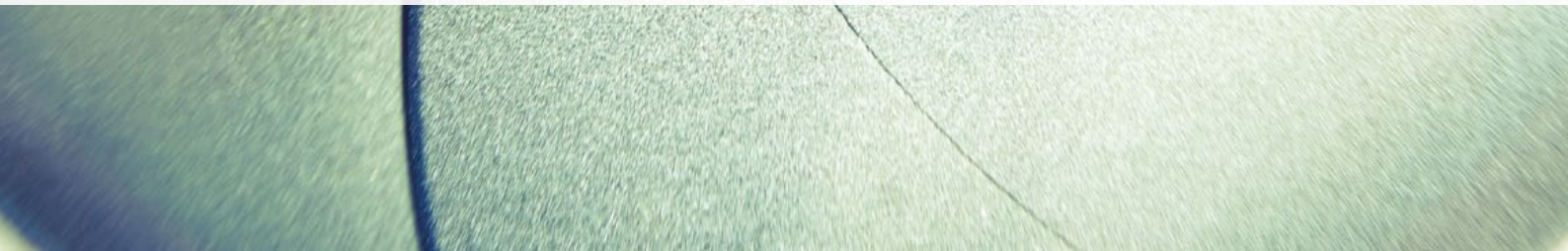
B2B Marketing™



BEGINNER'S GUIDE

Beginner's Guide to Instagram

B2BMARKETING.NET



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Introduction: Why B2B brands should use Instagram

It's fair to say that Instagram remains unexplored by the majority of B2B brands. Its visual nature and the fact it doesn't drive direct website traffic like the other big social networks has meant that the B2B industry has been slow to jump on the Instagram bandwagon. The sceptics continue to argue that their audience isn't there. Although Instagram isn't for every brand, the ever-growing significance of visual sharing means it's crucial marketers explore this space, rather than dismiss it altogether.

Instagram is more than just a photo-sharing app, it's a vast mobile-first advertising space with over 400 million active monthly users, 80 million photos uploaded and 3.5 billion likes daily. Top branded Instagram posts generate 58 times more engagement per follower than Facebook, and 120 times more than Twitter, a Forrester study has shown. So let's face it: it's more than likely some of your customers are logging in and engaging on this platform. Meanwhile, the network is making the effort to become business friendly, announcing an array of advertising options to entice businesses to use the platform (outlined on page 4).

However, it's not just these impressive statistics and reach that should entice B2B brands to launch an Instagram account; it's the opportunity for humanisation, storytelling and engagement. Instagram offers a unique platform, not to showcase your products, but to create a meaningful brand image and community. In future, this will be vital to all B2B companies' success. The importance of brand can be seen through Google's consistent search updates – the search engine favouring recognisable companies and pushing them to the top of its search rankings. And with each update it penalises those that don't reach these requirements, whether it's through mobile presence or pop-ups.

As a result, if you want your social media marketing to go beyond sales messages, product updates and website links, Instagram can be a great place to be.

About this guide

This *Beginner's Guide to Instagram* has been put together with B2B marketers specifically in mind, and is part of a series of beginner's guides focused on social networks, including Twitter and Facebook.

In the following pages you'll find an outline of the basics of Instagram, a guide to launching an Instagram account for your brand and how to be successful on Instagram. The guide also includes a useful list of everyday tips and the five best B2B brands on Instagram.

Instagram: The basics

Image sizes

Profile picture
110x110px minimum

Photo sizes
1080x1080px (for best quality) Web app: 640x640px

Profile

Username

This cannot exceed 30 characters.

Bio length

Your Instagram bio cannot exceed 150 characters. Make sure yours includes a link to your website or another relevant web page.

Linking up accounts

By linking your Instagram account to other social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, you are able to share your Instagram photos on those networks and allow people to find you more easily.

Followers

Much like Twitter, followers on Instagram are users who choose to follow your account and receive your updates. You can also follow accounts that you feel are relevant to you in order to build your network. The maximum number of people you can follow on Instagram is 7500. This is to prevent spamming or breaking the community guidelines.

Search and explore

Use this feature to search for users and find new people to follow. You can also explore hashtags by entering specific hashtags into the search bar.

