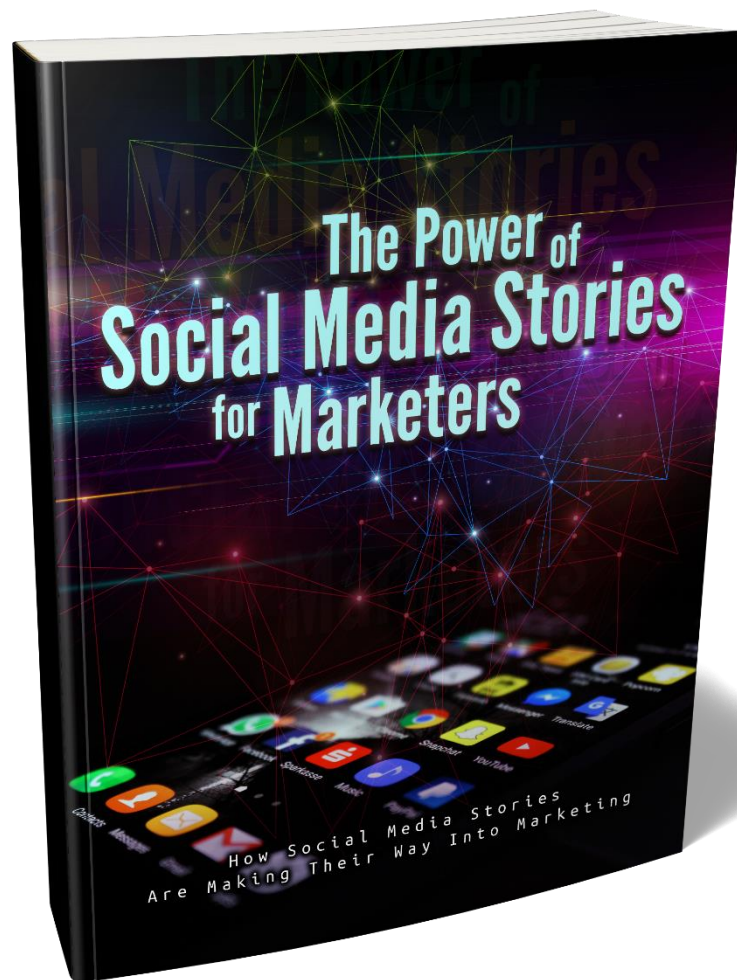


The background of the image features a smartphone in the lower-left corner, displaying a Facebook interface with a photo of three people. Behind the phone is a laptop keyboard, with keys like 'esc', '@ 2', '# 3', 'W', 'E', 'S', 'Z', 'command', 'option', 'control', 'fn', 'shift', 'lock', and 'X' visible. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent white rectangle containing text.

TAKE YOUR
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The Power Of Social Media Stories For Marketers Full Training



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Social Media Stories are those short-term photos and videos that you can share to your channel for 24 hours before disappearing. It was Snapchat that originally popularized the concept, but since then it has taken off and is now a common feature on the vast majority of social media sites.

That includes Facebook and Instagram, but also sites like YouTube and even Skype!

This surge in popularity is due to the simple and excellent concept that is behind Social Media Stories to begin with. Firstly, they allow creators to generate content that perhaps isn't so carefully created as it won't end up on their account. Secondly, it allows for a more immediate and urgent form of communication, that encourages more interaction with viewers. This taps into that feeling many of us know called FOMO: Fear Of Missing Out!

It's why people are generally *very* quick to respond to social media Stories.

But while Stories are often quick and off-the-cuff, they also have the potential to be polished and high quality. Depending on the nature of your brand, this can be an important way to reflect on your business, and to stand out from the crowd.

Read on to learn some of the most powerful methods you can use to get more from your Stories. We will split this report into two sections: image and video. That said, it's worth reading both as a lot of the same concepts will cross over!

IMAGES



Types of Photos

The first thing to do is to note the types of photos you want for your account. If you have a B2B company, then your imagery will be completely different to the imagery you'll use around a travel blog.

A business for instance might show the team working hard on a new project, or might post about a new product release. A travel vlogger on the other hand might film themselves talking about a long flight, or might upload a panorama of a stunning hotel room.

The general idea of Stories is usually to provide some form of privileged access to the most hardcore fans, and to let them feel as though you are speaking directly to them. For a vlogger this is easy, but for a big business it can be a challenge to tow that line between professionalism and feeling 'raw' and authentic.

Making it Look Professional

The first way to ensure that your images look professional is to use a *good* camera. This is very important and can be the difference between images that look amateurish and images that have the professional sheen. If you intend on taking all your Story photos from a phone – which is an option – then make sure it is one with a good camera. The best options right now are the Google Pixel phones or Apple iPhones.

Using a high quality camera doesn't necessarily detract from the 'behind the scenes' feel of a Story. A shot of your office after-hours is still a shot of the office after hours, but by using a high quality camera you show your business in a slightly better light.

Likewise, while you might have a messy desk in real-life, this is something else you might want to tone down. Not only will the image look better if the background is less cluttered, but it will also present your business as a more organized one. You want to show people a little behind the curtain but *still* ensure that your image is carefully orchestrated.

