



The
Marketing
Crowd

LEO Kerry

Digital Marketing Programme

Week 5 – Instagram Marketing

Session Summary

Delivered by The Marketing Crowd on behalf of Local Enterprise Office Kerry

Course overview

Week 5 of the Digital Marketing Programme, delivered for Kerry Local Enterprise Office via Zoom on Monday, 12th May 2026, focused entirely on Instagram marketing. This was a substantial session running from approximately 9:44am to 12:36pm, covering the platform from the ground up — how Instagram is structured, how the algorithm works, how to optimise a profile for search and conversions, how to post effectively, how to make Reels, and how to use Stories strategically.

Evan approached the session as a practical walkthrough, using his own TMC Instagram account, a dummy account called The Laughing Horse, and a range of real Irish business accounts as examples throughout. The session was structured to build knowledge progressively — starting with how the platform looks and feels to a user, then moving into how a business should show up, and finally into the practical mechanics of creating and publishing content.

The group included participants across a range of business types — retail, food, tourism, coaching, services — and Evan consistently tailored examples to show how Instagram applies differently depending on where a business sits on the visual-to-service spectrum. Technical difficulties with audio and screen sharing caused some early delays, but the session covered its full content.

Key Topics Covered

Instagram's Three Feeds: Main, Stories, and Reels

Evan opened by explaining that Instagram is built around three distinct feeds, each with different reach and purpose. The **main feed** is where posts (images) and Reels (videos) from accounts you follow appear. It is the highest-visibility feed and where followers will encounter your content most often. The **Stories feed**, displayed as circular icons along the top of the screen, shows short-lived content that disappears after 24 hours and does not appear on the grid — making it a more informal, lower-stakes publishing space. The **Reels feed** serves content from accounts users are *not* following, based on the algorithm's judgement of what they'll find interesting. This makes Reels the primary organic discovery tool on the platform.

Understanding the distinction between these feeds is fundamental to any Instagram strategy. Posts and Reels published to the main feed are permanent and appear on the profile grid; Stories are temporary and not grid-visible. For businesses, this means Stories require less polish but Reels and posts carry a lasting impression.

The Algorithm and How It Decides What Gets Shown

Evan spent considerable time explaining how the Instagram algorithm operates — drawing a direct parallel with the Facebook session from the previous week. The algorithm has two main functions: first, it analyses each user's behaviour to understand what content they find engaging; second, it evaluates every piece of content to judge whether it is interesting enough to show more widely.

When a business sends out a Reel, Instagram initially shows it to a small sample of followers. If those followers watch a high percentage of the video — and if engagement (likes, comments, shares, saves) is strong — the algorithm interprets this as a signal of quality and shows the Reel to more followers. If that second batch also engages well, the reach continues to build. The same Reel may then be pushed into the Reels feed of non-followers who have shown an interest in similar content. This snowball effect explains why video content consistently reaches further than image posts. Evan was direct: "Just because someone follows you doesn't mean they'll see your content — it's up to the AI."

Profile Optimisation: Grid, Name, Username, Bio, and Links

Evan dedicated a detailed section to the Instagram profile, covering each element and what it means for a business. The **grid** — the mosaic of recent posts and Reels on a profile — is the first thing a potential follower sees, and it forms an instant impression. Evan advised participants to look at their own grid through the eyes of a stranger: not asking whether it looks spectacular, but asking whether it looks interesting, consistent, and worth a follow. A cluttered or random-looking grid is a conversion killer.

On **search optimisation**, Evan explained that Instagram's search function — unlike Google — only matches keywords against the Name field and the Username. The bio and caption do not influence search results. This means participants need to think carefully about what search terms they want to be found for, and include those terms in the Name field (up to 60 characters) rather than repeating the business name that is already covered by the Username. He demonstrated this with real examples: searching for "Bridal Ireland" and "Boutique Limerick" returned accounts that had embedded those terms in their name or username, while searching "Boutique Tipperary" returned no results — not because no boutiques exist in Tipperary, but because none have thought to include those search terms.

The **bio** should function as context, not a sales pitch. Evan's advice: tell people what you do and establish credibility in 150 characters, with any remaining space used to direct people to action. His own TMC bio — referencing over 20,000 Irish businesses trained across 12 LEOs — achieves both goals efficiently.

