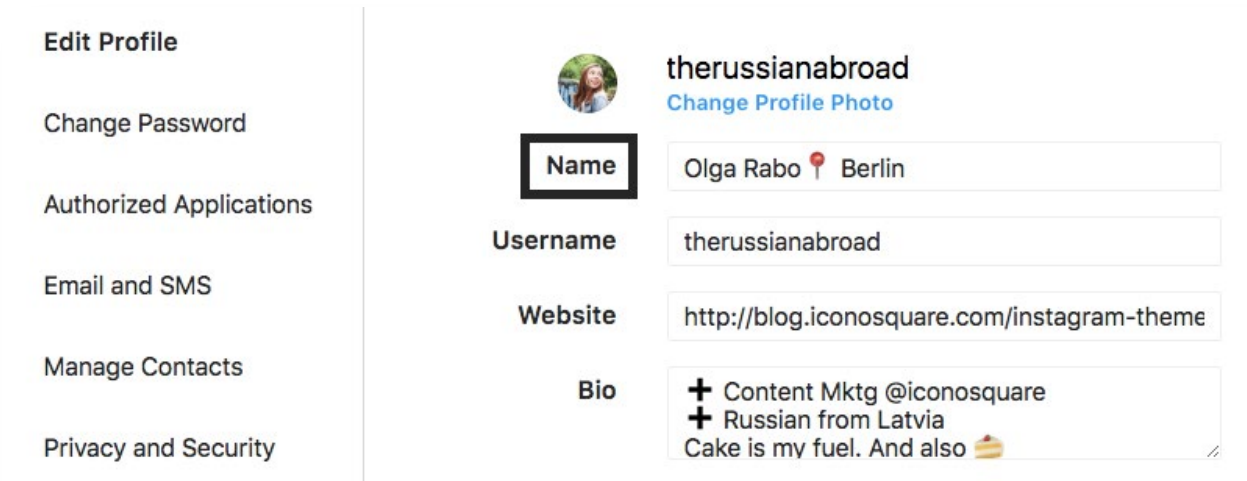
3. Keywords

Add simple keywords to your name to boost your visibility in searches. For example, if you're based in London, add the keyword "London" to your name so those searching for London-based accounts find you easily. Better yet, include a keyword that defines your business or your profession, such as "Social Media Marketer" or "Personal Trainer", so that potential clients can find you when they search for those keywords. Tyler J. McCall has opted for "Instagram Marketing Strategist" – straight-forward and to the point!

You can also add keywords to your bio that define what your brand is all about. If you're an interior design company, for example, adding the keywords "interior design", "home decor", and "architecture" to your bio will help get you discovered when people search for these terms on Instagram. Think about the keywords your ideal follower is most likely to enter into the search bar – nothing too complicated or flowery – and use those.

4. A link to your website with a CTA

Utilize your bio to add a link to your website and drive traffic directly from your Instagram Profile. Of course, you only get one link in your bio so make it count! There is a 'workaround' though: You can use **linktree** or **Tapbio** with a link to tap bio.

Don't forget to add a snappy CTA to encourage users to click the link and learn more about your business and what you have to offer.


@healthyminutemeals directs users to click the link for more easy ideas & meals

5. The right business category

Remember when you set up a Facebook Business account and had to select your business category? Well, whatever business category you selected on Facebook will automatically be pulled through to Instagram. Worried it's not the best fit for your business now? Go to 'Edit Profile' and Tap the Category option to see other categories that you can choose such as Books and Magazines, Events, TV, Film, Local Business, Brands and Products, Music, and so on.

