

*Laura Bradley is editorial director at Dazed Media Studio. She's also an Instagram consultant and has helped businesses from Dover Street Market to M/M Paris get started on the platform. We asked Laura to share her top tips for using the site and some of her favourite accounts*

# The Instagram Enthusiast

by Rachael Steven

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Instagram is the social media platform that stole my heart. My Instagram journey began in March 2012, when I was editor of anothermag.com and we launched the @anothermagazine account. It quickly became my channel of choice — a place where I could get ideas, engage with our audience and seek out creatives to commission, and I began to look for fellow Instagram enthusiasts in the industry. David Owen is one of them and IDEA Books (@idea.ltd), the business he co-founded with Angela Hill, is one of my favourite Instagram success stories. “Instagram is the internet!” Owen says. “It exploded our business. We feature six books a day, seven days a week — that’s a total of 2,000 books a year and it is reasonable to say everything sells and quite often, many times over.” Over the years, I’ve enjoyed persuad-



ing countless creatives and brands to sign up to the platform, including @doverstreetmarket and graphic design duo M/M (Paris) [see pic below left]. “How fascinating it is to communicate only visually. For us, it’s more exciting than a website,” says Michael Amzalag, one half of @mmparis-dotcom. I love watching the changing landscape of Instagram — the trends, the movements, the formats and the key players — and observing a new generation of creatives who have taken Instagram to their heart. Make-up artist Isamaya Ffrench (@isamayaffrench), whose selfies are one of my Instagram highlights, says: “Instagram has been the most powerful tool for me so far in my career.”

In the past four years, I’ve learned lots along the way — here are my top 10 tips for using the site...

## 1 Analyse five brilliant accounts

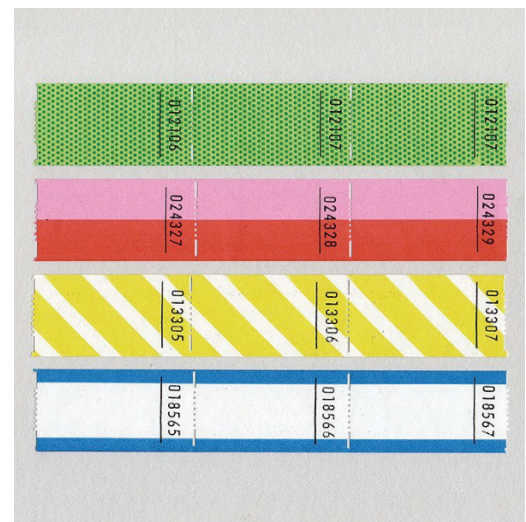
Learn from the best. This is the time for Insta-homework. Think about the accounts you love and obsess over them. What is it that makes them so good? Which posts perform best? How much do they post? I'm a big believer in looking outside of your industry for inspiration and quite often, the smaller businesses are playing a much better Instagram game than the big brands (check out @petalon\_flowers). Take screenshots of posts that catch your eye. @glossier is my current favourite.

## 2 Define your account

Working out exactly what your account is and who it's for is crucial. Even if you've been posting for a while, it's never too late to have an overhaul. Is the account for business or pleasure? Who is your audience? Is it a mood board, portfolio, diary, or a digital shop window for your brand? Who is your audience and what excites them? A lot of brands make the mistake of focusing solely on product – the best accounts mix other types of content such as lifestyle shots or inspiration images (see Ashley and Mary-Kate Olsen's brand @therow). Creating an inspiring 'world' gives people a reason to follow and the best Instagram accounts can be described in a simple way. Write a description for your account, even if it's just for your eyes. Three to five key words can also be helpful.

**This page** Shots from the Instagram account of high-end stationery retailer Present & Correct, @presentandcorrect.

**Facing page** From travel photographer Joe Pickard's account @josephowen





### 3 *House-keeping*

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The best accounts are also consistent. Work out your house style and own it. Keep your account tidy – get a strong profile image and fill out the description box with your email and website if you want people to get in touch. I once spent ages trying to track down a photographer I'd stumbled across on Instagram because he didn't have a contact. As soon as he added his email, the inquiries started rolling in. The 'following' list is often overlooked – if you're a business, ensure the accounts you are following are on-brand.



### 4 *Set up an Insta-system*

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Whether it's a personal or business account, the best accounts have a great system. Work out a plan, organise folders of images, get a team to create assets. Put your favourite apps for Instagram in a folder. My favourites include VSCO (it has a brilliant selection of filters, make sure you experiment with the extra bundles) and Insta-tiling for image tiling and grid layouts.



### 5 *It's all about aesthetics*

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Image is everything. It's important to think about your individual posts and the grid, but don't get hooked on the latter. Posting in rows of three can be effective but question whether this will be an enjoyable experience for the viewer. Work hard to create quality images – consider your composition, take lots of shots and edit later, experiment with filters (try to limit to a handful, for account consistency). Blurry images or low quality images are never acceptable. Humour, appreciation and inspiration are key words that relate to the most successful posts. (Check out @josephowen)

## 6 What's your trademark?

The best accounts have a 'thing'. Instagram's Eva Chen often photographs her shoes from the back seat of a cab alongside her handbag and a piece of fruit, and smartly groups images under #evachenpose. @idea.ltd have dealt with Instagram's strict no-nipple rules with a variety of stationery items and stickers. @alc\_ltd are doing a great job of using quotes. I'm a big fan of the @dazed emoji polls and #dazedinstastories and @cococapitan's grids.



## 7 Tone of Voice

Whilst images are important, captions shouldn't be any less considered. Think about your tone of voice and stick with a style. @rickowensonline always uses capital letters while @palaceskateboards makes great use of emojis. Use hashtags with caution. They can be useful to group types of content together or lead users to your content. Or they can be a funny. If you want to use a few, think of a nice way to lay them out – on a separate line or posting them in a separate comment. But be warned: too many hashtags can look desperate.



**This page** Eva Chen's signature set-up – feet up on the back seat of a cab surrounded by fruit and a bag, @evachen212.

**Facing page** From the Instagram account of beauty brand Glossier, @glossier

*“Be careful of Insta-spam – three posts per day is more than enough”*



## **8** *Timing is everything*

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If you're not posting regularly, you're not part of the Insta-conversation. But be careful of Insta-spam: three posts a day, spaced out, is more than enough. Posting when your audience is active is key – in the morning, at lunch or in the evening, as well as Sundays and holidays. A late night post can often get lost. Think about how you can mark key moments on the calendar, be it National Cat Day or Boxing Day, but work hard to do posts that are unique and interesting. @presentandcorrect is very good at marking key moments on the stationery calendar such as #nationalpencilday.

## **9** *Insta-etiquette*

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Practice good vibes. Be polite and don't steal other people's images without a credit. Regrams are great in moderation. Later grams are a bit weird.

## **10** *Review. Review. Review.*

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Experiment, test, question everything. Always ask, 'Would I like this post? Would I follow this account?' But don't get fixated with your own account – continue to watch others and learn from the best. And, most importantly, have fun.



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