

Growth Hacks to Build Your Social Media Footprint

with Carly Stocks



How I inadvertently became a social media specialist



Top lessons

- Be Genuine
- Stay Consistent
- Show up to serve
- Strive to create a community
- Assess and adapt
- Have a strategy

Consistency is Key

- Posting more can equal faster growth
- But don't overdo it
- Avoid burnout
- Pick a schedule you can keep



How often to post

You don't need to post daily to grow
Post as often as you can sustain
Post at least twice a week to grow



Staying Consistent

- Keep track of content on a calendar
- Schedule Content in-app or with a scheduler
 - Facebook Buisness Suite
 - Youtube Creator Studio
 - Metricool
 - Apphi
 - Later





Time-Saving Tips

- Batch Content
- Write captions on your computer
 - Use a notes app to access on phone
- Build a hashtag list
- Create hashtag groups

When to post

- Post during your audience's peak time
- Metricool and in-app Analytics
- Post around the same time
- Post when you can engage

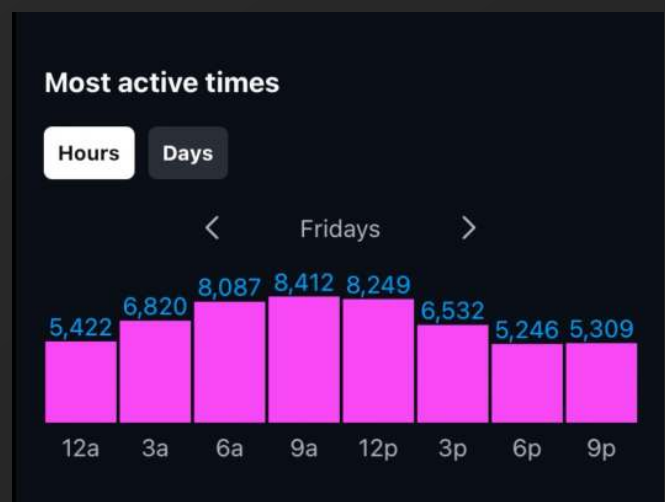
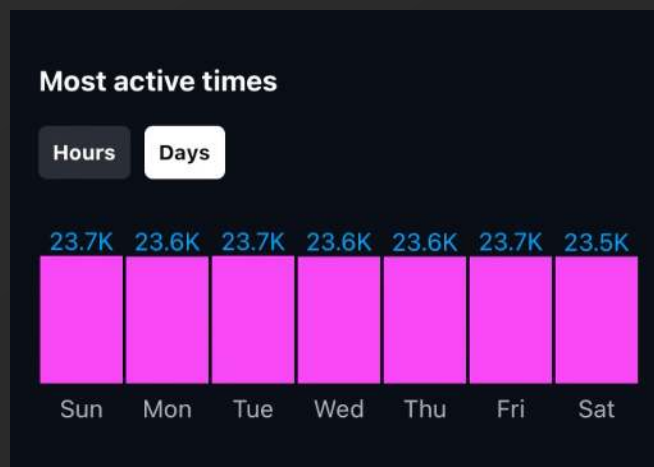


Metricool

The screenshot displays the Metricool web interface. At the top, a dark navigation bar contains icons for Analytics, Inbox, Planning, SmartLinks, and Ads, along with an 'Upgrade to Premium' button and a user profile for 'darkskyutah'. Below the navigation bar, the 'Calendar' view is active, showing a weekly grid from Sunday 1 to Saturday 7. The time slots range from 3:00am to 2:00pm. The interface includes a search bar, navigation controls for 'Today' and 'Sep 1, 2024 - Sep 7, 2024', and a 'Create post' button. A 'Best times' filter is also visible. The calendar grid is currently empty, with a light pink background for each day's column.

When are followers most active on Instagram?

