

How to Use  
Instagram & Facebook  
Stories to  
Drive Brand Awareness,  
Grow Your List and  
Increase Sales



## **Instagram & Facebook Stories Drive Brand Awareness, Grow Your List, and Increase Sales**

Stories are a good way to produce up to date content and help your brand stand out by capturing your target audience's attention with images and video. Instagram and Facebook Stories are based on visuals rather than written content and they have a limited-time run of 24 hours. Therefore, it's important that you learn as much as possible about creating and using these visual Instagram and Facebook stories to drive brand awareness, grow your list, and increase sales.

As you create your stories, it's essential you ensure that they are well-planned, eye-catching, and actionable. Let's start by looking at why Instagram and Facebook stories are so important to your business.

### **Why Use Instagram and Facebook Stories**

You know that visual content is steadily gaining in popularity among potential customers and subscribers, as well as business owners and marketers. So, it's probably no surprise that Facebook-owned Instagram and Facebook Stories are becoming more popular too. As new visual marketing options develop, you'll want to try each one out to find out which ones your audience responds better to. Here are a few reasons you may want to try and then implement Instagram and Facebook Stories in your marketing plan.

#### **Instagram Details & Benefits**

Instagram is a site and app for Smartphones, where you can share photos, videos, and even live events. It is very popular with the 18-30 year-old crowd and many of them visit it several times a day to check out what is new. This target market group also tends to be interested in trends and influencer marketing.

Influencers are generally high-profile people in a particular niche or industry. Sometimes they may be celebrities, public figures, or well-known in a specific niche, who post content regularly. Instagram is ranked in the top 15 of all influential websites, so it is a good place to connect with influencers that attract your target market.

Instagram is a good marketing option because it stacks/saves published content that the viewer hasn't seen yet. It will show all of your content, not just the most recent item. The story only lasts 24 hours, unless you make it a highlight of your account. You can also store stories in your camera roll and re-use them again at a later date.

In addition, Instagram allows you to cross-post your story on Facebook, so you can reduce the amount of work with just a few clicks. The only significant difference between the 2 is that Instagram allows 15 seconds of video per clip, while Facebook offers 20 seconds.

## Facebook Details & Benefits

Facebook tends to appeal more to mature users. If your products and services appeal to a younger audience, it might not seem a great fit. On the other hand, more than 2 billion people use the site every month. Even younger people have accounts on Facebook, if only to keep up with older family members who are loyal users of the site.

Facebook is also actively encouraging videos, memes, and stories rather than written content. In fact, their CEO has predicted that the majority of content on Facebook will be video by the year 2020, putting them head to head with the extremely popular YouTube.

Facebook does have some drawbacks. It does not show content to all of your followers, only a certain percentage (such as 10%). In order to get more visibility, the post has to get engagement, such as Likes, Comments, and Shares. If it does receive some type of response or acknowledgement, it will be posted more widely. Those sharing it will also help spread the content.

Your Facebook stories also have a lineup of content, so it will show the most recent thing you have published, even though you might have published several items since your follower was last online. Facebook Stories can be a good format to publish in because they are attention-grabbing, as compared to other types of posts. The downside is they only last 24 hours before they vanish.

Knowing the advantages, disadvantages, and business benefits related to Instagram and Facebook can help you make the right choices for your business needs as well as your audience's needs. With that in mind, let's take a look at your goals to assist you in making your decisions.

## Meeting Your Goals

Both Instagram and Facebook provide great opportunities to spread the word about your business. Start by setting goals for each story, such as driving traffic, gaining new subscribers, making sales, promoting brand awareness, and much more.

Each of the networks mentioned can help you meet your goals. The key is to implement SMART goals as well as match the right content to your target market's needs. Knowing what attracts your audience, visually, and what info or solutions they want from you, will help your stories stand out from the others.

## Traffic Goals

Getting traffic to your site often includes providing a clickable link to learn more. A story can work well for this, especially if it is breaking news or a special sale that will be here today and gone tomorrow. Add text and a link to photos and videos. Track your results. Without those, you won't know exactly what you did right or what worked best.

