

DRIVING ORGANIC TRAFFIC USING INSTAGRAM

Cindy: Ryan, it so wonderful to have you here. Thanks for joining the show today.

Ryan: Yeah, no problem. Thanks for having me on.

Cindy: Today we're just going to dive straight in because I know we've got a lot to share and for people who are listening in, we want to learn today a lot about Instagram and you are the man to talk to about Instagram. For people who don't know about Instagram, who have no idea what it is, why don't you just quickly tell us? What is Instagram?

Ryan: Sure. Sure thing. Basically Instagram is a social media platform. It started out, it's an app where some other social media platforms are websites and that's how you interact with them, but Instagram started out as an app. You can access the content on the web as well now, but yeah, it's a social media platform. It's a visual platform with images and now they have 15 second videos. It's really cool. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and everyone loves Instagram.

It's definitely different than Facebook and Twitter and all these other ones in that it's more focused, in my opinion. I think that's why people like it. Where on Facebook, you can do a status update, pictures, videos, games, groups, everything. You can do everything. On Instagram it's more focused. It's images that you have that you upload to your profile, and videos. Then you interact with it. You see people's feeds that have their pictures that they've uploaded and the captions to those photos and then you can comment and like and it's pretty straightforward. It's pretty basic, and that's why people like it I think. It's very focused.

Cindy: I think that's a really good point, because with Facebook it is ... There's a lot of different ways that you can market on Facebook. With Instagram it's quite formulaic I would imagine, because it is so just very straightforward as to what you can do instead of having to juggle and manage how to do everything.

Ryan: Sure, the way I look at it is there's just less bloat. Like on Facebook, you go on Facebook and you go into another realm of distraction. I go to Facebook for a purpose and I end up playing a game. It's like what? What happened to the last hour of my life? On Instagram, you're there and you're actually what really they want you to do. I know that actually Facebook owns Instagram. They bought them for about a billion dollars awhile back, and you can see a little bit more of Facebook's influence on Instagram at this point, but it's definitely the platform to be on if you're trying to drive traffic or build an audience.

It's a lot different from Facebook and Twitter in terms of engagement. It's the king of engagement right now. That's what I always tell people and I'm happy to spend my time building my audience on Instagram as opposed to these other platforms because the engagement levels are so low on all the other ones.

Cindy: Right.

Ryan: It's definitely the place to be and there's over, it's about 450 million monthly active users now. It's growing at a pace faster than Facebook, which is who owns them. At some point if it keeps it up it's going to surpass Facebook.

Cindy: I've actually only, because everyone went and got an Instagram account when it first started out, but then very few of us actually ... For me. I'm speaking for myself. It was a long time before I actually went back, and now Facebook is really, when you do Facebook ads there's Instagram ... It's the option to advertise on Instagram and all that stuff. It's obviously, Facebook's really pushing this so if Facebook is behind and it's throwing a billion dollars into this, it's something that you really want to pay attention to. How does a marketer, do you market?

Today we're actually going to be focusing mainly on the traffic side of things. How do you get ... What should we ask you? How about what kind of offers can you do? How do you sell with Instagram? How does this work?

Ryan: Sure. I'll back up a step. This is what I usually tell. We actually just had a webinar yesterday on e-commerce on Instagram. I have all my notes here on my board. If I'm looking up like that ...

Cindy: Oh good.

Ryan: Yeah, you'll see. Basically what I teach and the phrase that you'll hear throughout the course that we have is called to be an account worth following.

Cindy: Excellent.

Ryan: Think about it. If you're going to grow an audience on Instagram or on any platform, you need to add value on a regular basis and because think about it, the people that you follow or that I would follow on Instagram are accounts or that maybe it's a dog account, because you love dogs and you want to see furry dogs all the time, cute dogs. The value that they're offering is pictures of dogs, whether it's their dogs or somebody else's dog, or whatever. That's how it works. Basically you add value on a regular basis and you become and account worth following, and people will follow you. The problem that a lot of marketers have is they come to it ... It's funny that that's the first question that you asked.