Go to Profile → Professional Dashboard → Total Followers → Scroll to the bottom



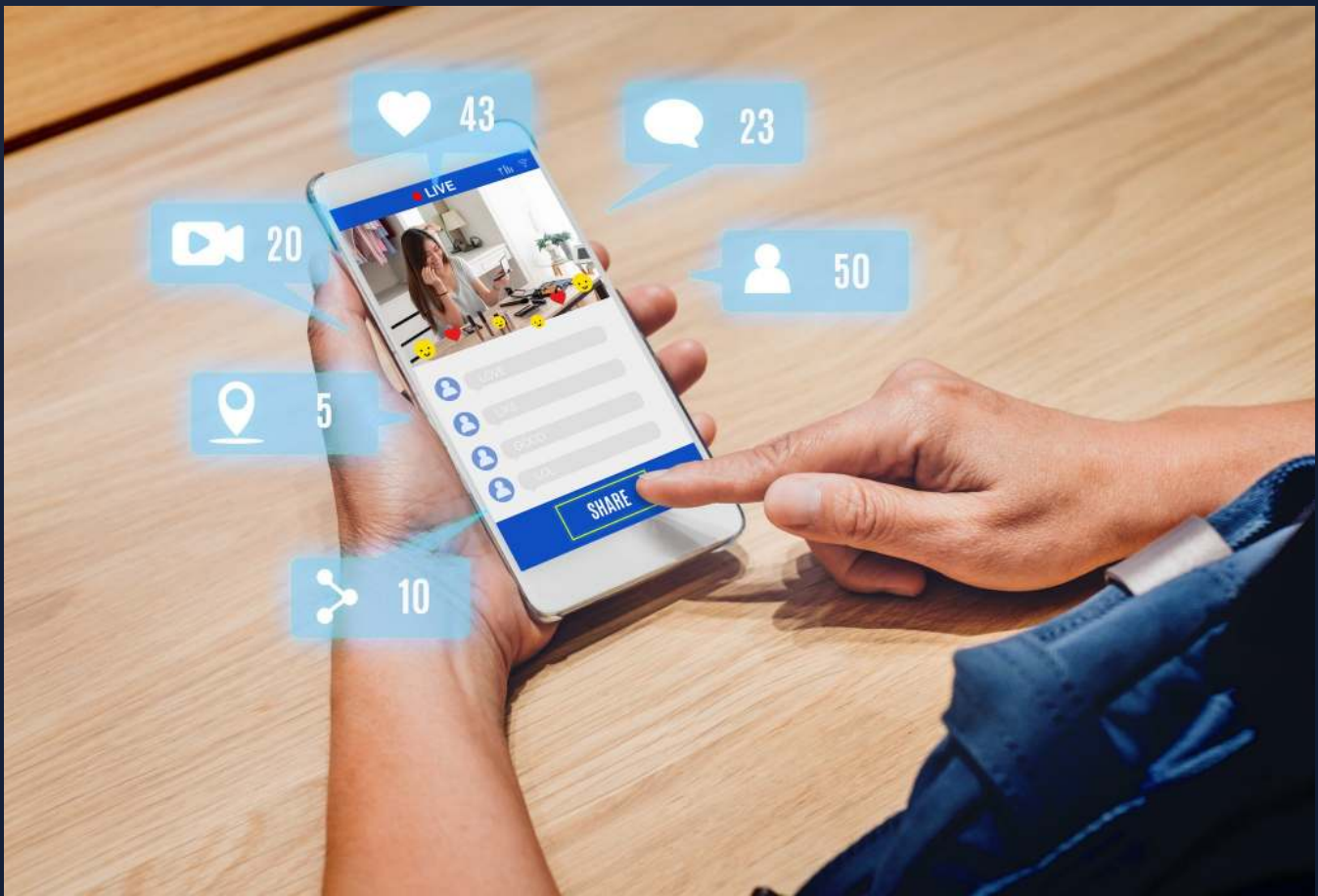
Facebook Business Suite → Planner

The screenshot displays the Facebook Business Suite Planner interface. At the top, the title "Planner" is followed by the subtitle "Plan your marketing calendar by creating, scheduling, and managing your content." Below this, there are navigation options for "Week", "Month", and "Today", with "September 2024" centered above a calendar grid. The calendar grid shows days from Sunday 15 to Saturday 21. On Sunday 15, three posts are visible: two at 9:15 AM and one at 10:57 AM. On Monday 16, a notification states "100 people reacted to your posts" with a "Send invites" button. On Friday 20, a notification states "This week, your Instagram followers are most active at this time" with a "Schedule" button. A vertical sidebar on the left contains various icons for navigation.



Show up to Serve

- Respond to messages
- Answer questions
- Ask questions
- Be helpful
- Provide Value



How can you engage with your followers?

- Be grateful
- Thank them for the comments
- Respond to them in their language
- Show appreciation
- Engage in conversation about the post

How can you engage with others in your niche?

Join Facebook groups or forums

- Actively participate
- Answer questions
- Be helpful
- Post your work if appropriate

