

# The Power of Social Media Stories for Marketers

How Social Media Stories  
Are Making Their Way Into Marketing

# Introduction



There is a saying among marketers that “storytelling is SEO for the human brain.” Of course, when this saying was first coined, it had nothing to do with social media stories.

But perhaps it should have done. Social media stories in fact have HUGE potential to engage audiences, to build authority and trust, and to generally boost your brand. Not only that, but they’re also gaining in popularity all the time. Social media stories took the internet by storm and they’re not showing any signs of slowing down now.

In this book, you will learn precisely what a story is, how to create them, and how to have huge success using them to grow your audience and increase brand loyalty. Four out of five major brands report using stories to promote themselves, and that should tell you something about how big this is going to be going forward.



# What is a Social Media Story?



## Chapter 1

The first social network to use stories as we know them today was Snapchat. In fact, this was the core feature of that app and the one that set it apart. Snapchat was a surprise hit, despite being built on some slightly shaky code, and so it wasn't long before the other major players had jumped on board. YouTube introduced reels, and Facebook brought us Stories (also available on Instagram). Twitter gave us Twitter Moments, and Skype created Skype Highlights. The idea behind a story is unique and quite unlike other forms of content found on social media. A story is a post that is usually delivered through a different feed than the rest of a user's content, and that is only available for a short period of time. After this, the story will disappear and no longer be available.

Stories can take a number of different formats. Often they will be videos, but they can also be still images. Also a common trope for stories on multiple platforms, is to allow the use of stickers and text. These are usually placed on top of the main media, giving them pride of position and leading to very impressive engagement and open-rates.

### Why More and More Companies Are Using Stories

There are a number of compelling reasons that many brands are starting to rely more and more on the use of Stories. One is that the organic reach of business accounts on a number of social platforms is decreasing – and this is something we'll encounter a few times in this book. Another is that stories provide a great ROI in terms of the time and effort they require and the benefits they offer.

The great thing about Stories is that they are temporary – normally lasting just 24 hours. That means that they don't leave a lasting impression on your page, feed, or account. That gives them a much more personal and off-the-hip feel that customers and fans really dig, but it also means they can afford to be a little less polished and tailored. That means you don't need to shoot a product using studio lighting and a DSLR camera: you can just snap it on your phone and send it off. For businesses, this can be seen as a revelation.

Finally, Stories are also extremely popular with customers and users right now. While it's better to stay away from such terms in marketing, stories are undeniably "trendy." In fact, Facebook introduced Stories to its platform for that very reason. At the time, the site was seeing fewer and fewer members of the younger generation sign up, as the demographic began to skew upwards in age. Meanwhile, Snapchat was enjoying a lot of success for a new option – and particularly among the younger contingent of users. Snapchat provided a way for kids to share messages that couldn't be held for posterity, and in a very immediate and fun manner. Facebook had to adapt or risk becoming obsolete. And as marketers, we need to do the same!

# Using Stories For Marketing -The Basics

## Chapter 2

So how do you go about using Stories for marketing? How do you take a form of communication that is designed to self-destruct like the start of Mission Impossible, and use that as a way to draw in more visitors and to make more sales?

Well, that's where you're going wrong to start with!

If you're used to traditional forms of marketing, and if you have been creating ads and posts for Instagram and Facebook for a while now, then you might be accustomed to thinking in a more straightforward and direct manner. Marketing makes leads, and ads make sales.

But in truth, Stories are not for either of those things. Stories are perfectly suited not for increasing the number of followers you have, OR for selling directly to those followers. So if that's the case, what *is* this form of marketing for? The simple answer is that it is for building stronger relationships with your existing followers. It's about deepening that connection – and that's huge when it comes to increasing profits in the long term.

You might have heard of the book *1,000 True Fans* by Kevin Kelly. In it, the author describes the value of creating meaningful relationships with your followers. He describes how as long as a business genuinely manages to obtain 1,000 TRUE fans, it will likely be able to succeed.

What is this based on? Simply the notion that a true fan is not only someone that will buy nearly every one of your products, but also someone who will like all your posts, and who will rave about those same products to anyone who will listen. In short, a TRUE fan is a brand ambassador. And it's through brand ambassadors that your business can begin to grow exponentially.

How do you get to this point with your followers though, and what does it have to do with Stories? There are lots of ways you build true fans. One is by having a very clear mission statement for your business. One is by knowing precisely who your business is “for” meaning that you understand the psychology of your buyer persona. But the other is through meaningful interactions. And in the case of Stories, that can also mean building a personal brand.

**Stories for Trust, Engagement, and Personal Brands**

It is common knowledge that most buying behavior is based on emotion rather than logic. We buy things because we see them in the store, think they look desirable, feel tired, and are worried we'll miss out if we don't buy. That's why, often when we go away and really think about a purchase prior to making it, we decide better of it.

With emotion being such a key factor when it comes to spending, it should be no huge surprise to learn that we are more likely to buy when we feel that we really know, understand, and like the seller. Better yet if we feel that the seller has views that agree with our own.

