



Local Enterprise Office Kerry

Instagram for Marketing - Part 2

25th August 2026

Course Summary

Prepared by The Marketing Crowd

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

The Feed (Home)

Home is the main feed. There are actually three versions of it. The default is the "For You" feed, an AI driven version showing what the algorithm thinks you would find interesting. Tapping "For You" reveals two more options.

The "Following" feed shows everything from every account you follow in reverse chronological order, with no AI filtering. Because you typically follow a couple hundred accounts and there is not enough room to show everything, Instagram defaults to the AI version rather than chronological order.

The third feed is Favorites. Any account you follow can be added to favorites by going to their profile, tapping Following, then Add to Favorites. Content from favorited accounts always appears at the top of your feed and you will never miss a post or reel from them. Evan favorites all the Local Enterprise Offices he delivers courses for, since he never wants to miss their posts. He suggested that businesses actively prompt their own followers to favorite them, since most people do not know the feature exists. A good tactic is a post with text like "Have you favorited us?" and a caption explaining that favoriting guarantees your content always appears.

The AI decides what is interesting by watching behaviour: what you linger on, what you swipe past immediately, what you search for, and which accounts you engage with. It puts different weight on different actions. A like is easy to give and is a weak signal. A comment is a stronger signal. Reposts, shares (privately or to story) and saves are the strongest signals, since people only do these for content they find genuinely valuable. The more reposts, shares and saves a piece of content gets, the more the algorithm will push it to other people.

Feed content itself falls into three tranches: fresh content (roughly last 12 hours) from accounts you engage with regularly, older content from accounts you follow that has strong engagement, and beyond that, content the AI is testing more broadly.

Mechanics: like, comment, repost, share, save

When you tap the heart to like a post, the original poster gets a notification. Commenting is public and also triggers a notification.

There are three distinct ways to share content on Instagram:

1. **Private share (paper plane icon)** — sends the post or reel privately to another account's inbox, similar to forwarding a message.
2. **Share to your story** — the paper plane icon also lets you add the post to your own story. Evan stressed an important tip here: when you add someone else's post to your story, tap your finger on the image once so it displays with the full context (poster's name and caption preview) rather than looking like an ambiguous, unattributed screenshot. Always do this extra step, whether you're sharing someone else's post or your own.

3. **Repost (the circular arrows icon)** — this is a newer feature, introduced roughly six months ago. Reposting pushes the content into the feeds of your own followers, but the post is still attributed to the original creator, not to you (it will say "from [original account]," not "The Laughing Horse shared"). Your profile picture and a small repost icon appear beneath it. You can add a short comment ("add a thought") to give context for why you're resharing it. Evan advised keeping this comment brief.

The Save function (bookmark icon) is completely anonymous; the original poster is never notified. Saving only stores the item in your own Instagram account, not to your phone's camera roll or gallery — there is no way to download someone else's image via the save button. Evan recommends organising saves into Collections (effectively folders). A practical tip: create a collection for each of your regular content pillars (e.g. for a restaurant: new menu items, chef's tips, new staff, special offers, testimonials) and save good examples from other accounts into the relevant collection for inspiration when planning your own posts. To find your saved items: profile, menu (top right), Saved, then Collections.

On the topic of copyright: uploading content publicly to Instagram means you accept, via the terms and conditions, that others can share, story-share or save your content. Saving does not let anyone download the image to their device or reuse it elsewhere, so there's no IP breach in that mechanism, although anyone can still take a screenshot (nothing prevents this). If you want to protect your own images from this, use a watermark. Evan demonstrated in Canva: upload your logo or a signature graphic, place it over the image (not in a corner, since corners are easy to crop out), and reduce its transparency to roughly 20 to 30% so it's present but not distracting. If someone asks about citing an outside source in a caption (e.g. citing a paper or study), Evan's advice was to simply put the source in brackets rather than a full bibliography, unless your industry or academic context specifically requires more formal citation.

Account privacy: businesses should keep accounts public, since marketing depends on visibility. Personal accounts can be made private via the menu (top right) then Privacy then Account Privacy. This can also be used deliberately as a "sandbox": if you're just starting out and want to build up your grid before anyone sees it, set the account to private, post 10 to 12 items, then switch to public once you're ready. This is also relevant because a brand new account with no followers is not going to be shown to anyone regardless.