Cindy: I know. I'm sorry.

Ryan: It's not the wrong question. It's the right question, but there's questions that have to go first in order to be what you need to be in order to do what you want to do. As a marketer on Instagram, if you're trying to sell products and make sales and use the platform to do that, it's hard to just start out with and leading with that. If you don't become an account worth following first, then no one's going to follow you and you'll be able to market to no one. The first thing I always tell people is add value on a daily basis. You need to go in there. You need to be posting images that are of value to whatever niche that you're in. Again, if you're a dog page, a dog account, dogs of Instagram, you go there, they have millions of followers and they're making a full-time income from that account, without a doubt.

The way that they're able to do that is because they've built that following and they're adding value on a regular basis, and then they're able to sprinkle their offers throughout their page and their audience responds in a great way. That's pretty much how it works. Again, the number one thing is add value, build a following, and you do that by posting very consistently, adding that value everyday, and then some people, they'll buy shout outs from bigger pages.

For example, on some of the pages that I have that have hundreds of thousands of followers, pretty much everyday I get hundreds of people that are ... It's wild. I get hundreds of people that are asking me for a shout out everyday.

Cindy: Right, okay.

Ryan: I can't respond to all of them, because ... Some people want to pay me for that, or some people just, they're just like, "Hey, give me a shout out." I find it really funny. It's like, I always give the example doing that is like seeing a person on the street and saying, "Hey, stranger. I don't know you, but tell everyone that you know, that knows and likes you, tell them that I am awesome. Would you do that for me?" A lot of people do that. I always respond back with, "I don't even know you. You didn't even say hello."

Cindy: Right.

Ryan: Some people they'll buy shout outs. They'll contact a page who is willing to run like an ad and give credit to your account and that'll send you traffic. That's one way of doing it. Another way is to build relationships on Instagram. I have relationships with people on Instagram that I have ... Some of them are my good friends now that I've never met in person, but we've communicated for three, three and a half years on a weekly basis, if not a daily basis. Now it's to the point where I post for them, they post for me, and we don't even talk about it. We just, "Oh, I saw that you posted for me, so I get you back." We're cross promoting and we call it a post for a post. Some people call it a shout out. When you give credit, you post somebody else's image on your account, you give them credit and say, "Hey, credit dogs of Instagram." Then they post for you. Then it sends traffic back and forth.

That's a great way to grow and partnering with other pages. A lot of times people will try to contact the giant pages. If you're a brand new page, you're a new dog page. It'll be Ryan's favorite dogs account, and it might be tempting for me to want to go contact dogs of Instagram to get them to send me traffic, but the likelihood of that is very low, unless I pay them a lot of money.

Cindy: Right.

Ryan: What I always advise people to do is contact other dog pages that are smaller, that are around the same size as you are and friend them and add value to them and give to them first. Don't immediately say post for me, post for me, but start posting for them. Start giving them credit, reposting some of their stuff and give first and then they'll be a lot more likely to want to post for you, because oh wow, this person has been helping me for no reason for a long time. That's how it works in terms of the post for post relationships.

Cindy: When you share someone else's post. When you post for them, do they get notified? If someone makes a post for you, then they see. You get to see that?

Ryan: Yeah, there's two ways of actually doing it. When you, because for each photo that you upload, photo or video, you have the opportunity to write a caption. In the caption you can say credit at dogs of Instagram. When that happens, it'll show up in their activity as somebody tagged you in a photo. Also, now that they actually allow you tag the actual photo itself, that's the best way of doing it, because there's a section and when you look in your profile all the way to the right, that shows you all the images that you've been tagged in. I always check that.

When somebody tags me in a photo, I'll always see that. If they do it only in the caption, I have so much activity that within one or two minutes, I have to be literally on Instagram in order to see it. It's a good problem to have but so many notifications are coming in that I ... It only shows about the last 100 things. I'll never see it. Yeah, the best way to do it is actually tag the photo and then people will see it. It's a good way to get larger pages attention if you're posting for them as well.

