

Money making on Instagram

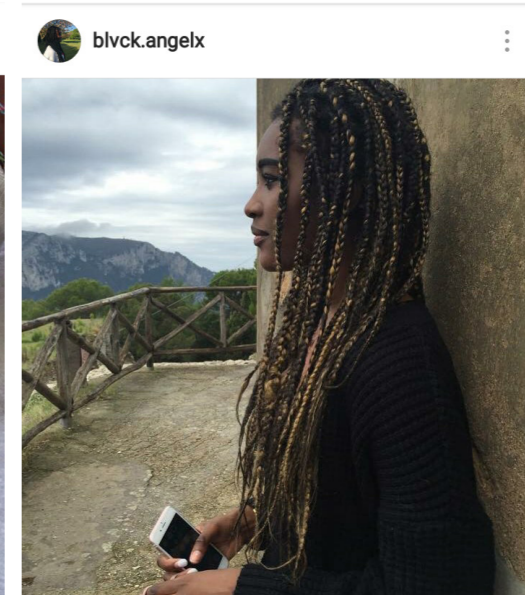
How would you feel if you could make five grand a year for posting a few photos online? From fruity breakfast snaps to those fire selfies, the hash-tagging app Instagram is taking the social networking world by storm. Entrepreneurs, new growing businesses and creative individuals give us an insight into their lives and the secret benefits they gain from 'IG'.

In 2010 Instagram launched. Since then, the picture-sharing app has become more than just a place to upload images. For many independent business owners and self-starting entrepreneurs Instagram is a key factor in making profit and advertising.

Figures of up to '£2000' have been offered to accounts by social media brands who want to persuade Instagrammers to advertise their products. Likewise, the job of being an 'Instagrammer' has become a trend among young people, as more and more are choosing to make a full time living off posting photos online.

Maia Thomas, 17-year-old student, part time sales advisor at Urban Outfitters and social media contributor believes Instagram is vital for expanding businesses as well as encouraging freedom of expression. Maia says: "I wanted to create a gallery of meaningful images and share messages to people about my thoughts and opinions on issues."

Her online relationships with followers are kept strong through her images that she uses to "create art and a visual album of experiences". Unlike typical IG feeds,



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Maia keeps a strict seasonal theme and colour pallet alongside metaphorical images that represent her personality. Maia says, "I use captions on current issues, personal opinions and through these form open discussions with followers. Advertising skills are important, I only collaborate with companies I genuinely have an interest in, to provide truthful reviews."

As Maia flicks through her account she says that "promoting" and "collaborating" is the way she earns money through her respectable 60,000 followers. When joining IG, around a year and a half ago, she benefited from making money through 'app collaborations' that increased her followers and encouraged others to get in touch.

Maia explains, the profiting app "Pay-Friendz" is linked to her account and works with followers. Each follower that downloads it through her bio link automatically pays a "£3.33" fee to Maia and in turn followers receive an additional incentive of "£1". This mutual benefit between a business and its customer is all part of the IG 'social experience'.

Although £3.33 may seem like a minuscule amount of money, combined with Maia's thousands of followers this small collaboration totals up in her favour, with her making £333 per hundred downloads by the click of a link. Maia says, "PayFriendz" is "easy", "mutually beneficial" and safe like "PayPal".

Data from PayFriendz Facebook page claims that in August 2016 the app reached 100,000 users and is the "UK's first mobile payment app with an inbuilt messaging." The link between social media networking and money, is a key factor driving Instagrammers to become more business minded.

Maia's connections with niche corporations continue to grow as she works with companies such as "Daniel Wellington, Flattum-mytea and various clothing brands, receiving free items in exchange for honest reviews on their products."

