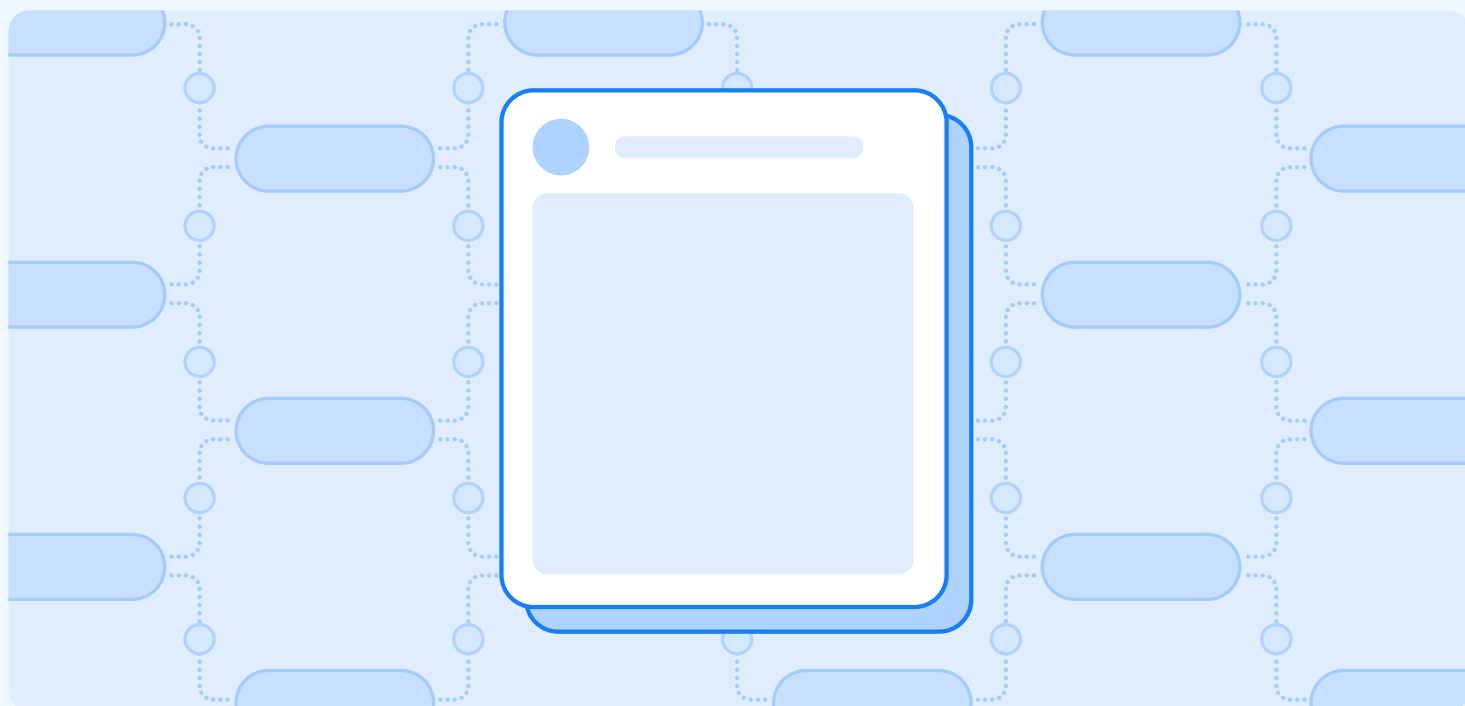


Break the Algorithm

How To Take Your Instagram
Strategy to the Next Level



Contents

Introduction	2
Part 1	
Setting the Scene on Instagram	3
Part 2	
Crafting Compelling Content	6
Part 3	
Navigating the Landscape of Your Engagement	9
Part 4	
Mastering the Market: Brands That Are Leading the Way	11
Part 5	
Next Level Insights: Strategies For Further Growth	13
Beyond the Algorithm	15

Foster your community, boost your engagement and propel your Instagram strategy forward.