## Subscriber Goals

A lot of marketers rely heavily on social media. This can result in neglecting to build a solid mailing list. Yet, the two strategies can work well together. Email marketing is extremely effective when it comes to reaching your target audience, building long-term relationships, and compelling readers to take action. However, before you can accomplish all of that, you need to get them to opt-in to your list with an offer they can't wait to get.

There was a time when offering newsletter updates or notifications excited potential subscribers enough to sign up to mailing lists. However, that is definitely not the case now. Your prospective subscribers want and expect more value. You can provide this valuable, free item in multiple ways.

A free ebook download, a free multi-lesson eCourse, are both attractive incentives to gain subscribers. In this case, your story would be all about the benefits of the item, with a link to sign up for the list and then receive their item.

## Sales Goals

Let's face it. Sales help you keep the lights on. Whether you offer your own line of products and services or recommend affiliates' items, you need to make sales. Creating a story for each offer enables you to showcase the item's features and benefits.

Many business owners automatically plan to incorporate visual social media stories into new product launches and promotions. This is because they can create a huge buzz when shared on multiple social sites, albeit short-term.

However, when you use social story offers with other marketing methods, such as social media posts, ads, and email marketing, you increase your chances of meeting your goals and making more sales.

## Brand Goals

You need to see and be seen. Maintaining a social media presence and embracing new marketing methods keeps you in your audience's mind. Social media marketing is a way to put yourself on the map. Every social network specializes in a specific content type, even though they may offer other options. Right now, stories are hot and growing in popularity.

On Facebook and Instagram, stories are currently receiving greater visibility. When you add relevant, interesting, problem-solving stories, your brand reach increases, as does your brand recognition. Publish great content regularly and you will soon have everyone talking about you, and your products/services.

## Appealing Story Types

Certain types of content have a higher appeal to your target market than others do. Knowing what your audience prefers is very important to your overall success, as well as the level of engagement your story receives. When you implement stories using the content and information your viewers want, you're more likely to get a good deal of engagement.

Here are a few suggestions to help you discover exactly what compels your viewers to take action and engage with your story. Be sure you track the results so you can repeat your successes by following the same steps. Give these a try and see how your audience responds. Make a note which types work best.

### Behind The Scenes

Behind the scenes videos and images let people get to know you, your values, and your items better. This also helps you to build trust as well as greater brand recognition, especially if you include your logo in the visual story. If you are a sole proprietor, share the story of how you first started out in business. If you are a company, share staff stories about what they do and what motivates them.

When you are working on a new product, give them a sneak preview. If you are hosting a webinar or live event, use video excerpts (or teasers) to entice people to attend live, or to view recordings afterwards.

Once your target audience feels that they know and trust you, this can stimulate brand loyalty, which can in turn bring sales, repeat sales, and/or a desire to share your content with others.

### Informative Demonstrations

Demonstrations are an ideal way to market products and services. In your stories, share hints, tips and how-tos, as a series of images with text overlay and/or videos. "Seeing is believing," as they say. This is particularly true and works well for your visual and hands-on learners.

In addition, demos show off your expertise. Address the main issues your target audience has, in relation to your niche. Plan your story content around them. Save the stories to your camera roll, within your Instagram account. Doing this repeatedly allows you to build a library of useful content you can publish regularly there and on Facebook. As your number of followers grows, they will be able to see these stories.

### Intriguing Teasers

People love movie trailers and sneak previews. Create stories made from snippets of a larger work. Include a strong call to action and a clickable link where your viewers can

learn more on the topic. Keep in mind that teasers are meant to pique interest, not tell the whole story. This is often accomplished by sharing exciting clips and ending the teaser with a cliff-hanger to make them want to see the rest of the longer story/video.

### **Exclusive Offers**

Stories are a great way to provide exclusive, limited time offers to a specific group or to fast-acting viewers. Use a coupon code to track the success of each offer you create. Save the best holiday or yearly promotions on your camera roll so you can re-use them. Prospective followers are more likely to follow you and engage with your stories if you give them a good reason to do so. Exclusive, valuable offers fit that bill.

