

# Break

# The Algorithm

**How To Take Your Social Media Strategy To The Next Level**

Boost your likes, up your following, and  
propel your Instagram strategy forward.

girlboss® + DASH HUDSON

Once you've poured your blood, sweat, and tears into your brand, it's only natural that you'd want it to shine on social media. It's 2020 after all, and if your business doesn't have a digital footprint, then you're missing out on massive opportunities for growth, customers, community, and sales if your brand is product-driven.

Luckily, the days of having to post without a plan or purpose are over. We built this handy guide thinking of social media novices and seasoned pros alike to help nudge your business account to its first one hundred, one thousand, or one million followers (because you can never dream *too* big!). With killer insights from the leaders at visual marketing software solution Dash Hudson, we'll also show you how to translate likes, follows, and saves into meaningful engagement data that will help pivot your strategy in real time. Buckle up, because your social strategy is about to take off!

## What To Expect:

- ❑ The basics of social media management and calendar planning
- ❑ Case studies from brands that are crushing it across social
- ❑ A deep dive on metrics so you can better understand your engagement
- ❑ The top strategies for fostering organic community growth
- ❑ Inspiration for creating authentic content for your channel

**PART 1:**

# Getting Started

You know how many people liked your photo, but have you ever wondered how many people saw it? Or which days the majority of your followers are active on Instagram? The easiest (and completely free!) way to start understanding your Instagram engagement and audience is by converting your account to a Business or Creator account. Instagram has simple instructions to set these up in just a few minutes.

## Get Discovered

So, you already have a business account? Let's talk about making it **discoverable**. Instagram handle aside, having a buttoned-up Instagram bio is crucial not only for discovery, but also for introducing yourself to a new audience of potential customers.

Take a step back and think about how you would present your business to someone who has *no idea* what you offer—this is exactly what your Instagram bio does for you. Space is limited, so there's no need to get flowery with your language. Focus on succinctly communicating who you are and what you do.

### Try to include the following:

- 1. What you sell.**  
Even if your *entire* feed only consists of photos of rings, reiterate that you are a jewelry brand, not a nail polish brand, in your bio.
- 2. What makes you different.**  
Clarify what kind of, say, jewelry brand you are, by adding one or two adjectives that summarize your brand's aesthetic or offerings, like "fine, affordable jewelry."
- 3. Who you serve.**  
With over 25 million business accounts on Instagram, chances are there are a lot of brands selling similar products. Another way to make your feed stand out is to clarify *who* your products are for. Maybe you're all about "fine, affordable jewelry for glamorous women."
- 4. Who you are.**  
Getting personal with your bio can help customers identify with your brand on a deeper level. Don't be afraid to share that you're a "small, women-run business based in Southern California" or "founded by a sister duo based in Texas." If your founders have a personal, public handle, add those in!
- 5. What you ask is.**  
Ultimately, your presence on Instagram should be driving new customers to support your business, right? So tell them to. Direct your followers to "Shop our new arrivals" or "Read the reviews", and make sure your link in bio matches.

## Here Are A Few Example Bios We Think Are Top-Notch:



"Vintage clothing boutique for stylish women  
Curated by @yourhandle from Chicago  
Shop new arrivals in our stories every Sunday"



"Email Marketing & Consultations For Local Businesses  
From the woman behind @yourhandle  
Get my FREE tips for starting your first email list!"



"Small batch, gluten-free cookies everyone can indulge in  
We make healthy eating fun and accessible in Boulder, Colorado  
Order a fresh batch today!"

## Remember Your Why

Before you jump into posting 3x a day, every day, **spend some time reflecting on your why**. Your purpose and mission are the why—for example, the value you bring to a community. Once your why is clear you can think tactically about *how* you're going to make good on your mission.

Some helpful questions to consider: What goals are you trying to achieve by posting? Are you hoping to convert customers or keep a lively, engaged community? Or bring levity, humor, and tools and resources to ambitious women everywhere?