Once you've poured your blood, sweat and tears into your brand, it's only natural that you want to see it shine on a social media platform like Instagram. If your business is product or service-driven and doesn't have a digital footprint by now, then you're missing out on valuable (and massive) opportunities for growth, customer reach, community building and sales. If your brand is already on social, then you understand the nuance that comes with the ever-changing algorithm and how it can feel impossible to beat.

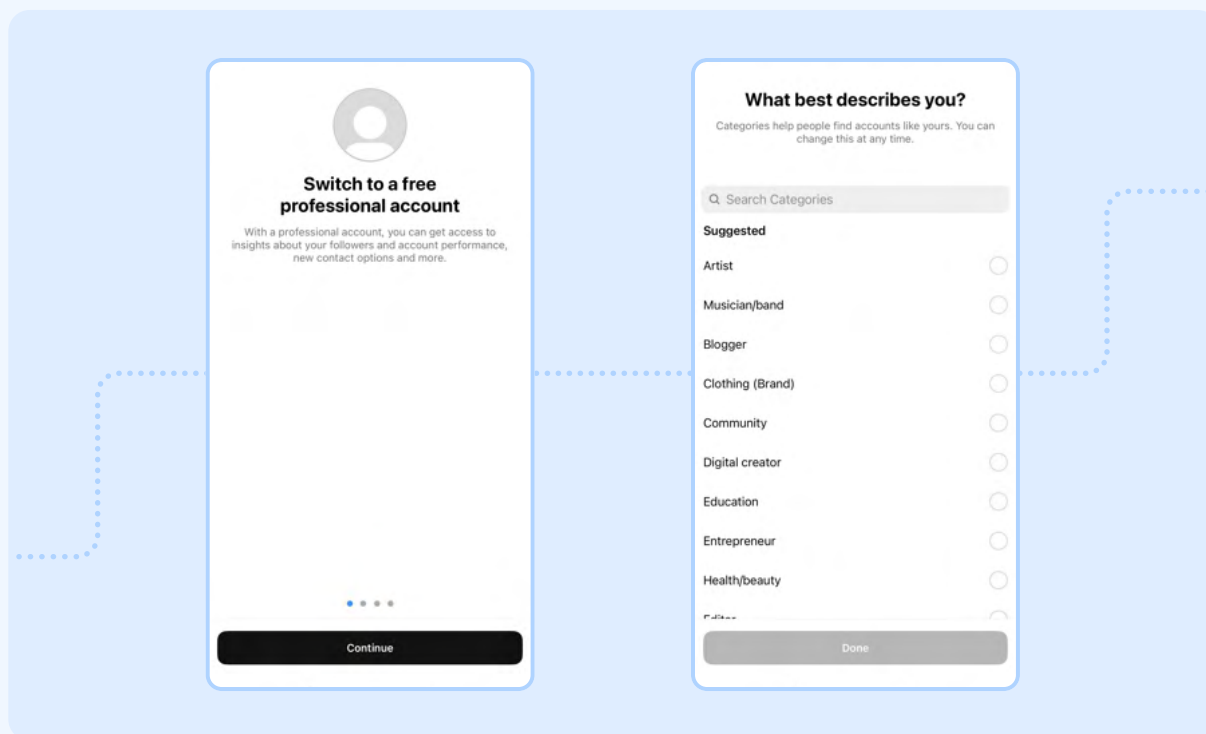
Luckily, the days of having to post and pray to the algorithm gods are over. We've built this guide thinking of social media novices and seasoned pros alike, to help your business account move past the confines of the algorithm and succeed on Instagram like never before. With killer insights from the leaders at Dash Social, we'll show you how to translate engagement, likes and saves into meaningful data that will help pivot your strategy in real time.

To truly understand the algorithm, you have to learn:

- The basics of getting discovered on Instagram.
- The key to crafting the most compelling content (and when to post it).
- How to navigate your insights and analytics.
- Inspiration and use cases from top-performing brands.
- Additional strategies to continue growing your social presence.