This puts us at ease. We feel better about buying from someone we know because we feel it's less likely they're going to try and con us. Likewise, we often want to please the seller. Finally, if we feel that their beliefs are aligned with ours, then we might feel as though buying from them will in some way "align" us with them and help to strengthen our sense of identity.

And that's where Stories come in.

Many businesses will create a lot of marketing and advertising that is highly polished and staged. Products look perfect with ideal lighting and professional-looking backdrops, while the personality selling the product is never shown. We feel very detached from these kinds of brands, which is why the average person doesn't exactly shed a tear when they feel that a big corporation is going bankrupt.

This is even MORE true when it comes to selling B2B a lot of the time.

This method is getting increasingly old-fashioned though, as the company in question fails to build any trust, to demonstrate anything that would make it unique or stand out, or to demonstrate any personality.

If you run an online business, then your Instagram account might have the same problem. It might well be filled with lots of stunning looking images of products, or perhaps lots of inspiring quotes, or photos of your lifestyle that are designed to look perfect. This is the image you want to portray, and you know that by including even one unpolished looking photo, you will make the entire account look less messy.

But this is where the nature of the Story is ideal. This is a TEMPORARY image that will never be included on your profile. That means you can include anything you like here, and in 24 hours it is going to be gone. This in turn means you're permitted to peel back the curtain just a little, and to show your followers "how the sausages are made" so to speak.

Stories can be the kinds of insights that you would never include on the main account, but that help to give you a little personality and help to make you seem much more approachable. Let's say for example that you were a high profile lawyer, you could use Stories to share aspects of your life – not only the travel and nice hotels, but also your preference in sandwich, your gripes with the queues at your bank... you know *normal* stuff.

Likewise, a local business might share a Story about a fun customer who came into their store. Or about the parade outside that is driving away customers. They might even include a photo of their dog, or a short post about how they loved the latest Marvel movie.

Things like that might not sound like strategies that would gel with traditional approaches to business... But that should be considered a GOOD thing. This is not a traditional approach to business, but a much more modern strategy for improving relationships.

These posts don't need to be on-topic, but they do need to be on-brand in as much as they should show a side of you and your business that you want to be seen.

In the next chapter, you'll see just how this kind of interaction can not only strengthen relationships, but also invite meaningful interactions that translate to sales.

If you're worried about being too personal, then you can use this as a kind of "behind the scenes" to show you setting up the shop, or your staff enjoying drinks out. What's even more effective though, is if you choose to create a "personal brand."

## Stories for Personal Brands

A personal brand essentially means a brand that puts the owner (that's probably you) front and center. Rather than promoting X company, you instead promote yourself as a sole trader.

This doesn't necessarily reflect on the size of the company, or even it's structure. Most companies began as one or two people. It's rather a conscious decision early in the business's life, to push the individual. And for all the reasons we've discussed, this is a very powerful thing.

So instead of being RXPlumbing LTD, you might instead be John Dandy and Co Plumbing. The difference is that the John Dandy is a person that you feel you can "know" rather than a faceless company. Even if you never deal with John Dandy, the implication is that he's there, and that if you had a serious complaint you *could* talk with John Dandy. And this opens up huge potential for marketing that otherwise would simply not exist. You can now, for example, do a live Q&A with your followers and they can actually speak with the owner of the company! Likewise, you can show them some of the homes that you've visited and how you've helped them, and they'll not only get to see a demonstration of the great service you can provide, but will also get to see even more of your personality.

Have you ever found that one plumber or electrician who you know does a good job and who you know will turn up on time? And then you never feel the need to use anyone again?

What if you could become THAT service provider, even without ever having met the customers yet?

## Stories for Social Media Influencers

There is one more group that should definitely sit up and take notice of Stories: social media influencers. Scratch that. Most influencers are already ALL OVER stories because they know just how important they are. The group that should get involved then is the *aspiring* influencers group. The people who want to become influencers, but haven't quite got there yet.

And this goes for bloggers too, because like it or not, you're essentially just an old-fashioned type of influencer. An influencer is someone for whom the personal brand IS the business. That's someone that inspires, entertains, or educates an audience to the point that the audience trusts their recommendations implicitly. The creative doesn't necessarily sell a product of their own (though they may) but they have so much clout that they can generate huge amounts of cash from simply wielding their influence.

For example, did you know that the going rate for a sponsored post on an Instagram account with 200,000 followers is \$1,000? On YouTube it's \$1,000 for every 100,000 followers!

That's BIG when you consider that there are PLENTY of accounts out there with over 1,000,000 subscribers/followers. That in turn equates to \$10,000 for a single post. On Instagram it takes about 2 minutes to post an image!

In other words then, the potential ROI for a successful social account is gigantic. And how do you get to that point? Using stories is an absolutely essential way for all the reasons we discussed – it lets people come along on your outings and feel that they know you. That they're a part of your *story*.



# More Benefits of Stories and How to Use Them to Maximum Effect

## Chapter 3

While simply posting Stories as you go about your day is a great way to help bring your followers along for a ride and show off what you're all about, this is also only part of what makes Stories so effective for increasing engagement. Because the real value of Stories is in the way that they can facilitate communication.

