



Instagram Reels

Evan Mangan delivered this comprehensive training course on how to create **Instagram Reels** on behalf of the **Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Cork North & West**. The session was part of **Enterprise Week**, a national initiative featuring business events across the country. Evan clarified from the outset that while the LEO offers broader courses on Instagram marketing and advertising, this specific session was a "deep dive" into Reels, which he identified as the most critical area for reaching both followers and non-followers.

Evan emphasized that participants would receive a **detailed 82-page manual** containing screenshots and step-by-step instructions following the course. He explained that the session was not recorded to encourage open questions and protect privacy under **GDPR**, but noted that a transcript would be used by AI to generate a four-page summary of major points for attendees. Evan's background included extensive digital marketing experience in London with brands like BT and Yahoo before he established his training company in Kerry.

The Instagram Ecosystem and the Algorithm

Evan began by establishing the "fundamentals" of how Instagram operates for business. He explained that the **Main Feed** (Home) consists of three primary content types: **posts** (static images), **reels** (videos), and **ads**. He highlighted the importance of the **Grid** on a business profile, describing it as a "helicopter view" that a stranger uses to judge an account; if the grid appears "drab" or "boring," potential followers will not engage.

A significant portion of the session was dedicated to understanding the **Instagram Algorithm**, which Evan described as being driven by **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**. Evan said the algorithm has two primary jobs: analyzing users to see what they find interesting and evaluating every piece of content to see if it is worth showing to more people. He noted that Instagram feels no "obligation" to show your content to your followers, as they view them as "their users" rather than yours.

Evan provided crucial **reach metrics** to illustrate why Reels are superior to other formats:

- **Stories** typically reach only **7% to 9%** of followers and disappear after 24 hours.
- **Static Posts** reach an average of **15%** of followers.

- **Reels** generally reach **15% to 20%** (or more) of followers because Instagram knows users find video more engaging.

Evan stressed the importance of the **"3-second hook."** He explained that the AI calculates what percentage of viewers watch beyond three seconds; if most people swipe away quickly, the AI deems the content uninteresting and stops showing it. He suggested that the more people re-watch a video or watch it to completion, the more the "snowball effect" takes hold, potentially pushing the Reel into the **Reels Feed** of non-followers.

The Marketing Spectrum: Products vs. Services

Evan introduced a conceptual "spectrum" to help participants determine their content strategy.

- **Visual Products:** Businesses like boutiques, jewellers, or furniture shops have "visually interesting" products and can afford to be **80-90% sales-focused** because their content is naturally appealing.
- **Services:** Businesses like life coaches, accountants, or LEOs face a harder challenge because their work is not inherently visual. Evan said these businesses must follow an **80/20 rule: 80% helpful, informative content** (tips and advice) and only **20% sales content**.
- **The "Expert" Requirement:** For service providers, Evan noted that "nobody knows if you're any good" just by looking at a profile. Therefore, they must use video to establish **credibility and expertise**.

The Three Types of Marketing Reels

Evan identified three distinct styles of Reels that businesses should utilize:

1. **Clips Set to Music:** This involves taking several short, high-quality portrait clips (around 2-3 seconds each) and syncing them to upbeat music. Evan recommended this for showcasing physical products or locations.
2. **Voiceover Reels:** This style uses the same clip-based format but adds a recorded voice to explain a product's benefits or share a tip. Evan said this is highly effective for explaining complex services or adding a personal touch to product showcases.
3. **Talking to the Camera:** Evan described this as "authentic" and "humanizing". While optional for product-based businesses, he said it is **essential for service providers** because "you are the product".

Content Planning and Idea Generation

To help participants overcome "creator's block," Evan suggested two primary methods for finding ideas:

- **Instagram Search:** Searching for keywords like "ADHD tips" or "Irish landscape artist" to see what competitors and peers are successfully posting.
- **ChatGPT/AI:** Evan demonstrated a powerful technique where he asked ChatGPT to "act like an Instagram marketing expert" and provide 20 Reel ideas based on a business's website content. He showed how AI can suggest specific hooks and scenarios tailored to a local business.