Posting an image (single post)

To post a single image: tap the plus icon, select "Post" (this is used for images; video posts are Reels, covered last week).

Image shape matters a great deal. Instagram's grid changed roughly a year and a half ago from square to a 4x5 ratio (a little taller than wide). Posting in 4x5 means the image fills the grid cell fully with nothing cropped and gives you a much larger, more attention grabbing image in the main feed, competing better against reels for visual space. Square images take up noticeably less feed real estate, and landscape images are the worst option, appearing very small and should never be used. When you select an image on your phone within the Instagram post flow, it frequently defaults to square, even when you've already cropped a

source image to 4x5 in Canva — always check and tap the resize button to bring it back to 4x5 if needed.

Evan demonstrated cropping an image to 4x5 in Canva: go to canva.com, choose Social Media, select the preset "Instagram Post 4x5," upload your image, right click and choose "Set image as background" to fill the canvas (double click to reposition/reframe which part of the image is kept), then add text using the text panel and font pairings, and download. To get the finished design from a desktop onto your phone, log into the same Canva account in the Canva mobile app; your designs sync automatically, and you can download the image directly to your phone's gallery from there. An alternative, more old-fashioned route is downloading to desktop and emailing the file to yourself.

Within the Instagram posting flow itself (after selecting your image) you can also: add music (creator accounts get a wider commercial-track library; business accounts get a stock library — Evan suggests using music occasionally, not on every post, where the vibe genuinely fits); add text directly in-app (though this was described as fairly basic compared to Canva); add an image overlay (useful for a logo); apply filters; and adjust brightness/contrast or ratio. Evan personally skips all of this in-app editing since he prefers to finish images fully in Canva first.

On the caption screen: never place a link directly in a caption, since Instagram does not make it clickable, it will just sit there as plain, non-functional text and frustrate people who tap it expecting it to work. Instead, add your link via Edit Profile > Links, and in the caption direct people to "tap the link in our profile." For hashtags, Evan reiterated last week's guidance that they're now used more as searchable keywords than the older "tap a hashtag to browse" behaviour, since search now matches ordinary words in the caption too. Use around 5 hashtags maximum and push them down using a "." on its own line repeated a few times (a plain return gets stripped by Instagram) so they don't clutter the readable text.

Tagging people/accounts: tap on the image itself, search for the account, and tag it. This triggers a notification for the tagged account. Reasons to tag: to make sure a relevant business or organisation sees the post (e.g. tagging the Local Enterprise Office when posting about a course you're delivering for them), in the hope they'll reshare or repost it to their own followers. Only tag accounts genuinely relevant to the content; tagging irrelevant accounts to get attention reads as spammy and can lead to being blocked (up to 10 accounts can be tagged per post).

Add Location works the same as covered last week, making content more discoverable.

Connecting to Facebook: for anyone running a Facebook business page alongside Instagram, connect the two so content publishes to both automatically, saving duplicate work. To connect: on desktop, switch to using Facebook as your page, go to Settings, then Linked Accounts, then Connect Account and log in with your Instagram credentials. Once connected, you'll see a toggle in the Instagram post flow asking whether to also publish to your Facebook page. There is also a "more options" section allowing you to schedule a post for a future date and time rather than publishing immediately.

Once published, you can pin up to three posts to the top of your grid, via the three dot menu on the post, then "Pin to your main grid."

Carousels

A carousel is technically a type of post (there is no separate "carousel" button); when creating a post, selecting multiple images (or a mix of images and up to 20 items total, including video) creates a carousel automatically. The first item chosen is what displays first in the feed and should be the most eye-catching, since it's effectively your "cover." Brands that know what they're doing (Evan referenced Brown Thomas and Ruby Rouge as examples) frequently open a carousel with a short video, then follow with a run of images, since a moving first frame draws attention in the feed before people notice and swipe through the rest.

A carousel should be resized to 4x5 the same way as a single image post. In the caption, it's worth explicitly telling people to swipe (e.g. "swipe left to see more"), even though most users already understand the convention. Note: carousels do not transfer to Facebook as carousels if cross-posted; Facebook will show them as a plain multi-image post instead, so Evan does not recommend cross-posting carousels.