### **User-Generated Content**

User-generated content can help create buzz around your business. It can also take the burden off you a little in relation to constantly having to come up with fresh content for your site, blog and social accounts.

Run contests to get images, captions, videos and so on, making it clear that the best content will be used by you. Ask for video reviews and testimonials. Ask for questions and answer them. Invite guest bloggers. Giving your target audience the chance to provide feedback shows you care and promotes engagement.

You could also invite a takeover. Pay attention to those who are most diligent about following you on Instagram. Let them take over your account for 24 hours to publish what they feel is useful content. It gives you a break for a day and gives your audience a new “voice” to pay attention to.

### **Surveys, Polls & Activities**

Learn more about your audience so you can serve them better. Ask them what they need help with. Get their opinions regarding options for your next product, have them vote on the options they want most. Plan to do random, prize drawings. These can keep things interesting and engaging.

Some people dislike taking surveys or polls. If your people tend to shrink from giving feedback, use fun activities to get answers. Niche Trivia is usually a good activity that provides some info depending on how many people are participating. Don't forget to give participants a thank-you gift.

Now that you know why stories are a powerful marketing tool, and which story formats work well, let's dig a little deeper into the details of using each site, beginning with Instagram stories.

### **Instagram Stories**

Instagram tends to be very popular with younger audiences, as well as older audiences who prefer visual content and enjoy learning about the latest trends.

To create a new story, tap on your profile picture in the Stories row of your home screen or from your profile page. This will activate the camera. Use the button at the bottom of the screen to shoot a photo or choose one from the last 24 hours in your camera roll.

You can add to your story at any time by tapping the camera icon in the upper-left of the home screen. Then tap the “+ your story” button to add it to your story.

## Image Formatting

You can choose to display your Instagram Stories in either portrait (vertical) view or in landscape (horizontal) view. However, they do format images to fit the screen. This might mean your images get cropped or empty bars are added to the top, bottom or side of a photo. You can use these areas to add text, stickers, or other useful content.

The optimal photo size for Instagram is 520 x 520 pixels. For video, it is 15 seconds. Plan your content and film it based on these specifications.

## Story/Recording Options

When you open the Stories camera, you will see a number of different recording formats on the bottom of the screen, underneath the shutter button.

*Normal* is a regular photo or video, and the default option. Tap the button to snap a picture, or hold it to record a video of up to 15-seconds long.

*Boomerang* is a looping GIF-style video that will play forwards and backwards for several seconds in a loop. It can be a fun effect to surprise your audience.

*Rewind* is like a normal video which only plays backwards. Again, this can be amusing for audiences.

*Hands-free* perfect if you want to take a 15-second video without having to keep the button pressed. Tap one and it will keep filming until you stop it. Use a tripod for best results so you don't have videos with the shakes.

## Live Stories

Swipe left to the “Live” option and tap “Start Live Video” and you'll begin to broadcast yourself to your followers. Some of your followers will be notified when you go live. You can turn these notices off if you wish, but in general, live is a great format interacting with your target audience. Post a message that you are live so people can attend and engage with you. Create a calendar of live events, and your followers will start to look forward to seeing your content.

Both business and personal accounts can go live. During the broadcast, viewers can send reactions and leave comments, unless you choose to disable this option. Live videos are an excellent tool for connecting with your followers in real-time and hopefully showing the more human side of your business.

Instagram also lets you save your live broadcasts as a video file to your camera roll. Note that comments and reactions will not be saved with it. For the next 24 hours, a saved broadcast will be available to be added back into your story. If you are using live video as part of your marketing, you can use these as part of your Instagram stories as well.

### Stand-Out Story Elements

Instagram has lots of cool features, which are similar to Snapchat Lenses. Elements such as doodles, filters, and stickers enable you to customize images to meet your goals, while attracting your viewers' attention and making the image more meaningful and memorable. And of course, you can use the text tool to add a whole new dimension to your stories.

Once you've taken a photo or video, swipe left or right to cycle through various filters, which are best described as overlays that will change the color and contrast of your Instagram content. There are a few basic options such as black and white.