Setting the Scene on Instagram

Look at you! You've already done the hardest part. Just creating an account for your brand is half of the battle when it comes to working with the algorithm. Now it's time to take things one step further. The easiest (and completely free) way to start leveling up your account is by converting it to a Business or Creator account. Once that is complete, it's time to work on the details.



Perfect Your First Impression

So, you have your business account at the ready, let's make it discoverable. Instagram handle aside, having a buttoned-up Instagram bio is crucial for discovery and introducing yourself to a new audience of potential customers.

Take a step back and think about how you would present your business to someone without any idea what you offer – this is exactly what your Instagram bio does for you. Space is limited, so there's no need to get wordy with your language. Focus on succinctly communicating who you are and what you do.

Try to address the following questions:

What product or service do you sell?

Even if it feels obvious based on your posts, reiterate what people can buy from you. If your entire feed only consists of photos of rings, it is still important to distinguish that you are a jewelry brand in your bio.

What makes you unique?

Clarify what kind of brand you are by adding one or two adjectives that summarize your aesthetic or offerings. If you sell vintage clothing, examples of good adjectives are “timeless”, “classic” or “sustainable.”

Who do you aim to serve?

Chances are, with over 200 million business accounts on Instagram, many brands are selling products similar to yours. Make your feed stand out by clarifying who your products are for. If you make snacks catered to those with dietary restrictions, make that known in your bio with “Gluten-free” or “Vegan.”

Who are you?

Getting personal with your bio can help customers identify with your brand on a deeper level. Don't be afraid to share that you're a “small business based in New York City” or “founded by two best friends in LA.” If your founders have a personal, public handle, you can even add those in.

Do you have a call to action?

Ultimately, your presence on Instagram should drive new customers to support your business, right? Direct your followers to “Shop our new arrivals” or “Join thousands reading our newsletter” and don't forget to make sure your link-in-bio or [LikeShop](#) matches.

Examples of Top Notch Bios



Vintage clothing boutique for stylish women.
Curated by @yourhandle from Chicago.
Shop new arrivals in our stories every Sunday.
[likeshop.me/yourbrand](#)



Email marketing & consultations for local businesses from the woman behind @yourhandle.
Get my FREE tips for starting your first email list.
[likeshop.me/yourbrand](#)



Small batch, gluten-free cookies everyone can indulge in.
We make healthy eating fun and accessible in Boulder, Colorado. Order a fresh batch today!
[likeshop.me/yourbrand](#)

Stay Rooted in Your Purpose

Before you jump into posting, spend some time reflecting on your why. What is this all for? Some helpful questions to consider:

- What goals are you trying to achieve by posting?
- Are you hoping to convert customers? Or keep a lively, engaged community?
- Are you aiming to bring your audience fun, humor, tools, or resources?

Your purpose and mission are the why. Once that is clear, you can think tactically about how you will make good on your mission. Allow it to be your guide for posting so that everything you share on Instagram ladders back to a clear purpose. In a time when there's more noise than ever across social channels, you want your message to be concise, purposeful and productive.

Develop a Brand Voice and Stick To It

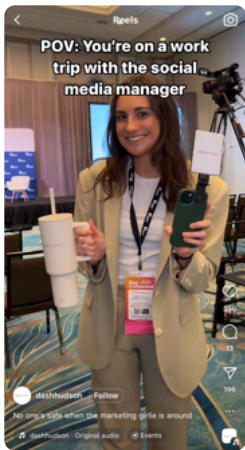
We're sure you've heard it many times before, but consistency truly is key when it comes to showing up on social, especially Instagram. This doesn't just mean posting every day, but also keeping your tone, voice and style consistent and identifiable. Having a standard brand voice across all channels, not just Instagram, makes you recognizable, tells the user a really important story about your brand and shows them how much time and effort you put into your strategy.

Another significant element of developing a brand voice is knowing what makes sense to post (or not post) for your brand and staying true to that. While it may be tempting to jump onto the latest trends, take a step back and consider if it aligns with your brand voice and if it will make sense to your followers. Always remember your community should come first when creating new content.