Yeah, there's another strategy, and this is a very popular one in order to get more followers is to A. Again, be an account worth following, and then you can employ the follow to be followed strategy which a lot of you may have heard of in the past for different platforms. A lot of people on Twitter would do this.

Cindy: [crosstalk 00:11:18], yes.

Ryan: Yeah. You get all these ... People follow people like crazy, and honestly it works great on Instagram because if you are an account worth following when you tap that, it's like when you follow somebody it sends them a notification. It taps them on the shoulder and says, "Hey, I exist."

Cindy: Someone's [crosstalk 00:11:33].

Ryan: When you get a new follower, you're like hey, who is this person? Who is Bible Lock Screens or dogs of Instagram, or whatever the account name is and then you go check out that account. What I teach is that people make a split second decision on whether or not to follow you back. Hopefully if you're an account worth following, they will hit that follow button. The strategy is, is that you want to go to other big accounts. Say for example, I have a lot of accounts in the Christian niche, if you want to call it that. One strategy is to go other Christian pages and see their followers, the people that are following them, and then you follow their followers. The reason why it works is that if somebody buys one business book, most likely they'll buy another business book. If you follow one Christian account, the chances of you following another one are pretty high, especially if you're adding a lot of good value.

Cindy: And you're an account worth following, yes.

Ryan: Yes. I'd beat that horse to death, and then I'd beat the dead horse, just because that is what matters, because people are like, "I can't get any followers." I'm like, "Your account sucks, frankly." I go there and it's like you don't post frequently. You haven't posted in a very long time, and the stuff that you post is either blurry or adds no value. I always tell people, when I say value, I mean something that's going to inspire them, motivate them, encourage them, make them laugh, make them tear up, in a good way, something like that. If you're doing that, people will follow you. If you're not, why would they follow you?

Cindy: How often should you post?

Ryan: Good question. I tell people ... You have to think about it like this, when you post, you create an opportunity. You have an opportunity for people to like the post, to comment, and sometimes in the comments, this happens all the time. If you go to some of the pages that I have, I'll encourage people to tag their friends in the comments and you can tag ... All you have to do is put the at symbol, and their friend's account. It notifies them, "Hey, come check out ..." Just like on Facebook. If you want your friend to see this funny video, you tag your friend in it, and then it tells them, "Hey, check out this video." Those are all opportunities for people to come to your content, see your page, and then follow you.

I encourage people to post anywhere from one to four times a day starting out, and to do that consistently, and to not do any promotions. Say you're a marketer and you're trying to get into any particular niche. I tell people no promotions for the first month, at all. Strictly value. Strictly value posts, because we want to establish your account as a value account. When people think of your account, your new dog account, I want people to be excited about it. I don't want them to think all she does is post ads or promotions. You want them to think this is an awesome page. The best thing in the world is seeing friends say, "Hey so and so, you need to follow this page." That just fills me up with joy when I see that, because that's when you know you're doing it right, when their friends are saying, "Hey, you need to follow this page."

Cindy: How do you get people to engage? You're throwing up some stuff there. What content actually gets people to want to share them to ... Want to comment, to yeah.

Ryan: There's a couple of different things that you can do. I call them engagement posts. I don't know if I coined that term, but I started using it. That's what I tell people, it's called an engagement post. A lot of times you can either have the image itself be something that is either so good that when people see it they just want to tag their friends and engage. I tell people to always have some type of call to action, either in your caption or at the top. You could actually put a location at the very top of your post. A lot of people, back in the day before Instagram changed that, you could put a custom location in there and you could just write anything you wanted to. I would say tag a friend or double tap, as in like. If you double tap it likes the photo. You can still do some of that now. There's what we call a location hack.