Reach statistics by content type

Evan gave the following typical reach figures (percentage of your total followers who will see a given post):

- **Reels:** roughly 20 to 30% of followers (can go higher with strong engagement)
- **Single image posts:** roughly 15% of followers on average, but can reach 20% with strong likes/comments/saves/shares
- **Carousels:** typically reach more followers than image posts
- **Stories:** roughly 7 to 9% of followers

This is why reels should be prioritised, followed by carousels, then single image posts, with stories treated as a supplementary extra reach mechanism rather than a primary channel. Evan recommended roughly 70% of content being reels, with the rest split between carousels and single image posts.

Engagement with carousels also has a specific mechanic: if someone actively swipes through multiple images/videos in your carousel, the algorithm interprets that active engagement as a stronger interest signal than merely seeing (and scrolling past) a single static image, and will show your content to more people as a result.

Content strategy depends on where a business sits on a visual interest spectrum. Businesses with visually striking, tangible products (jewellers, boutiques, florists, artists, photographers, tattoo parlours) can post product photography and reels most of the time and people welcome it because it plays to genuine visual interest, not because it "isn't salesy." Service based businesses (life coaches, financial advisors, accountants, solicitors, parenting coaches)

don't have this advantage; nobody is inherently passionate about watching service content, so the content needs to establish credibility through tips, advice and helpful information. Evan's suggested ratio for this end of the spectrum is roughly 80% genuinely useful/interesting content to 20% direct selling. Businesses in the middle of the spectrum (restaurants, hotels, yoga studios) have some visual material but should still mix in tips and advice rather than relying purely on visuals.

Stories

Stories are a secondary feed, both in terms of visual prominence and reach (7 to 9% of followers, as above). Content posted to a story disappears exactly 24 hours after posting and does not appear permanently on the grid, meaning people tend to be more relaxed about what they post there compared to a permanent grid post or reel. As a rough guide, one or at most two posts/reels a day is plenty (the algorithm restricts reach on anything beyond that), but multiple story updates through the day (five or six is reasonable) is fine, since stories are viewed as a separate, lower-stakes channel.

Common reasons to use stories:

- To catch part of the 70 to 93% of followers who won't see a given post or reel in the main feed, by also pushing the same content to the story.
- To share other people's or your own posts with more attribution and context than a bare repost provides.

To post a story: profile, plus icon, select Story, then either choose an existing photo/video or use the in-app camera.

When sharing another post to your story (via the paper plane share icon then "Add to Story"), the shared image on its own looks ambiguous and out of context, so tap on the image once after adding it, which brings back the visible attribution (original account name plus first line of their caption). This was demonstrated with an example of resharing a Local Enterprise Office Clare post about a course to the marketing crowd's own story.

Story extras: tapping the "Aa" icon lets you add text (same font/colour options as a normal post, some glitches were noted live). You can add music. Stickers offer a range of options; the most important for marketing is the Link Sticker. Since links do not work in ordinary post captions, stories are the one place Instagram does let you link out directly. To use it: copy the URL of the destination page in your phone's browser, return to the story, tap Sticker then Link Sticker, paste the URL, and customise the button text (e.g. "tap to book," "view menu"). Position the sticker on the image.

A related, lesser known tip: when you share your own post to your story (rather than adding a link sticker), tapping anywhere in the middle of the story image will also bring up a "View Post" link, taking the viewer back to the original post and its full caption. Most users don't know this exists, so Evan recommends explicitly adding text on the story that says something like "tap for details" positioned over the middle of the image, so people know to tap there.

Growing your followers

Two foundational prerequisites before actively trying to grow followers:

1. **The grid must look appealing.** When someone lands on your profile, they will subliminally judge, within seconds, whether the account is worth following, based on the grid. It doesn't need to look amazing, but it can't look messy, dull, or boring. For visually strong product businesses this is relatively easy. For service businesses it takes more deliberate effort, and Evan recommended searching for other accounts in your own sector to see a range of grid styles, noting which ones you personally find appealing versus off putting, and aiming for that. Grid covers can be changed retroactively (via the three dot menu on a post/reel, then Edit, then choosing a different cover image, e.g. one designed in Canva) even after the item has already been published, and Evan suggested doing this to reduce over-repetition of, say, too many photos of yourself in a row.
2. **The grid must be filled before you start trying to grow followers.** An account with only one or two posts reads as inactive and will not attract follows. Evan's recommendation is to have at least around 12 posts up before actively pushing for followers. If you're starting from zero, you can build this up privately (accounts set to private, or simply posting a batch in one sitting) since a new account has no followers to reach anyway.