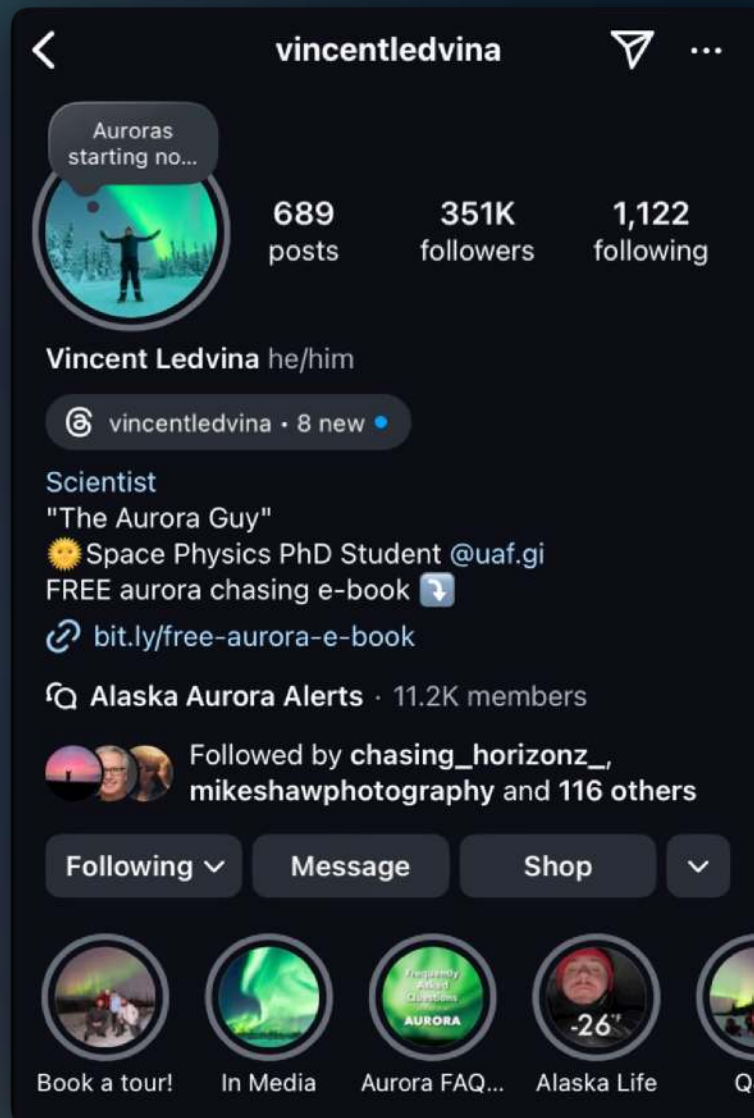
Follow accounts in your niche

- Make comments
- Like posts
- Ask questions



Use Broadcast Channel

- Create channels with specific purposes
- Teach people more in depth
- Share alerts
 - Vincent announces Aurora activity



Strive to create a community

- Like or comment on loyal followers' posts
- Follow others in your niche
- Be a good follower
- Make thoughtful comments
- Use their name
- Share others' work



Be patient

Steady growth > Viral growth

Take time to build

There are seasons of growth

Enjoy the journey



Assess and adapt

- Instagram will always change
- Some things are out of our control
- Our content has to change too
- Things that worked in the past don't now
- Trends come and go
- We have to be willing to adjust to grow



Adjust your Bio

- Does your Bio need a facelift?
- How is your profile picture?
- Is it clear what you do?
- Is it clear who you serve?
- Would you follow you?
- Do you need a new call to action?



Analyze your data

- Data from App
- Facebook Business Suite
- Metricool



Assess others

Who is successful in your niche?

- Check Explore Page
- Look up hashtags
- Look up other creators
- What are they doing right?
- What are they not doing?
- Is there a gap you can fill?
- Follow and interact with those you like
- Ask questions



Who is currently growing in your niche?

Not all popular accounts are growing

- All accounts lose followers
- Some accounts are losing and gaining at a similar rate

Most accounts are getting some non-follower reach

- Not all accounts are turning non-followers into followers
 - Use Social Blade or HypeAuditor for data

Note: Growth is not the only metric for a successful account

Reach and Engagement are key for most sponsors

Who is currently growing in our niche?

rami_astro •



719 posts 1M followers

Rami Ammoun

rami_astro

Photographer

Touring the cosmos from my telescope 🌌
Prints and wallpapers 🖨️

beacons.ai/ramiastro

Rami Astro Content Updates 📢 · 3.8K

Followed by chasing_horizonz_, azastroguy and 479 others

Following Message Shop

Welcome Exclusive My Gear! Beginner

astronycc •



243 posts 339K followers

Samil Cabrera

astronycc

Photographer

Yeshua is King!
Exploring the outdoors 🌿

All content is captured and processed by me
Prints ↓

displate.com/astronycc/space

Followed by azastroguy, tracye and 378 others

Following Message Email

Features Gear

aaronjenkin •



869 posts 652K followers

Aaron Jenkin | Cornwall & NZ he/him

aaronjenkin

Photographer

I like to timelapse 🌌
Landscape & Astrophotography Prints 🖨️
2025 Cornwall Calendar now available for order! 📅

