

The Step-by-Step Guide to Grow Your Instagram Followers





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If you're reading this guide, it's possible you've searched the internet to learn how to grow your Instagram following, and have come across countless tips, tricks and hacks to make it happen. Unfortunately, the web is littered with plenty of bad advice (i.e paying for followers and using bots) and that's just not the way to go.

What's the real key to Instagram success? Authenticity, great content and engaging with your followers. In this guide, we've laid out everything you need to know to grow your Instagram following and how to get them to stick around.



Monthly Gameplan

DAILY

Engage with your followers daily

- Make it someone on your team's job to engage with 5 - 20 new people a day. This can be just a comment or answering an Instagram Story.
- This is the best way to increase your followers! You should be engaging with current and potential followers to show that you care about what they have to say.
- Tip: Look up related hashtags and authentically comment on people's content

WEEKLY

Post at least once a week

- Plan out your grid. If you post on a whim it will take you longer to come up with content. Instead, sit down once a month or quarter to plan your content ahead of time. This will ensure that you actually post.
- Also brainstorm Story content as your followers are more likely to view your Story than all of your posts. Story content is perfect for all the fun, relatable content that might not fit well in your grid.

Reply to all comments you receive to join in on the conversations around your brand and show that you're active in your community.

Go through all tagged photos of your brand and like and comment on them. You never know, you might even find some quality UGC. (Remember: always ask permission before using any!)

QUARTERLY

Quarterly check out how many unengaged/spam followers you have acquired and clean them out.

- Remember that a smaller amount of engaged followers is much better than a large number of unengaged ones.

Run Giveaways and Contests

- Giveaways and contests are a great way to get your followers engaged and excited about your brand. No matter what the size of the prize is, they're perfect for bringing in new followers. [Click here](#) to read our guide on how to run your own giveaways and contests.

Work with Influencers

- Plan to work with a handful of influencers each month as part of your marketing strategy.
- Create a plan around how many influencers you'll work with, what products you want to send them and how often they need to post.

Here is a breakdown of all the things you should keep in mind as you follow the monthly game plan to grow your follower count. We also threw in some examples of brands who did a great job so you can have some inspiration.

1. Avoid Fakes

First, let's address one of the biggest don'ts when it comes to growing your following. Paying for fake accounts to like and comment on your posts and follow your account may seem like an easy way to increase your numbers, but it definitely does more harm than good. We're here to tell you that this practice can virtually ruin any reputation you've built with your current follower base.

Reasons you should avoid fakes:

- **YOU WILL REACH LESS OF YOUR REAL FOLLOWERS:** The way Instagram works is that it shows your content to a set of your followers, and then based on their engagement with the post, they will show it to more people. If you have fake followers, they won't engage with the content and then it won't get shown to your real followers. For example, if Instagram shows it to 100 people and only half are real, you have already cut your engagement rate in half. Also, if you think that buying fake engagement will fix this, then you are wrong. Fake engagement will just show your content to more fake people, so you are only losing exposure. So unless bots will buy your product, then this is never the answer.
- **THEY'RE A TURN OFF TO REAL FOLLOWERS:** Fake followers and engagement will give you a temporary boost, but it will also alienate whatever followers you did manage to connect with. As soon as your followers find out you were paying to seem more relevant, they will stop trusting you. People like brands with integrity and want to support the ones who are actually working for their Instagram popularity.
- **YOUR FOLLOWERS WILL NOTICE:** Don't think your followers won't notice that you've paid for followers and engagement. These accounts are easy to spot with spammy usernames like @followers.plus123, usernames with random letters and numbers or usernames that suggest they post explicit adult content (yikes). Fake followers usually don't have a profile picture or any posts of their own and they stand out when your posts go from getting a low number of likes to thousands.

Be careful about leaving your account's followers alone for long periods of time. Fake followers can pop-up on their own with no prompting and cause just as much trouble as bought bots. Using a system to monitor what kinds of followers your brand has is a great way to weed out

unengaged and harmful followers. Apps, like [Cleaner for IG](#), can select ghost followers, inactive followers, and unengaged followers and get rid of them. Many of these apps will only get rid of a certain amount of followers at a time with their “free-mium” version, so you may need to pay for premium for it to get the job done.

By getting rid of sketchy followers that are bogging up your feed, your engagement rate will automatically raise. It’s always better to have a smaller follower count with highly engaged followers than no engagement and a ton of followers.

2. Talk With Your Followers, Not at Them

We love a good, catchy caption to match a high quality post, but don’t stop there. Your one-liner isn’t enough to pull your followers in and make them engage.