There are some things that, and of course we'd go into much detail with that, but there's all these things that you can put up there for calls to action above the photo, and then in the caption below you can have a call to action too. It could just be as basic as hey tag a friend you think might like this. If the image itself is something that is very engaging, sometimes I would make a post on my Bible Lock Screens page that says, "Tag someone that you love." Something as easy as that. Or something like "I thank God for you." Then in the caption I say, "Tag your significant other." What happens is is when the post itself says, "Tag someone you love," and then somebody gets a notification, it's almost like the person leaving the comment is telling their friend or telling their significant other that, "Hey, I love you," or whatever. It's that stuff. If you can create posts, that's almost like one follower can speak to another, it works really well.

There was one that was really cool that I saw the other day. It was on a entrepreneur type page, and it was actually, it was very tricky. It was a promo of a sweatshirt that said ... What did it say? It said CEO, and then had a bunch of zeros after it like a billion, but the first three numbers were CEO. It had a billion on it. It said double tap if this is your next hoodie that you're going to buy, or something like that. It was really smart of them to do that, because ... Or, "Tag a friend who would love this hoodie," because it sends a bunch of traffic [inaudible 00:17:51] that are actually going to check out this promo and check out this account.

Just doing calls to action are really crucial and you could do calls to action on images that are not promotions. You can just do them on regular what I call value posts. Something that just offers value, but you can say, "Tap the link in my bio." By the way, links on Instagram are not clickable inside the caption at this moment in time. What you have to do as a marketer is say, "Tap the link in my bio," and what that means is there's one link in your profile that is clickable. We always send people to that link and say, "Hey, tap the link in my bio to buy this shirt," if it's a promotion or something like that. Then that's all you have to do is say, "Tap the link in my bio." People on Instagram know what that means, so it works really well.

Cindy: Does that mean ... That means you've got to keep things quite fluid. If you're promoting something, you just promote one thing for a certain amount of time and then you go back and change the link later, or?

Ryan: Yes. You can change the link as often as you want. You could change the link every five minutes if you wanted to. What I tell people was if you have a different thing that you're promoting, then change the link right before you post it. With your promotions, and by the way, before we go too much deeper into promotions, I always tell people, "Value, value, value, value, value, value, value, and then a promotion." Way more value than promotions, obviously because you want to have all this, a sea of value on your page and then sprinkle your offers, because again you want to be that account worth following.

If you have too many ads on there or too many promotions then you can disrupt that whole being an account worth following thing. When I do a promotion by the way, I only, I post it and I leave it up for about 24 hours and then I take it down. The reason why is because I don't want people to come to my account and see a bunch of promotions. I want them to see value.

Cindy: That is, it's a very different cycle then what we're used to, because a lot of ... When we're setting up email, order responders or, you stick something on Facebook and you want it to go viral and six months later still have people sharing it and doing it. This is a lot shorter, shorter life cycle I guess.

Ryan: Yeah, the life cycle typically of an Instagram ... This is will fluctuate a little bit, but typically I say it's like this huge surge in the first one to ... From point of zero to maybe five hours. Then you'd see a pretty huge jumping off a cliff on the diagram of engagement. That's to be expected, because people are on to other things. It is a feed that as you ... Right now Instagram has announced that they are going to make some changes to the feed in terms of, they're saying that they're going to reorder some of the things in maybe the front of the feed. We'll see what happens with that.

I'm holding on that they're not going to ruin Instagram, but I think they said that they're going to reorder the posts to some degree, and they're going to experiment with it, but they're not going to make it so that you can't see any posts. They just said they're all going to be there, but they're going to reorder some. We'll see what happens with that. It's still the platform to be on. Even with that, I guarantee the engagement's going to be so much higher than any place else. Right now it's crushing Facebook. It's crushing Twitter. Pinterest, all that stuff. Life cycle, it pretty much is after about a day, and I'll still see some traffic, some engagement on some posts after a day, but the primary engagement, it happens within that first five hours typically. Then you'll see it trickles down and it comes to a drip. Then some people might see it later on.

Cindy: In a way, that's really good because we build up a whole lot of these automated stuff, but if you need instant traffic, this is definitely the place to be. You say it has a very short life cycle, you will get five hours. Is there a really good time of the day that you should be posting and a time that is just not really that active?

