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How to Drive Social ROI

Through Visual Storytelling

REAL
TIME
WORKFLOW



Photo by MATT DIRKSEN

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Introduction

Today, brands are sharing more visual content than ever before. And the reason why is simple: Photos and videos are the best ways to engage your followers and introduce new prospects to what you have to offer.

In fact, in the 2018 Report: [Engaging Your Audience with Visual Content](#), 70% of marketers revealed that their digital marketing results are better when they share visuals versus when they don't.

This shouldn't be a surprise. We live in a visual world where audiences seek relevant content at every turn, and brands are expected to meet these demands.

In that same survey, we also discovered that over 60% of marketers believe the ability to share visual assets with their audiences quickly is critical. And what's one of the best ways to engage your audience quickly? Social media.

Whether you're interacting with followers on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, high quality, creative visuals are key to maximizing engagement. But as a marketer, how do you come up with innovative, eye-catching visuals for social media? And how do you measure if your efforts are even working?

To help you out, Bitly and Libris have partnered on [How to Drive Social ROI Through Visual Storytelling](#). Use this guide to get inspiration from companies thinking outside the box with visual storytelling on social media. Plus, get tips for measuring results and tracking all your hard work.



Photo by SARAH MATHESON

3 Brands Getting Results with Visual Storytelling on Social Media

Whether you work for a sports team, a non profit or for a fast-casual restaurant, brands across the board are coming up with creative and interesting ways to engage their followers with visual content on social media.

In this section, we'll highlight a number brands who have mastered visual storytelling on social media and are getting real results — including Applegate Natural & Organic Meat, the Colorado Rockies and the Women's March Chicago.



Photo by GUY AMBROSINO

How to Use Visuals to Power Social Media and Sales

If your brand is seeking inspiration on how to use social media to drive sales and directly impact your bottom line, look no further than [Applegate Natural & Organic Meats](#).

For this company, success comes down to sharing the right photo. The brand's social media channels are a classic example of show don't tell.

"Our food photography is how we really promote our products on our social media platforms," says Holly Sellner, graphic designer for Applegate. "That's how we get people to get excited about our product and go out and buy it."

Here are 4 ways to use visuals to sell better on social media.

1. Source Gorgeous Food Photography

“Our food photography is how we really promote our products on our social media platforms,” says Holly Sellner, graphic designer for Applegate. “That’s how we get people to get excited about our product and go out and buy it.”

Holly and the team at Applegate work with a husband and wife freelance team to source high quality photos that fit perfectly with the brand’s messaging. She develops recipes using Applegate products, and he photographs them. Together, they generate high quality visual content that shows the best of what the brand has to offer.

“The photo is important because we really want the viewer to see all the ingredients really clearly in the photo,” says Holly. “People will see the recipe and say, ‘oh that looks delicious,’ and they’ll go out and buy our products.”



Photo by Guy Ambrosino

2. Distribute Photos Across Your Team

Images fuel Applegate's digital communications, social media (including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube and Pinterest), website sliders, ads and point of sale materials (ranging from in-store digital signage to deli tags).

With such high demand for visual content internally, the team struggled with different servers, different departments and different file formats. "The reason we got Libris is we have a ton of photography and it was a huge mess," says Holly.

Now, Holly and her team have [one centralized place for all of their visual assets](#). Photos are organized in collections and galleries for easy browsing, and tagged with metadata for quick search. "Everybody in our company can go on and view everything and search for things really quickly," says Holly.

3. Track Metrics to Know What's Working

The most successful brands on social have a secret — they are constantly using performance data to understand what is working for them, and what isn't. In order to build an impactful visual strategy on social, it's important to test your content, and track your numbers. Armed with that information, you'll gain an understanding of what's getting you the most bang for your buck on social.

One way to do this is to use [Bitly](#) links for any URLs you share alongside your photos, whether you're promoting a blog post, a product page, or an event. You'll be able to see in real time which pieces of content are driving the most engagement. You can even run easy A/B tests by posting different versions of your posts or social ads, with a unique Bitlink for each version. Once you find a visual post that seems to click with your audience, you'll be able to iterate in future posts.