hype.co/@aaronj

Followed by chasing_horizonz_, adventurewithpaige and 209 others

Following Message Shop

2025 Calen... Questions Prints Educat

benjaminbarakat •



441 posts 59.6K followers

Benjamin Barakat

benjaminbarakat

Photographer

Milky Way Photographer of the Year 21, 22, 23
Living in Switzerland 🇨🇭

Photography workshops & expeditions 📅

www.benjaminbarakat.com and 2 more

Cosmos Cafe 🌌 · 913 members

Followed by mikeshawphotogra, chasing_horizonz_ and 427 others

Following Message Contact

Indonesia Kyrgyzstan Namibia Switzerland

miguel_claro •



681 posts 49.9K followers

Miguel Claro Astrophotography

miguel_claro

Photographer

Night Photographer, Author 2x 📖 Scier Communicator 🗣️ | @darkskyalqueva | @tw @esoastronomy ambassador | Private Work BUY MY PRINTS 🖨️

miguel-claro-prints.mysho... and 4 m

Followed by mikeshawphotogra, azastroguy and 184 others

Following Message Email

Solar Corona New Print E... ZEUS 455C... Aurora

missjessbess



642 posts 44.7K followers

Jess Santos

missjessbess

Photographer

Wanderer / Adventurer / Stargazer 🌌
Join the Community @theimageguild 🌌
@SonyAlpha Ambassador / #AlphaCollective
#CommunityOverCompetition

linktr.ee/missjessbess


The Image Guild · 93 members

Followed by lorithomasphotog, chasing_horizonz_ and 134 others

Following Message Email

Dark Sky W... #UtahSnow... #Ireland 🇮🇪 #Arizona

jriceastro



182 posts 20.6K followers

Jason Rice

jriceastro

Photographer

Astrophotography | Birmingham, AL 📍
Website | Inquiries | Prints 🖨️

bio.site/jriceastro

Astro Amigos · 433 members

Followed by astronycc, bettym and 74 others

Following Message Shop

Features 2024 Art Exhibit Time

kristinrosephotography •



530 posts 11.2K followers

Kristine Rose Photography she/her

kristinrosephotography

Education

Full-time fine art nightscape photographer & educator in NS Canada.
Halifax, Nova Scotia

kristinrosephotography.com

Night Sky News 📖 🌌 · 471 members

Followed by lorithomasphotog, chasing_horizonz_ and 116 others

Following Message Email

Nature Reset YFMWP Au... Case Studies Case St

What are they doing right?

- Beautiful production value
- Often use written hooks to stop the scroll
- Descriptive on screen text
- Story Telling in Reels or Captions
 - Showing the process
 - Showing gear taking images
 - Walking up to gear



What are they doing right?

- Using video and still images
- Using Carousels (Multiple images)
- Reels over 8 seconds
- Making you wait until the end for image or payoff
- Use niche specific hashtags for post





- Specialty- Moon and Deep-Sky
- Uses a variety of gear
- He doesn't travel much
- Uses Instagram lives
- Visual storytelling
- Adds movement and animation
- Concise informative captions
- Varying number of hashtags

- Engagement rate 1.64%
- Post Frequency- 2.92 per week

- Specialty- Milky Way Time-lapse videos
- Posts mostly Reels
- Incorporates story telling and movement
- Uses multiple time-lapse videos together
- Mainly Showcases one geographic area
- Cornwall, England
- Concise informative captions
- Stopped using hashtags in May
- Used 3-5 prior to May

- Engagement rate 2.68%
- Post Frequency- 1.88 per week

The screenshot shows the Instagram profile of Aaron Jenkin. At the top, the name 'aaronjenkin' is displayed with a verified badge. Below the name is a circular profile picture of a man with a beard. To the right of the profile picture, the statistics are listed: 873 posts, 652K followers, and 668 following. Below the statistics, the bio reads 'Aaron Jenkin | Cornwall & NZ he/him'. There is a link to 'aaronjenkin' and a bio description: 'Photographer · I like to timelapse ✨ · Landscape & Astrophotography Prints 🖨️ · 2025 Cornwall Calendar now available! 📅'. A link to 'hype.co/@aaronj' is also present. Below the bio, it says 'Followed by chasing_horizonz_, adventurewithpaige and 209 others'. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Following', 'Message', and 'Shop'. Below these buttons are five circular thumbnails for different content categories: '2025 Calen...', 'Questions', 'Prints', 'Educational', and 'Hooker'.



- Specialty - Astrophotography
 - A true mix of Deep Sky, Milky Way, Moon, and Solar
- Provides variety of subjects and locations
- Tells story of capturing the image
- Includes written hooks when appropriate
 - Doesn't always use on screen titles
- Adds movement to images
 - Rotation, panning, zooming in
- Concise informative captions
- Uses 6-10 hashtags

- Engagement rate 3.23%
- Post Frequency- 1.88 per week



- Specialty- Milky Way photography and Nightscape
- Showcases beautiful tour locations
- Finds the world's most unique trees
- Separated his photos from Reels in the feed
- Incorporates tour footage
- Collaborations
- Showcases people on tours
- Uses captions to explain video
- Occasionally uses titles or hooks
- Uses 10-14 hashtags