Crafting Compelling Content

What Type of Content Should You Post?

Always knowing what to post can feel impossible, especially when keeping your brand voice in mind. Hold a brainstorming session with your team for the following month's social plan and dream up your next viral Instagram post or story. Here are some ideas to get the creative juices flowing.



Video-based assets:

- Lo-fi over Hi-fi
- Behind the scenes
- Sneak peeks
- Trending content
- Product shots

Photography-based assets:

- On-model
- Flat lays
- Environment shots
- Product releases
- User-generated content reposts

Text-based assets:

- Infographics
- Testimonial
- Relevant quotes
- Countdown graphics
- Memes and mantras

One important rule for consumer-facing brands is to strike an effective balance between your promotional posts and organic content. We like the 80/20 rule, where ~80 percent of your content is authentic, unbranded editorial content and about 20 percent of your posts are dedicated to selling your product or service.

How Often Should You Post?

First things first, what's manageable and realistic for your team? If you're a team of one, posting 3x a day and stories 1x a day might be unrealistic, especially considering other platform needs. You can always scale up if you find you have bandwidth to spare. **We recommend posting at least three to four times a week and posting a story every day.**

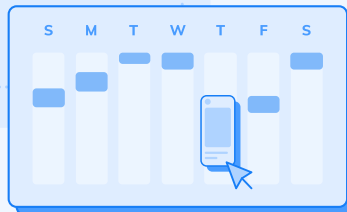
Once you settle on an appropriate amount of times to post per week, experiment with the days and times you post to get an idea of the best time to post on Instagram and when your audience is online and wants to interact with you.

Organize Your Content With a Marketing Calendar

Now that you're full of inspiration, it's time to bring your ideas to life. A great place to start is by creating a content or marketing calendar to get yourself organized. This will help you visualize your content in one place and will help you plan even farther ahead. A great calendar will also help you identify the key dates you want to plan content around and what themes will drive the focus of each month's posts. This is especially important if you have product drops throughout the year – pre-planning will allow you to be strategic about your marketing for those products or offerings.

Try Dash Social's ready-to-use Social Media Calendar Template to get started.

[Download Free Template](#)



Once you have a rough outline for your calendar, the next step is to explore what evergreen content looks like for your brand. Evergreen posts aren't tied to a specific timeliness peg, product launch or viral trend, so they can be scheduled at any time and help bolster up a backlog of great content to post in a pinch. Choosing what content works best for your brand starts with testing different asset types.

