

## INSTA-BRAND

> Want a surefire way to start exposing your brand to the next generation of flower buyers? According to the 2014 Piper Jaffray Spring Teen Survey, more than 80 percent of teen girls from homes with incomes topping more than \$103,000 use the social media site Instagram.

Instagram is yet another social media site started in 2010 that allows users to instantly share photos and video. Sound similar to functions already offered by Facebook, Flickr, YouTube and Google+? Instagram's unique trick is offering users a variety of fun filters they can apply to photos, which they can easily post to other social media sites. And the photos are square — because they're meant to be taken and viewed using a smartphone. Yes, that's about it, but it's enough for those teen girls — and boys, according to the same survey — to use it religiously.

If you're skeptical about devoting time to this form of social media, consider Instagram's staying power: Facebook bought it for \$1 billion in 2012 for cash and stock. Then, the acquisition proceeded to outgrow its parent by 23 percent to 3 percent in usage for 2013.

### Mimic a Millennial

Before you get your business started on Instagram, try using it as a teen or millennial would. You can download the free app via the App Store on iPhones, the

Google Play Store on Android phones and at the Windows Phone Store.

Unlike most social media sites that allow you to start an account using a desktop computer, Instagram accounts can only be opened on a smartphone. It may not be for you, but the smartphone is the central tool for young people to engage the world around them. Instagram gets this. It is successful because it allows users to capture and instantly share visuals as they go about their day.

Here's what this might look like: Let's say you buy a new pair of sneakers (or a sweater or a great bottle of wine). Take a photo of it with your smartphone, apply a fun filter — try "Rise" or "Sierra," two of my favorites — and hash it #readyto-run. Or let's say you're watching a group of carolers on the street. Capture a quick video, apply the "Brooklyn" or "Helena" filters and hash #theygottalent. Moved by a sunset? A quick snap and #wishyouwerehere captures the emotional moment and is shared in an instant.

Hashes nowadays are less functional than descriptive. #flowers is a great way to track trends on Twitter, but with Instagram the idea behind hashtags is to describe or express the "here and now."

### Getting Started

Starting to feel a decade or two younger? Now open an account for the business. Remember, it's all about branding, so choose a username that matches your shop's name (you have a 30-character limit). Also, consider creating a new shop email for this account, such as instagram@yourshopdomain.com. Never ask an employee to open this account with a personal address, since you may not be able to access this in the future.

Next, see how other florists post to the service by following them. Go into the app and simply type "florist" in the search field at the top. In the results, just click on a profile and click + Follow on the next screen to follow them. Consider following only a few since they'll likely follow you back (which may be a little embarrassing if you don't have any posts of your own).



### Insta-Do's and Don'ts

Before you go crazy with your smartphone camera, consider the following tips on crafting your Instagram brand. Don't think of Instagram as a product-placement opportunity; rather, think in terms of business themes: everyday, wedding and events. Be creative with your shots, and show people using and enjoying your work! Show yourself and other staff creating it.

Don't ignore the "insta" part of Instagram. Posting photos from the weekend's wedding is great — but do it while you're still on site. How about behind-the-scenes shots at your shop? It might be ho-hum to you, but the average consumer has never seen what a design room in prep mode for a 20-table gala looks like, or what flowers look like upon arrival: in boxes, unconditioned. Great way to convey the value of working with a retail florist.

Post at least once, if not twice, a day, and most importantly, engage with your followers. Respond to comments and follow people back. Like things you like when you're scanning profiles you follow.

Need more help? Visit <https://help.instagram.com> and check out <http://blog.business.instagram.com> on how other businesses are building their brands using Instagram. 📸

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**IN THE MOMENT** Instagram is all about capturing an image or video of what's happening right now: a new product, as shown by Monday Morning Flower and Ballon Co (right) or you holiday party, as shown by Hothouse Flowers.