- Engagement rate 2%
- Post Frequency- 2.76 per week



- Specialty- Solar and Deep Sky Photography
 - Collaborations with @darkskyalqueva
 - Most images captured in this location
 - Many descriptive titles in the videos
 - Longer Captions
 - Often educating on scientific principles
 - Uses stories to connect with audience
 - talks about gear, share BTS, promote prints and workshops
 - Uses 15-20 hashtags
-
- Engagement rate 3.82%
 - Post Frequency- 1.08 per week

- Specialty- Landscape and Nightscape
 - Showcases the overlanding experience
 - Collaborations on Reels
 - Descriptive Captions
 - Mix of images and Reels in the feed
 - Uses EXIF Data panel as a second slide
 - Variety of Reels
 - Different Landscapes
 - Editing Tutorial
 - Drone footage of tours
 - Uses stories to share BTS and tell stories
-
- Engagement rate 3.14%
 - Post Frequency- 0.44 per week

missjessbess

642 posts 44.7K followers 2,066 following

Jess Santos

missjessbess

Photographer
 Wanderer / Adventurer / Stargazer 🌿
 Join the Community @theimageguild 🤖
 @SonyAlpha Ambassador / #AlphaCollective
 #CommunityOverCompetition

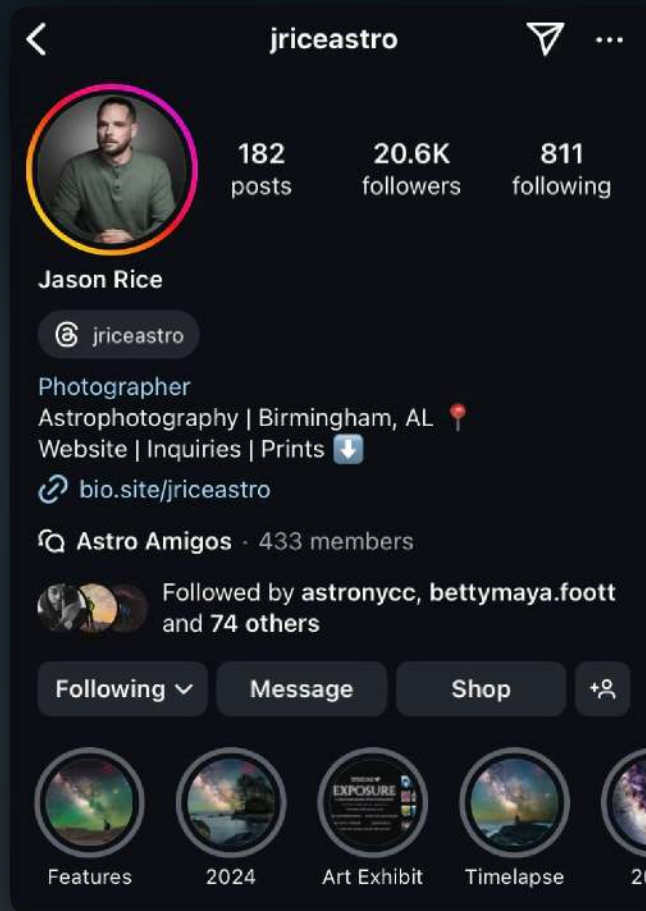
linktr.ee/missjessbess

The Image Guild · 93 members

Followed by lorithomasphotog, chasing_horizonz_ and 134 others

Following Message Email +

Dark Sky W... #UtahSnow... #Ireland 🇮🇪 #ArizonaNi... #Baj...



- Specialty- Nightscape and Deep-sky
 - Mix of Reels and images
 - Carousels of multiple images
 - BTS footage
 - people, location, and camera (drone)
 - Concise Captions
 - Uses a slider to provide some movement
 - Uses on screen titles and storytelling
 - Includes calls to action
 - Adds voice-over and asks questions
 - Follows some viral trends
-
- Engagement rate 5.06%
 - Post Frequency- 3.24 per week

- Specialty- Milky Way Images
 - Mostly images
 - Reels- BTS, tutorial, speaking to camera
 - Descriptive Captions
 - Story telling about images in captions
 - She uses Instagram to promote her business, events, and podcast
 - A business account that feels more like a passion project
 - She uses stories to share her life and BTS
 - Also uses stories to share and sell offers
-
- Engagement rate 1.83 %
 - Post Frequency- 1.28 per week

kristinerosephotography

530 posts 11.2K followers 995 following

Kristine Rose Photography she/her

kristinerosephotography

Education
 Full-time fine art nightscape photographer and educator in NS Canada.
 Halifax, Nova Scotia

kristinerosephotography.com

Night Sky News 📺 🌟 · 471 members

Followed by [lorithomasphotog](#), [chasing_horizonz_](#) and 116 others

Following ▾ Message Email +

Nature Reset
 YFMWP Au...
 Case Studies
 Case Studies
 Prin

Have a Strategy

What is a social media strategy and why do I need one?