Allow your why to be your North Star for posting so that everything you share on Instagram ladders back to a clear purpose. In a time when there's more noise than ever across social channels, you want your message to be concise, purposeful, and productive.

Consider your why and jot down the goals you want to hit on social media:

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## Make A Plan & Stick To It

We're sure you've heard it many times before, but consistency truly *is* key when it comes to showing up on social. This doesn't just mean posting at your most engaged time every day, but also keeping your tone, voice, and style consistent and identifiable. Social scheduling tools like [Dash Hudson](#) make it easy to make a plan and stick to it. If you've been active on social for some time, you'll find that within the scheduler tool, DH highlights time blocks when your audience is most engaged, signalling the best time for you to post throughout the week.

If you're new to posting, you can seek out your most engaged times by testing posts on different days and times with similar content to see what gets the most traction. After a few weeks of this, you should be able to narrow in on the windows that work best for you.

Tools like Dash Hudson can also be used to plan out your content months in advance so you don't have to feel the pressure of posting in real time. (However, if you opt for the pre-planned route, start each morning by reviewing your scheduled content as real-world events and timely social issues may make pre-planned posts feel irrelevant or tone deaf.)

## How Often Should You Post?

Make sure your content plan aligns with your bandwidth and resources as well. If you're a team of one, posting to feed 3x a day and to stories 1x a day might be unrealistic. What's manageable and realistic for your team? You can always scale up if you find you have bandwidth to spare.

As you build creative content brainstorms and calendar planning into your routine, one important rule for consumer-facing brands is to strike an effective balance between your promotional posts and organic content. We like the 80/20 rule, where ~80 percent of your content is authentic, unbranded editorial content, and about 20 percent of your posts are dedicated to selling a product or service.

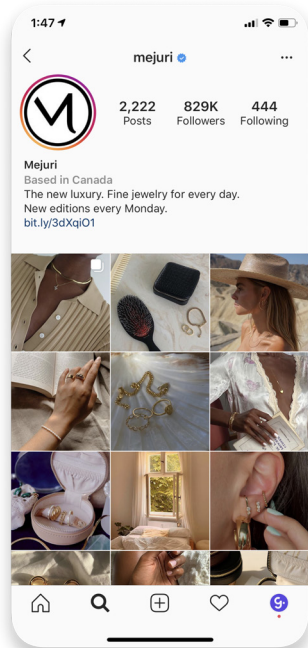


**PART 2:**

# **Case Studies: Who's Doing It Well?**

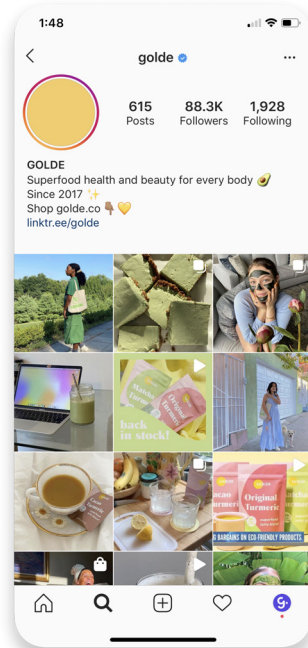
## **Own Your Voice**

Crushing it on social is no easy feat. With a little hard work, a lot of creativity, and a deep connection to your audience, you can grow your brand's digital presence and carve out your own corner of the web. It sounds great in theory, but what does that actually look like in practice? For best results, just ask the experts. We rounded up some of the top women-owned businesses in the game to find out what they get right and how you can, too.