Be the brand that asks for your followers’ opinion, or tells them about what’s been happening behind the scenes. By asking a question in your caption, you are more likely to get a genuine response. It’s simple - if you ask someone about themselves, they are more likely to be invested in the conversation. They will feel closer to your brand because you’ve show that you care about what they have to say, and they have shared a piece of themselves with you. Even if it is only what their favorite product of yours is, or seemingly mundane things like how they drink their coffee.

Try questions like the ones to below to start a conversation with your followers:

- How do you use this product in your routine?
- What’s your go-to product from our collection?
- What are your plans this weekend?
- Which color/style/flavor from the new collection are you picking up?

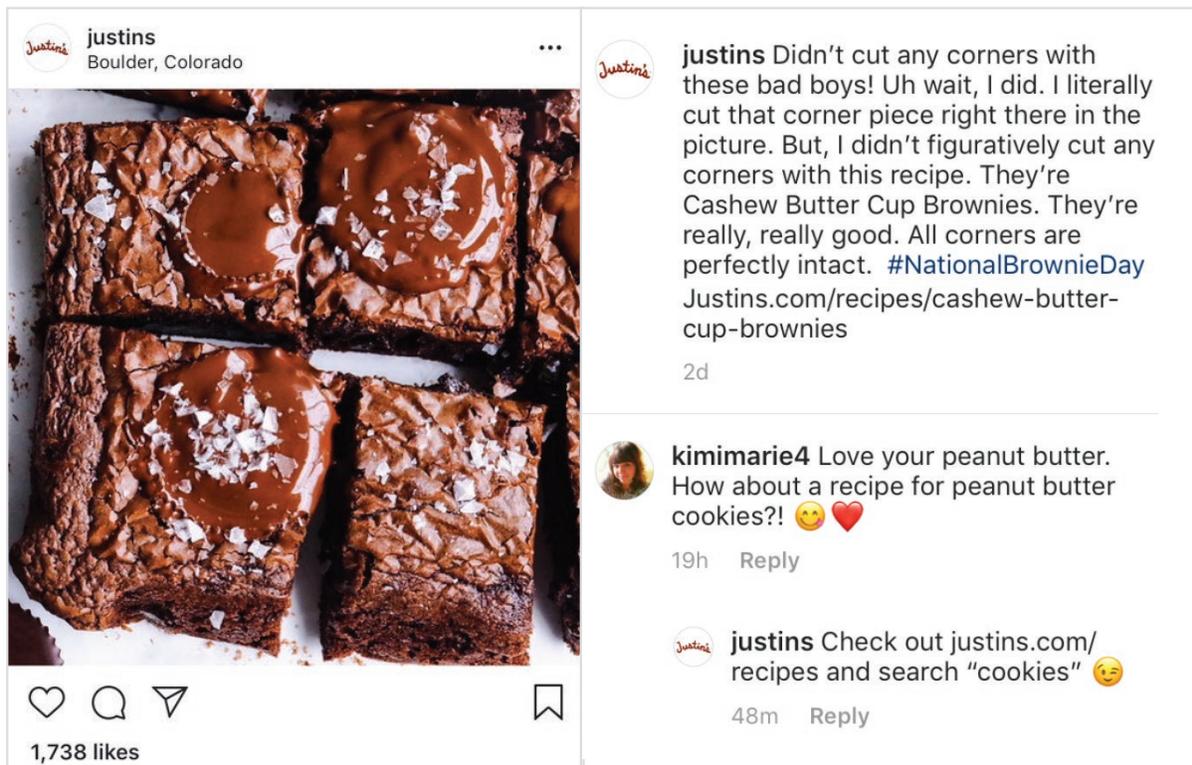
NYX Cosmetics employs this tactic often to get their followers’ opinions on products and makeup looks. This can also give them feedback about what products people like and don’t like before sales numbers start coming in.



3. Reply to Comments

When you do get followers to engage with your content, one of the best ways to cultivate that relationship is to reply to their comments. By replying, you make them feel like you are listening to what they are saying, even if it's just about the product in the picture. You don't have to reply to every comment, but even liking comments feels personal and encourages them to comment on other photos.

If the comment asks a question or makes a suggestion, then make sure you give it special attention with a reply. The follower put time into their response, so give the time back to them. While a comment saying "so cute!" is great, that follower isn't engaging as thoroughly as someone asking a question or giving a response to something you asked.