3-4

posts per week

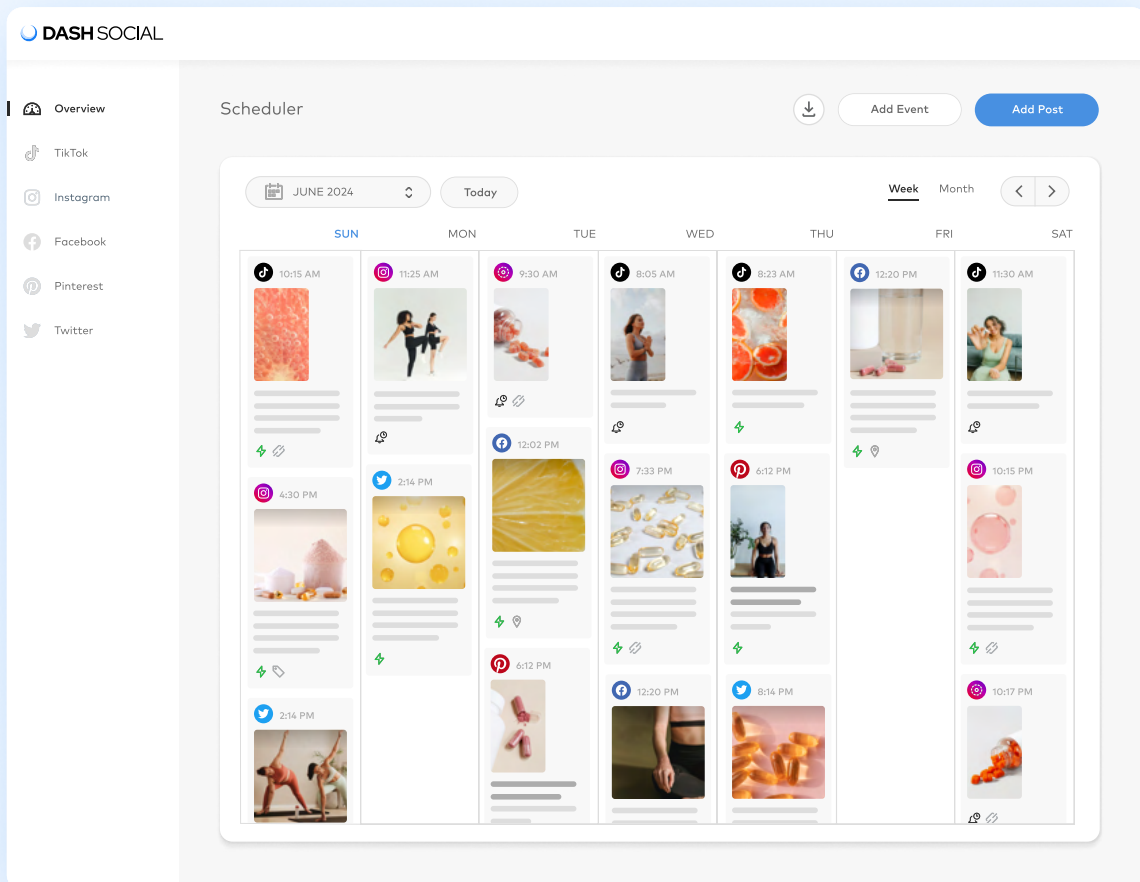
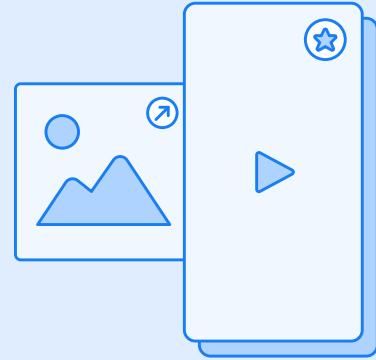
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story per day

Set Yourself up for Success With a Content Scheduler

You thought you were organized with just your marketing calendar? Wait until you get a scheduling tool. Tools like Dash Social's Scheduler make it easy to take your marketing calendar and schedule content as far (or as close) in advance as you want to. Being this organized means you can essentially set it and forget it if you choose auto-publishing. However, we recommend checking in on your scheduled content regularly to ensure it still aligns with your strategy, especially if there are timely things happening or world events that may cause you to adjust your posting schedule.

A nice bonus of using Dash Social's Scheduler is that you are privy to real-time performance predictions, which can be found in the upper corner of each asset in the "unscheduled" field. This will allow you to pick only the best-performing content so you can see your engagement and other important metrics soar.



Navigating the Landscape of Your Engagement

Harnessing the Power of Instagram Analytics

You've got your posting strategy down. Your content is on brand, looking great and users are starting to notice. But how do you keep the momentum and stay on top of your followers' interests? The next and most crucial step in any social media marketing strategy is to track your metrics. Social media analytics give you a full picture of how many people saw and interacted with your content. This is a great way to understand how posts and campaigns resonate with your audience and how the algorithm will respond to them.

On Instagram, you can do this easily within the app by hitting the "Insights" button in the Settings and Activity section.

You can view these three types of metrics through the Insights section:

Recent Highlights

In this section you will see any notable increases in your account or content performance here. When you first open it up it will be set to a preset date, but users have the option to create custom timeframes within the last 90 days if you are looking to highlight performance overall during a larger time period.