Tagging/adding location

You can tag (or 'mention') people in every photo you post, either in the caption or comments. To do this, type @ followed by the username (again, as you would on Twitter).

Filters

It's possible to apply one of a number of filters to your photos on Instagram, in order to improve the quality of your image. There are many to choose from, so make sure you select the right filter – different filters work well on different photos. You can find a handy guide to using filters here.

Hashtags

You can add hashtags to your photos and videos on Instagram in order to make them more easily findable. Note that numbers do work in hashtags, but special characters such as $ or % will not. You can include up to 30 tags on one post.

Paid-for options explained

Instagram's advertising opportunities will soon be open to all businesses across the world. Previously campaigns were restricted to eight markets and selected companies. Here's what you need to know about the social platform's paid-for options:

Image ads

The most simple format of advertising is an image ad. This option displays one branded image with a caption on users' feeds.

Video ads

Brands can upload videos up to 30 seconds long in landscape or portrait format.

Carousel ads

Carousel ads include several images where users can swipe to see more. Plus brands can add a direct call-to-action button beneath the image to drive further web traffic.

How to launch an Instagram account for your brand

JESSICA MCGREAL
DIGITAL CONTENT MANAGER
B2B MARKETING



Starting out on a new social network is both time and resource intensive. Consequently, B2B marketers need to ensure the rewards will outweigh their initial investment. To understand if Instagram is the right platform for your company, think about the following:

Research

Don't make any plans before completing an extensive research project to find out if your audience is using the network and wants you there. Distribute a short email survey to customers containing only key questions, including:

- Do you use Instagram?
- Do you interact with business brands on the platform?
- Would you interact with [company name] on the network?

Make the reason for the survey clear and the questions short and sweet for optimum responses.

In addition, see what your competitors are up to on Instagram. Do they have a presence? What do they post? What reach and engagement metrics are they achieving? This can give you some indication about how your brand will work on the platform.

The last stage of your research should investigate how Instagram will fit within the business: do you have the resources available to launch a new social account? Who will ultimately be responsible for running it, the marketing department or an individual? How does it align with your overall business objectives? Does it fit in with your social marketing? The answers to these questions will be useful when setting out a strategy.

Strategy

Once you've completed the required research and it has shown that Instagram will add value to your business, it's time to lay out your strategy. While creating a dedicated plan is essential, this document should also sit within your wider social media strategy and overall marketing plans. Disconnecting social media from your overall marketing plans is a recipe for disaster.

So, within the strategy, marketers need to highlight the following:

- Your main objective for launching on Instagram.
- How it fits into your marketing strategy.
- How it contributes to wider business goals.

Use your strategy to lay out achievable – and measurable – goals that can be reviewed throughout the year (e.g. after one month, three months, six months etc.)

Content calendar

The final action you need to take before setting up a profile is to create a content calendar. Get the whole team involved for an Instagram posts brainstorming session. Instagram updates should be used to support upcoming campaigns and initiatives, rather than in isolation.

Stuck for post ideas? Turn to page 7.

Once you've completed the preliminary stages above, it's time to download the app and set up a profile. To do this, follow these simple steps:

1. **Create an account**
   Instagram doesn't offer specific business profiles, so you will need to set up the account as an individual. Use your company name as your username and logo as your profile picture.

2. **Fill in your profile**
   Make your bio short and sweet. It should include a brief 'mission' statement highlighting what you will be sharing as well as any branded hashtags.

3. **Connect your other social profiles**
   Link your account to your other social profiles, such as Facebook, Twitter or Tumblr. This will allow your audience to easily discover your account as well as cross-sharing when you start posting.

4. **Start posting and make an announcement**
   Once your profile is filled out, it's time to start posting. After two or three Instagram posts, make an announcement across your other digital channels informing your audience about your new venture.

Internal buy-in

Gaining internal buy-in from your team, manager or board to launch an Instagram account can be challenging because of its niche nature. As a result, before rushing to complete the necessary research and hastily drawing up a strategy, it's vital to start a conversation with peers. Find out your colleagues' opinions in your next team meeting (it's unlikely you'll all be in unanimous agreement). At this point you should suggest carrying out the appropriate research to reveal the facts, which can be presented and a decision made. Don't complete the research without notifying the business, as this could result in a tonne of wasted time and resources.