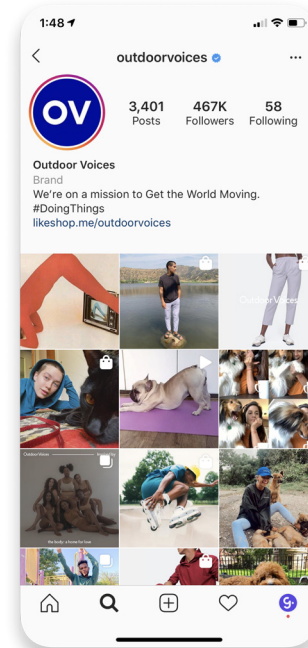
## Mejuri

Ethical fine jewelry brand Mejuri makes luxury accessible, and that ethos permeates throughout its Instagram feed. With a healthy mix of aspirational imagery, glittery product shots, and even a cute animal or two, fans get a full picture of the brains behind the brand and are treated to a community of like-minded accessory lovers—over 800 thousand of them to be exact. Most importantly, the social team leverages user-generated content (UGC) often, pulling tons of tagged images into the main feed. Not only does this highlight the pieces in action, but it showcases how those pieces fit into the lifestyles of their chic target demographic.



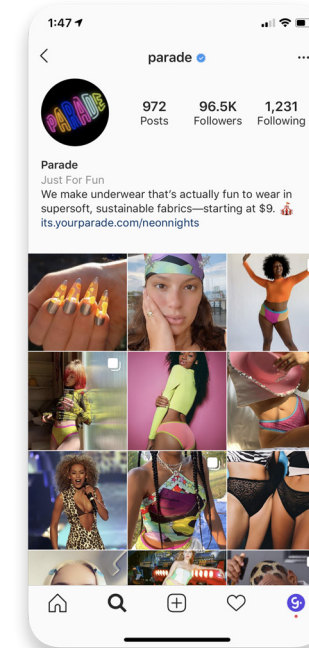
## Golde

Superfoods are at the heart of Golde. On social, the Brooklyn-born wellness brand has the power behind its products on full display with lush fruits and greens everywhere you scroll. When they're not making the deliciously tempting recipes in frequent rotation on Golde's feed, fans are obsessing over the face masks, signature tote bags, and candy-colored packaging—and showing the love on their profiles. In fact, UGC is really the centerpiece of the brand's content mix in-feed and on Stories. A lo-fi aesthetic for their own content makes it seamless to share posts from influencers and followers alike, and garner next-level social proof in the process.



## Outdoor Voices

To those in the know, the Outdoor Voices blue is unmistakable. Its Instagram feed is highly branded with its color and logo, and that helps reinforce to its audience that the experience they get in store or online will translate onto social as well. On a mission to get people #DoingThings, the brand shares imagery and video poised to inspire action—and always with the branded hashtag in tow. Its "Virtual Recess" IGTV series includes everything from fireside chats with bestselling authors to 15-minute workouts with professional fitness instructors, all designed to remind audiences why they need the brand's gear in the first place. And it's highly effective.



## Parade

Parade's manifesto states it's "rewriting the American underwear story in full technicolor," and that's a narrative the brand continues to craft on Instagram. Parade stays true to its roots with content that's equal parts sexy and silly and representative of the shapes and sizes of all its customers. The brand's biggest home run is definitely its community management strategy—its social team responds to almost every comment on every post, from shipping inquiries to friend tags to single emojis, ensuring everyone who interacts with the content feels seen, heard, and appreciated.

## More To Explore

Want even more examples of top-tier brand accounts? We recommend checking out the following for well-rounded approaches to Instagram content in a variety of industries:

- o [Avaline](#)
- o [Clare Paint](#)
- o [Glow Recipe](#)
- o [OUAI](#)
- o [Bandier](#)
- o [Cuyana](#)
- o [Love Wellness](#)
- o [Sakara Life](#)
- o [Briogeo](#)
- o [Ethel's Club](#)
- o [Miss Grass](#)
- o [Summer Fridays](#)
- o [YOWIE](#)
- o [Hike Clerb](#)
- o [Ritual](#)

**PART 3:**

# Understanding Your Engagement

## What's The Deal With Instagram Analytics?

You've got your posting strategy down. Your content looks great, it's on brand, and fans are starting to notice. But, how do you keep up the momentum and stay on top of your followers' interests? The next step in any social media marketing strategy is to track your metrics. Social media analytics give you a full picture of how many people saw and interacted with your content, which is a great way to understand how posts and campaigns are resonating with your audience. On Instagram, you can do this easily within the app by hitting the "Insights" button beneath the bio on your profile.