Overview

Here you will find a wide range of interesting insights, including accounts reached, accounts engaged, total followers and approximate earnings. Users can click into each of these metrics individually to get a closer look at the data. Like the Recent Highlights, users can customize the time frames for which they want to get an overview.

Content You Shared

This is a quick snapshot of all of the content you've posted or boosted across feed posts, stories, videos, Reels and live broadcasts. You can click on each individual content type to gain access to the media library, where users can view and filter all of their content based on media type, reach, interactions and timeframe.

Diving Deeper Into the Data

Manually monitoring the numbers takes time and because of this, social media managers are often some of the busiest on any marketing team. As your business grows, you'll want to dive even deeper into the numbers – but a calculator just isn't going to cut it if you've got thousands of posts and hundreds of thousands of followers on the go.

When it's time to level up, Dash Social can pull all of your historical data and calculate key performance indicators such as:

- **Engagement rate:** likes + comments / followers
- **Effectiveness rate:** likes + comments + saves + video views / reach
- **Growth rate:** the rate at which your audience is growing
- **Weekly earned reach:** the number of impressions you receive through UGC

It's quick, easy and takes almost all of the legwork out of the process so you can focus on what matters: creating content primed to convert.

Mastering the Market: Brands That Are Leading the Way

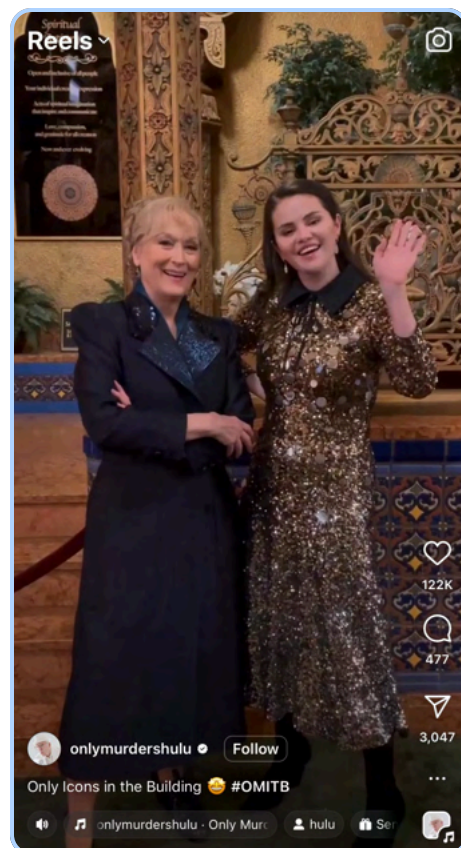
Own Your Space

Crushing it on social is no easy feat. With a bit of hard work, a lot of creativity and a deep connection to your audience, you can grow your brand's presence and carve out your corner of social media's highly saturated digital space. It sounds great in theory, but what does that look like in practice? For best results, look to the experts. We rounded up some of the brands with top-performing engagement rates to find out what they get right and how you can, too.



Average engagement rate: 6.2%

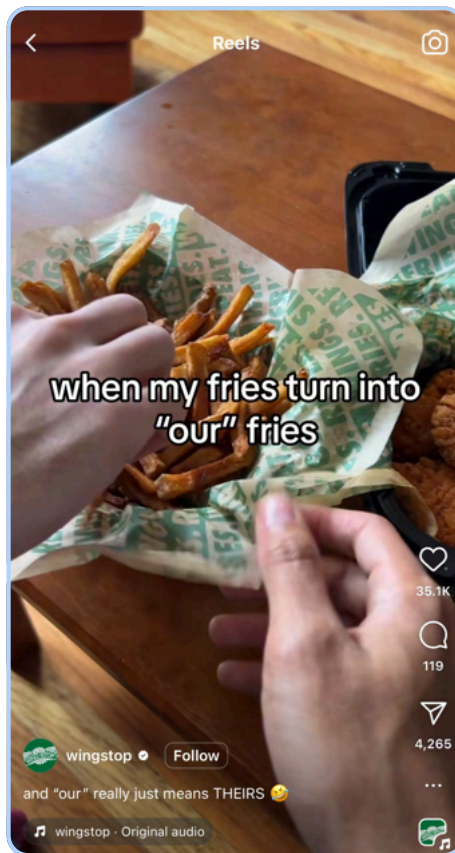
You would think a star studded show such as Only Murders in the Building wouldn't take the time or need to post on social media. That is because, typically, hype around shows like this comes from the actor's accounts or the streaming service, but that's not the case for Only Murders. While the actors and Hulu post about the show, the show's Instagram account is the breeding ground for engagement and excitement. With an average engagement rate of 6.2%, @onlymurdershulu does a phenomenal job of highlighting the characters, showing behind-the-scenes content and most importantly, involving the fans. It even has a highlight pinned to its profile that shares art fans have made inspired by the show.