Ten everyday Instagram tips

How to engage

1. Create a house style
Ensure your Instagram photos fit in with your overall brand guidelines by setting up a house style. Think about using the same two or three filters to ensure posts coordinate and create a hashtag that encapsulates your brand message on the network. Make your audience aware of the hashtag by including it in the 'bio' section of your profile.

2. Talk to your audience
Instagram is all about engagement, and that doesn't just mean individuals engaging with brands, but brands engaging with their audience too. Following customers and prospects isn't enough; like and comment on their posts, and reply to comments to fuel conversation.

3. Use hashtags
As well as setting up your own hashtags, use popular hashtags to get your posts discovered. But a word of warning: don't just jump on everything that's trending, only add a hashtag if it's appropriate and don't overuse them.

4. Cross posting
Once you've connected your other social media accounts, such as Facebook and Twitter, make sure you cross post. Instagram pictures are a simple way of creating recyclable visual content that can be shared across all your social channels, as well as embedded on your website. This will increase post viability, audience reach and engagement.

5. Don't forget video
Video is one of the most shareable pieces of content and according to Instagram, 40 per cent of the most shared videos are by brands.

As a result, it's vital brands make full use of Instagram's video functionality. This doesn't have to mean more budget and resources, but recycling larger video content. For example, your latest campaign ad could be cut into digestible three to 13 second snippets and shared on the app throughout the length of the activity.

What to share

1. Company culture
Instagram is a great way to offer your audience a behind-the-scenes look into your company's culture. Updates could include snippets from your team day out, quick-fire and fun staff interviews or a short 'day in the life' post – after all everyone loves to be nosey.

2. Teasers
If you're working on an upcoming campaign, organising an event or creating a new creative asset, give your audience a teaser. Make it more interactive by asking for feedback.

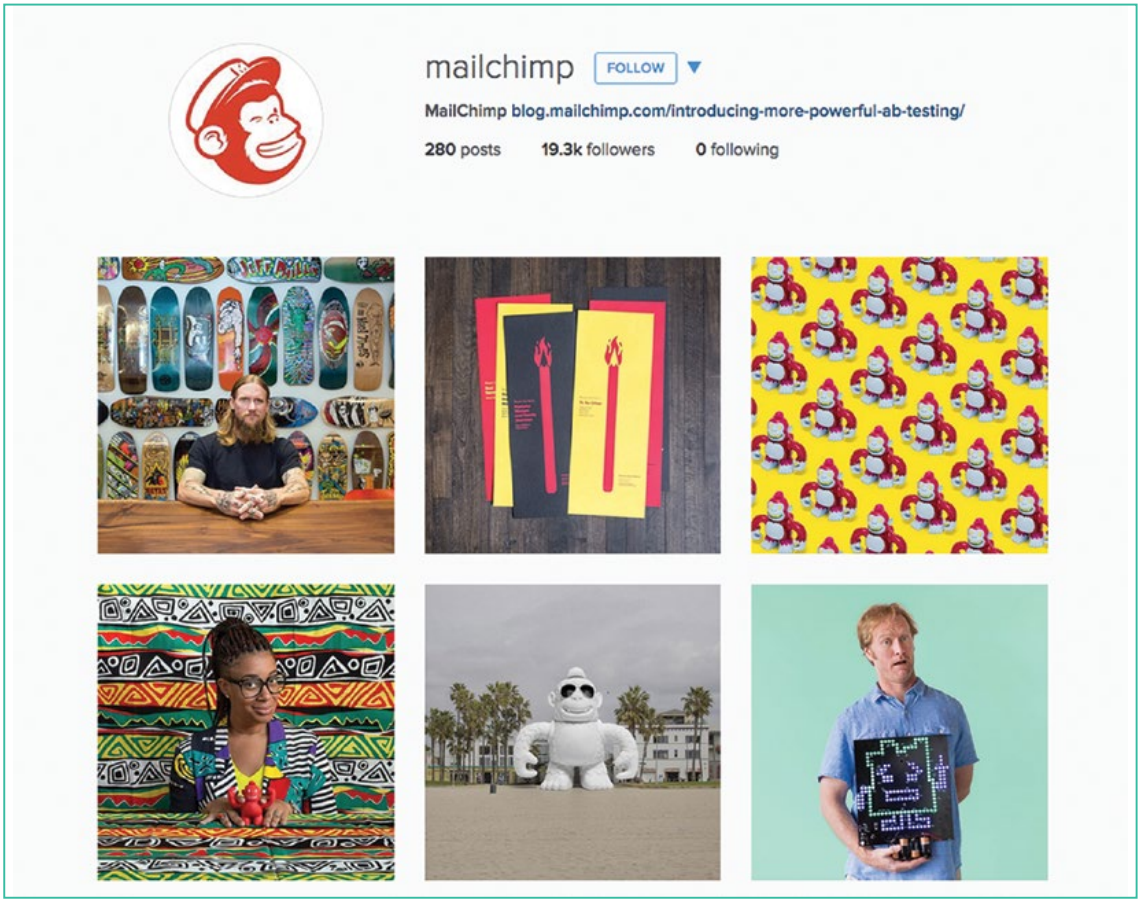
3. Inspiration
Use the platform to share motivational quotes, cool ideas and professional advice. There are a tonne of apps that can help you make your copy look amazing in no time. For example, 'Vanillapen' available on the iPhone App Store allows you to add text to a variety of backgrounds, in addition to your own photos.