On **links**, Evan made a point that trips up many Instagram users: you cannot include a clickable hyperlink in a post or Reel caption. The URL will display as text but will not be tappable. The only clickable link is in the Links section of the profile. The correct approach is to update that profile link whenever you want to drive traffic to a specific page, then instruct followers in your caption to "tap the link in our bio."

Content Types: Posts, Reels, and Stories — and How to Publish Them

Evan walked participants through the mechanics of creating and publishing each content type. For **image posts**, the key elements are choosing a strong image, writing a purposeful caption, and directing people to the bio link if needed. He reiterated that links in captions do not work on Instagram.

For **Reels**, Evan explained three types:

1. **Clips set to music** — multiple short video clips edited together with a music track. Suitable for any business with visual products or experiences: retail, food, tourism, beauty, events. Short, fast-paced, and engaging.

2. **Voiceover videos** — the same clips-plus-music format with the creator's voice added on top. This is ideal for coaches, trainers, consultants, and service-based businesses who need to communicate information alongside visuals.
3. **Talking to camera** — where the creator speaks directly into the camera. Evan noted that for product-based businesses this is optional, but for service providers it is essential because "you are the product." Studies consistently show that face-to-camera videos generate more engagement than other formats.

He then ran a live demonstration of how to build a Reel using the Instagram editor: importing clips from the phone's camera roll, trimming each clip by dragging the handles, reordering clips, selecting a music track from the library, choosing the right segment of the track using the rectangle selector and AI-suggested red markers, adjusting clip volume, choosing a Reel cover image (either a frame from the video or a custom Canva-designed cover), writing a caption, and adding hashtags.

For **Stories**, Evan covered how to use them strategically: posting images and short videos that disappear after 24 hours, sharing your own posts or Reels to Stories to amplify reach, and adding link stickers to drive traffic directly to a webpage. He demonstrated customising the sticker text — for example, changing a link sticker to read "View Yummy Menu" — and showed the importance of adding a "Tap for Details" sticker when re-sharing your own posts to Stories, since most followers do not know they can tap anywhere on the image to access a link.

Hashtags: What They Do (and Don't Do) Now

Evan addressed hashtags directly, clarifying that their role has changed significantly in recent years. Historically, hashtags were the primary way to get content found — someone tapping on a hashtag would see all posts and Reels tagged with that term. That function still exists but is no longer how most people find content on Instagram. Today, Instagram's AI-powered search can interpret the meaning of content directly, making keyword search far more powerful. Hashtags now serve as topical signals to the algorithm — they help Instagram understand what your content is about, which aids distribution.

His practical recommendation: use 3–5 relevant hashtags per post or Reel. Use ChatGPT to generate a list of hashtags relevant to your business type, or look at the hashtags used by high-performing accounts in your category. Avoid irrelevant or overly generic tags.

The Repost Feature and Sharing to Stories

In the closing section of the session, Evan explained the relatively new **Repost** feature on Instagram (introduced within the previous four to five months), which allows users to share another account's post or Reel directly into their own main feed. He noted this is a significant change from Instagram's long-standing policy of keeping the main feed 100% original content, and discussed the strategic implications: a business could potentially benefit from being reposted by a high-follower account.

He also revisited the **paper plane (Share)** button, demonstrating both private sharing (sending a post as a direct message to another account) and sharing to Stories — and covering best practices for each.

Tools & Resources

Instagram — The core platform covered throughout the session. Evan demonstrated the full interface including the main feed, Stories feed, Reels feed, profile editor, post and Reel creation tools, and Stories editor.

Instagram Reels Editor — The built-in video editing tool within the Instagram app. Evan demonstrated importing clips, trimming, reordering, adding music from the library, using the volume slider per clip, and selecting a cover image.

Canva — Referenced as a tool for designing custom Reel cover images and Story graphics. Evan reminded participants this was covered in Week 3. A Canva-designed cover can be uploaded to the camera roll and selected as a Reel cover instead of using a video frame.