When you open up to your followers in this natural and organic way, in a format that feels very instant and current, you invade people to respond.

And THIS is where you can potentially make a massive difference in the way that your followers see you.

For example, let's say that you have a store selling hair products. You can post beautiful pictures of women's hair, or well-lit bottles to your main feed all you like, but if you post a short video of *yourself* talking naturally to the camera about how you tried the latest product that just came in and your hair feels AMAZING, then that is infinitely more engaging.

And notice that in this example, you never actually said what the product was. You just said something new that came into your store. This is the critical aspect, because it means that you have invited a conversation. That in turn means that you can sell directly to those leads.

Now of course, directly messaging every single person in order to sell a bottle of shampoo might not be the most time efficient method of doing business. But if you imagine that this is a big ticket item – perhaps tickets to see a seminar you run for \$1,000 – then suddenly it's a lot more viable.

Moreover, you can also do this with products that you aren't selling! Giving people tips throughout the day and doing so via message, is a brilliant way to really establish some rapport with those people. It lets them feel as though they've just got a great "insider tip" from a mate, and that's going to drastically increase their chances of checking out your next post, or of buying your product even.

### Announcements and Sales

Another great way to make use of Instagram or Facebook Stories is for announcements.

Stories are displayed extremely prominently on most social media platforms, meaning that they're often one of the first things that users encounter when they land on the sites.

Not only that, but if you haven't posted a story in a while, then they will be notified that you have. This of course is an excellent way to grab their attention when they might otherwise not have been about to engage with your brand. An announcement can mean that you are introducing a new product or service, or it can mean that you are running a special deal. Either way, this gives you an excellent way to alert people and potentially to drive some sales. The best part is that the nature of Stories means that viewers will know they're not looking at a live post – that this sale is happening NOW.



# Instagram Stories For Business

## Chapter 4

When it comes to Stories for business, the biggest platform you are likely thinking of is Instagram. Yes, it might have been Snapchat that started it all, but Snapchat remains a relatively obscure option that only has so many users and that appeals to a very specific niche in the market.

Instagram on the other hand is the second largest social media platform in the world, second only to Facebook. But while that might lead you to think that it would be Facebook that would be the ideal choice then, the fact that Instagram is initially designed from the ground up to be a visual platform makes a huge difference here. People use Instagram because they want to see images and videos. That makes it the perfect place to share Stories and to promote your business in a visual manner.

It gets better too, because this is the ideal time to start using Instagram Stories for business. Like any type of Story, Instagram Stories have the potential increase your engagement and to raise trust with your audience. At the same time though, they are also very much on the up and up in terms of user base.

### How to Get Started With Instagram Stories for Business

Instagram has a relatively straightforward interface on mobile (which is the only option for sharing stories). That said, it does tend to hide a few options in plain sight, which can make it difficult to figure out the very first time.

To find your Stories, you might be looking for a button that says “Stories” for instance. Instead though, you’ll get there by swiping right from the home screen, or by tapping the icon in the top left that looks like a camera.

You can now take a photo from the following screen by tapping the shutter button, or make a video by holding it down. Videos can be up to ten seconds in duration.

There are other options too: you can stream live, you can create a boomerang, you can super zoom, you can rewind, and you can hands-free video.

If you prefer, you can pick an image from your camera role in order to use a previously created video or picture. If the photo is over 24 hours old, then a sticker will appear on it with the day, month, and year. You can opt to simply remove that if you so wish – just drag it onto the trash icon.

Likewise, you can also add face filters to your Stories. This works like the now-famous filters on SnapChat in order to apply amusing accessories, or to warp your face in a number of different ways.

Swiping left and right will similarly apply extra filters to the entire image that can change the colours and look of your photos and videos.

Tap anywhere on the screen to bring up a text tool and start typing. You can also change the size, colour, and shape. Use the @ symbol to tag other accounts.

Tagging other users is a good way to get noticed by them, which in turn can result in some free publicity should they decide to give you a shoutout in return.

You can also add a sticker that will provide your location. This can help you to stand out in search, and is also a great way to show off where you are if you're posting while travelling – something that a lot of brands and influencers will do in order to let their viewers live vicariously through their travels! This is also a fun way to shout out a business that you're visiting (perhaps as part of a sponsorship).

What's even more useful is the hashtag. Simply write with the hashtag symbol on your Story, and it will work just like hashtags across the rest of Instagram. Now your Story will be shown in collections of other Stories using those hashtags, creating the opportunity for new users who share that interest to discover your content. Instagram now also lets users search for Stories this way, so it's important that you know how to use them well.

## A Quick Primer on Smarter Hashtags

Hashtags are extremely powerful tools for bringing more people to your main page, your photos, or your sponsored post. A hashtag simply tells Instagram what a photo is about, which in turn means that it can then categorize it and let people search for it.

The fact that you can now add hashtags to stories therefore, is somewhat game changing. And it means that you can help your Stories to stand out and promote themselves in their own right.