4. User-generated ideas
Interact with your followers by running competitions, re-gramming their posts and asking them to submit images. Adobe Creative Cloud's profile is a great example of this. The software company asks its audience to share the work they have created with its tools using the hashtag #creativecloud. It then features its favourite images, showcasing its audience skills as well creating free visual content for itself.

5. Demos
Your Instagram feed shouldn't be too product-centric; however, its video feature offers a great way to share short helpful demos. If a customer asks for help using a product on Twitter, why not use Instagram's video feature to create a step-by-step 'how to' video? Your customer will appreciate you've gone the extra mile, and you can recycle the content again and again.

Five of the best B2B brands on Instagram

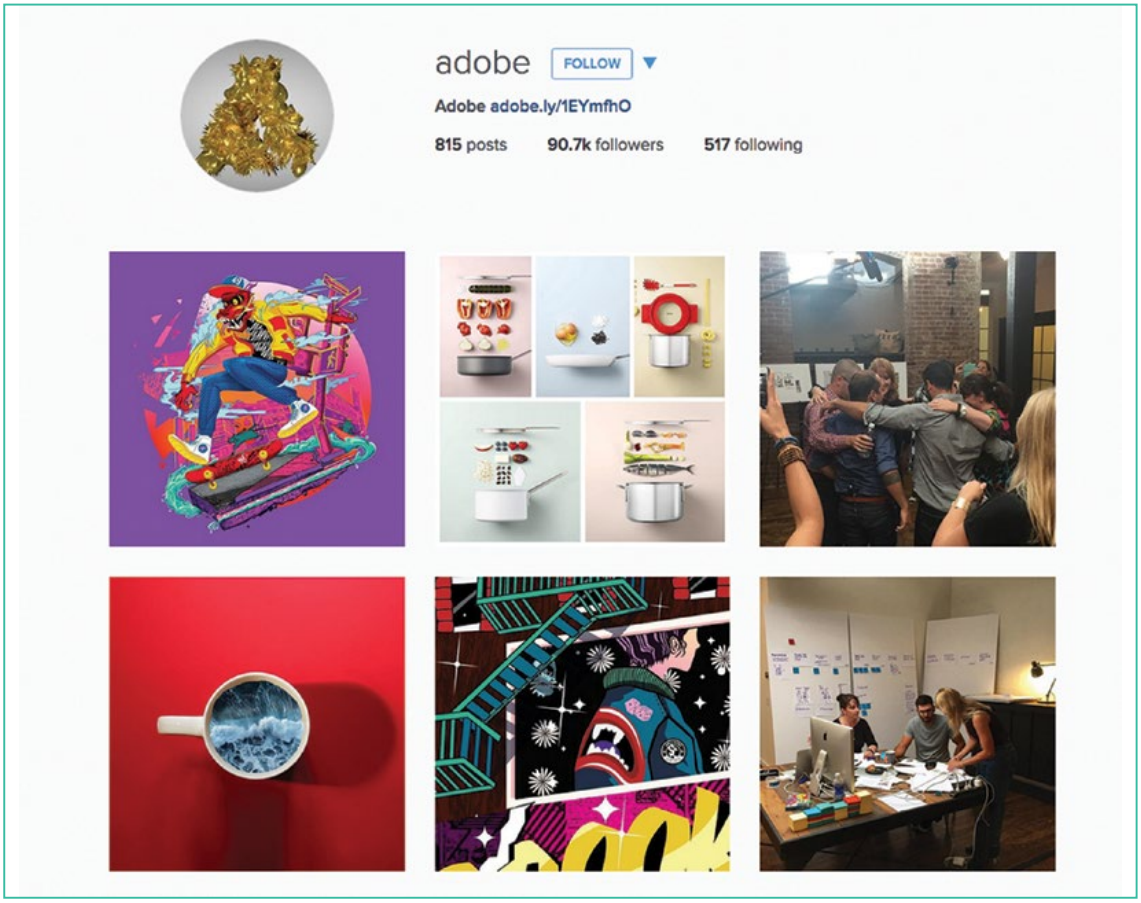
Mailchimp



@MailChimp
Followers: 19.3k
The email marketing service provider made our top five because of the way it showcases its company culture through its people and ideas, rather than products. It introduces its following to its employees through colourful profile images and uses the image caption for quirky Q&As. Its fun feed also contains numerous playful images of its iconic monkey, as well as inspirational design images to inspire its audience of email marketers.

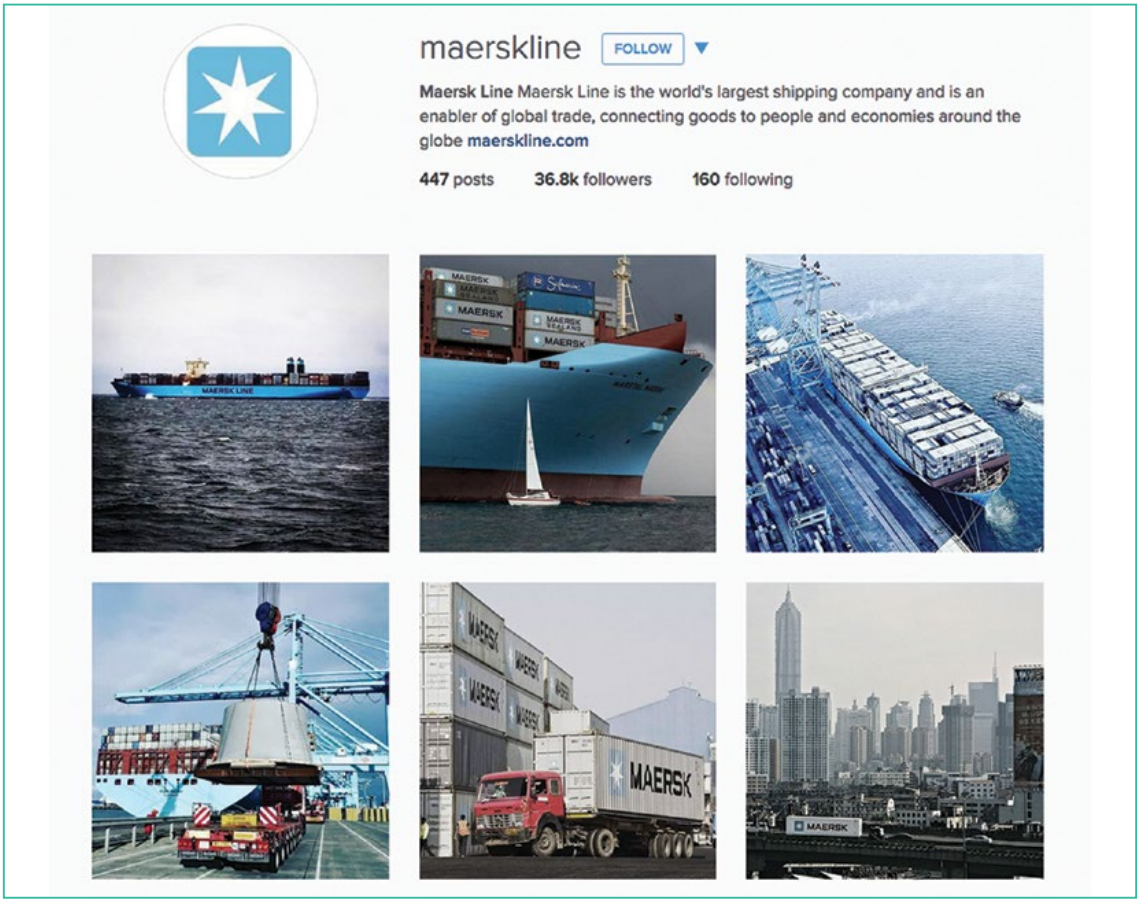
***Jason Travis**, the photographer who runs MailChimp's Instagram account, says: "Our design team has a lot of fun on Instagram. We see it as a place to showcase the creativity of MailChimp's culture, process, and products, and we love it when our posts feel unexpected."*