After you choose the category that best fits your business, you can select a subcategory from a drop-down menu. The subcategory is what appears in your Instagram bio.
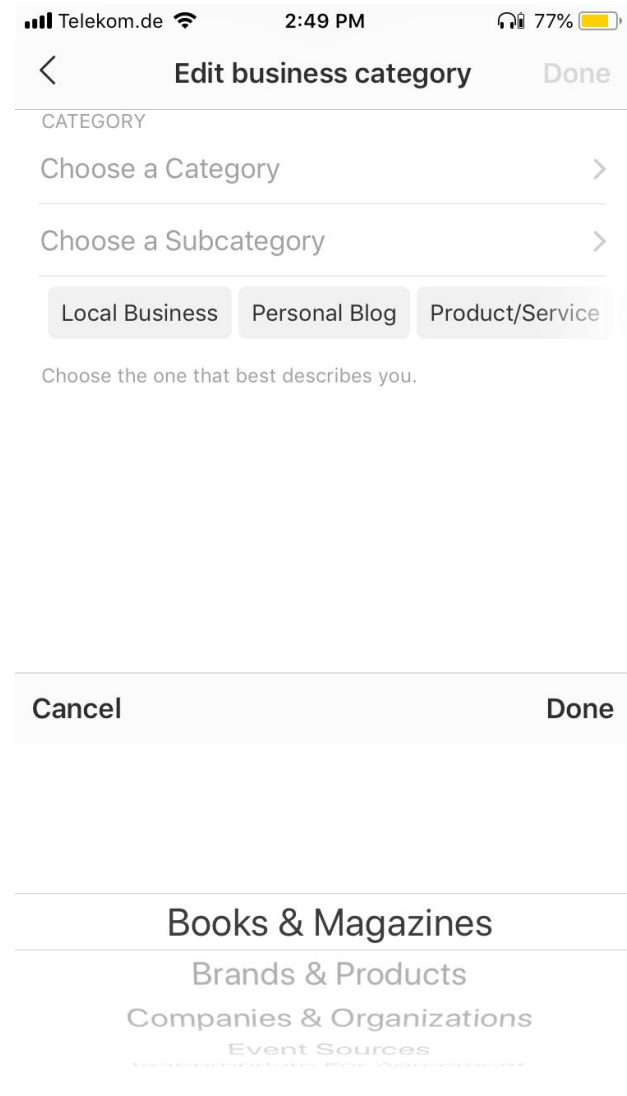
6. Action buttons

An action button connects your Instagram profile with other online services such as Yelp or Eventbrite so your customers can take actions like buying tickets or making a reservation without leaving your Instagram profile.

To add an Action Button to your profile, you'll need to have an existing account with the third-party app you want to connect your action button to. When you've set that up, go to Edit Profile and click Add an Action Button, then choose the online service you're using to do business. Click Next, add the URL that your business uses, and click Done. When you finish, the new Action Button appears in your bio.
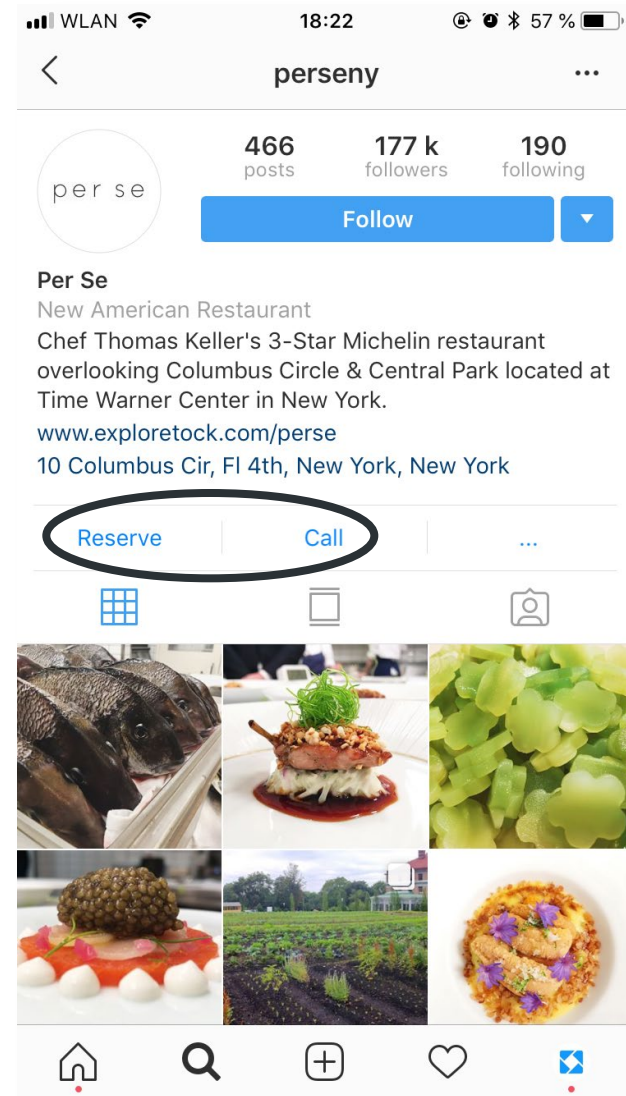
7. Contact info

Finally, to make it as easy as possible for users to contact you, add your email, phone number, and/or address. Tap Edit Profile and open the Business Information section. Then tap Contact Options to see the Email, Phone, and Address fields. Any field you fill in will appear on your Instagram bio.