ChatGPT — Recommended as a practical tool for generating hashtag suggestions. Evan's advice: tell ChatGPT your business type and ask it to suggest hashtags you would want to be found for on Instagram. Follow up by asking it to narrow the list to the five most relevant.

Instagram Music Library — The built-in licensed music library within the Reels editor. Evan showed how to search by artist or track title, preview tracks, and select specific segments using the rectangle selector and AI-recommended markers (red lines indicating popular sections).

MarkFennel.ie and Dr. Julie (Instagram accounts) — Recommended as reference accounts for participants who are coaches, trainers, or service providers, as examples of strong talking-to-camera Reel content.

Q&A Highlights

Q: If I already have my business name in the Username, do I need to also include it in the Name field to appear in search?

A: No. If your business name is in the Username, you will appear in search for that term — guaranteed. Repeating it in the Name field just wastes your 60 characters. Use the Name field for additional search terms you want to be found for that aren't already covered by your Username.

Q: Is there a tool I can use to find out what hashtags people are actually searching for on Instagram?

A: There's no dedicated hashtag research tool for Instagram in the way keyword tools work for Google. The two best approaches: first, use ChatGPT — describe your business and ask it to suggest hashtags people would search for in your category; second, search Instagram for your main topics, look at the posts and Reels ranking highly, and examine which hashtags those accounts are using. Well-performing content tends to be tagged thoughtfully.

Q: Is it okay to put a clickable link in a post caption, pointing to my website or product page?

A: No — links in post and Reel captions are not clickable on Instagram. They appear as plain text and cannot be tapped. The only place a link works is in the profile's Links section. Always direct followers there with "tap the link in our bio."

Q: How do I remove an old post from my grid without permanently deleting it?

A: Tap on the post in your grid, tap the three dots in the top right corner, and select "Archive." This removes it from your grid but keeps it saved — you can restore it at any time. If you're certain you'll never want it back, you can select "Delete" instead.

Q: I have a creator account — does that affect music options?

A: Yes. Switching to a Creator account (rather than a Business account) gives access to the full Instagram music library, including commercial tracks. Business accounts are restricted to royalty-free music due to licensing rules. If music is important for your Reels, a Creator account is the better option.

Q: When I share my own post to Stories, what's the best way to do it so followers actually engage with it?

A: Tap once on the post image after sharing it to Stories — this makes it obvious you're sharing your own content rather than someone else's. Then add a "Tap for Details" sticker so followers know they can tap through to the full post. Most people don't know that tapping anywhere in the middle of the image on a Story will reveal a link — so the sticker acts as a prompt.

Action Points for Participants

1. Review your Instagram grid as a stranger would. Ask yourself honestly whether the most recent 12–15 posts look interesting and consistent. Archive anything that looks dated, off-brand, or low quality.
2. Go into Edit Profile and review your Name field. Make sure you are using the full 60 characters to include search terms relevant to your business — not just repeating your business name. Think about what a potential customer in your county might search for.
3. Check your Instagram bio. Make sure it tells people clearly what you do and establishes credibility. If you have space left, include a call to action directing people to the link in your profile.
4. Update the Links section in your profile with a current, relevant link — whether that is your homepage, a specific product or service page, a booking link, or a current promotion.
5. Decide which type of Reel suits your business: clips set to music, voiceover video, or talking to camera. If you sell a visual product or experience, start by planning a short clips-plus-music Reel using existing footage on your phone.
6. Film at least three to five short clips this week related to your business — even casual, unedited footage — and practise importing them into the Instagram Reels editor, trimming them, and adding a music track.
7. Use ChatGPT to generate a list of hashtags for your business. Prompt it with your business type and location, ask it to suggest what people would search for on Instagram, then ask it to narrow the list to the five most useful hashtags.
8. When you publish your next post or Reel, direct followers to the link in your bio rather than pasting a URL into the caption. Update your profile link to match whatever page you're promoting before you publish.
9. If you have posted to Stories in the past by sharing your own posts, go back and check how it looked. From now on, tap the shared image once to make the attribution obvious, then add a "Tap for Details" sticker so followers know how to reach the original post.
10. Switch to a Creator account if music access is important to your content strategy. Go to Settings > Account > Switch to Creator Account. This gives you access to the full music library for Reels.

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