The image is a screenshot of an Instagram post. On the left, there is a photo of four square brownies with a thick chocolate glaze and white chocolate shavings. The post is from the account 'justins' in Boulder, Colorado, and has 1,738 likes. On the right, there is a comment thread. The first comment is from 'justins' (the brand) replying to a comment from 'kimimarie4'. The brand's comment says: "Didn't cut any corners with these bad boys! Uh wait, I did. I literally cut that corner piece right there in the picture. But, I didn't figuratively cut any corners with this recipe. They're Cashew Butter Cup Brownies. They're really, really good. All corners are perfectly intact. #NationalBrownieDay Justins.com/recipes/cashew-butter-cup-brownies". The second comment is from 'kimimarie4' asking for a recipe for peanut butter cookies. The brand's reply is: "Check out justins.com/recipes and search 'cookies'".

justins Boulder, Colorado

justins Didn't cut any corners with these bad boys! Uh wait, I did. I literally cut that corner piece right there in the picture. But, I didn't figuratively cut any corners with this recipe. They're Cashew Butter Cup Brownies. They're really, really good. All corners are perfectly intact. #NationalBrownieDay Justins.com/recipes/cashew-butter-cup-brownies

2d

kimimarie4 Love your peanut butter. How about a recipe for peanut butter cookies?! 🍪❤️

19h Reply

justins Check out justins.com/recipes and search "cookies" 🙄

48m Reply

1,738 likes

Not only is the caption here funny and engaging, but Justin's makes sure to comment back to people who are actively trying to engage with the brand. Here the brand offers a source to a follower looking for other recipes, which not only furthers the relationship between their brand and the follower, but sends them in a loop back to content they've created.

4. Monitor Your Brand's Tag, Hashtags and Mentions

Even when you aren't running a giveaway or contest, you should be actively monitoring your brand's associated tags. Your followers will most likely be posting content under these tags which you can repurpose (as long as you have their permission, of course). Even if a post isn't usable on your feed, commenting on it will encourage your followers to continue posting about your brand. It will also make your followers feel like they are a part of your brand, like they have a stake in its success, which can create forever-customers.

Looking at your followers' posts shows you care about what your community is up to. If you think of your social media following as more than just a number or sea of potential customers, but also as a community that you lead, then it seems like a no-brainer to be active in the conversations your followers are having. Creating and maintaining your brand identity (or presence) on social media is essential to standing out and attracting new followers.



Here, both Cake Beauty and Jelly Pong Pong commented on a post one of their followers made about their products. By engaging with content they are tagged in, they are monitoring the trends in their community as well as making their community feel like what they are posting matters. This creates an authentic relationship between brand and consumer that will help your brand stay relevant.

5. Include Personality Pics

Your followers want to hear about your brand and get behind-the-scenes details. Since you expect your followers to answer your questions and give you details about themselves, keep the conversation going by adding in what your brand has been up to. You could even use this as an opportunity to hype a new release coming out, or talk about a special event you're planning.



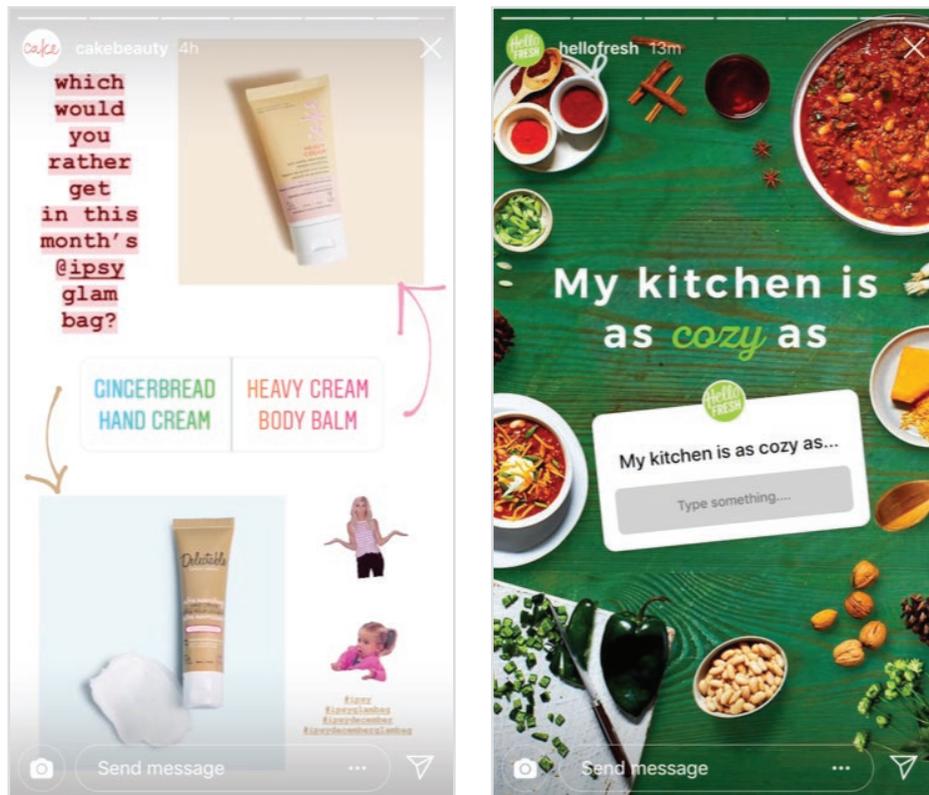
Lifestyle brand ban.do posted a series of photos highlighting some of the colorful sites from the creative team's trip to Mexico. Not only is this a personal look at the brand and how they get inspiration, it shows their followers that they're an innovative brand that steps out of the box to create their products. It sends a pretty cool message, right?