The key though, is understanding how to use hashtags to your advantage. A mistake is to presume that the best hashtag is the most popular one (fun fact, the most popular Instagram tag is "love"). In fact though, this strategy will simply mean that your post gets buried before it has any chance to shine. By the time anyone has searched for your post with the hashtag "selfie," a thousand other people have already posted the exact same thing and as such, your post is now nowhere to be seen.

That said, you of course don't want to choose a hashtag that no one is looking for either! This is why the best strategy is most often to go somewhere in the middle and to aim for a hashtag that has around 30,000 posts a day.

## FAQS

The question sticker that you can add to Stories on Instagram is a brilliant feature as it denotes that you are open to questions. This "ask me anything" Story is a great place for you to clear up any misunderstandings around your products or services, as well as to help encourage people to make that final decision to buy.

The sticker provides a small chat box where users can type up their questions, and even if an answer doesn't lead to a sale, it can be excellent for market research purposes. What aren't you communicating about your business as clearly as you could be? What are people interested in learning more about?

# Facebook Stories For Businesses

## Chapter 5

Facebook announced that it would be getting on board the Stories gravy train in late 2016. This was just a few months after the release of Instagram Stories.

These days, Stories are used by a huge number of accounts. In May 2018, over 150 million active users were regularly posting content to the platform. That creates a potentially huge market for businesses looking to make a splash.

That said, while the number is large, it's also not so large as to be impossible to stand out. This is a platform that is still growing, and as a result, you can still get noticed – it's something that not every brand has begun taking full advantage of yet.

This is particularly relevant, given that the organic reach of Facebook pages is continuing to decline. Facebook is seeing more and more users migrate from its platform, and is presumably is worried that a prevalence of advertisements on newsfeeds might be the culprit. As such, content from pages has be de-prioritized.

Through Stories though, business owners now have a new way to cut through the noise and to get their content seen. And of course, this also comes with all the benefits associated with stories in general that we have already explored.

### How Facebook Stories Work

Facebook Stories appear in a different place in relation to other types of post. While images and updates appear on the user's feeds, Stories will appear right at the top of the app. That means that Stories are actually the first things that users see when they open Facebook!

Not only that, but the icons for the Stories – at the time of writing – are large and rectangular. That is to say that they are ideal for consuming on mobile, and they take up a large amount of space. This makes them very difficult for a user to miss.

This really is “prime real estate” for internet marketers.



To use Facebook Stories, there are a few steps you need to follow. Firstly, you will need to create a Facebook Page. On Instagram anyone can create a Story post, but on Facebook, you need to have a Page to do so as a business. You'll then need to be an administrator on that page in order to gain access to posting stories.

Facebook Stories can also be accessed from Facebook Messenger, where they are displayed as a row at the top of the inbox.

Like Instagram, Facebook Stories are available for 24 hours after being posted.

## Creating Your First Facebook Story

To create a Facebook Story, you need to start by making a page. Select the option to create a page then, and then give your page a name (which ideally should be your business name). You'll also need to offer some other details like your postal address, your phone number, and more.

You'll also want to choose a category for your Page. This should roughly describe the type of business you run and will make it easier for others to find you.

You'll also want to upload a profile photo, which should ideally communicate precisely what your business is about and who it is for. This might be your logo, but the same holds true for logos: the ideal logo is one that clearly expresses the mission statement and industry of the business.

## Getting Started With Stories

Instagram only allows you to share stories from your phone or tablet, but with Facebook Stories, you can easily share through the website as well. In fact, there are ways to share stories through Facebook Lite, as well as Facebook Messenger.

The recommended option for users however, is to share their stories using the app. This is more versatile and provides more options and tools for users than the desktop version. Not only that, but it of course gives you access to your phone's most-likely-superior camera.

In the app, you will start by choosing the hamburger menu (three lines) in the top right of the app. Keep in mind that these instructions may change as the app is updated.

Now select the page that you just created, and you'll be taken to an area where you can see some details and create posts. In order to share a Story however, you will need to view the page itself as a visitor might see it. Click the icon along the top called "Page" and then tap on your profile image. You'll see the option appear to "Create Story." Once you've done that, the app will open up your gallery and show recent images. You'll also be able to tap the camera icon in order to take a new photo or video. To use video, you will need to long press the shutter button. You'll now have the option to add effects by selecting the wand icon at the bottom of the screen, to add text by hitting the letter icon, or to add stickers. These can add a bit of personality and fun to your posts and are very similar to the same feature found on other platforms. You can also draw free hand on the screen, which is ideal if you have a device that uses a stylus, such as a Galaxy Note or an iPad Pro.

Finally, the most useful feature is the link icon. This doesn't let you link directly to a site of your choosing unfortunately, but what it does do, is to give you the opportunity to add a call-to-action button. This can include options like "Book Now" and "Learn More."

This has potential to be extremely monetizable, as it allows you to sell things directly through your stories, which will have a high open rate.

