SEVEN WAYS TO GROW YOUR INSTAGRAM

Instagram is money in today's day and age, and everyone wants more of it. We want more likes, comments, and followers, so it's important to stay on top of your Insta-game!

There are over 300 million people on Instagram - that's HUGE. It can get overwhelming feeling like you're just. not. growing.

I feel you.

I am by zero means an Insta-expert, but I *am* someone who likes to share the things I have picked up along my road to over 13,000 followers in the hopes of helping you, too.



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1. Always post quality content.

This seems like a total no-brainer, but if you ever find yourself hitting "share" on something you wouldn't frame on the wall, it might not be the best for your Insta-brand. That might seem extreme, but Instagram is a visual platform. Since its start, the best accounts are the ones that have gorgeous imagery, because many people are inspired by gorgeous imagery. A general rule of thumb for any social media platform: if you're sharing something only because you feel like you "have to," that's not a good enough reason! Step back and think before sharing: will my followers lovelovelove this? Will it inspire them? Will it make them laugh? Will it uplift them? Will it help them? If it's not good quality content, it's doing no one good.

CLICK HERE to check out five Instagram editing apps that you need to download!

2. Be consistent.

When you're building a brand experience, the golden rule is consistency. There's a reason the color red is immediately associated with Coca-Cola, and that Zappos gets tons of 5-star customer service ratings; Coke consistently has red all over the place, and Zappos consistently delivers stellar service. Same goes for Instagram - if you're not consistent about posting and only post every three weeks or so, or if you go from posting three times per day to once a week, people notice - and it messes with their brand experience. Figure out your schtick and schtick to it.

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3. Optimize your post times for your peeps.

If you haven't yet downloaded **Iconosquare** (iconosquare.com) yet, do it. Iconosquare has an analytics feature that lets you know at what days and times your followers are most engaged with your profile. If none of your peeps are checking their phones at 3 am, why would you post then? No one will see it! Make sure you optimize your posting to get the most engagement and ultimately, growth. Set the party up to start right when your fabulous follower guests arrive.

4. Make real, heartfelt, genuine connections.

Fakers gonna fake, haters gon' hate...shake it off and only focus on making mutually beneficial collaborations. Don't be spammy or disingenuous to try and bring folks to your profile - if they think you're a phony, they won't follow anyways. Try **the 3-1 rule:** on an account you're loving, give a heart (that's "like") to three separate recent photos of theirs, and comment something meaningful ("thanks for sharing!" doesn't count) on one. It's a nice way to spread some love and be noticed in the process. Interact with the accounts that you lovelovelove!

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5. Use relevant hashtags.

But how?, you ask. Find an account that's bigger than you that you admire and that's similar in brand, theme, content...the whole nine yards. Check out what hashtags they're using and follow suit. Do your research! Look up relevant hashtags in the "tags" tab of Instagram, join an Instagram-challenge with a specific hashtag, and/or

Pro tip: You can use up to 30 hashtags per post. Don't jampack your caption with hashtags, though - instead, comment on your own post with your relevant hashtags.

6. Connect with bigger accounts + brands.

When you're doing all of the above, chances are you've got a hella nice Instagram profile. (Can I see it?). While you're engaging with other Instagrammers, remember to always engage with your favorite brands, too. Tag them in your gorgeous, optimized, quality photos, and if it's in line with their own Insta-theme, they may ask to re-post your image to share with their own followings. If your brands are similar, chances are their following will like what you're sharin', too, and you'll have yourself a new crew of peeps.

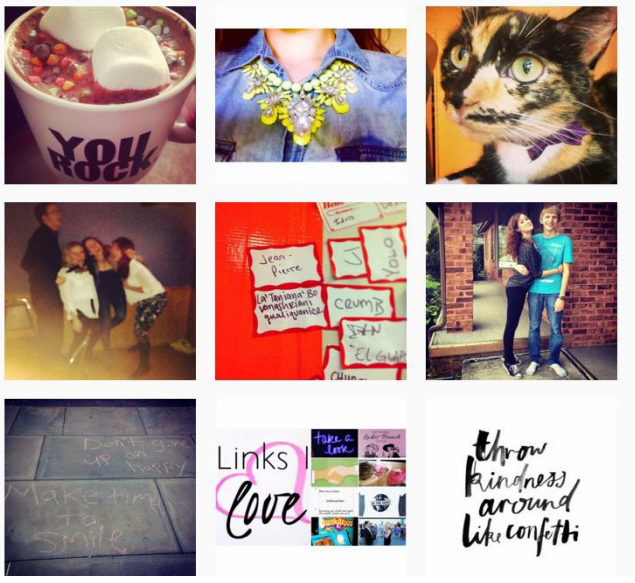
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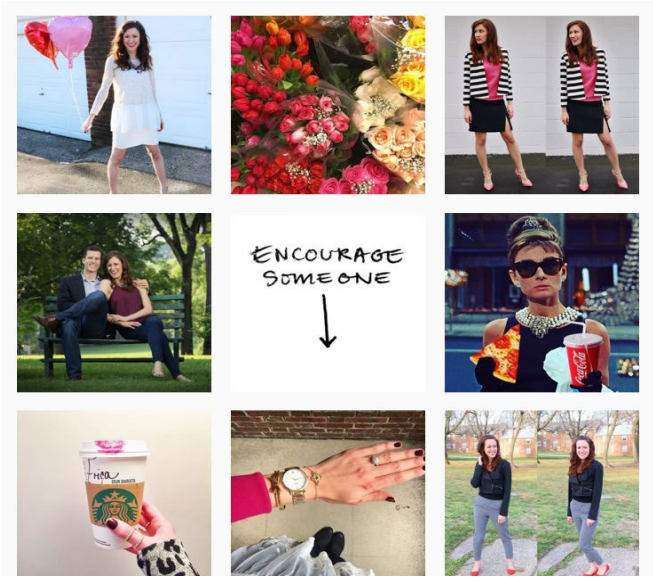
7. Plan ahead.

The best way to not run out of Instagram post ideas is the same rule of thumb for not running out of blog post ideas or things to pitch at work - plan ahead. **Download VSCO** if you haven't already (this post explains why you should!) and start using the **Library** feature. Here you can upload photos from your phone into VSCO's Library and see how they'll look in grid formation together, meaning you can easily visualize what your future feed will look like.

CLICK HERE to learn how to THEME your Instagram!

The **left grid below** was from over a year ago on my own profile. There is *zero* visual consistency - some images are cropped, colors are all over the place, and there's no clear theme in place.
On the right, I planned ahead to know how to flow from pinks to greens and how to best use white space while sticking to my "content buckets."





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I hope this guide proves to be a helpful resource as you carry on, Insta-Queen! If you've found all of this information to be useful and worthwhile, I would lovelovelove if you'd click here to share this resource with your own followers. I'm sure they would love to grow their Instagram profiles, too! ;)



And if you're not already, be sure to follow along on Instagram - **@ericaligenza**. The party is just getting started!



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