The text, pen, and sticker tools in the upper right-hand corner can let your creativity flow. You can add different layers of text in different colors. Use the pen tool to doodle. There are different pens with different effects. Look on the left-hand side of the screen to choose the one that's best for your purposes.

At the top is an eraser tool to get rid of any mistakes you make. Or, just click "undo" to revert back to your previous version. Use your pen strokes to highlight text you've added to a story, or call attention to a particular area of a photo

The sticker tool lets you paste icons to photos. Choose from several categories, including current temperature, time, and day. Add an emoji or a silly sticker if you want to add a bit more personality to your stories.

Tagging a story with your location may also add it to the public story, making it viewable from the Explore tab. This means that it may be seen by anyone near your location as long as your account isn't set to private.

Any of these elements can be added to both photos and videos. In the case of videos, you can "pin" an element into a certain place on the screen in order to lock it into place. Tap and hold on an element to pin it into place. You can change the position any time. This would be a handy way to label things on the screen, such as people.



Type Mode lets you post stories using creative text and backgrounds. Go to the bottom scroll menu inside Stories and you will see it with the other options like Live, Normal and so on. This would be a great way to create a cover page for your story, or pages in between elements in your story as introductions or summaries of the content.

## Face Filters

If you've ever used Snapchat, you'll see a similarity between Face Filters and Snapchat Lenses. A few examples of filters include digital tiaras, animal noses, hats, and other items. These add an element of fun and some even animate the images. Since Instagram updates and adds new filters regularly, be sure to check them out often.

Preview and select a filter before you add it to your image or video. You may have to play around with your front versus back facing camera if you have an iPhone.

Learning about all of your options and tools can take some time. You'll want to take things slowly to help you find the ones that best suit your business. The more you experiment with the effects, the easier it will be to discover which combination of items motivates your audience best.

## Tags and Hashtags

Tags help viewers find your content and there is quite a variety of types you can use. The most popular types to use with stories are name tags, location tags (geo tags), and hashtags. To tag people on Instagram Stories, type the "@" symbol and type the person's username. Suggested users will appear as autotype options. When you see the right one, tap their profile picture. They will get a message that you've added them to your list of people who get to see your story.

For hashtags, tap on the sticker button and then tap hashtag, or just type in a hashtag using the text tool. As with posts on Facebook and Instagram, user tags and hashtags act as links in your Stories which viewers can tap on to see more information. If they tap "Facebookpettoys" and your story is about your latest pet toys in stock, even people who are not your followers will be able to see your content.

## Delete Stickers and Text

If you're not happy with your sticker placement or text additions, get rid of them by tapping and holding the sticker or text you want to delete. Then, drag it to the trash can icon at the bottom center of the screen. Note that the trashcan does not actually appear on screen until you begin dragging something.

## Save, Share, and Reply

Stories may only appear on your account for 24 hours, but Instagram has now started archiving stories so you can use them again as needed. Tap on your profile picture on

the bottom right, hit the archive icon at the top, which looks like a clock with a counter-clockwise arrow, and select a story you would like to revisit.

You can also keep your story active for more than 24 hours by making it a highlight. It will remain on your profile page until you un-highlight it. This could be perfect for preserving stories about your company as an introduction for anyone who signs onto your account.

Instagram gives you two options for saving Stories. Your first option is to save it as a single photo or video. Your other option is to save the entire story. If you save the entire story, Instagram will render it as a video before archiving it in your camera roll. While you won't always want to save your full story, this can be a helpful feature if you want to keep a daily record of your stories and activities.

Share a photo or video from your story as an Instagram post. Go to the item you want to share. Tap the "..." button and select "Share as Post." This will show the item in the Instagram post window, where you can edit it like any other post before sharing it to your feed.

When it comes to sharing and reply options, you can choose to allow replies from everyone, from just your followers, or no one. Change these settings any time, even after posting a story. Just tap on the "..." button to explore your options.

If you prefer that some people don't see your stories, tap the Settings button. Tap Hide Story From and select the users you wish to block.

Engage with others' stories. When viewing a story, tap on the "Write message" field at the bottom of the screen to send a private message to that user. Want to send something more visual? Send a photo or video as a reply.