## Tip: Cross Post to Instagram and Facebook

A really useful tip when it comes to posting Facebook Stories, is that you can easily cross post from Instagram. Instagram has a larger engagement when it comes to Stories, so you might choose to prioritize that platform. But by selecting to post to both sites, you'll be able to get even more benefit while putting in no extra work.

Simply head to the settings menu called "Story Controls" and then scroll down to the option to "Share Your Stories to Facebook." Toggle that option to the on position, and you'll automatically post to both.

# Snapchat Stories For Businesses

## Chapter 6

And so, we come to Snapchat, which in many ways is the black sheep of this group. Snapchat is the one that started it all of course, but it's also the one that in some ways is the most limiting for marketers. That's because Snapchat doesn't have a live feed or page where permanent content can be placed. It also lacks some of the advanced tools that other platforms benefit from.

Another issue with Snapchat – and one that doesn't get raised often – is that it is actually not programmed all that well. The app takes up more space than it should, uses more memory, and doesn't have the most intuitive interface. But it remains popular. In fact, it is still the 5<sup>th</sup> most popular social network of all, and has 330+ million users every month. Consider too that the entire experience is *built* around Stories in this case. So if you're going to be creating Stories to share on Facebook and Instagram, then you might as well post the same ones here as well!

### A Quick Primer

To bring you back up to speed, Snapchat is a site that lets you create short term messages that can be sent to specific users, as well as Stories that work just like they do in the previous two examples.

When a user posts to their Story, the image or video will again be viewed at the top of the app, this time on the Discover page. The Stories are available to be viewed for 24 hours before they self-destruct.

You can see Stories from friends, as well as Stories from accounts that you subscribe to. This is what we're going to be targeting with our marketing.

The demographic for Snapchat skews very young, which may or may not be a good market for your brand – something to consider when deciding how to divide your time. The good news is that the average user opens the app 25 times a day and the reason likely has a lot to do with a powerful urge that we can tap into as marketers: FOMO. That is: Fear Of Missing Out.

### Posting Content

When you enter the app, you'll see there are four main windows. Those are Camera, Discover, Friends, and Snap Map. One thing that is very unique about Snapchat, is that the first thing you see is you! The Snapchat app *opens up*



onto the camera, which makes it easy to start posting right away. Swiping across the screen is how you navigate between the different windows.

We're interested in the camera window of course, as this is where you'll create your images.

To make a photo, you can simply tap the large circle down the bottom, or hold it for video – we've seen this before at this point. Videos can once again last up to ten seconds. There is also the option to upload from your gallery, which is always a good option if you want to increase the quality of your content (more on that in just a moment).

## Filters (Lenses)

As with the other platforms, you have a lot of interesting options for decorating and augmenting your stories at this point. Most of these will be available *after* you take the photo, but before you go ahead, you also have the option to apply filters – called 'Lenses'.

Lenses are effectively filters that will add different accessories to your face, or alter it in humorous and creative ways. We've seen this feature on Instagram, but it was Snapchat that started it, and in this case it's Snapchat that does it best. Since the much-vaunted 2.0 update a few years ago, Snapchat filters have become extremely advanced, using full computer vision in order to alter faces in real-time in 3D.

Lenses like these are fun for users but can also be handy for influencers. For one, they give you something to share when you might not have anything in particular to say. People will love seeing their favorite content creators goofing around and it's an easy way to show your lighter side.

The other benefit is that these filters will often explode in popularity all of a sudden and that way give you a great way to get in on a trending movement.

To access these filters, either tap on your face in the photo, or use the face icon just next to the capture icon. From here, you can then take a photo or film as normal.

## Editing Content

Next come the different editing options you have available to you once you've taken a photo. These include stickers which you can apply around the image as decoration.

Stickers come in a lot of different shapes and sizes. You'll search through them based on category, and from there you can then add them to your post, these are updated all the time and provide a great way to quickly communicate a concept to your viewers, so they're worth exploring.

The T icon will allow you to type and edit the font, and the pencil icon will let you draw on the photo or video in real-time.

The scissors icon lets you crop your image in order to create new stickers from it, which is a very handy feature if you use it properly.

The stopwatch icon is what allows you to set how long you want your content to be visible to the recipient for. This includes your Stories, and lets you show a quick glimpse of something *or* show a longer image that gives the user time to read.

Things can get quite nuanced here, depending on how creative you want to get with it. If you are so inclined, you can change the timings of different shots as your viewers swipe through your feed in order to create a more surprising

and dynamic experience for them. What's more, is that you could quickly tease someone with an image and *then* follow up with a longer shot. It even allows for a sense of comic timing! Have some fun with it.

## Adding a Call to Action

Finally though, the most useful option of all is the ability to add links to your posts. This is one area in which Snapchat drastically outperforms Instagram. Whereas Instagram requires users to have 10,000 followers (or a verified account) before they will be able to use links through the swipe up method; Snapchat lets you add any URL you like right away!

This means that you can promote a product right in your snapchat and then link to it so that people can buy right away. This is an ideal way to convert your Snapchat momentum into sales!

Once you've added all these final touches, all that is left to do is to hit the blue send button (the arrow) in the bottom right hand corner. You'll be then be prompted to select if you want to send your Story to someone you know, or add it to your Story.