Average engagement rate: 4.1%

American football has been having its moment, so it's no surprise that the ESPN College Football Instagram account performs better than ever. ESPN does an incredible job of weaving together game highlights, milestones, schedules and news, leaving it with an average engagement rate of 4.1%. @espncfb also has the luxury of being able to pull any and all relevant news from the NFL too, which brings in a whole other crowd of excited and engaged fans. While it may seem all business from the outside, a great thing about the ESPNCF account is that while news is the main driver, there are still plenty of opportunities for memes and fun to be had with fans.



Average engagement rate: 3.7%

Wingstop takes an ultra-casual approach to its feed and fans are eating it up (pun intended). A lot of its content is funny memes and shots of delicious food. The best part? Almost all of this content is made by Wingstop lovers. @wingstop leverages UGC constantly to showcase new launches and the classics. Wingstop's community-focused content keeps users coming back for more, with an average engagement rate of 3.7%. And if that's not enough, Wingstop also features multiple celebrity partnerships to reach a wider audience. Having this approach to social has allowed Wingstop not to take themselves so seriously and to hop onto trends seamlessly.



Average engagement rate: 3.6%

In a world obsessed with Barbie, we're pleasantly surprised to see Bratz still making impressive waves on Instagram. As the "girls with a passion 4 fashion," it can integrate just about any fashion trend into its feed, pulling inspiration from the likes of Zendaya to Maison Margiela. By doing this, @bratz can stay current while also drawing on the nostalgia factor that so many people feel when seeing these dolls. There are even trends where people build filters or do makeup and create outfits to look like Bratz. The Bratz account averages a 3.6% engagement rate, showing that some things never change or go out of style.

Next Level Insights: Strategies For Further Growth

We've made it very clear that the Instagram algorithm favors engagement. The more engaged your audience is with your posts, the more the algorithm boosts those posts to an even larger crowd. So, how do you foster engagement?

Grow Your Audience With Community Management

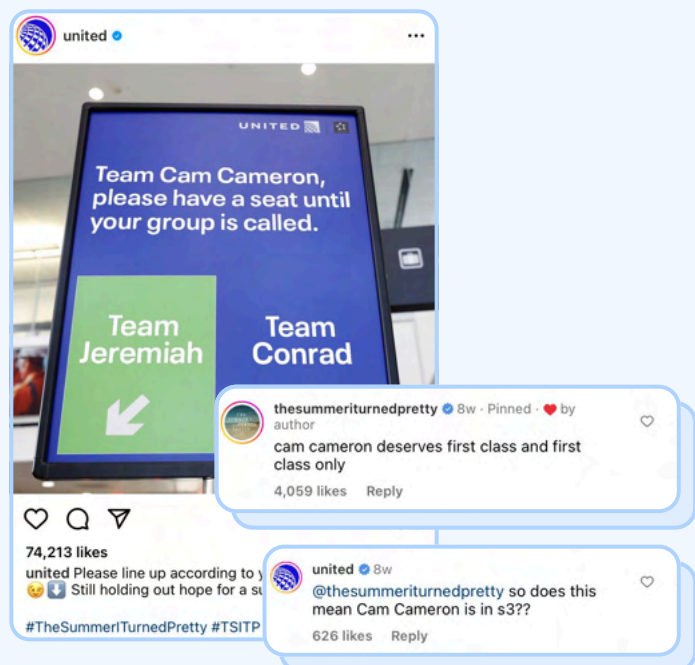
- To build your [community](#), share posts that your followers care about. Show consistency with your presence, replies and reactions and hold regular conversations with your followers.
- Give them a call to action to encourage interactivity. Use your time to ask followers questions in the captions of posts or series. This is a great way to ramp up your comment count and build community.

