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INSTAGRAM FOR MAGAZINES

INSTAGRAM LAUNCHED AS an iPhone-only app in late 2010 and saw rapid growth among early adopters for its photo-oriented, mobile-first approach to social media and its square images and Polaroid-like filters—novel at the time—that instantly improved the look of smartphone photos.

Now owned by Facebook and boasting 150 million monthly active users posting 55 million photos a day from iPhone, Android and Windows Phone, Instagram is a major player on the social scene and is, so far, managing to maintain its super-simple functionality while slowly rolling out new features such as photo maps, video, direct messaging, a web-based interface and sponsored posts.

With 17 percent of American adults—37 percent of those aged 18 to 29—using Instagram according to September 2013 data from the [Pew Research Center](#), it's a platform ripe for interaction.

WHY SHOULD MAGAZINES BE ON INSTAGRAM?

For tips on Instagram, we turned to editors at two Canadian magazines with robust followings, photo-centric editorial and experience to share: Sabrina Doyle, social media editor at *Canadian Geographic* (@cangeo); and Scott Birke, editor of *Snowboard Canada* (@snowboardcanada).

For *Canadian Geographic*, Doyle says Instagram is part of the magazine's overall refresh and mandate to engage more with readers online—and it's a great fit for their visually-oriented audience. "Photography makes up a huge part of what we do, both in the magazine and through our photo club," she says. "Instagram seemed like an obvious social network to tap into."

Instagram also has huge brand-building value for magazines who can tap into and participate in an existing community. Birke calls Instagram an extension of *Snowboard Canada's* editorial and says it's an important way they get the word out about their media properties. "People might see a shot on @SnowboardCanada and decide to check out our other media offerings," he says. "It helps us reach new readers in a way that a traditional newsstand might not."

WHAT TO POST

"People like good content and want to see interesting photos and videos," says Birke. All editors and senior photographers have access to the account, ensuring a variety of images and video:

live event coverage, contest promotion, behind-the-scenes shots from upcoming stories, even photos submitted by up-and-coming photographers. The key, Birke reiterates, is that each post has value to followers: "People want to see beautiful images."

For *Canadian Geographic*, the theme for posts is "the beauty and diversity of Canada," and photos are generally created not by editors, but by photo club members, "which adds to the feeling of community," Doyle says. In addition, they promote the hashtag #shareCG—something open to anyone on Instagram—from which they select photos to appear on the magazine's "In A Snap" page.

AD VS. EDIT

Birke strongly believes that editorial, not sales or marketing, should be managing the Instagram feed. "Your Instagram's engagement shows the strength of your editorial," he says. While he's fine with occasional promotional content, he cautions that it must have value to readers. "If it doesn't, they'll see right through it and tune out," he says.

DOS AND DON'TS

Doyle shares a few Instagram dos and don'ts:

- Do be approachable and friendly—even witty—in tone.
- Don't be rude.
- Do show some of the behind-the-scenes work of the magazine.
- Don't overpost. It's annoying.
- Do give back to your audience.
- Don't go overboard on the hashtags. Find the ones that are relevant to the focus of your magazine.

GETTING STARTED ON INSTAGRAM

Ready to try it out? Pull out your smartphone (no BlackBerrys, I'm afraid) and download the Instagram app. Create an account for your magazine, but before you start posting, follow some friends, magazines and other brand accounts and get a feel for the culture. Here are a few to start with:

- Canadian Geographic, @cangeo
- Snowboard Canada, @snowboardcanada
- Montreal Gazette, @montrealgazette
- Bon Appétit, @bonappetitmag
- Outside Magazine, @outsidemagazine
- Instagram official, @instagram
- Lululemon, @lululemon
- Ben and Jerry's, @benandjerry

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