# How to Create Better Stories

## Chapter 7

At this point, you understand the benefit of using Stories, and you understand how to use them on the three biggest platforms. There are more we haven't looked at yet (YouTube Reels for example), but that covers the big places that you should be spending most of your time and energy.

But that brings us to the missing and most important piece of the puzzle: the quality. How do you ensure your Stories are *good* and worth watching for the users?

### Quality Content

Before we get into the technical details, it's first important to consider the very concept of your story. Is this something people want to see? Are you overdoing it?

Quantity and regularity is a big consideration for many creators making social media Stories. So then just how often should you post and at what time of day?

As for quantity, the general advice for social media *in general* is that you should post once or twice a day. This has been shown by studies to be more effective than posting either more or less regularly. The problem with this however, is that Stories work differently from other posts and so we can't extrapolate this information.

Whereas posts to your main feed risk 'clogging up' users' feeds and becoming irritating (or simply being buried and therefore gaining no benefit), posts to your Story will appear at the top of the page and not in a queue.

Moreover, while Instagram and Facebook use complex algorithms that favour the individual user in order to determine which posts to show, this is not how Stories work. Stories are far more weighted by chronology, meaning in other words that the most recent Story is the one that you will be shown first.

And THAT means that you can more easily get seen if you post more regularly. This way, you'll be the first Story presented when more people open up their phones, in turn meaning that you'll get more eyeballs on your content. Don't go crazy, but there is no reason not to post 10 times in a row if the idea you're trying to get across benefits from it. Don't do this all the time though, or your viewers might still judge you!



As for timing, the best time to post is just when people will be getting home from work. That means roughly 6pm in your local area, but you'll need to be strategic to target the most countries possible if you have an international brand.

## What to Post About?

This is the other big question to ask yourself when posting Stories: what is this about? Is it well suited to the format? Should you be posting it at all?

Anything can be a Story. You can post an image of a product and call that a Story.

Generally though, this will simply beg the question: why wasn't that a regular post? Users want to see you use Stories to post about things that are happening *now*. That is why they're so often used to post about concerts, travel, meetings, seminars, and similar events. But this is also what makes them a great fit for product launches, special deals, competitions, shout-outs, polls, and clips of other things that you might be doing.

Going on a business meeting somewhere interesting? Why not bring your followers via Stories? Just created a new post for your blog? Stories!

Stories also work extremely well for news sites. For instance, if you have a tech channel and a big company releases a new smartphone or computer, then you can write about it on the blog and then immediately share that post as news to your Stories.

If you find yourself struggling to come up with ideas for Stories, then consider creating a kind of recurring theme or even a 'series'. A good example was when actor Chris Pratt used Stories to share what he was eating every day on his diet. They were funny, short, and a great insight into his life at the time. They also had the added bonus of showing a bit more of his life through things happening in the background or other stars in the videos.

## Higher Quality

Your Stories don't need to be extremely high quality. In fact, that is often considered to be one of their biggest benefits: that they can be made quickly and don't need to be works of art.

With that said though, creators like Peter McKinnon are showing everyone else up by showing just how attractive and professional they can be.

So, depending on the nature of your brand, you might choose to stand out with a highly polished and beautiful Story. At the very least, learning some basics when it comes to photography, editing, framing, and more can help to elevate the level of your Stories and all the rest of your content for that matter!

## Taking Better Photos

### Equipment

The first thing you should do is to equip yourself. If you hope to take the best pictures that will look professional on your account, then you should have a camera that will be able to take high definition images and you should have editing software so that you can add that extra bit of professional polish.

You're probably used to taking photos for Instagram and Snapchat on your phone. And that of course is something you can still do. To take a high quality photo you just need a phone with a good sensor, high megapixel count, and respectable post-processing. Good options include mostly anything by Apple or Samsung, the Pixel phones, Nokia phones etc.

BUT you also have the option to take photos from your gallery – which you might have added via an SD card or WiFi transfer. This is how you can take photos with a professional DSLR or Mirrorless camera. And you WILL see the difference. This is especially true if you shoot in RAW with a flat color profile and then do a little editing as well. This means that the camera will minimize post-processing, providing more information from the original image to play with. That in turn means you can really create that dynamic, HD looking contrast and crush those blacks/get the colors to pop.

### **Being Ready**

If you run a business with a social account then you should be constantly ready to capture images when the opportunities present themselves. For instance, when I sold my old car in cash not long ago, I took the opportunity to photograph the money in a range of scenarios ready for potential use on my money making channel. Likewise, you might find when you're on a walk that you see a great cityscape which could be used in a range of generic motivational posts. Make sure you have your camera on you at all times, and that you are actively looking out for great photo-ops so that you can create a great resource to draw on in future.

This is another thing to consider: the photos don't need to be posted as soon as they're taken. You can post photos from months ago, or even post photos and videos from stock video/photography sites. This lets you create more content, more affordably.

