How Brands Should Use Instagram PR During Work-From-Home Mode via @lisabuyer

Is Martha Stewart’s recent drunk-posting the best new Instagram PR strategy to get media coverage and engagement?

Oops, maybe not for everyone.

Although it is a timely reminder, on-point social media strategies are central to any effective public relations and marketing

With a large portion of the United States and beyond under shelter-at-home orders, it’s never been more true with all eyes online.

Waving farewell to likes and hello to comments, it’s all about the engagement.

Today’s Instagram for PR mode is all about vibrant community, cultural relevance, and visual expression.

Instagram PR Stats Don’t Lie

Before the pandemic, Instagram already offered brands large and engaged audiences.

One billion people use the app every month and 500 million accounts use Instagram stories every day.

But more importantly for brands, 83% of people use Instagram to discover new products or services and 72% make a purchase after seeing something on Instagram.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

If there is one thing these stats show is that your brand

should be on Instagram!

Instagram in the Age of COVID-19

The novel coronavirus pandemic has affected virtually every single area of our lives, including how we handle social media marketing, public relations, and advertising; but that doesn’t have to be a bad thing.

Instead, brands should take this global crisis as an opportunity to be creative, especially on Instagram.

One of the ways to take advantage of these crazy times we live in is to understand your brand can still connect with its customers while building awareness around both your products, beliefs, culture, and values.

I sat down with Hugh Rees to discuss Instagram in the age of coronavirus.

Rees is an Australian-based software engineer, agency owner, and social media expert whose book, “Instagram Mastery: The Ultimate Guide To Using Instagram To Organically Grow Your Brand”, just launched on Amazon.

Here are some expert tips for utilizing and growing your brand account during the pandemic.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

1. Brand Building (or Rebuilding)

Screen-time and social media usage have been skyrocketing these past few months.

Consumers are spending more time on their phones, but they're also being fed much more content.

The best way to differentiate yourself is by having a unique brand identity on Instagram.

While COVID-19 might prevent you from doing business as usual, Instagram PR is a useful way to make sure your audience knows your brand still exists.

TripAdvisor, for example, has been putting out content for its users, while supporting the hospitality community.

This post asks for users to write reviews, which "could help these businesses get back on their feet once people start heading out again."

If your brand is new to Instagram for public relations, Rees wants you to know:

> *"It's never too late to start but you've got to have a goal. Why are you making this account? What kind of content do you want to create? Be very straight with yourself about what you're trying to achieve, and put in the work. It's not going to happen overnight, it will take time to build a following."*

2. Survey Says: Research & Strategy

If you're unsure what your audience wants to see from your brand on Instagram during these difficult times, just ask them.

Not only will it crucially inform your strategy, but it will

also engage your audience.

An intuitive way to do so would be using polls or questions in your Instagram stories or encouraging people to engage in the comments section of posts.

“Be conscious of what is going on outside. You don’t want to be posting photos of you having a fabulous time on a beach, although you can be mixing that content up if you want to post throwbacks but make sure you’re messaging is cognizant of how people are feeling,” Rees said.

3. Algorithm Alarms & Hearts

With so many brands putting out content during the pandemic, knowing how the algorithm works can set your brand apart.

“The Instagram algorithm loves engagement. Reply back to comments straight away, create the conversation. The most engagement your post gets, the more it reaches new people,” Rees said.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

This is especially important during the pandemic for two reasons.

- With so many people spending more time on their phones, it is likely **comments and questions will increase**. Make sure you stay on top of your replies!
- **People are seeking support.** If your brand account replies to them fast, they will feel that you’re there to support the community.

4. Content Counts

Zoom calls are the new boardroom.

What to wear and hair trends are in a new hashtag called #workfromhome or #WFH.

When rethinking your content strategy and adapting it to COVID-19 times, think about how you can help your audience, how your audience's priorities might have changed, and how it might impact your offering.

Once you've determined these, craft Instagram content that will be helpful as well as mindful of what your community is going through.

Even though all days might be blurring together, it does not mean the content calendar should be forgotten.

Don't scrap all the old content just filter it to represent the new normal.

Travel tips might be out but wifi hacks are in.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

Your content should be empathic, not tone-deaf.

A mix of normal content and content showing your customers you want to help and are here for your customers is an ideal strategy.

"Be conscious of what is going on outside, make sure your content is mindful of how people are feeling. Having more content will allow you to grow your audience because people have time on their hands," Rees said.

5. Community Hugs

In these trying times, people want to feel they’re part of a community and that they’re being supported.

By showing your customers that your brand is here for them, you can both make them feel better and gain more exposure!