Beyond that, the core driver of follower growth is posting genuinely interesting content, which increases the chance the algorithm surfaces your reels to non-followers in the Reels feed, increases the chance people repost or story-share your content into their own followers' feeds (carrying your account name with it), and increases the chance people search for and find your account directly (both via account name/bio search terms, and via keyword rich captions, both covered last week).

Driving traffic to your website

A recap tactic, since it overlaps with sharing mechanics already covered: for posts/reels, never a direct link in the caption, always "link in profile." For stories, use the Link Sticker.

Beyond Instagram itself, three off platform tactics were covered:

1. **Pull your Instagram feed into your website**, using a free tool called Juicer (juicer.io). Sign up, enter your Instagram username, and it generates an embeddable code snippet showing your recent posts on your website. Evan advised against putting a link to Instagram at the very top of the homepage or on product/sales pages, since the goal there is to keep visitors on the site to inquire or purchase, not send them away. Instead, place the Instagram feed or a "follow us" prompt on lower-stakes pages such as blog posts or the Contact Us page.
2. **Cross promote on other channels.** On Facebook posts (not every one, just some), add a short postscript inviting people to follow on Instagram with a link. The same applies to marketing emails (a short "are you following us on Instagram" section) and email signatures.

3. **General reach context:** reach limitations are not unique to Instagram. Facebook typically reaches 5 to 10% of followers, and LinkedIn similarly does not show content to all connections, since every platform runs an algorithm designed to only surface content it predicts people will find interesting.

Reviewing your own performance (Insights)

Evan demonstrated Instagram's built in analytics: Profile then Professional Dashboard then "Content You've Shared." Changing the default 30-day window to 6 or 12 months gives a fuller picture, and filtering by content type (Reels, then Posts, then Stories) via the dropdown lets you compare views, likes, comments and shares across formats, visually confirming that reels consistently outperform posts, which outperform stories, in both reach and engagement.

At the individual reel level, tapping into a reel and selecting "View Insights" surfaces two key metrics: **average watch time** and **skip rate** (the percentage of viewers who swiped away within the first three seconds). Instagram's platform-wide average watch time for a reel is around 9 seconds; Evan compared two of his own reels live (16 seconds/46% skip rate vs. 13 seconds/53% skip rate) to illustrate how small differences in the opening few seconds materially change performance. The advice: regularly review these two numbers, and treat the first three seconds of a reel (hook, visual, on-screen text, whether you appear on camera) as the single most important variable to test and refine. Evan noted that ChatGPT can be prompted to act as a "video marketing expert" and suggest ways to strengthen the opening seconds of a planned reel.

Other questions answered during the session

- **Dummy/test accounts:** these are real Instagram accounts (not a special account type) used for two main purposes: testing how a post will look before publishing from your real account, and following/favoriting competitors or other businesses in your industry without doing so from your main account.
- **New business vs. rebranding a personal account:** Evan's advice was to create a fresh account for a genuinely new, unrelated business rather than renaming/repurposing a personal account, since existing followers didn't choose to follow the new entity and may be confused or uninterested. Renaming can make sense only where the new business is a natural extension of the person (e.g. "Evan Mangan" becoming "Evan Mangan Yoga").
- **Free image resources:** Pixabay (pixabay.com) was recommended for free stock images, as was Canva's own built in photo library (around 2.5 million images on the free plan, more on paid). Evan also demonstrated Google Gemini's AI image generation tool (via the "Create image" option) as an increasingly common way to generate bespoke images from a text description, including iterative refinement (e.g. changing a colour or adding a specific detail to a generated image).
- **Free background removal:** remove.bg was given as a free alternative to Canva's paid background remover tool.

- **Canva pricing:** roughly 60 to 70% of Canva's features are available for free; background removal is one of the paid-only features. To cancel a paid Canva plan: Canva, click your name (bottom left), Settings, Billing, then Cancel Plan.

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