### **Framing and Depth**

While you aren't going to become a pro overnight, taking great photos is often simply a matter of taking the time to consciously set up the image rather than just pointing and shooting head on. Think for instance about your foreground and background images elements, and about whether having a leaf in the foreground could help to create more of a sense of three-dimensional depth. Meanwhile look for things like paths and lines that can draw the eye in, and think about elements that can frame the action.

You don't necessarily need professional lighting equipment meanwhile, but thinking about the angle you take the shot in relationship to the natural light sources can make a big difference in just a few seconds.

Just take a bit more time and think about your composition as well as your subject and your photography will improve greatly.

# Advanced Technique and Selling

## Chapter 8

There are many more advanced techniques and strategies that we have yet to cover. In this chapter, we'll take a look at some of them, as well as how you can leverage the most powerful in order to drive far more direct sales.

### Mini Slideshows

One of the great things about Stories is the way that they naturally stitch together and play in sequence. This means that if you are thoughtful about which of your images you post in which order, you can turn your content into a kind of slideshow or video. This is a particularly popular way to promote articles for instance.

Here, each story might consist of a caption from your article or a key point that has a kind of cliff-hanger and picture as a backdrop. The user would keep tapping through the Stories to keep hearing more and to be guided through the narrative. It's an excellent strategy for engagement and for driving more people to an article.

### Instagram Albums

One relatively new feature from Instagram, is the ability to save photos from your stories onto your regular post grid as 'albums'. Once you've saved a story or you decide you want to post it normally, you'll be able to select up to ten of those images and videos and then post them as an album. This is a way to contain a whole story in a single node – perhaps an experience such as a trip abroad, or a concert.

This has the appeal of letting you turn your hard work into something more permanent and concrete, and of course there is potential marketing value from these albums that extends beyond the life of a single post. Some might say it cheapens the concept, but seeing as it is an optional feature, it's hard to argue with it.

### Selling

The main objective of any form of marketing is of course to sell, and converting that hard work into sales can sometimes be difficult – especially owing to some of the limitations of the platform.



For example, Instagram does not allow you to include the 'swipe up to buy' option through Stories unless you have enough followers. You could opt to use Snapchat instead as that *does* include a link, but that reaches a much smaller audience and a younger demographic.

So instead, another option is to create a poll. The great thing about polls is that it allows you to see who answered and what they said. This means that you can then contact individual users based on their answers!

One way to use this is to run a poll asking people their opinion on whether your audience would be interested in X new product from you. When you get the responses, you can then contact each of those now-qualified leads directly, knowing that there is a high chance they will convert to sales!

Another strategy is to use the tried-and-tested 'link in bio' option. Here, you simply include a link to your online store in your Instagram bio, and then promote it from within the content.

# The Rest of Your Strategy



## Chapter 9

While Stories are immensely powerful and have huge potential for marketers, they unfortunately do not work in a vacuum. And more specifically, that is to say that Stories *on their own* are not enough to make a huge impact. That's because a Story is only one small part of a much larger social media marketing strategy.

And your social media marketing strategy is likewise just one part of a much bigger puzzle that is your internet marketing strategy!

In order for Stories to work, you need to have that initial following, as well as a good amount of trust and engagement from your audience. This chapter will quickly go over some of how to go about getting that.

### Building a Following on Social Media

#### Have a Niche

The first thing you need to do is to ensure that you choose a niche and then stick to it. This is where a lot of people will go wrong – and it's why most general users don't have lots of followers. Think about it logically: who would *you* want to follow on Instagram or Facebook? Someone that provides interesting content that appeals to you. If that content is completely random, then you'll find there is no reason to keep coming back.

Follow most people though and you'll get pictures of their holidays, of their partners, of their pets and of them doing 'selfies' in the mirror. Unless you know that person this isn't going to be of much interest to anyone – so choose a topic and stick to it if you want to get followers.

Your business is likely to define this topic, so the next challenge is to find a way to take the industry you work in and make that into something interesting and ideally somewhat visual so that you can really sell it from your account. This is where many businesses struggle. If you are a travel writer, then coming up with a great theme for your Instagram account will seem easy. But if you happen to run a business that provides legal consulting... how do you turn that into something people want to follow?

The answer is to think about the lifestyle, and about the 'value proposition'. In other words, what is it that you are helping people to achieve? As a legal consultant, that will depend on your clientele. If you are marketing to businesses then that might mean helping people to achieve their dreams and find success. If you are marketing to families, then it might mean helping them to achieve security financially.

This then can provide the tone and topic for your photos. Are these images of people doing business, of tips for small companies? Or are they images of families and activities for families? Either can work, and from there, the Stories will then share a little of your personality and behind the scenes. This is the cherry on top of the cake.

### **Have a Strong Brand**

What's also crucial for your Stories, for your social media marketing, and for your marketing as a whole, is to set out with a strong brand. Remember, the big advantage of Stories is to let people get to know you more as a brand – to let them feel closer to you and to build trust and engagement.

This works a *lot* more effectively if the brand is something that people can really get behind.