# The Insights Page Is Broken Down Into Three Tabs:

## Activity

The Activity tab is a snapshot of what's going on with your account week over week. Here, you can view account discovery (including total accounts your profile reached as well as total impressions) and interactions (all actions taken on your account including profile visits and website clicks). The best feature in this tab is the breakdown of numbers by day of the week, so you can determine if there are specific days that you get more interactions and plan your content accordingly. For example, you might notice that Thursdays are a big day for reach and impressions while Saturdays and Sundays are pretty slow. You can make sure to post your most important announcements, contests, or product launches on the days when you know your audience is most active.

## Audience

When it comes to reaching your target demographic, the Audience tab should be your first stop. This is where you can monitor your follower growth week over week, including gains and losses, as well as get a bird's eye view of who those followers are. You can see your followers' locations by city and country, their age range, gender breakdown, and even the days of the week and times of day they're most active. This gives you insight into who you're actually reaching, when to reach them, and gaps in your reach.

## Content

On the Content tab, you'll see a full overview of your posts for the week, including number of posts, as well as view counts for your recent posts, stories, and promotions. Tap the "see all" button on any category to get a closer look at individual posts. You can set the type of post (photos, videos, carousel posts, or shopping posts), the time period for the posts (from seven days up to two years), and desired metric to measure (engagement, reach, likes, comments, impressions, follows, and more). The metric will appear as a number on the image and is sorted from highest to lowest.

**Simply put:** You can use this tab to see how your audience interacted with each post and use it to surface what's working (and what you should ditch). Likes and comments are important, but impressions (the total number of times your post was viewed) and reach (the number of unique profiles that saw the post) are valuable, too. You can even track which posts are inspiring newcomers to follow you or driving them to click your website link. A general rule is to keep pushing content that results in high engagement and avoid the content that doesn't.

## Diving Deeper Into The Numbers

Manually monitoring the numbers can definitely take time, and social media professionals are often some of the busiest on any marketing team. As your business grows, you'll want to dive deeper into the numbers—but a calculator just isn't going to cut it if you've got thousands of posts and hundreds of thousands of followers on the go.

When it's time to level up, Dash Hudson's software can pull all of your historic data and calculate key performance indicators such as:

- **Engagement rate:**  $\text{likes} + \text{comments} / \text{followers}$
- **Effectiveness rate:**  $\text{likes} + \text{comments} + \text{saves} + \text{video views} / \text{reach}$
- **Growth rate:** the rate at which your audience is growing
- **Weekly earned reach:** the number of impressions you receive through UGC

It's quick, easy, and takes all the legwork out of the process so you can focus on what matters: creating content primed to convert.

**PART 4:**

# Strategies For Growth

It's no secret that the Instagram algorithm favors engagement. The more engaged your audience is with your posts, the more Instagram boosts those posts to an even larger crowd. So, how do you foster engagement? It starts with generating interest, of course. Share posts that your followers actually care about. Next, give them a call to action to encourage interactivity. Savvy marketers are using this time to ask their followers questions in the captions of posts. This is a great way to ramp up your comment count, but it also opens the door for meaningful two-way conversations—and that's a much more valuable way to build a community.

## Grow Your Audience With Community Management

Whether you're looking to maintain the status quo of online operations or keep up with and build upon a sudden influx in sales or customers, consistency with your presence, replies, and reactions is important. Regular conversations between brands and followers tells the algorithm you care about each other and, the closer you are, the more likely it is that your post will be prioritized in their feeds. Essentially all you have to do is spread more love on social and watch your business get it back in droves.

