



## Instagram Marketing - Part 2

Evan Mangan, on behalf of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Kerry, delivered Part 2 of the Instagram marketing. This course focused on the practical mechanics of the platform, the psychological and technical aspects of the Instagram algorithm, and specific strategies for driving business growth.

### The Mechanics and Strategy of the Feed

Evan started the session by explaining the "Home" feed, which consists of images and Reels from accounts a user follows. He highlighted five primary ways users interact with feed content: **liking, commenting, reposting, sharing, and saving.**

- **Reposting and Sharing:** Evan noted that "Reposting" is a relatively new feature (released within the last few months) that allows users to push content into their followers' feeds directly from the original account. He suggested that when businesses repost content, they should add a "message" or emoji to provide context for why they are sharing it.
- **Saving for Research:** Evan emphasised the "Save" feature as a powerful tool for businesses. He explained that saves are anonymous, meaning the original account is never notified. Evan recommended that participants use this feature to build "**Collections**" of inspiration, such as folders for "New Dishes" or "Staff Introductions," to improve their own content quality over time.
- **The Algorithm and Engagement:** Evan clarified that the Instagram feed is not chronological; it is managed by AI to ensure users see interesting content first. He described the algorithm as a "snowball effect": if a post receives high engagement (especially saves, shares, and reposts) in the first few hours, the AI will show it to a larger "tranche" of followers.

### Content Strategy: The Business Spectrum

A core part of Evan's teaching was the "Spectrum" of business types on Instagram. He said that where a business sits on this spectrum dictates its content strategy.

- **Visual Businesses:** Boutiques, restaurants, and florists are on the visual end. Evan said these businesses can "sell" 90% of the time because their products are inherently interesting to look at.
- **Service-Based Businesses:** Solicitors, accountants, and coaches occupy the other end. Evan warned that these businesses cannot sell all the time because it is "boring". Instead, they should follow an **80/20 rule**: 80% helpful, informative tips (expertise) and only 20% sales-focused content.
- **Using AI for Ideas:** To help businesses never run out of ideas, Evan demonstrated using **ChatGPT**. He advised participants to give the AI context (e.g., "Act like an Instagram expert for a bridal shop") and ask for 20 specific ideas for Reels or posts.

## Optimising Post Formats: 4x5 vs Square

One of Evan's most technical tips was regarding image dimensions. He stated that businesses should stop posting square images and switch to **4x5 rectangles**.

- **Impact:** A 4x5 image is physically taller and takes up more screen real estate, making it more likely to "jump out" and capture attention in the feed.
- **Design Tools:** Evan recommended using **Canva** to crop images to the 4x5 social media preset. He also shared a practical tip: when uploading a 4x5 image to Instagram, users must tap the "resize" button to prevent the app from automatically cropping it back to a square.

## Hashtags, Search, and Tagging

Evan explained that hashtags should be viewed as "**search words**" rather than just tags. He shared several insights into current hashtag trends:

- **Hashtag Limits:** Evan and some participants noted that Instagram has started restricting some accounts to only **5 hashtags** per post. He said this is because Instagram wants to stop "spammy" or irrelevant tagging.
- **Researching Tags:** Evan advised looking at successful competitors and using ChatGPT to find the best tags for a specific niche.
- **Tagging vs Mentions:** Evan said that "Tagging" is subtle, while "Mentioning" (using the @ symbol in a caption) is more overt and helps other accounts gain visibility. He encouraged tagging LEO Kerry or partners so they receive a notification and can potentially share the post to their own Stories.

## The Power of Carousels and Stories

Evan highlighted the benefits of "Carousels" (multiple images/videos in one post). He noted that the algorithm often favours carousels because **swiping is considered engagement**.

Moving to **Stories**, Evan described them as a "secondary feed" that reaches a smaller, more dedicated portion of followers (typically 7–9%).

- **Links:** Stories are vital because they allow for a "Link Sticker," which is the most direct way to drive traffic to a website. Evan suggested customizing the sticker text to something actionable like "View Yummy Menu".
- **Engagement Hacks:** Evan showed how to share a feed post to a Story and add a "Tap for Details" GIF to drive traffic back to the original post on the grid.

## Driving Website Traffic and Growing Followers

Evan addressed a common frustration: links do not work in Instagram post captions. To solve this, he recommended:

1. **Link in Bio:** Using the "Bio" section of the profile, which now allows up to five links.
2. **Call to Action:** Writing "Tap the link in our profile" in post captions.

Regarding **growth**, Evan said that competitions are the most effective way to gain followers quickly. On Instagram, it is legal (unlike Facebook's strict rules) to require users to follow the account and tag friends as a condition for entry. He also suggested **cross-promoting** the Instagram account on Facebook, in email signatures, and on the business website using tools like **Juicer.io**.

## Analyzing Success: Professional Dashboard

Finally, Evan explained how to use the **Professional Dashboard** to track reach and engagement. He urged participants to look at their metrics over a year to identify which Reels or posts received the most "saves" or "likes" and then create more content of that specific style.

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## Action Point List for Participants

- **Optimize Your Grid:** Ensure you have at least 10–12 high-quality, visually consistent posts on your grid so that new visitors have a reason to hit "Follow".
- **Switch to 4x5 Aspect Ratio:** Use Canva to resize all future image posts to 4x5. Remember to hit the resize button during the Instagram upload process.
- **Audit Your Bio Links:** Update your profile links to include your most important sales pages (up to 5) and reorder them so the most relevant one is at the top.
- **Implement the 80/20 Rule:** If you provide a service, plan a content calendar where 80% of your posts provide free tips or advice to build trust.
- **Research Search Terms:** Identify 5–10 primary search terms for your business and ensure they are included in your "Name" field on your profile and in your post hashtags.
- **Create "Inspiration" Collections:** Start saving successful competitor posts and Reels into organized Instagram Collections to use as templates for your own content.
- **Run a Targeted Competition:** Design a "Follow and Tag" giveaway to attract non-followers. Consider partnering with a complementary business to double your reach.
- **Review Your Insights:** Access your Professional Dashboard once a week to see which posts have the highest "Reach" and "Saves" and plan more content based on those winners.
- **Cross-Promote:** Send an email to your customer list or post on Facebook (with a link) specifically inviting your existing audience to follow your Instagram account.

*This was created with the help of one of our AI colleagues 😊*