Adobe



@Adobe
Followers: 90.7k
Adobe runs several different Instagram accounts for each of its products. However, instead of diluting the brand image it allows Adobe to connect directly with its users. The 'Adobe Students' profile showcases how students use Adobe Creative Cloud in their work. The brand asks individuals to submit their work through the hashtag #MakeIt. This is a great way to build a real brand community and collect crowd-sourced content, while highlighting what its tools can achieve.

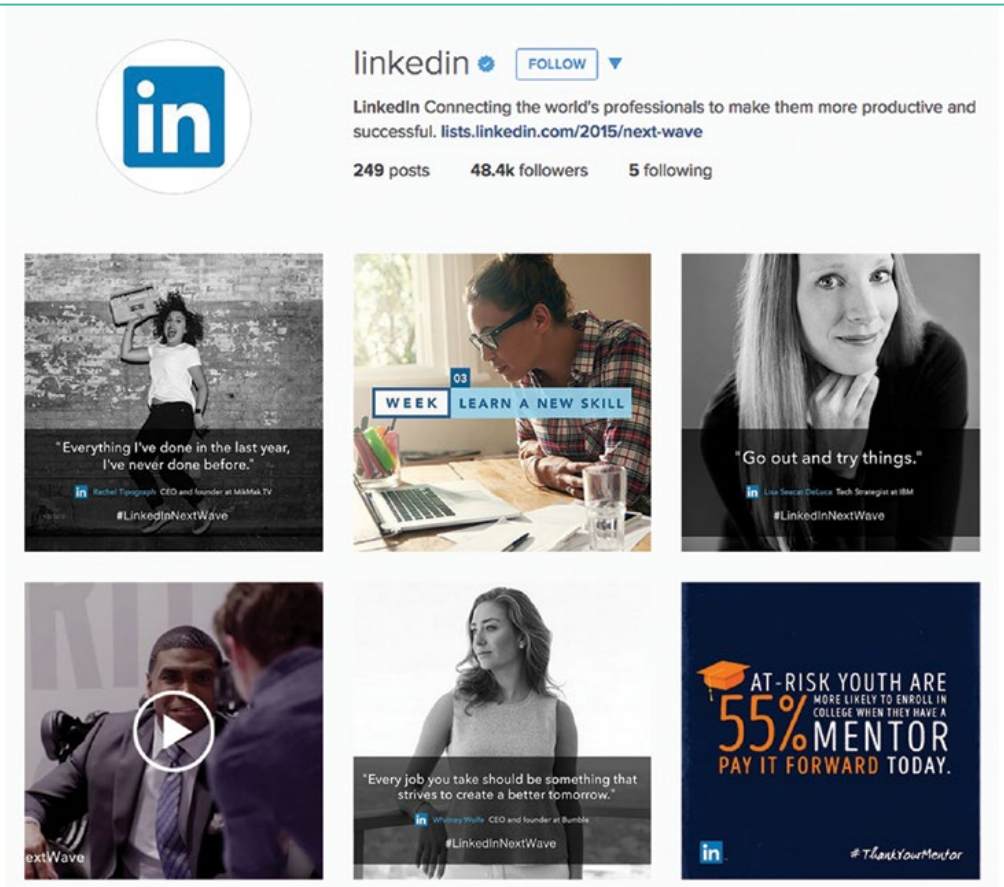
Maersk Line



@MaerskLine
Followers: 36.7k
The world's largest shipping company is a great example of how B2B brands can use Instagram to tell stories. Its profile includes breath-taking photography of its liners and containers being transported across the world (a large chunk contributed by followers). But what makes this account stand out is the way it uses photo descriptions. The business makes full use of the copy space available by revealing interesting shipping facts, customer stories and financial results.