Ryan: Sure.

Cindy: When do you find is the best time to post?

Ryan: This is the magical question, because it can depend on where you're located, because I'm in the United States and where are you located?

Cindy: I'm in New Zealand.

Ryan: New Zealand, so the time. There's a little bit of a time difference here, but typically I speak in terms of Eastern time, because that's the time that I'm on. I've tested this sporadically and what it boils down to is think about when you use Instagram. Think about that, because most people, if they love Instagram and they're on Instagram all the time, when they wake up they check their phone. They check Instagram. It's probably an unhealthy addiction, but that's what a lot of people do.

Cindy: You're right.

Ryan: I think about it like this, if you're going to post multiple times throughout the day, some marketers, they're like what's the one perfect time? If I had to pick one perfect time, I would say probably 8:00 PM, anywhere from 8:00 to 10:00 PM, eastern time.

Cindy: Yeah, that's when I'll post. A lot of people in the internet marketing, their audience, product launches revolve around eastern time and it's something that everyone is used to. Working with American time between 8:00 PM and 10:00ish.

Ryan: Somewhere in there. If you just try your best to hit that window. It's a two hour time period, but the reason why that I think that works really well, if you think about it it's because a lot of people are off of work, they're off of school, they're just able and ...

Cindy: Wind down time.

Ryan: Yeah, they're just hanging out. They're watching TV and looking at Instagram. There's a lot more people. I call it prime time Instagram time is in that time frame. Also, again I teach people to post throughout the day. I usually would tell people if you're going to post somewhere around 8:00 to 9:00 AM eastern time, so a morning post, and then second one would be an afternoon post. Anywhere from 12:00 to 1:00 eastern time. Then after that, somewhere around the 5:00 to 6:00 PM time, because that's after work for a lot of people. You're just hitting people, and so they might not see it ... Basically if you have that one in the morning, you have that one in the afternoon, one in the evening, and then one in the later evening, you're going to hit everybody.

Cindy: Right.

Ryan: A lot of people starting out, they think maybe four posts a day is too much, but do what you can and the more you post, the more opportunities you create, the more value you could potentially add and you could grow faster.

Cindy: Do you have any tips for people who aren't massively graphically talented? You want to, because everything is just so visual with Instagram, you need to create a whole bunch of images. You need to ... What if people can't work Photo Shop, or they can't ... What do you suggest?

Ryan: A couple different things. If you're using the desktop, Mac or PC, I would recommend Canva.com. Canva.com is amazing. I love it. My background is in graphic design. I use Photo Shop everyday, but I've actually switched to doing a lot of stuff in Canva, just because it's so easy to use and I love it. Yeah, Canva has some templates in there already, and you can just drag and drop and click it to change their text to whatever you want. There's free public domain images that you can use. One that I like to recommend is Unsplash.com, which a lot of people know about that one. Also, Pixabay.com.

Cindy: Yes. That's my new favorite thing, yes.

Ryan: There's apps that you can use as well. Say you're just hanging out and you want to make something on your phone, I'm an iPhone user. I have Androids as well, but there's a lot more apps for iOS than there is for Android and the ones that I use for iOS now at this point in time are Adobe Post and Over. These two have integration with Pixabay, and they have integration with Unsplash. They have a new API that they came out with that allows you to pull in these public domain images right into the app and create images right on your phone, and just post them to Instagram, because either way, if you create it on your desktop you have to get the images from your desktop to your phone so you can post it on Instagram.

Again, it's a mobile app, so you have to have it on your phone. Some people try to do it the illegal way of trying to post to Instagram not using their approved API, but that can get your account banned and shutdown. I've actually seen accounts that were 200,000 plus followers shutdown, because they did that. Strictly stay with the whole post from the Instagram app on your phone. That's just a safe way of doing it.

Yeah, Adobe Post and Over are for iOS and then if you want on Android, there's one called Phonto, with a P-H. Phonto, that's a really good one. Yeah, you can just create stuff right on your phone and add value.