These actions tell the algorithm that your brand and its followers care about one another. The closer you are, the more likely your post will be prioritized in their feeds.



United is a real-time participant on social media, adapting its voice and content to be culturally relevant and relatable.

Community management is the cornerstone of United's organic social strategy, and it is the secret to how the brand has achieved such a loyal following. United is committed to making its followers feel "seen," responding to comments and queries with a blend of humor and positivity. The airline flies above and beyond the standard practice of responding to comments on its own posts by interacting regularly with other accounts, even showing up in the comment sections of viral content.



The Strength Of Inter-Brand Collabs

For product-driven brands in particular, it's easy to get caught up in the competitive nature of the retail world and bring that attitude to Instagram. Instead, consider the affection you give to your community and how much it helps grow your profile. This love doesn't have to be limited to followers – collaborating with other businesses can lead to mutually beneficial partnerships that expose huge audiences to what both of you have to offer.

Try a combined giveaway, where participants have to follow a few brand profiles and tag friends to be eligible to win a major prize pack. Another easy way to collaborate is to shout out brands you admire or think your audience would appreciate. Sharing UGC with multi-brand tags is also a way to align yourself with like-minded brands or even brands you aspire to work with.

The Fusion of Social and E-Commerce

When it comes down to it, the physical and digital business spaces are really one and the same. On social channels, posts are the window displays, followers are the foot traffic and live streams are the in-store activations. And then there's the comments section. That's your community. Your fan club, word-of-mouth referral system and customer service hub are all rolled into one. For e-commerce-enabled brands especially, leaving comments without responses is akin to leaving customers in an empty store: the shelves are stocked, but nobody is there to offer assistance, answer questions or make recommendations. It tells them you don't care about what they have to say and everyone wants to feel important.

But it isn't just about the volume of comments you're responding to – the content of the comments can play a major role in your brand's reputation on Instagram. Paying attention to keywords like "do you ship to" or "where can I buy" means you can create more sales opportunities by directing potential customers to the right place. Furthermore, a search for comments including terms like "where is," "not arrived," or "shipping date" can quickly turn a negative experience into a positive one, saving potential lost time and revenue. Making this search process a part of your daily routine through sentiment analysis and Dash Social's Social Listening Tool ensures these questions are addressed within 24 hours. It shows followers how much you prioritize their needs.

Beyond the Algorithm

If there is one thing to be taken away from this guide, it's not all about the algorithm. It's also about engagement, building a community and showing your existing and potential consumers that you're here and listening. Though technically unbreakable, the algorithm responds well to Instagram accounts that are detailed, active, engaging and show they care. It also doesn't hurt to be in tune with your data and analytics.

Who would have guessed that the secret to beating the algorithm lies in simply prioritizing the desires and needs of our community? It's a revelation that will undoubtedly make us all better social media marketers.

Want To Keep Exploring?

Once you've mastered all the material covered in this guide, there are plenty of other Dash Social resources to help you enhance your social presence. Consider checking out these resources that we love:

- [Social Media Trends Report](#) to keep up on the latest trends and insights to drive your strategy forward.
- [Industry Benchmarks](#) to understand how your brand stacks up to your industry.
- [Dash Social Blog](#) to stay up to date on a wide range of social media marketing topics and learn from the best.
- [Case Studies](#) to hear directly from brands about how they use and love Dash Social.
- [Downloadable Templates](#) to implement into your daily routine as a social media manager.

[Get a Demo](#)