Note here the important distinction between a brand and a logo. A brand is much *more* than a logo. Your branding starts when you identify your mission statement – who does your business set out to help and how? What are your values?

Take a look at the best business accounts on Instagram and you'll see that they all have a clear message and objective. If we go back to the "1,000 True Fans" concept, you essentially need to be more than just a business in order to establish those real fans. No one is a "fan" of their heating company... but you get genuinely fans of Apple. The thing is, there's no reason you *can't* be a fan of a heating company. Not if that company stands for being eco-friendly, being simple for customers, being convenient... Not if that company also does other interesting things and has a *stellar* social media account.

Know your audience, don't try to cater to everyone, and know what you're here to do. Create a logo that expresses this intent and hopefully you'll attract the right kind of customer who has the potential for high engagement. This the kind of customer who will watch your Stories and who will become more loyal to your brand each time they do!

### **Take Good Pictures/Write Interesting Things**

What's also of course rather important, is that you take great pictures. We mentioned that this was somewhat important for Stories, but for your general accounts it becomes much more crucial. Even if you choose a topic that interests a lot of people, you're not going to keep your followers very long if all your images are grainy and at awkward angles.

As such then, it's highly important that you also brush up on your photography skills. This is something that you can learn with a little practice and by reading up online – so put the time in to improve your craft and follow the tips from earlier in this book.

The same goes for other forms of social media. If you have a Twitter account, then you need to Tweet interesting and humorous things. If you have a Facebook page, then make sure that you are sharing interesting content relevant to your audience through it.

The big takeaway? Offer *value*. Make sure you are providing a good reason for people to follow you. Too many brands – especially older corporate businesses – will make the mistake of only ever posting about their own services or industry. Again, this is something that they think makes them somehow more professional and they are often afraid to venture outside of that comfort zone.

But think realistically: how likely would you *personally* be to want to follow an account that only ever posted about how effective its EPOS system is? You need to provide good content to ensure that the next time you post, your followers want to look!

And remember, engagement is more important than followers!

## **Be Active and Consistent**

Of course, people are also going to stop following you pretty quickly if you never post, so you also need to make sure you use the site often if you want to gather some momentum. And better yet, be active in liking other people's photos and posts too and commenting – that way people will come to see who liked their picture and you'll bring in lots of new visitors.

Try to get into the habit of posting once or twice a day and where this isn't possible, use automated systems and scheduling apps to keep a steady flow of content to your channel even in your absence.

## **Tags**

Finally, you need to make sure that people can actually find your sit in the first place, which is where using the right tags come into place.

Tags work in Instagram just the same way that they work on Twitter: you use a hash next to the word that you think people are going to search for, and then that way people can start browsing by theme.

This is similar to picking keywords and keyphrases in SEO: you need to choose things that people are likely to look for, and which the *right* people are going to look for. This requires you to think about what's always popular, what's currently 'in vogue', and also what people are likely to search for within your niche.

As we've seen, using tags that aren't *too* popular is an important tip as well, to ensure that your content doesn't get drowned out right away. On Instagram in particular, users are allowed to include 30 tags with every post. Our advice? Include all thirty. Think of this as thirty free chance to play the lottery – there really is no reason not to take every opportunity!



# How to Put All This Into Action

## Chapter 10

So now you know all the basics. You know how to set up your Social Media accounts for Stories, you know how to post them, and you understand the benefits of the medium and why you should be using it.

Now what's left, is to understand how to put all of this into action so that it works together with synergy. How do you integrate your Stories into your campaign?

### An Example

Let's take an example of a fitness brand. This fitness brand is the personal brand belonging to a sole trader that runs a blog and that sells personal training online. That seller is now going to use their social media platforms and their Stories in order to reach the largest audience possible and engage with them on a deeper level.

Start by creating your logo and your brand. Identify your buyer persona (the exact person you're selling to) and your mission statement, then create a logo and site design that expresses this. Create a blog and post here every two days with relatively short 500-word blog posts. These aren't particularly SEO optimized but aimed rather to work well on social, with strong, eye-catching titles.

Next, you're going to set up your social accounts. Try to get your company onto as many different platforms as possible and to use your company name and logo on every single one. The objective is to 'be everywhere' and to be as consistent as possible with the image you are putting forward.

You will then post to those social accounts regularly, making sure to provide real value as you do. It's these actions that will help you to start to build a following that views you as more than a simple product manufacturer or service provider – but as a brand with a set of ideals and a real mission statement.

By doing this ground work, that's when you can make a real impact with your Social Media Stories. That's when you'll have an army of followers who actually care what you do with your day, who want the inside scoop, and who are excited by your new releases and your Q&As.

Post to Stories once or twice a day – maybe more if you can – and you'll remain in their notification trays and on their minds. Respond to questions and take the time to interact with your audience.

If you can do all that, then thanks to Stories and strong branding, you will have an audience that is more highly engaged and involved than 90% of audiences out there!

Follow this up with the occasional Story that promotes a product or that gauges interest, and you can convert some of those warm leads to buyers.

And *that* is how you employ Stories to their fullest. Good luck!  
It's time to write your own success story!