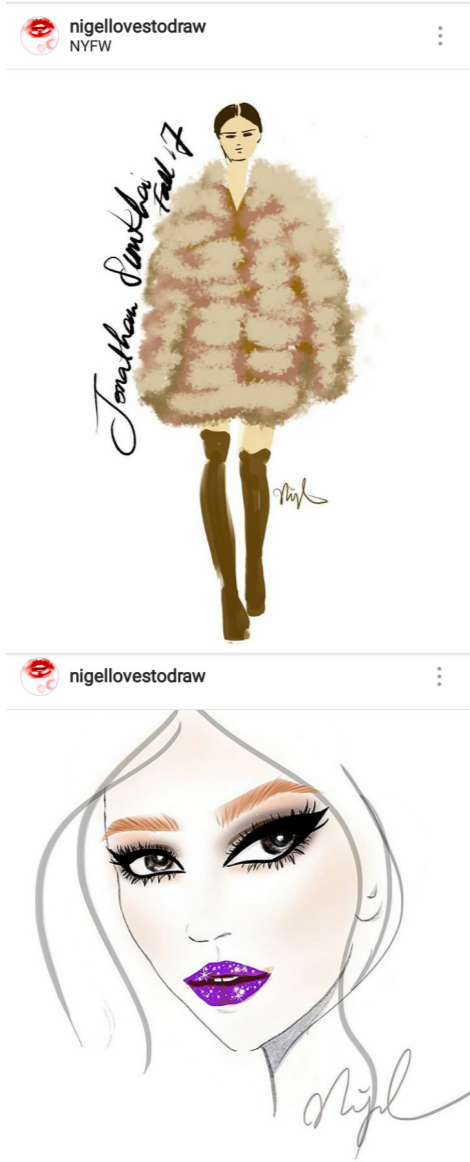
We asked what makes IG so special, to which Maia says, "The online market and e-commerce is important to businesses. Instagram is important for independent clothing lines as social media is essentially a free space to advertise to lots of people".

Takumi, is another one of the many apps linked with connecting businesses. According to The Mail Online, it 'joins Instagrammers with brands looking to partner' meaning 'amateur photographers can make thousands each year by agreeing to take pictures of their products and post them'. But promoting is not the only way Instagram users are making money.

Freelance Illustrator and Makeup Director Nigel Stanislaus, claims his love for his job came from the “glamour and money!” as well as a “social factor”. Nigel’s representation on IG expresses his personality, through: “Consistency evolving brand and style. I want you to know me as an old friend. It’s my ‘magazine’ so I try to curate things that are funny life moments with glamour and a side of mischief”

Nigel, like many IG users thinks the app provides more than a place for photography and says, “I use it as the modern day visual resume” and it provides “potential work” but “It’s important, to know the ins and outs of what to/not to do”.

Nigel suggests his advertising guidelines are to “never just post a pic and hashtag... I try to narrate a story. I want followers to laugh and relate”.



Lindsay Kolowich from Hubspot’s marketing blog says, “find the hashtags your audience might be using do a little research in your niche or industry. The easiest way is in the Instagram app itself, in the “explore” tab”.

Gaining followers isn’t hard if you use IG to fashion a relatable personality. Nigel says he gains viewers by “post entries that are relevant to society, about beauty and the exclusive world of fashion the public has no access to, but I put an ‘ugly betty’ twist on it so my viewers can laugh”

Instagram is not just for his own work benefit but he says is for, “The same way I seek new talents and hire them. Half of my followers are from New York City and the rest are from Sydney, Asia and Brazil.” He says to, “be professional, offer viewers what interests them, tell your story and be consistent.”

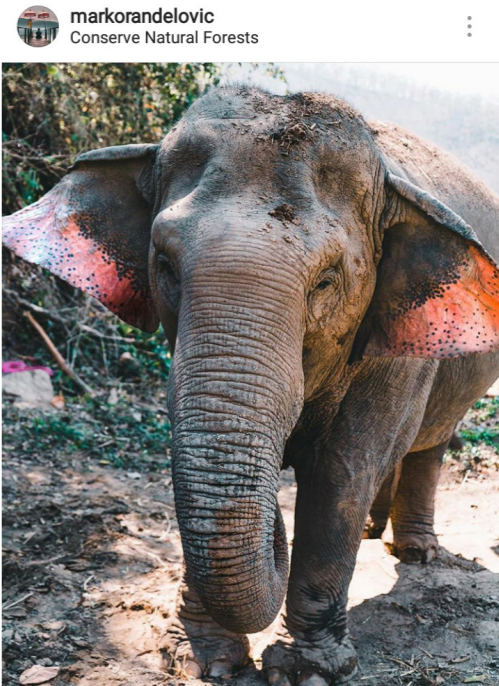
In the 2014 Jobvite annual Social Recruiting Survey, data shows ‘93% of hiring managers will review a candidate’s social profile before making a hiring decision’. Jill says, “IG works as a virtual portfolio and shows personality” and from a profit respect, “IG gets me nearly as many jobs as my agencies do.”

Besides bettering her profile Jill says, “I get a lot of offers to try skin care and beauty products [for free]. The biggest advantage IG has provided is MORE WORK. In my business, it is CRUICAL. Surfing images on IG is a super quick way to be exposed to new companies and people”.

Jill’s tips for keeping on top of IG business are, “posting daily, show personality, treat it like a job and make sure all posts are to do with the same theme. Tag agencies you want to be scouted by and hashtag relevant groups and people”.