## Metrics

Once you've posted your story, you can see who has viewed it, at the bottom of the screen. It will usually say something like "John Smith and 12 others." Tap that to show a full list of everyone who has viewed your story.

At the top of the screen, your story will be broken down into thumbnail images. Tap on each thumbnail of your story element to see the metrics for each component. This will help you tell what made them click to go on, or to click out of your story and stop viewing it.

## Facebook Stories

Facebook Stories sit at the top of your mobile news feed. There are 2 methods for sharing and reading stories. It can be done through the "Direct" message link or the "Stories" link.

Direct is at the top left-hand side of your news feed and allows you to view any story sent to you directly, and see replies to your own stories, when you tap the paper airplane icon. To start a Direct story, you need to begin with an image or video.

Conversely, when using Messenger, you can start a story with text, an image or a video. Your stories will appear along the top of your connections' news feeds. They will see circles with thumbnails of your stories and can tap on the one/s they wish to view them. They can view the story for up to 24 hours, and they can reply to you via the story if they wish. You will be able to see who has viewed your story by clicking on the eye icon. The more views you get, the more successful your story is.

### Create a Facebook Story

To create a story, you need an image, video, or content from your phone. Start the story by clicking on the '+' icon at the top of the news feed. Tap on the Facebook camera. Take photos and videos as needed, or upload content from your camera roll.

When you are finished, click the Direct icon and then the blue box that says "Send Photo/Video" and your story will go live.

### Editing

At some point, you will need to edit your image. In Camera Mode, there are various screen controls. Starting from the top and moving clockwise, you have:

- Start again
- Use a photo or video from your camera roll
- Flash control
- Take image
- Change camera orientation
- More filters/decoration
- Add filters/masks

Photos and videos will be in portrait format. Videos can be up to 20 seconds long.

Once you have your content, you can add filters, masks, and/or text or doodles. Save each image on your camera roll before moving on to the next image just in case—you don't want to lose all your hard work.

Facebook Stories offer a wide range of special effects. You will want to try them all out over time. However, you don't want your images to be cluttered so think minimalistic at first. Too many effects can overwhelm your viewers as well as obscure the image or video's purpose.

Your main goal is to present your business in its best possible light. You want your work to stand out without looking unprofessional or gaudy. Stick to your brand color scheme as much as possible to aid in brand awareness.

The text overlay will probably be your most important tool. You can use it to create your cover page, section pages, captions on images, and more. You may also want to consider using the paintbrush and pen tools to highlight items in your stories.

### Facebook Story Publishing

Facebook offers 3 publishing options. You can post your content to your mobile timeline, directly to one or more friends/connections (using the “@” symbol and their name), or to your story. This variety of options makes it easy for you to send your stories specifically to the people who would be most interested in the information.

### Editing Published Stories

Once you’ve posted videos or images to your story, you may discover that you need to edit something. Click on Your Story to access thumbnails for each photo and video in your story. Go to the item you want to edit. Click on the three dots at the top of the item. Edit or delete elements as needed and/or save it to your camera roll.

### Check Your Analytics

Facebook Analytics for Stories is easy to use. You can view each the stats by tapping “Your Story” and viewing each thumbnail, one by one. The eye icon at the bottom of the screen shows a viewer count. Click the eye to see the names of the people who viewed the various elements of your story. Keep a record of your analytics to help you track what doesn’t work well and what you want to do again. Taking a screenshot each day at the same time, can help you document your progress over a long period.

You may also want to create a spreadsheet to track content names and numbers. You will soon be able to see which images and videos were the most viewed, and which compelled viewers to take action.

Instagram and Facebook have adopted stories as a new, interactive form of visual content containing photos, video, text, links and more. These stories can serve as an engaging, interactive, profitable showcase for your business. Your stories will require some planning and organization. However, the results can be well worth the effort, when you attract more of your target audience and compel them to help you meet your business goals.

While you have learned a great deal about how to use Instagram and Facebook stories to meet your business goals, there is more to learn and discover. Because visual stories are becoming more popular and new developments are rolling out almost on a daily basis, it’s important to begin implementing stories in your business strategies.