And those are the pillars of branding on Instagram. Now, I bet you're feeling pretty confident in your feed; you feel like you know what your audience wants, you're experimenting with content, and your profile is fully optimized! Laying the groundwork for your strategy requires a lot of effort, but it's essential to achieving Instagram success – which is well within reach

Good luck on the rest of your Instagram journey!

Iconosquare and Tyler J. McCall
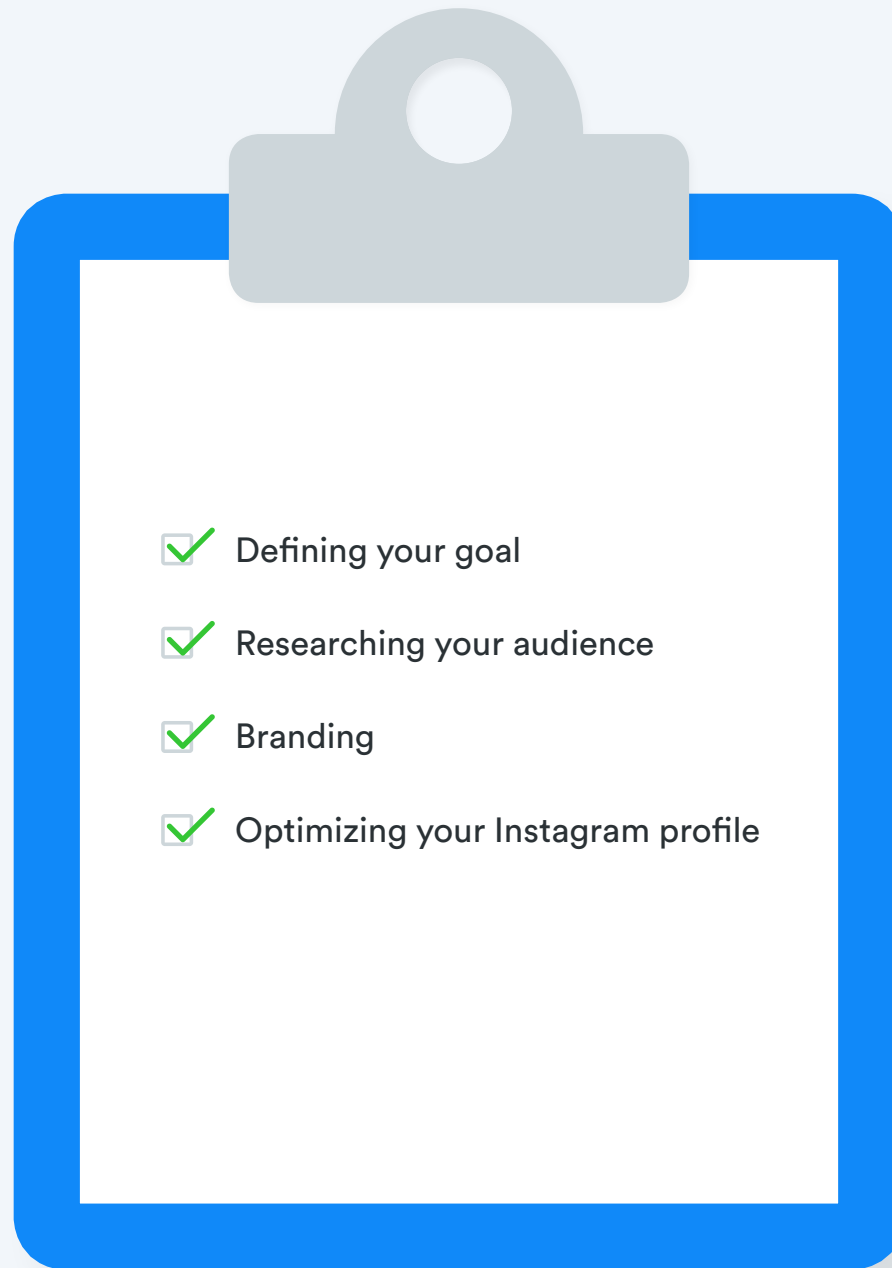
- ✅ Defining your goal

- ✅ Researching your audience

- ✅ Branding

- ✅ Optimizing your Instagram profile

Join the social revolution, try Iconosquare.

Try Iconosquare free for 14 days. No credit card needed.

Start 14 day Free Trial

ICONOSQUARE

Instagram & Facebook Analytics and Management Platform

A very special **thanks** to

TYLER J. McCALL