

Let's Make Instagram Casual Again...

When I think of the first form of social media I downloaded and actively used growing up, I think of Instagram. I remember having 20 filters to choose from - Valencia was my personal favorite - and of course the inspirational quotes were always necessary for the caption. The simplicity of it was great - but in recent years, Instagram took the Snapchat story and made it its own and then took the idea of YouTube videos and brought IGTV to life. Although Instagram is having a major identity crisis, this form of social has been my favorite photo sharing app in the App Store - rather than Facebook and Tumblr, which were very popular when I was growing up.

When I made my first account in 2013, I used it to post inspirational quotes and photos of my family. Instagram was casual, and no one really used it for anything but sharing their life and what made them laugh- I remember wanting to get enough likes to make it on the explore page. *Side note: never did.* But even in 2013, I wanted people to see what I was posting and hopefully know who I was! The point of Instagram is still to share your life, but we are editing, cropping, and making sure we get the right pose for the perfect picture to get (fingers crossed) more than 200 likes.

But let's make Instagram casual again. Am I right?

... right? Wait, am I the only one?

I want you to understand that I love seeing people use this photo sharing app as a way to make a name for themselves, but can we stop selling Fab Fit Tea and hair gummies? I want you to share products that you actually use and love, rather than those that just make you money. And if you do sell those hair gummies and tea that doesn't make you skinny, I trust that you hopefully believe in the product and you're not just taking advantage of your following to make a little bit of money. But if you are, I guess I understand. We want to grow the name we've made for ourselves and use it to the best of our advantage - but we need to remember, don't just take advantage of your following. Because honestly, your followers trust you and follow you for a reason. And trust me, it's not for the gummies.

We've grown to use Instagram as a way to make a name for ourselves and hopefully become "Insta" famous, but are we losing the real touch that Instagram had from the beginning? The main purpose of it, being a photo sharing app is meant to share photos and videos and I hope we never stop using the app because everyone is doing the same thing just because they feel like they have to!

We all follow those people we have completely fallen in love with, but why did we fall in love with them? They were real and casual!! My sister listens to The Morning Toast podcast on her way to work - and of course, she follows them on Instagram, has a sticker on her laptop, and a pop socket for the back of her phone. Personally, I had never heard of this podcast, but when she talks about Claudia Oshry, I swear it's like she is talking about a friend.

"oh she is just so funny and always has me laughing"

Little did I know, she is not my sisters' friend. My sister only wishes she was her friend - but when I heard that, I wasn't shocked because we like that feeling. These people are our friends, they may not

know that, but we sure do! Let's use this photo sharing app for intentional content so we can learn to love each other for who you are and not what you're selling - which is basically ourselves.

As we talk about keeping Instagram casual, let's talk about the infamous Instagram story - **I dig 'em**. It's the sophisticated version of Snapchat stories. I can post a Bible verse or 20 pictures of my friend for her birthday or promote something that I know won't get shown on my feed - thanks to Instagram for not posting chronologically anymore... NOT.

QUICK TANGENT: Apparently, they changed the order because they wanted to give people the ability to see the followers they interacted with the most. But do you wanna know why we interact with them the most? They are the only thing we see on my feed!

Back to what I was saying, we are using Instagram stories to connect with our following better so we can seem more relatable and it's most likely guaranteed to be seen. Strategically, it's genius. Like the article says:

1. You can grow your community
2. Promote exclusivity
3. Add a personalized approach to engagement

Looking at these three things, it all comes back to being real and honest with your followers... **by being casual**. You have the option to let people get to know you on your own time and in real time - why not show them behind the scenes of something you're working on? And if you have a blog and your life seems like it's always put together, show yourself in sweatpants with no makeup on with a pile of unfolded clothes in the background. I guess I am just preaching one thing at this point - be real and use Instagram wisely. It's a photo sharing app for a reason - it's meant to be fun, so don't go about it trying to make yourself someone that you aren't.

Be casual, give yourself the freedom to post a selfie of yourself unedited, with no purpose or hidden agenda. We promise we will still love you, even if you haven't jumped on the Fab Fit Tea Train.