Social Media strategy is your plan



Your strategy should answer these questions

- What are your specific goals?
- What is your niche or target audience?
- How will you serve them?
- What content will you create?
- How can you engage with your followers?
- How will you use data to track progress?
- How will you adjust?



What would you like to accomplish with social media?



**What are
your
specific
goals?**



**The two main types of
photography accounts on
social media are**

Business or Passion Project



Business or Brand

Social Media's role

- Use as top of funnel
- Teach or share value
- Build an email list
- Build credibility
- Reach potential customers
- Build a community



How to make money on social media

- Sell prints
- Instagram Subscriptions
- Monetize Youtube channel
- Sell courses or digital products
- Membership sites
- Sell workshops
- Brand sponsorships
- Affiliate Marketing



Passion Project

Social Media's role

- Share images
- Get to know other night photographers
- Increase beauty in the online world
- Build credibility
- Build a community of friends
- Promote a Cause
- Encourage yourself to process images



The most successful business accounts feel like a passion project

- Focus on serving before selling
- Show up for them
- Build a connection
- People like to buy from people



What is your Niche?

More than just a topic or genre

- A problem you are trying to solve
- A person you are speaking to



Finding your Niche

Photography is too large, you must specify

- What is your favorite type of photography?
- What do you do best?
- What type of photography are you known for?
- Can you niche down even more?



Who is your target audience?

- Who will you serve with your content?
- What do they value?
- What are their interests?
- What are their concerns?
- What solutions do they need?



How to find information about your target audience

- Facebook groups
- Subreddits
- Quora
- Google Trends
- Pinterest
- Hashtags
- Youtube Videos
- Comments sections
- Audience research platforms
 - SparkToro




On what platform are they active?



Should you be on all platforms?

- Focus on one platform
- Create an account for each platform to secure your username
- You can post the same material across all platforms



A composite image featuring a desert landscape with unique rock formations in the foreground and a starry night sky with the Milky Way galaxy in the background. The text "How will you serve your audience?" is overlaid in the lower-left quadrant.

**How will you
serve your
audience?**



Ways to serve

- Tutorials
- Inspirational Messages
- Showcase your unique experience
- Funny content
- Create a product that solves a problem
- Create interest
- Answer questions

What content will you create?



Educational content

- Upcoming news
- Share tips
- Tutorials
- How-to guides



@darkskyutah

Research your niche for content ideas

What is working for other creators?
How can you put your spin on it?



Research other Niches

What is working in other niches?
Can you make that work for you?



Vary your Content



Carousels

multiple slides or images together

- Increase reach
- More followers will see it.
- Instagram shows the second slide to a follower who didn't interact



Carousel Tips

- Use to teach concepts
- Show collections
- Use Canva to add text
- Include different crops of an image
- Include an EXIF slide with settings



Reels or short-form video

- Generally shorter than one minute
- Best way to reach new followers
- Introduce your content



Reels Tips

- Visit beautiful places
- Create high-quality video
- Use Trending Audio
- Include text on the screen
- Include hooks
- Use movement
- 2-second rule