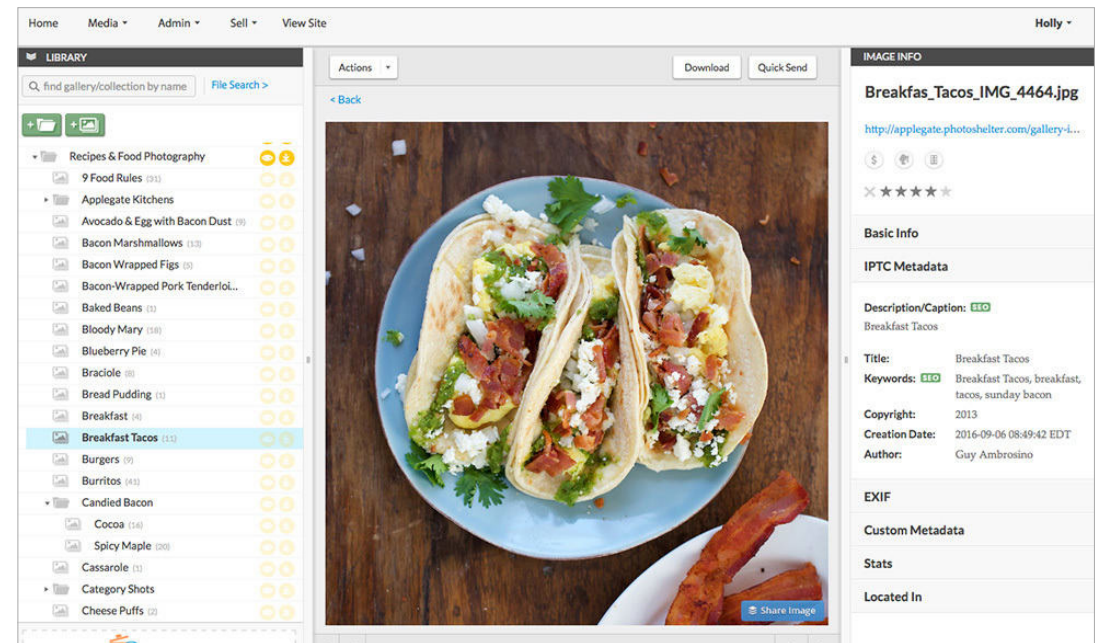
4. Save Time With an Efficient Photo Workflow

Before getting organized with a visual media library, Holly would constantly get emails from people asking for a specific photo. In response, she'd have to stop what she was doing and dig through the server. "Our servers are so slow, so just sitting there waiting for the image preview to come up was like torture, and it wouldn't even be the image I was looking for."

Not only has this new self-service photo delivery workflow saved Holly time, it's had an impact on every team member that uses photos.

Applegate's Libris library has 20 invited users – 20 people who can regularly log in and find what they need on their own, without having to ask Holly for help. They have easy access to the files Holly has given them permission to see and download, and they can resize and convert high resolution files to JPGs on the fly.

Whether they need a photo from Applegate's Reel Food Cafe at the Sundance Film Festival or a shot the Cleaner Wiener Fest in Austin, stakeholders can always find what they need in seconds.



Inside Applegate's Libris account

The Impact on Engagement

If you look at Applegate's [mission statement](#), you can see how this story fits into the bigger picture.

"At Applegate, our mission is to Change the Meat We Eat. By that we mean making good meat – the kind that's raised humanely without antibiotics and hormones – accessible to as many people as possible."

The brand's photos and their accompanying recipes are compelling and shareable. They catch people's attention and motivate them to share. As a result, more people learn about Applegate's natural and organic products, go out and buy them, and spread the word to their friends. Streamlining processes behind the scenes has a powerful domino effect. The more time the Applegate team saves with each project, the more content they can create and share, and the more potential customers they can engage, helping the brand fulfill its mission.