Also think about the ways you can utilize not only your feed, but your Instagram Story to highlight your brand's culture as well. Don't isolate your fun office parties, pizza lunches, or manufacturing videos to personal accounts. Share your style with your followers, and let them know what you are all about. When every picture feels staged, or you always post pictures that are clearly from an event or photo shoot, it starts to get redundant and uninteresting to both old and new followers.

6. Polling Your Audience

Instagram is becoming the Swiss Army knife of social media. With their introduction of new options for Stories, the ways your brand can interact with followers is changing, and you should keep up. These polling options are easy ways to get instant engagement from your followers and make the Instagram algorithm lean in your favor.

On Stories you can post more than just videos, you can post graphics, use stickers, and run follower polls. Here are some great examples of how you can utilize your story to get great feedback and engagement.



With Cake Beauty, they are asking a question directly related to their product and seeing what interests their users more. This is great to get feedback about your products and gain user interaction. With Hello Fresh, they are allowing feedback to be open-ended and their question isn't directly related to their product. This makes their question seem less about sales and more about interacting with their followers directly in a fun way.

7. Going Live On Your Story

As a bonus, consider live-streaming an event or project within your company. Whenever you go live your followers are notified, and since being live is such a personal experience to your followers, they will want to tune in. (Make sure to stay live long enough that your followers have time to do so!) You can even announce when you intend to go live ahead of time on your feed, or on your Story so you can have more people tuning in.

Make sure you are engaging directly with your followers and answering questions as they come up while you are live, and get rid of any potential trolls by X'ing them out of the feed. Use your live sessions to develop your brand identity, release new products, or do guest features.

Pro Tip: Make an outline of what you want to go over before the live-stream and notify any people around you that you will be going live or if they'd like to join you. Just like any other content, you want the quality to represent your brand well, so don't just wing it. It can still be laid back and relaxed, but having an outline is a great idea.

8. Don't Let Negative Feedback Sit

One easy mistake brands fall into is avoiding, or deleting, negative feedback. When you avoid negative feedback, it sets a precedent for other customers that if they ever have problems with your product or brand, you won't care enough to find a solution. If you go a step further and delete the public comment, it multiplies the problem. If anyone saw and screenshotted the issue or complaint and then you delete it, you've deleted your credibility.

If you allow negative feedback to be public, it can show you are willing to help your consumers and work with them to fix any issues. Offer them the information to get into contact with someone that can help resolve the problem, or let them know that you have DM'd them to help them fix their issue. By publicly addressing the issue and offering a solution, you're letting your followers know you won't leave them high and dry if they ever encounter problems.

That being said, don't guarantee them anything solid - just in case you can't follow through. This can open up an opportunity for a PR mess, where your brand looks like a liar and your credibility is publically flushed down the drain. Or you may experience an increased number of fake negative comments looking for freebies. Take care of your customers, but keep the details between you and them. Handle each situation on a case-by-case basis.

Here, Terra Chips handled this situation appropriately. Instead of deleting this comment, or arguing with the negative review of their service and defending themselves, they gave the customer a way to fix the mystery issue they had with their chips. Even if this customer doesn't call the number provided, the brand still salvaged what could have been a bad interaction that affected other followers' opinions of them as a company.