Overall, you want your brand to be associated with good, and that starts with supporting your community and offering help.

You can also use your brand and exposure to support important causes and organizations.

Danish chef Rasmus Munk, posted a call for volunteer cooks to join his JunkFood initiative, which delivered 20,000 meals to Copenhagen’s shelters for the homeless in the past five weeks.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

A creative way to build community post-pandemic is to organize activities your followers can engage in.

For example, fitness brands have responded to the shelter-in-place orders around the country with home workouts videos available on Instagram, live workout classes, and partnering with influencers.

Athleta, for example, has made a highlight dedicated to their workout challenge, which brings their community together around the same goals.

Other brands like O’Neil have offered songs, books, and movies suggestions to their followers.

What would “The Today Show” be without its plaza segments?

They created an Instagram account called @todayplaza and keep

the community going each morning.

6. Frequency Flows

How many posts are too many posts?

“Post at least once a day. And the more followers you have the more you should post. But don’t just post content for the sake of posting content, and make sure you’re not posting content that isn’t of value,” Rees said.

People have more time on their hands than ever so make sure you’re giving them enough quality content.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

You should also make sure the content is varied enough in its form.

Take advantage of stories and lives.

Instagram’s live feature has seen a 70% increase in usage compared to pre-coronavirus analytics!

7. Hashtags Debate: In the Caption or Comments?

Because so much content is being put out during this pandemic, using hashtags definitely helps increase reach and new users.

Thirty hashtags is the maximum and if you are not using hashtags well you are missing a huge opportunity for exposure.

When it comes to the never-ending debate surrounding where you should your hashtags?

“I always used to say it didn’t matter whether you put your

hashtags in your captions or your comments. I had been using both and couldn’t see much difference. However, lately, I had been noticing that when we were putting hashtags in the first comment, our reach wasn’t as good. Now that I’m including them in the actual caption, our reach is back to how it used to be,” Rees states.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

He also emphasizes the importance of local hashtags.

“If you’re a brick-and-mortar business that has had to shut down, you can still engage with your local area by using local hashtags and supporting the community. Do some shoutouts for other businesses who are also having a tough time, start building that community. That’s a great way to start building a following and doing good at the same time,” he said.

8. Essential Shopping Sprees

With people stuck at home all eyes online in the palm of their hand, Instagram’s shopping tool is an effective way to increase mobile sales.

Quarantined customers can buy directly from your Instagram feed, in just a couple of minutes.

Because 70% of shopping enthusiasts rely on Instagram for product discovery, it serves as a built-in search engine.

Simply set up a product catalog, link it to your account, and tag the products in your feed photos.

If your strategy and content are in synch, your public relations strategy will not only lead to brand awareness and media attention but will result in increased direct sales from Instagram.

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

9. Raw or Produced Content?

Because you've got more time to create content, your brand might be drawn to highly-produced videos and complex photoshoots.

Fair warning from the experts:

"Regardless of the situation we're in now, raw content is the best type of content. If you're doing overproduced content, no one is going to really engage with it because they won't believe it or trust it. So be real, talk about your struggles, talk about what's going on with your business, and how it's affecting you. People will relate to that much better," he said.

Instagram Content Dos & Don'ts

- **Do** put out reassuring and helpful COVID-19-related content.
- **Don't** only communicate about COVID-19 information.
- **Do** support and engage with your community.
- **Don't** appear as if you just want to be selling.
- **Do** take advantage of Instagram's most engaging tools such as stories, lives, polls, Q&As.
- **Don't** scrap all your previously-scheduled strategy.
- **Do** adapt your Instagram strategy to the current situation.

Instagram's Official Statement

Instagram is committed to helping brands spread the word and communicate with its audience responsibility and accurately

without being opportunistic.

In a recent blog post, Instagram outlines how it is keeping the community informed, safe, and supported with:

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

- More educational resources in Instagram Search.
- Stickers to promote accurate information such as “Stay Home”.
- Removing COVID-19 accounts from recommendations, unless posted by a credible health organization.
- Verified donation sticker in more countries and connecting people with relevant nonprofits to support.

With the billions on Instagram, now is a critical time to support your brand’s community while gaining meaningful exposure.

Instagram is an always-evolving and reinventing platform.

Being able to adapt is the first step towards a successful social PR strategy, especially right now.

Take it from Martha, make sure you publish the post before you toast.

Cheers to working from home.

More Resources:

Image Credits

ADVERTISEMENT

CONTINUE READING BELOW

In-Post Images: Provided by author, May 2020

http://tracking.feedpress.it/link/13962/13668494