Thibaut Davoult, a digital marketer at kiss-metrics blog says, “Instagram’s advantage compared to other networks [are that it]: makes ‘sharing’ a two-way street and enables brands to leverage User Generated Content (UGC)”. This means there is a relationship formed between brands and promoters increasing the profit margins on Instagram.

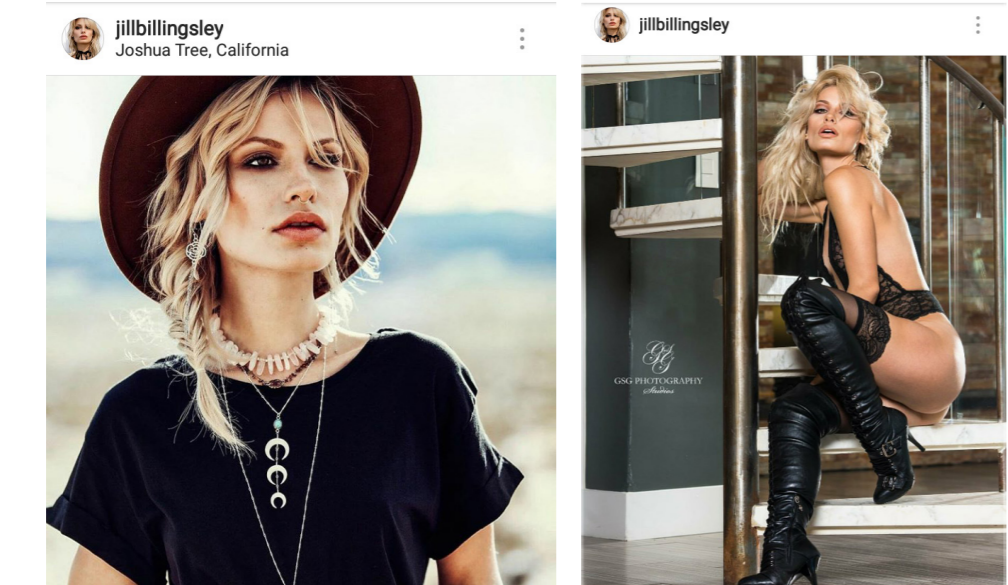
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“Instagram helps me to engage a wide audience and attract views.”

Marko Randelovic, UK Journalist based in Thailand has an IG following of 8709. “After working for several online media outlets as a producer, creating short documentaries on subjects such as refugees or the mob”, Marko says, “I now work for myself as a nomadic film maker”.

Marko says, “I post photographs from film projects or interesting places” and “Instagram helps me to engage a wide audience and attract views.” Using IG to promote Marko’s work provides opportunities to reach out to other journalists and showcases it on an “online platform”.



Worldwide connectivity’ is one of the main highlights of Instagram according to 28-year old LA actress, model, vlogger, and writer Jill Billinsley. With a 14.6K following Jill says: “Since 2016 IG has played a factor in the entertainment world because agencies have started evaluating talent based on their following and popularity. I use it as a platform to gain interest through photos but maintain followers, making an impression via hashtags.”

Photography @josecervantes_ & @01ginomartino

Alike other successful businesses he gains his followers by, “extensively hash tagging and tagging other profiles. Also, messaging big pages and asking them to share photos”. The power to message any IG account and ask other corporations to share work is another advantage of the social media app.

Making online connections through Instagram is plays a big part in making profit as Marko says: “One time I met someone in Bali. A Balinese had commented on my pics so messaged her to see if she would want to work with me and translate one of my projects. It worked out great.”

Communication between people from different cultures and being able to make business proposals globally widens Marko's consumer audience all by a simple message. Yes, emails are great but they do not have the 'social' connection that is possible through Instagram and they do not provide the option to share images with personality.

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Alongside making money the culture of Instagram is about much more, the relationships and personal messages the app enables creatives to make.

Marko says: “My film making is aimed for those curious about the world and true culture. I aim to dig a little deeper and unearth interesting and pressing issues buried deep within the places I visit. Hopefully my storytelling can help raise awareness and bring exposure to issues or the great work being done by certain organisations.”

For beginner journalists, he advises being, “very careful about what you post, make sure all content fits your style and you can be proud of. The more often you post, the more likely you will develop a stronger audience”.

We can only wait to see what the future of opportunism on Instagram will be but it's looking bright and is continuing to benefit businesses and entrepreneurs. This feature alone used Instagram networking to find the inspiration interviewees! Next time you're posing and posting a picture of your night out, stop and think could you be doing more? ♦

Follow the interviewees on IG:

Jill Billingsley – @jillbillingsley

Marko Randelovic – @markorandelovic

Maia Thomas – @blvck.angelx

Nigel Stanislaus - @nigellovestodraw

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