You also need to think a little bit about the composition of your photos. Don't just point and click, but instead arrange the various elements in a way that gives your photo depth. For instance, using a path leading into the distance can draw the eye from the centre to a focal point, while at the same time giving your image a greater 3D feeling. Likewise choosing images that are in both the foreground and background can give your picture more layers.

Framing is another useful strategy which means taking a photo so that there's an element such as a tree along one side of the photo, while you should also look at the different ways to play with expectations: the subject doesn't have to go right in the middle of the shot, why not have them slightly to one side? Making pictures interesting and showing that you gave at least a little thought to them can make a huge difference to the way that they come across.

Consider lighting too. Don't just shoot a person with a strong light source behind them, as they'll look dark and the exposure will be all wrong. The best angle for lighting is for it to hit the subject at a 90 degree angle. Take that extra moment, and your shot will look all the better for it.

How to Photograph Products

This becomes extremely important if you want to promote a product. This is one scenario where you want to ensure your brand looks professional, and that the subject of the photo has a sheen and an appeal.

To photograph a product, there are a few different things to keep in mind. Some of these are things we've already considered. For example: it's important to consider lighting. Here, investing in at least a small light box can make a huge difference by creating some dramatic shadows.

Thinking about backdrop is also important. And one of the most popular options when it comes to backdrops for products is plain white. A MacGyver way to achieve that is simply to take a white bed sheet and then to pull it taut over a table or similar. Now you can stand your product in the middle and shine your light just how you want it.

ALWAYS make sure that the product is crystal clean. Find a microfiber cloth and take the time to wipe it down. Otherwise a few fingerprints or a little bit of dust or lint can make it seem significantly less impressive.

Another option is to zoom right in on specific aspects of your product. If you choose a camera wide a wide aperture then you can set the focus to the extreme foreground. This will blur out everything in the background, which is ideal if you want to show off – say – the keyboard on a shiny new computer. Then there is always the argument for showing products *in use* and the way that they help make their owners' lives better.

Photo Editing With Photoshop

And of course, don't forget editing! If you really want to take your Stories to the next level, then doing a little editing before uploading them can make a world of difference.

Learning to use Photoshop is a very worthwhile skill to develop and one that can be useful in a large number of situations. Of course if you're at all interested in web design, graphic design, photography, art or even app development; being able to create your own backgrounds and images will be a great help and could even enhance your career! And actually, being able to list Photoshop skills on a CV can help with a great many different jobs.

But of course what we're interested in right now, is using Photoshop for Stories.

So how do you go about starting to learn?

Come Up With a Small Project

A very good piece of advice when trying to learn any new skill is to give yourself a small project to work towards. In other words, rather than just blindly trying to acquire as much information about Photoshop as you can – start with a particular image in mind that you want to edit and then look up the skills necessary to do that as you go.

What this does, is give you a foundation and a direction that allows you to ground what you're learning in some kind of context. It means you learn *why* certain skills are useful and *how* to use them – rather than just learning in a more abstract manner. It also makes the learning process much more rewarding!

Remember, when you plan on editing photos in Photoshop or another piece of editing software, you should always shoot in RAW with a flat color profile. This removes the 'post processing' that most cameras apply by default, which in turn gives you more raw information to play with. Ultimately, it makes it easier for you to bring your vision for that photo to life and gives you more options for ways to do that.

Take to YouTube

If you're looking for information on how to use Photoshop, then you'll find no shortage of tutorials that talk you through it. This [link](#) is a whole YouTube channel dedicated to using Photoshop and which includes tutorials on how to remove spots and blemishes, add facial hair, change hair colors and much more!

Just make sure that you look for up-to-date videos that talk about using the same version of Photoshop that you're using!

Think about the types of photos you'll be taking for your Stories and the skills you need. If you're only going to be taking photos of products, then you probably don't need to spend a whole deal of time learning about removing pimples. Take a look at your competitors and ask what things they're doing that you would like to learn!

Watch Speed Art

Another tip is to watch 'speed art' on Photoshop (which can also be found on YouTube). These are quick videos where someone puts together an impressive image while showing off a wide range of different Photoshop skills. By watching the techniques they use you can quickly learn how to employ similar strategies in your own art.

Take [this video](#) for instance. This shows someone creating a piece of artwork called 'The Lost Aquarium' by lifting images from a variety of sources, editing them and combining them in unique ways.

Experiment

Finally, though, the most important part of the process is just to play and experiment with ideas yourself! Find some time to put the skills you've learned to use and to apply a little trial and error to your images. This is how you'll really learn what works and what doesn't – as well as how you'll discover your own style and the types of techniques you're going to use most often. No two people will approach Photoshop in the same way so there are some things you *can't* learn from a book or a course. The only way to really get the skills you need is to get stuck in. And this also happens to be the most *fun* way to learn!

While Photoshop will give you the most advanced photo editing skills, there are many more apps and options you can use to create better images for your Stories. We'll share those in a moment.