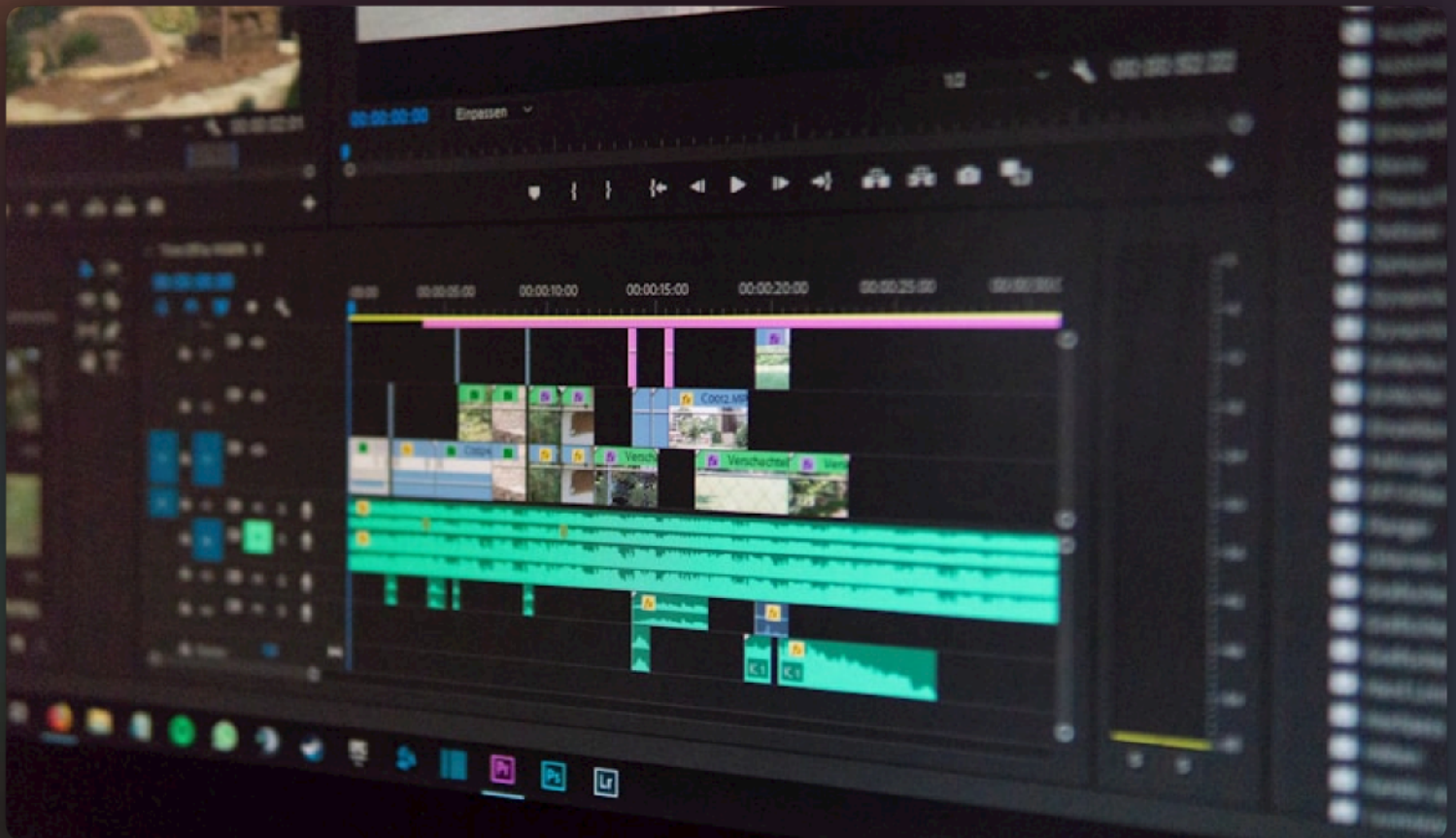
Reels

Tell a story

- Record B-role footage on your adventures
 - Walking to your camera or sites.
 - Messing with the camera or telescope
 - Time-lapse video of a telescope or camera taking pictures

Learn video editing skills

- Watch video editing tutorials on Instagram
- Try professional editing software
 - Davinci Resolve, Adobe Premier Pro, Final Cut Pro, etc
- Try video editing phone apps
 - Adobe Premier Rush, Inshot, Capcut, iMovie, etc





Stories

More casual and immediate

Build connection

More interactive

Only last 24 hours

Show your personality

Share things outside your niche

Share offers and products

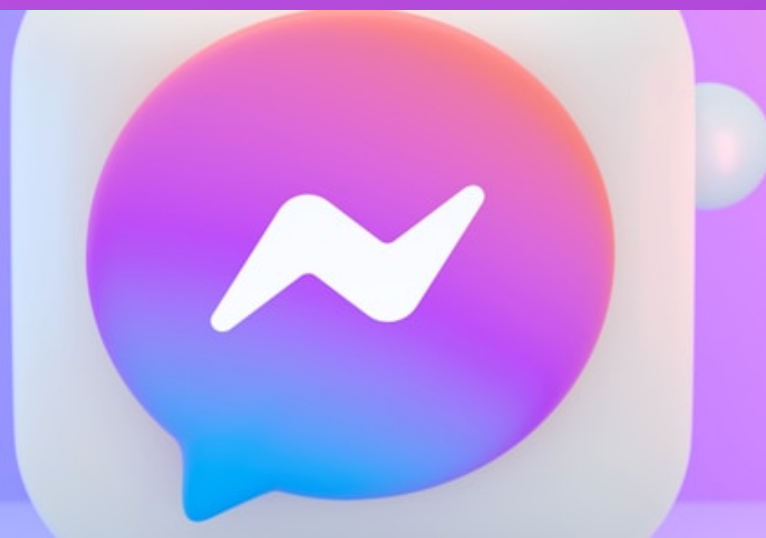
Stories Tips

- Show behind-the-scenes content
- Ask Questions
- Use Polls and Quizzes
- Showcase others' work
- Make Announcements
- Share News Events
- Tips and Tutorials
- Shoutouts to other creators
- Giveaways and Contests



Direct Messages (DM)

- Great to answer questions
- Great for networking and collaborations
- The most effective way to sell on Instagram
- One-on-one interaction
 - Establish boundaries
 - Tell people what you will and will not talk about
 - Use the Frequently Asked Questions feature



How to use DM's to sell

- Have conversations
- Build trust
- Answer questions
- Follow up
- Use Direct message automation in posts
 - Many Chat