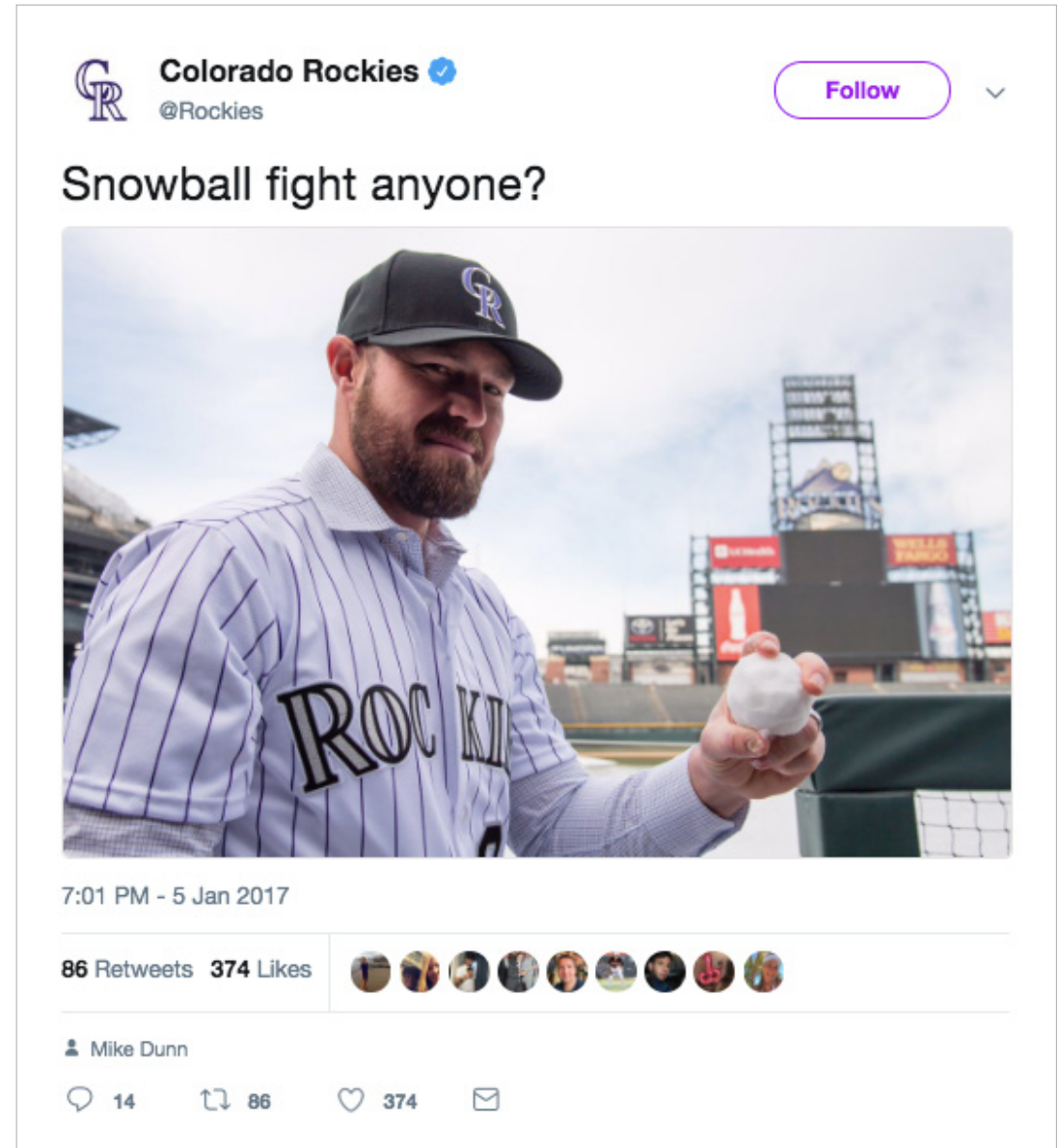


Photo by Guy Ambrosino

4 Ways to Create a Twitter Sensation Using Photos

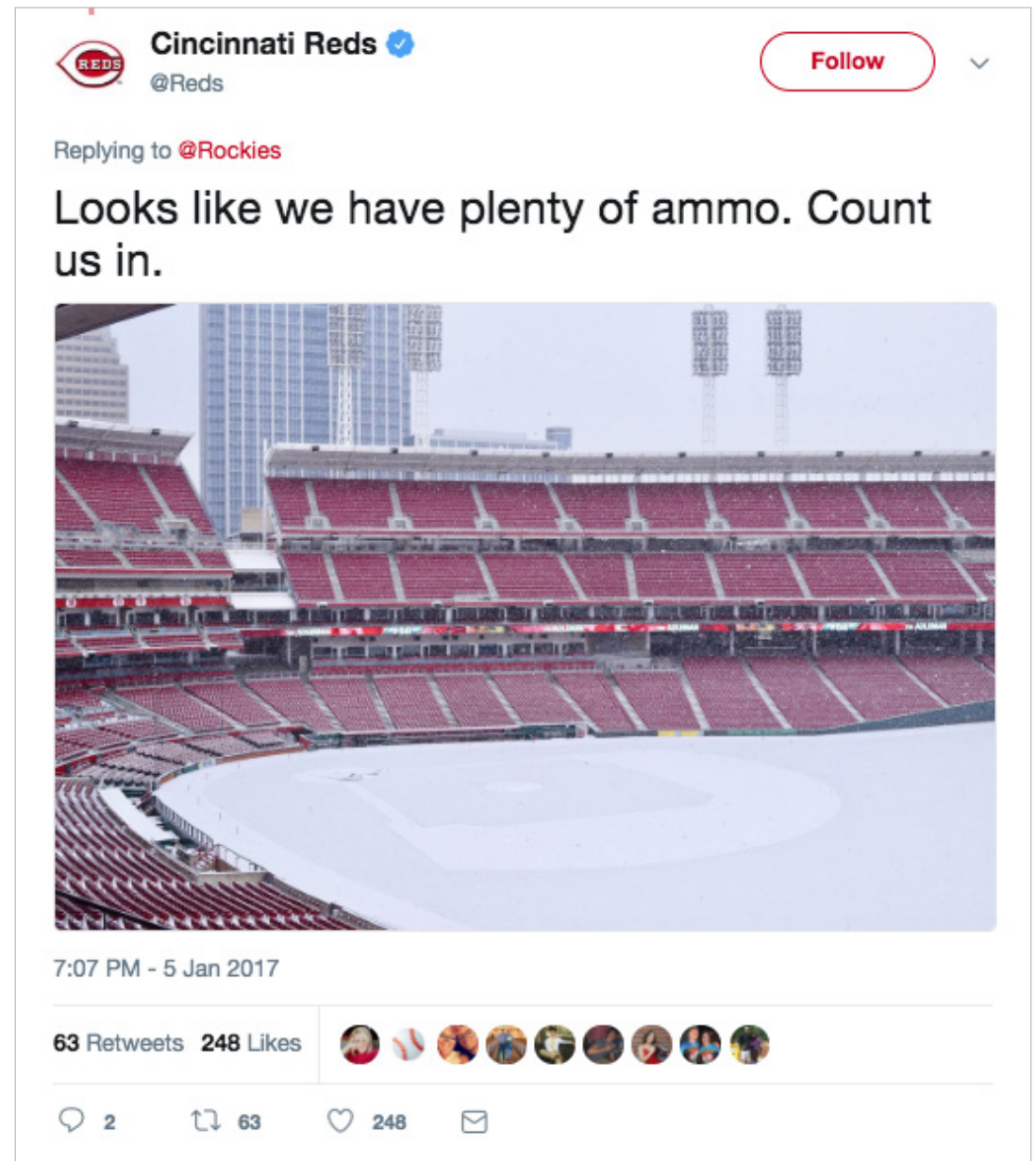
During a snowstorm, a “crazy idea” from the Colorado Rockies created a sensation on Twitter for baseball fans across the country.

It all started with a photo. Julian Valentin, Assistant Director of Digital Media and Publication for the Rockies, had an image sitting in his drafts of pitcher Mike Dunn holding a snowball with the caption, “Snowball fight anyone?”



“Initially it was going to be sort of a rhetorical question for our fans,” says Julian. But when he noticed the snow was also coming down in Cincinnati, he asked his counterparts at the Reds if they’d be interested in making things a little more interesting. The Reds accepted the challenge of a Twitter snowball fight right off the bat.

“Any time you can interact with another club on Twitter, the fans love it and it gets a lot of media attention,” says Reds Digital Content Coordinator Chad Fischer.



What made this snowball fight a winner, and how can you create your own Twitter sensation to delight your followers? Let's break down the keys to its success.

1. Great Timing

As a social media manager, it's important to spot opportunities that grab your fans' attention.