Cindy: A lot of those resources I didn't know about the last couple that you mentioned, but the first few are actually free. Instagram is free and this is something that anyone can get started in as long as you have a phone and most people have a smartphone now and a little bit of time to play around and make some really good little images and stuff. Then anyone can get started on this.

Ryan: Yeah, it's pretty amazing. When I started I had never thought that I would be doing what I'm doing now. Just to give you a quick little background of ... I created an app called Bible Lock Screens. It's a wallpaper app, and I was looking to promote my app on Instagram, because I was like, "Oh, it's a visual medium. It's an image based app, a social media app, and I have a wallpaper app that's visual, so it would be a good fit." Low and behold I found that there's tons of people already posting my images on there before I even got on Instagram, which is cool.

Cindy: Wow.

Ryan: I was able to add value on a regular basis and just I employed the whole follow to be followed type of thing in the beginning and got people's attention and when I was an account worth following they saw that my account was good, then they followed me and if people don't follow you back, it's not a big deal. It's okay. You can unfollow them. It's like, that's fine.

Cindy: Yeah.

Ryan: Now it's to the point where I'm getting so much organic traffic. If you just type in the word bible into Instagram, you're probably going to find my account, just because it's doing that well. I'm very thankful and yeah, it's something that anybody can do. I am no rockstar. I'm not famous or anything like that, but I was able to grow a very large following on Instagram, and you can too. Then through doing that, you can promote products and it either be your own products or affiliate products or whatever and stuff that will be of value to your audience. You have to think about it like this, you want to find, if you're dogs of Instagram, then you want to match the products to the page. You wouldn't, with the particular niche. You wouldn't want to, I don't know, try to sell pants on a ... Unless they're dog pants.

Cindy: Dog pants would due, yes.

Ryan: You need to match it so that people think, "Oh okay, this is something for my dog, oh I want to check that out. I'll buy that." There's one company called Bark Box, which they provide these little ...

Cindy: I love Bark Box, yeah.

Ryan: Boxes, yeah, you see. You probably know more about it than I do, but it's huge on Instagram and they get all these pages on Instagram to promote them, and they get affiliate commissions and man, what a world that we live in that you can grow an audience for a dog account on Instagram, pretty much curating photos from other people's dogs, and you post them, and then you build an audience. People follow you, and you get the [inaudible 00:30:53].

Cindy: You make a lot of money. It's crazy. It is crazy.

Ryan: Pretty wild.

Cindy: It is awesome. We're probably going to wrap it up soon. Have you got any last minute advice for people just wanting to get started on Instagram that you could share?

Ryan: Yeah, I would say again, not to be the already very dead horse, be an account worth following, add value. If you're going to do it commit. Commit to doing it and commit to being consistent. That's one of the most difficult things for myself, for everybody. It's just to be consistent whether you're a blogger or you're content creator of any kind. Just be consistent. That's something that I struggle with with the different ... I suffer from the entrepreneurial shiny object thing, where it's like you get going on something and then you don't stay with it. Stay with this, because you can really start from nothing and this is the platform you can really grow on. You can't really do that as well on any other platform as you can on Instagram. Strike while the iron's hot, commit, and go out and be an account worth following and add value everyday, and people will follow you. You'll grow a following.

Cindy: Awesome. Thank you so much Ryan for joining us on the show.

Ryan: No problem.

Cindy: If you guys are listening, if you didn't come via the seven figure [inaudible 00:32:11] blog, and you're on your iPod or iPhone, or any kind of I device, come over to the blog. There will be a whole bunch of links there that you can do if you want some more information from Ryan, or if you want to connect with him, or if you want to actually get some more information where it goes into a lot more depth, audienceexplosion.com is Ryan's page, and you can go and check that out. He will break down absolutely everything. We've only really touched the surface of Instagram marketing and Ryan has tons more information over there. Go check it out and thank you again, Ryan for being here.

Ryan: Yes. No problem, and thanks for having me on.

Cindy: Talk to you soon, man. Bye.

Ryan: Talk to you soon.

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