Technical Training: The "Edits" App

While Reels can be made within the Instagram app, Evan strongly recommended using the **Instagram "Edits" app** (a standalone, free tool by Meta). He compared the Instagram internal editor to a "Ford Fiesta"—functional but basic—whereas the Edits app is a "BMW" with professional-grade features, no watermarks, and the ability to save videos for use on other platforms like TikTok or LinkedIn.

Technical Editing Skills Taught:

- **Importing and Trimming:** Evan showed how to pull clips from the phone gallery and use the **"Split"** and **"Delete"** tools to remove "dull bits".
- **Volume Control:** He demonstrated how to mute original background noise (like wind or sniffing) and apply that setting to all clips simultaneously.
- **Reordering Clips:** Evan explained that by "pushing down" on a clip in the timeline, it can be dragged to a new position to improve the story's flow.
- **Speed Manipulation:** He taught participants how to create time-lapses (up to 100x speed) or slow-motion effects (0.5x speed) to make mundane actions like "chopping carrots" or "clouds moving" more interesting.
- **Adding Music:** Evan explained how to search for tracks and use the "micro view" to select the exact "catchy bit" of a song for the Reel.
- **Voiceovers:** He showed the "Microphone" button and advised participants to write a script and practice before recording to ensure their speech matches the visual clips.
- **Captions:** Evan demonstrated how the AI can scan a voiceover to generate text. He emphasized the need to **proofread** these for spelling errors and showed how to style them with different fonts and colours to keep viewers engaged.
- **The "Overlay" Feature:** For "talking head" videos, Evan showed how to use the **Overlay** tool to place photos or videos of the subject matter (e.g., a dish of food) over the person speaking, which prevents the video from being a "boring" static shot.

Account Management: The Music Library Issue

Evan addressed a common frustration: why some businesses cannot find popular music. He explained that **Business Accounts** are restricted to a "Stock Music Library" due to copyright licensing. He recommended that businesses switch to a **"Creator Account,"** which provides access to the "Brilliant Music Library" (popular hits) while still offering the professional insights, scheduling, and advertising tools a business needs. He provided a step-by-step walkthrough of how to perform this switch in the Instagram settings.

Equipment for Professional Results

Evan concluded with advice on hardware, noting that "bad sound" is a major reason people swipe away from videos.

- **Microphones:** Evan recommended the **Hollyland Lark 2** (approx. €115) as a high-quality, magnetic, wireless option that works with both iPhones and Androids. He also mentioned a budget version for around €60.
- **Lighting:** He demonstrated his own setup using **Newer Ring Lights**, which provide 45-degree angled lighting to remove shadows during indoor filming.
- **Stability:** He suggested using a tripod and a simple €12 phone mount, or a **Gimbal** (approx. €120) for smooth, drone-like footage while walking.

- **Phones:** Evan noted that while flagship phones (like Samsung S-range or recent iPhones) have the best cameras, models from 3-4 years ago are still excellent for Reels.

Action Point List for Participants

1. **Audit Your Profile:** Review your Instagram Grid through "the eyes of a stranger". Ensure it passes the "visual hurdle" and clearly communicates your value.
2. **Switch Your Account Type:** If you lack access to popular music, follow Evan's steps to switch from a "Business" to a "Creator" account.
3. **Identify Your Spectrum Position:** Determine if you are a **Product** or **Service** business. If you are a service, commit to the **80/20 rule**: 80% tips/advice and 20% sales.
4. **Generate 20 Ideas:** Use **ChatGPT** with Evan's "Instagram Marketing Expert" prompt to create a content calendar of 20 Reel ideas.
5. **Download the "Edits" App:** Install the standalone Meta Edits app on your smartphone to access professional editing features without watermarks.
6. **Practice the "Split and Delete" Technique:** Take 60 seconds of random footage and practice trimming it down to a 15-second high-energy Reel.
7. **Optimize the Hook:** Review your first three seconds of every video. Ensure there is a visual or verbal "hook" to prevent users from swiping.
8. **Add Captions to Voiceovers:** Use the auto-caption feature in the Edits app for any video where someone is speaking. **Proofread** carefully before exporting.
9. **Invest in Audio:** If you plan to do voiceovers or talking-head videos, purchase a **wireless microphone** like the Hollyland Lark 2 to ensure professional sound quality.
10. **Experiment with Overlays:** The next time you record yourself talking to the camera, use the **Overlay tool** to show the product or service you are discussing while you speak.

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