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**How To Use Instagram For Restaurant & Hotel Marketing**

**Instagram was launched as an iPhone app in 2010 and was recently bought by Facebook.**

It's a social network built around photography, offering a mobile application that lets people add a range of filters to their smartphone snapshots and share them on their social networks. Recently, it's popularity in some areas has exceeded that of Twitter, so it's definitely worth using!

Instagram has a community of its own, where you can follow friends, as well as 'like' and comment on photos and label and categorize your pictures with a hashtags, which will help you track any picture via your social networks.

Often engagement online with customers can start with the simple act of publishing a photo and then sharing will happen. Instagram allows your venue to showcase your company to an audience of millions with a range of fun, effective imagery.

**How you can use Instagram:**

* Visually pleasing content - if images are important to your content strategy, use Instagram as a fun way to upload new photos of your property.
* Short-burst social engagement - this allows you to take a picture and share it instantly on your social networks.
* Add filters for personality - this allows you to showcase the essence of your brand in a picture. What vibe are you trying to give to potential guests?
* Join a #hashtag - Instagram has a hashtag system similar to Twitter, which allows you to search for images within the same hashtag. If you've set-up Instagram to automatically send pictures to Twitter, the hashtags translate and can drive extra Twitter involvement too.
* Make simple images beautiful, without professional photo skills - Instagram is an easy way for staff to upload "real time" images. The custom filters, which range from vintage to black and white looks, ensure that camera photos look as if they were taken by a professional.

*More ways Instagram can help drive traffic:*

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| mmmm - tiramisu on Instagram!mmmm - tiramisu on Instagram! | http://www.profitablehospitality.com/members/images/space.gif |

1. **People prefer colourful, exciting images** - users pay more attention to the cover photo on Facebook than any content on your timeline.

As a bar, restaurant and hotel, unlike an office, you have a physical environment that you need to sell to your audience. By using Instagram you can showcase your venue or hotel and gain interest from your customers on your social networks. Instagram is the perfect application to help you do this and you don't need to be professional photographer either! Say perhaps you have a new cocktail? Why not snap a nice picture of it, add an attention grabbing caption and an effective filter?

1. **Use Instagram's 'Photo Maps'** - this allows users to 'geo-tag' photos on a map displayed on their profile, making it easy for users to browse photos by location, versus scrolling through a person's stream.

Therefore, this enables you as a bar, restaurant or hotel owner/manager to categorize and promote your different venues around the country. So, if you do have several venues under your brand, geo-tag the pictures you take in 'photo map' with the location of the company. Adding these photos to a photo map will then allow your followers to browse photos taken in their own city or region!

1. **Share Every Day** - push Instagram photos out to Twitter, Faceboook, Foursquare, Tumblr and Flickr, through present options.
2. **Get Your Staff Involved** - because so many staff live on their mobile phones, Instagram can be a great way for them to conribute images of daily life and behind the scenes - make sure they use your hashtag eb #cafetroppo, #rivercottage
3. **Maximise SEO** by naming photos with keywords, eg the business name or location words.
4. Track activity on your PC - follow your account and activity with the free apps 'Carousel' for Mac or 'Instagrille' for PC.
5. **Run an Instagram Photo Competition** - best photo tagged as requested wins a $50 voucher or dinner. You'll need a good following first, but promote it through Facebook and Twitter to bring more followers in.

Some Instagram accounts to check: [Baked Uprising](http://instagram.com/bakeduprising/) -- [Sam the Pastry Chef](http://instagram.com/sammalicious/) -- [Fig & Cherry - a Food Blogger](http://instagram.com/figandcherry/) -- [Platypus Sneakers](http://instagram.com/platypus_sneakers/) -- [Maleny Weddings](http://instagram.com/malenyweddings/)

**Action Steps to Get Started:**

**Step #1: Create an Account**

Sign up for an account by downloading the free app on a mobile device through the Apple Store (iPhone or iPad) or Google Play (Android) and make sure to:

1. Register with an email address that is already the default login for other social media sites (e.g. hotelXYZsocialmedia@gmail.com)
2. Select a Username that is easily recognizable and consistent with your branding across other social sites (e.g. if your Twitter handle is @HotelXYZ, your Instagram name should follow suit)
3. Upload a recognizable hotel or restaurant photo as your default Picture. After signing-up, you will be brought to your Instagram account's home page. Before you jump
4. Edit Your Profile by clicking on the button furthest to the right on the app to ensure that your: Bio section describes your brand and utilizes as much of the 150 characters of text and Website is listed to ensure users can find you on their mobile device.
5. Check your profile online - eg here's the profile for [Ken Burgin](http://instagram.com/kburgin/) on Instragram, or caterer [ChefByTheSea](http://instagram.com/chefbythesea/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new)
6. Add an Instagram badge to your website, just like you already have Twitter and Facebook badges. You can get them here <http://instagram.com/accounts/badges/> (you will need to login to your account)

**Step #2: Understand the Landscape**

Before you begin posting through the application, it is a good idea to learn what kind of user-generated content (UGC) has already been shared about your brand. By using websites like [Webstagram](http://web.stagram.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new), [Statigram](http://statigr.am/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new) or [Pinstagram](http://www.pinstagram.co/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new), you can easily discover posts from other users that relate to your hotel or restaurant brand. Do a search for words such as your town or city, chef's name, music, and you can also find photos tagged with #hashtags.

This gives you the opportunity to:

1. Identify and start following other Instagram users that are interested in you
2. Discover which hashtags (#) are most associated with your brand
3. Determine what kind of content most resonates with those users - see which photos are 'favourited' and commented on.

See how this is hashtags are used by the UK's River Cottage group, using #rivercottage to bring the social Different people enjoy different social media outlets, and the ease of snapping photos has a great appeal for many staff.