VIDEO

2

While many creators will get by using only photos for their stories, knowing how to create great video content is an important trick to have up your sleeve. Video is more instantly captivating, it allows you to get more information across more quickly, and it is ideal for showing some personality.

The problem is that many business owners completely freeze at the prospect of making video. The following tips should help.

HD

First of all it's absolutely crucial that your video be crisp and high definition. You're trying to make your business look high tech and professional here, and if it looks like you used a camera that came from a Christmas cracker then you really won't send that message. At the same time, the clearer your footage, the clearer your message will be.

This is less of a problem these days as even the most affordable phone comes with a somewhat decent camera. But still, if this is going to become a large part of your business, then it's worth investing in something really good. Think about the quality of the rear shooting camera AND the selfie camera. And shoot in portrait... of course!

Sound

Spend as much time worrying about your sound as you do about your image quality. Again this needs to be crisp, clear and loud, and that means that you need to make sure that you have a good quality camera and that you're close enough to the mic. If you sound like you're underwater then people will turn off.

Music

The right music can really enhance your video and create the mood you're trying to sell. At the same time though this needs to be music that you own the rights to and that you are allowed to use, and it needs to be edited in such a way that it fits the length of your video.

This is a great way to set yourself apart from the crowd, seeing as a lot of Stories *don't* use any backing music for exactly those reasons. Music instantly helps set the mood, and again helps you to stand out.

People

If your video features people talking or being filmed then these people need to look the part – ideally choose the members of staff that come across well on camera.

Again, you walk a fine line here between showing an authentic vibe at your business and a polished and staged version of your reality. But just giving your staff (or yourself) a few pointers can make a huge difference. Try to speak more slowly.

Surroundings

You also need to choose surroundings for your video that look professional and that don't distract from the message. Choose a spot in your office that looks clean and tidy, and find a way to

Video Editing

Just as photo editing can make all the difference to your photos, the same is true of your video editing. This is an easy way to improve your presentation skills too – cut out the dead air (any silence between takes) and the videos will become instantly more snappy, engaging, and professional.

TOP APPS FOR BETTER STORIES

3

Download Gimp

There is one small problem when trying to learn Photoshop; it's expensive! Fortunately, there are ways you can get around this by using free alternatives. One example of a free alternative is Gimp (GNU Image Manipulation Program) which comes with almost all the same features. You can get it [here](#).

Try Lumafusion

If you're on iPad or iOS, then you can actually edit your videos live from your mobile device. While several apps on both Android AND iOS claim this, only one can really pull it off at the moment: That's Lumafusion. It's used by a number of big Instagram and YouTube stars, and it is intuitive while still being powerful. It's not free, but compared with Adobe Premiere it's extremely affordable.

Lapse It

One of the most interesting types of video you can upload to a Story is a timelapse. This is a stop-motion video made up of hundreds or thousands of stills taken over a long duration. You might use this to show time-passing outside your office for instance, or to show a whole workout in 1 minute.

Pixlr

Pixlr not only adds a whole bunch of Instagram-filters you can use on other platforms, but it also provides the option to create interesting and more ambitious collages from your photos.

Adobe Spark

Adobe Spark is an app that lets you create animated graphics and text. It gives you a bunch of templates and it can truly elevate your Stories to the next level. You'll get loads of people contacting you just to ask "how you did it!"

Unfold

Another app that can completely elevate your account is Unfold. This lets you create stunning portrait collages and "stackable" Stories that animate in clever ways. It's ideal for showcasing products, and it's certainly worth looking into for a whole host of creators.

Glitch Studio

Glitch effects and Vaporware are all the rage right now. If you want to give a photo that 80s aesthetic, then this is a very easy way to do so and it comes with some neat effects. iOS only, though you'll find plenty of alternatives.

ADVANCED STRATEGIES



4

Did you know there are a bunch of advance features you can use to get more out of your Stories? These not only help your Story to look all the more professional, but also create a bunch of new marketing opportunities. Here are some of the best.

Tap Here

For example, you can easily share photos from your Instagram feed to your Stories by heading to the Share button and choosing “Add to My Story.”

One of the most useful reasons to do this is so that you can then use the “Tap Here” sticker. There are a bunch of them, but if you pick the one that you like the looks of most they’ll all do the same job. This will then take the viewer to your post.

So if you have written a post that shares some insider knowledge, you can then invite your followers to tap on the Story and get taken straight there to read. Of course, if this also happens to be a post that converts followers into buyers... even better!

Other Media

Another option is to move away from still photos and videos altogether. A picture can be anything, for example: why not use a mind map? **Mindly** is an excellent app for iOS that lets you create beautiful Mind Maps completely for free.

Use Stock Imagery

Don’t have the camera skills yourself? Then why not find stock photography you can use? There are plenty of free sites, but if you’re going to be doing this often, then paying for a good source such as **Envato Elements** is a great choice.

So hopefully this report has helped you to up your Social Media Story game. You should be putting out better thought-out and more beautiful Stories than ever before.

But what’s more important than that, is the way that you use those Stories and integrate them into a grander marketing plan. Read the full eBook to learn everything you need to know!