"Being able to identify those opportunities and being able to jump on it quickly I think is really important." says Julian.

Julian adds that you shouldn't always try to jump in on a trending conversation – don't force it. Instead, pick and choose the opportunities that are a fit for your brand. In this case, the moment was perfect for both teams — the Rockies and the Reds.

"We both had snow that day and it really worked well in both markets because of the circumstances," says Julian. "It was all about having a unique and fun opportunity to connect with our fans with something they can relate to."

2. Know Your Brand Voice

If your brand's voice on social media isn't fun and playful, a Twitter snowball fight probably isn't the right fit. But for the Rockies, it was the perfect way to reach their fans.

"We have a very fun voice on Twitter," says Julian. "We're very fan-friendly, we love to have a great time at the ballpark and showcase our players in a positive light."

It's important to make sure that any project you take on fits seamlessly with your brand's personality. "You just have to have the right voice, knowing and understanding who you are and how you communicate with your fans," says Julian.

3. Ensure Easy Access to Visual Content

If you want to catch your fans' attention on social media, you have to use visual content. "On social media, Twitter especially, we never put out something without some kind of visual content attached to it," says Julian.

Because the [Rockies](#) and the [Reds](#) both use Libris by PhotoShelter to make all of their photos available in the cloud, team members always have access to the images they need, wherever they are.

"Just being able to access our photography on our phone or if we're traveling and things like that – it's just nice to always be able to have access to the photo visuals that we need and that we want for telling the story of our club, however that may be," says Julian.

Whether you're using photos, videos, gifs or a mix of all of the above, visuals are the best way to engage your followers. If you can easily find the content you need, you can use it to stand out when something newsworthy (like a snowstorm) happens.

4. Find a Great Partner

For a back and forth exchange like this to work, you have to have the right "dance partner," as Julian calls it. The Reds have a Twitter feed that's packed with visual content and humor, and a social media manager who was excited to play along. Pair all of that with the snow and you've got the perfect partner.

"It's a good way to get noticed by your fans but also by other team's fans, as well," says Chad. "It's fun to have that interaction with other teams' fans and to make fun of each other in a lighthearted way."

Plus, remember Julian's tip: once you find the right partner, don't overscript it! Improvise and let your creativity flow.

Check out the full Twitter snowball fight [here](#) to get inspired newsworthy (like a snowstorm) happens.

How Real-Time Visual Storytelling Helped This Brand Go Viral

As 300,000 people packed into eight city blocks for the 2018 Women's March on Chicago, Sarah Matheson and her team of more than 50 visual storytellers were there to capture the moment from every angle.

With the team's real-time photography workflow, the march went viral on Twitter. Here's how they did it.



Photo by Sarah Matheson

Develop a Storytelling Strategy

Sarah and her visual storytelling team had two major objectives:

- To share the story of the 2018 Women’s March on Chicago on social media in real time and engage marchers as well as people following along around the world
- To capture this historically significant event and create a digital archive for perpetuity

“It’s not only about using those images on the day – for whether it’s social or going out to press or whatever – it’s about the importance of the history,” says Sarah. “We are supposed to be learning from history and not repeating it.”

As the visual storytelling lead for Women’s March Chicago, Sarah not only led her team to social media success, but also captured and preserved an important moment in history.

Prioritize Getting Images to Your Social

Media & PR Team

On march day, once the images landed in their visual media library Libris, the social media team could access them and post them to social media, just minutes after they were captured. This allowed them to share a steady stream of images throughout the day.

Thanks to this lightning-fast workflow, the Women’s March Chicago team posted 1,500 photos on social media in just five hours. By early afternoon, their corresponding hashtag #WomensMarchChi was the top-trending march hashtag on Twitter, getting more engagement than dozens marches all over the country.

The Women’s March Chicago public relations team also had access to the images, so they were able to share press galleries with media partners throughout the day. And that fast, widespread distribution is the key to maximizing impact.

Post-March Impact

Since the march, Sarah and her team have shifted the focus to their second goal of building an archive for perpetuity. They want the images to be widely accessible so they can continue to have an impact for years to come.

“One of the most important parts of being organized is the ability to optimize the visual asset. A photo can be absolutely fantastic, but not if it’s sitting on a hard drive in the corner,’ says Sarah.