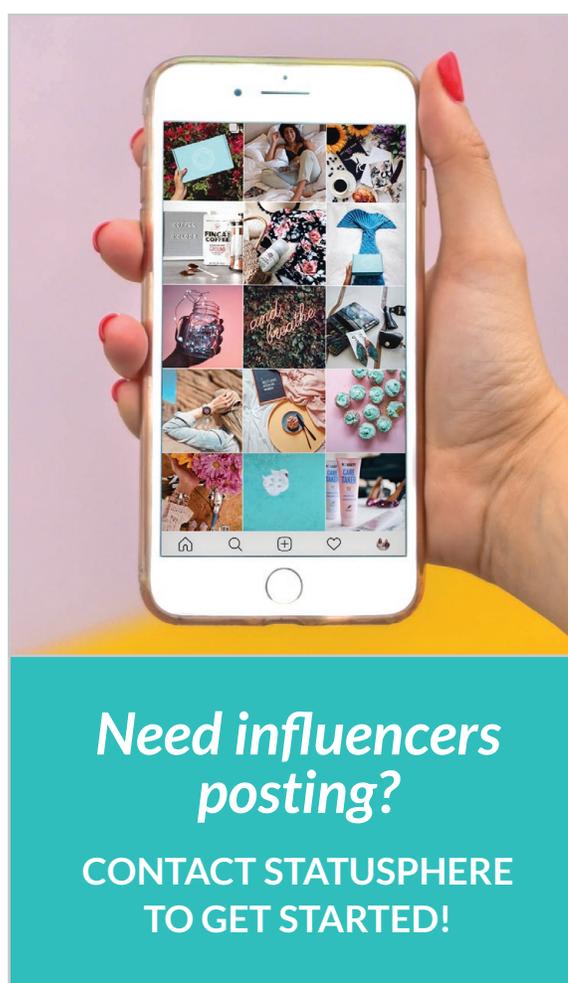
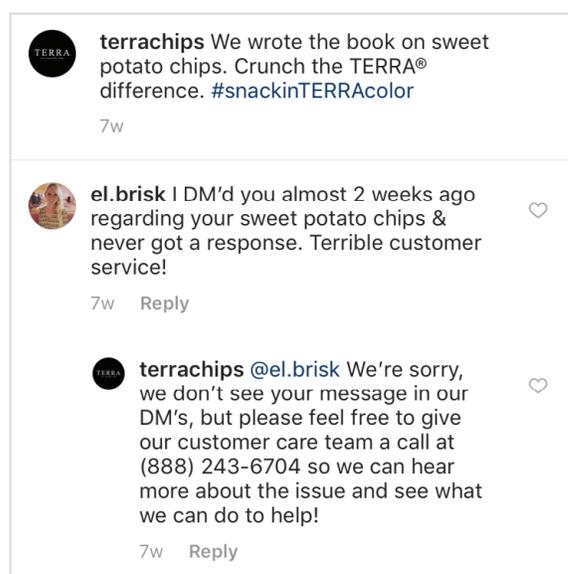
9. Partner with Influencers

Partnering your brand with people who already have an active following on Instagram is a great way to add to your authenticity and grow your following. Whether this partnership grows from a giveaway, contest, or relationship with influencers, it can be add to the trustworthiness of your brand. As long as the people you choose to partner with have a brand or personal message that complements your own, you should have no problem engaging with their audience.

10. Utilize Contests & Giveaways

By letting your followers represent your brand, you add them into the equation and open your brand up to the people they are connected with. If you also offer incentives through a giveaway, or content creation contest, it shows you are willing to give back to your loyal followers.

This will also help you reach new markets through your followers' interactions with their followers. Actively encouraging your community to post about your brand, and using influencers to speak to their community, is a great way to gain new followers.





For 12 days, Soap and Glory partnered with different companion companies for giveaways. This is great example of how you can give back to your followers while gaining followers in return. By partnering with other reputable brands and making following a requirement to win the prize, Soap and Glory has ensured the giveaway will result in a boost to their follower count.

The products they are giving away are also relevant to both of these brands followers' interests. Offering something people actually want ensures that you get the most entries possible from your followers - who would've thought?

11. Understanding The Instagram Algorithm

Staying up-to-date with the do's and don't of the latest Instagram update can be tricky. With the ever-changing nature of the platform, many brands aren't getting the most out of it as they could be. Luckily, following the tips in this guide will help you boost your engagement rates, thus making the algorithm work with you instead of against you. Remember when we said authenticity, great content and engaging with your followers were the keys to Instagram success? That's because those elements are important to the algorithm! To learn more, we put together a [handy guide](#) to help you stay in the know about Instagram algorithm best practices and what's changed.

Now you know how to grow your Instagram following organically and how to accurately represent your brand. If you have any questions about including Instagram in your marketing strategy or want to partner with influencers for a future campaign, [click here](#) to chat with one of our experts here at Statusphere!



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