Lives

- Do Q&A's
- Behind the Scenes
- Tutorials
- Collaborations or Interviews
- Show your gear set-up
- Reviews
- Show the moon through a telescope
- Live Giveaways
- Industry News



Collaborations

Collaboration increases reach

- Borrow another audience
- Increase Visibility and Growth
- The Algorithm boost
- Increase engagement
- Credibility
- Increase Expertise



Collaboration Ideas

- Hold a photo challenge
- Guest post
- Visit the same location and share your images
- Create Series together
- Live discussions
- Editing Challenges
- Joint workshops
- Feature posts or spotlights
 - Encourage people to use your hashtag
- Collaborate with music creators
- Showcase student work



How can you engage with your followers?

- Use the platform to serve
- Answer questions
- Respond to messages
- Ask questions



How will you use data to track progress?

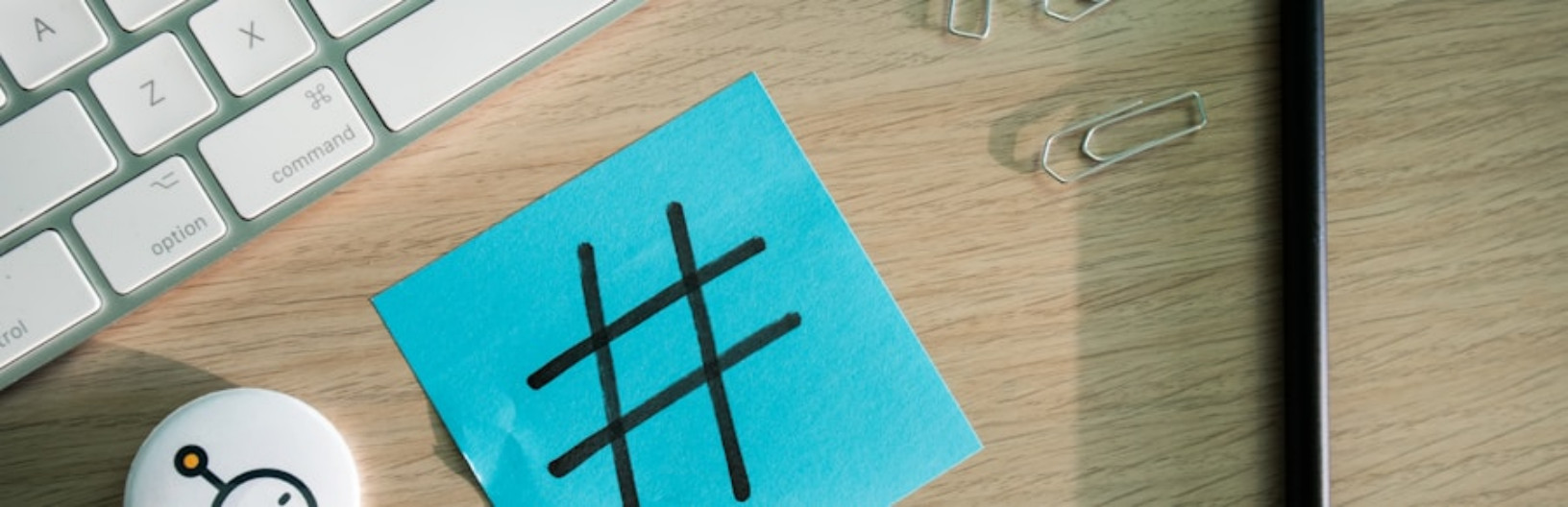
- Data from App
- Facebook Business Suite
- Metricool



How will you adjust?



- Be searchable
- Write Alt Text
- Include niche keywords in captions and bio
 - Don't Keyword stuff
- Switch up hashtags
- Update location tags



Hashtags

Hashtags can still help you

- Use hashtags specific to your post
- Don't only use the most popular ones
- Don't put hashtags in the comments
- Instagram only uses keywords in captions for SEO

Hashtags

Use hashtags with varying number of posts

- Most should be in 100K-750K range
- Don't use many hashtags under 50K-100K
 - Unless it is very niche-specific or your own
- Don't reuse the same set of hashtags all the time

Don't stress a lot about them



How Many Hashtags?

There is debate about the number of hashtags

- Keep # between 5-8 or 8-28
- Consensus is less than 30
- Use more popular ones on Reels for reach
- Test out on your account and see which help





Use Location Tag

- Location tags can increase reach
- Use an existing location tag
- Don't use exact GPS coordinates
- Be mindful of privacy

How to pick the location tag

- Pick a relevant location
- Pick a popular location
- Consider Niche Appeal
- Choose an Event or Occasion if applicable



Final thoughts

- Don't hold anything sacred
- Be social
- Move on if it isn't working
- Have fun
- Experiment
- Have growth mindset