Davina Rapaport, *social media manager, explains: "Instagram is an important supplementary channel in our social media strategy. While Instagram's functionality limitations mean that we focus our marketing activities on other channels, it is an integral platform for us to engage with our followers and reinforce Maersk Line's brand positioning, as well as being a valuable source of content for us. This, coupled with the relatively low investment required to maintain our presence there and our very strong and engaged follower base, means that an Instagram presence is a no-brainer for Maersk Line."*

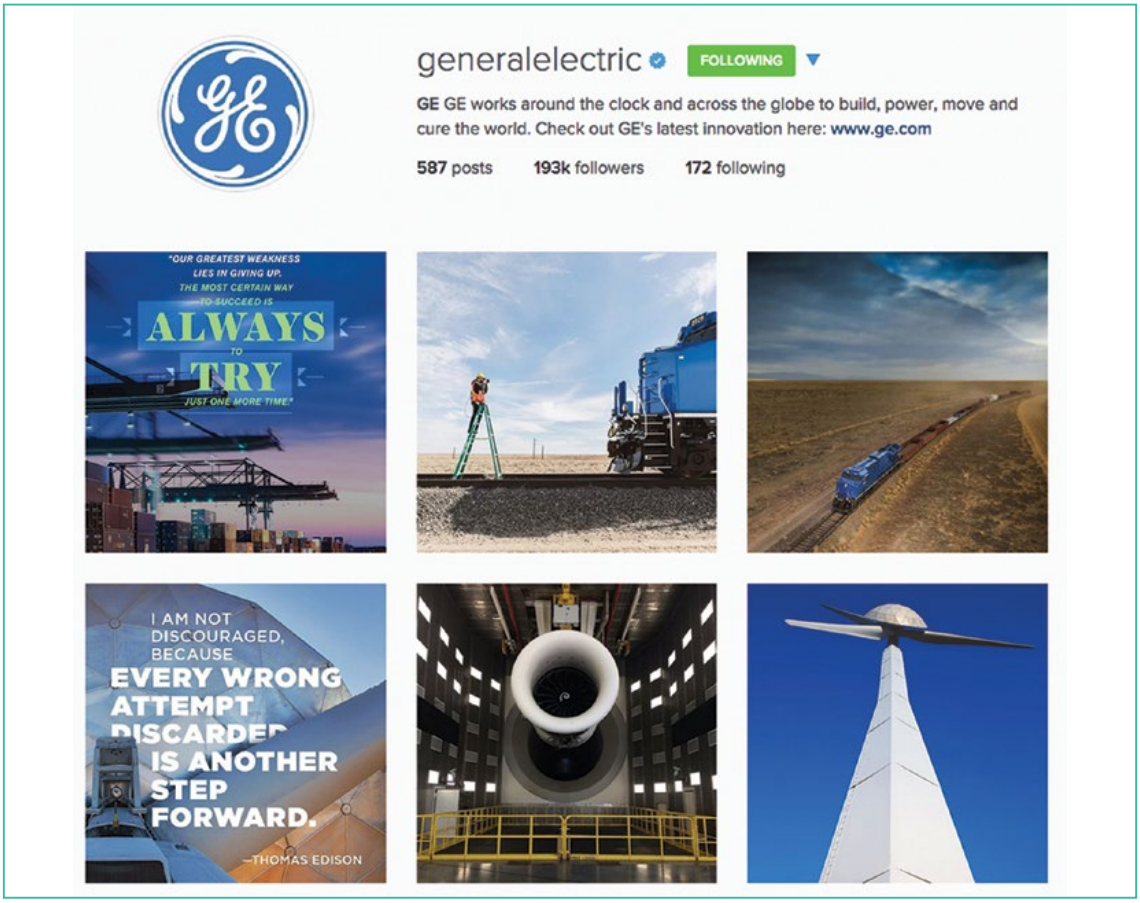
LinkedIn



@LinkedIn
Followers: 48.4k
As a social platform, LinkedIn understands the power of visual content and being where your customers are. The professional social network uses its Instagram profile to tell customer stories as well as sharing inspirational professional advice. The company's #ThankYouMentor campaign urges professionals to mentor young people. LinkedIn uses its Instagram account to display interesting facts such as 'one in three young people grow up without a mentor' and asking experienced professionals to 'pay it forward'.