## Better Together: The Strength Of Inter-Brand Collabs

For product-driven brands in particular, it's easy to get caught up in the competitive nature of the retail world and bring that attitude to Instagram. Instead, consider that community love factor and how much it helps grow your profile. This doesn't have to be limited to followers—collabing with other businesses can lead two mutually beneficial partnerships that expose huge audiences to what both of you have to offer.

For example, try a combined giveaway, where participants have to follow a few brand profiles and tag friends to be eligible to win a major prize pack. Another easy way to collab is just to shout out brands you admire or think your audience would appreciate with a #FollowFridays initiative. Finally, sharing UGC with multi-brand tags is a way to align yourself with like-minded brands, or even brands you aspire to work with, and elevate your reputation.

## When Social and E-Commerce Collide

When it comes down to it, the physical and digital business spaces are really one and the same. On social channels, posts are the window displays, followers are the foot traffic, and live streams are the in-store activations. And then there's the comments section—your community. It's your fan club, word-of-mouth referral system, and customer service hub rolled into one. For ecommerce-enabled brands especially, leaving comments without responses is akin to leaving customers in an empty store: the shelves are stocked, but nobody is there to offer assistance, answer questions, or make recommendations. It tells them you don't care about what they have to say, and everyone wants to feel important.

**On social channels, posts are the window displays, followers are the foot traffic, and live streams are the in-store activations.**

But it isn't just about the volume of comments you're responding to—the content of the comments can play a major role in your brand's reputation on social. Paying attention to keywords like “do you ship to” or “where can I buy” means you can create more sales opportunities by directing potential customers to the right place. Furthermore, a search for comments including terms like “where is,” “not arrived,” or “shipping date” can quickly turn a negative experience into a positive one, saving potential lost time and revenue. Making this search process a part of your daily routine ensures these questions are addressed within 24 hours and shows followers how much you prioritize their needs.

**PART 5**

# The Art Of Content Creation

## Get Organized With A Marketing Calendar

Now that your strategy is buttoned-up, it's time to get inspired about all of the exciting new content you can create. A great place to start is by creating a content or marketing calendar. What are the key dates you want to plan content around this year? What themes will drive the focus of each month's posts? This is especially important if you have product drops throughout the year—pre-planning will allow you to be strategic about your marketing for those products or offerings. Research holidays most relevant to your audience and brainstorm around those to humanize your brand.

Once you have a rough outline for your calendar, the next step is to explore what **evergreen content** looks like for your brand. Evergreen posts aren't tied to a specific timeliness peg, product launch, or viral trend, so they can be scheduled just about any time and help bolster up a backlog of great content to post in a pinch. **Choosing what content works best for your brand starts with testing different asset types.**

# What Type of Content Should You Post On Instagram?

## Photography-based assets:

- o On-model
- o Flat lays or product shots
- o Environment shots, or candid customer/ audience shots
- o User-generated reposts

## Text-based assets:

- o Infographics
- o Testimonials
- o Relevant quotes
- o Countdown graphics
- o Memes and mantras

Working from your content calendar, hold a brainstorm session for the following month's social plan and dream up your next viral Instagram post or IG story franchise. Then drop all of your new content into DH and check out its real-time performance predictions, which can be found in the upper corner of each asset in the "unscheduled" field.

Once you're pleased with your gorgeous lineup of scheduled content, sit back, relax, and let the auto-posting spare you from needing to be attached to your phone to post in real-time.



## Ready To Keep Learning?

Once you've aced all the material covered here, there are plenty of other free or affordable resources out there to help you push your social presence a step further. Consider brushing up on these social courses we love:

[Dive deep into all aspects of social media strategy on the Dash Hudson Blog](#)

[12 Tips to Increase Sales on Social Media](#)

[Decoding Influencer Marketing](#)

[Instagram Content Planning Course with Puno of ilovecreatives](#)

[Social Curator Subscription: Captions + Images Curated for Your Feed, Monthly by Jasmine Star](#)

[Online Digital Marketing Course with General Assembly](#)

[Online Instagram Courses on Skillshare](#)