Page Williams, *social media marketing manager at LinkedIn, says: "What makes a professional successful from the outside is often based on perception. But the real story of success is rooted in the late nights, relentless hard work, and persistence through the ups and downs of life. This year, we're focusing on growing our Instagram handle into a platform that captures and shares what goes on behind the scenes to make professionals more productive and successful, and sharing that visual inspiration with our community."*

General Electric



@GE

Followers: 193k

General Electric is renowned for its social media presence, so it couldn't be missed off this list. Despite the company's 'geeky' product offering – it essentially manufactures big machines and technology – the business makes its social presence interesting by delving into the science behind its goods. Its Instagram feed is no different, featuring stunning photography, factual video clips, and scientific facts and inspiration. Meanwhile, its focus on innovation and sustainability illustrates its corporate social responsibility initiatives.

About B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as B2B Marketing magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research and reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership

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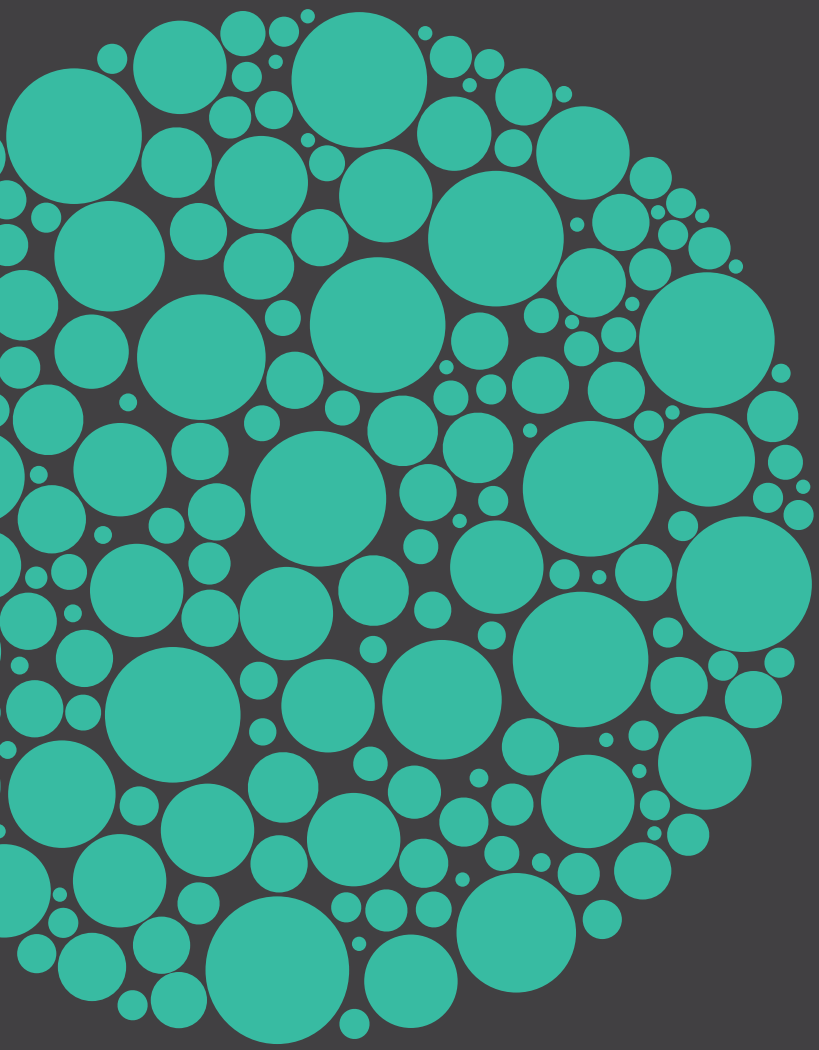
Corporate membership

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