Sarah says she hopes these images will land everywhere from billboards to school libraries, and continue to have an incredible ripple effect well beyond 2018.

“Photos are a mark in time,’ says Sarah. “And if we take a moment to actually look into the image, there’s an enormous amount we can learn about ourselves, but also about our society and what needs to change and what needs to move forward.’

To go behind the scenes with Sarah and the social media team, check out [Behind the Scenes with the Storytellers](#).



Photo by Sarah Matheson



Photo by Sarah Matheson

The Secret to Great Instagram Content

Forrester claims that Instagram is the “King of Engagement.” With nearly a 400% higher engagement rate than any other social network, the photo-sharing service has a lot of potential for brands to build communities and relationships among mobile audiences.

“Since 98% of Instagram users are on mobile devices, the platform also allows brands the opportunity to experiment with new kinds of mobile-first content.”

Posting

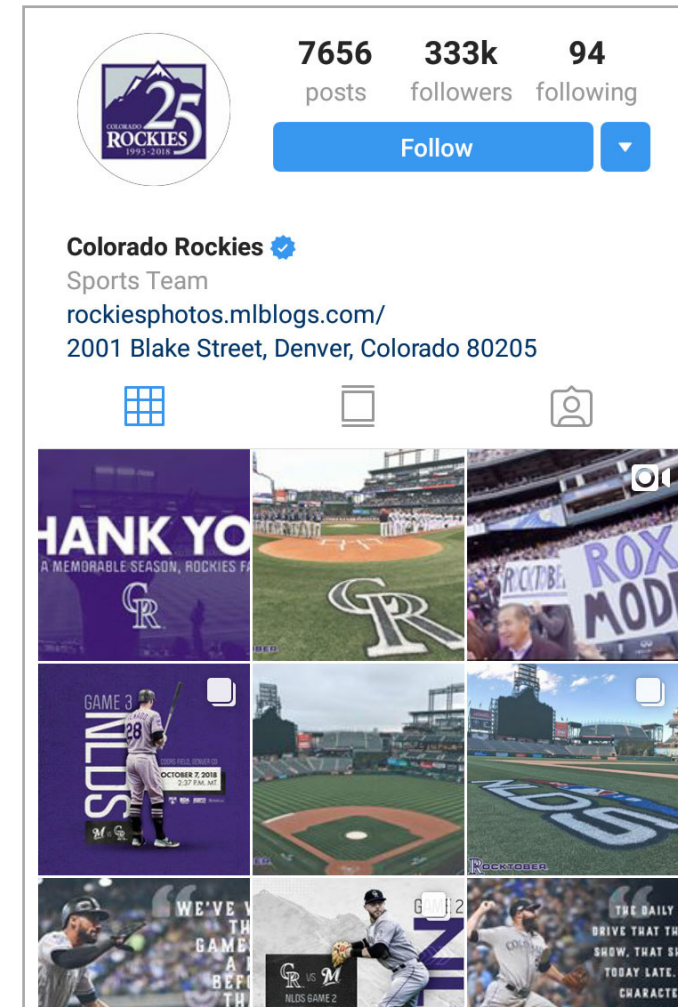
Many brands will post 2-3 photos a day. Photos should be story-driven, compelling visuals. You can also ask for photo submissions from followers or show life behind-the-scenes at the business. Don't forget that Instagram Stories allows for 15-second videos, too.

Offering Deals & Giveaways

A lot of deals and giveaways on Instagram are community-driven. Offer prizes to customers who take the best pictures of themselves with the product. You can also ask followers to tag friends in posts or take selfies in order to enter contests and giveaways.

Working With Influencers

Influencer marketing on Instagram can be highly effective. By working with someone who already has an established audience on Instagram, brands can tap into new audiences and build followings. The most common tactic is to allow influencers to "take over" a brand's Instagram account for a few days, so that the influencer's followers will start looking at the account. Influencers often test or promote a brand's product in each photo.



Hashtagging

The best way to start building an audience is to use common hashtags. Not just one or two, either. You can opt for anywhere from 5-11 hashtags per post to start growing awareness. By hashtagging industry terms and common words, you can boost engagement and followers immediately.

Keeping Your Profile Link Fresh

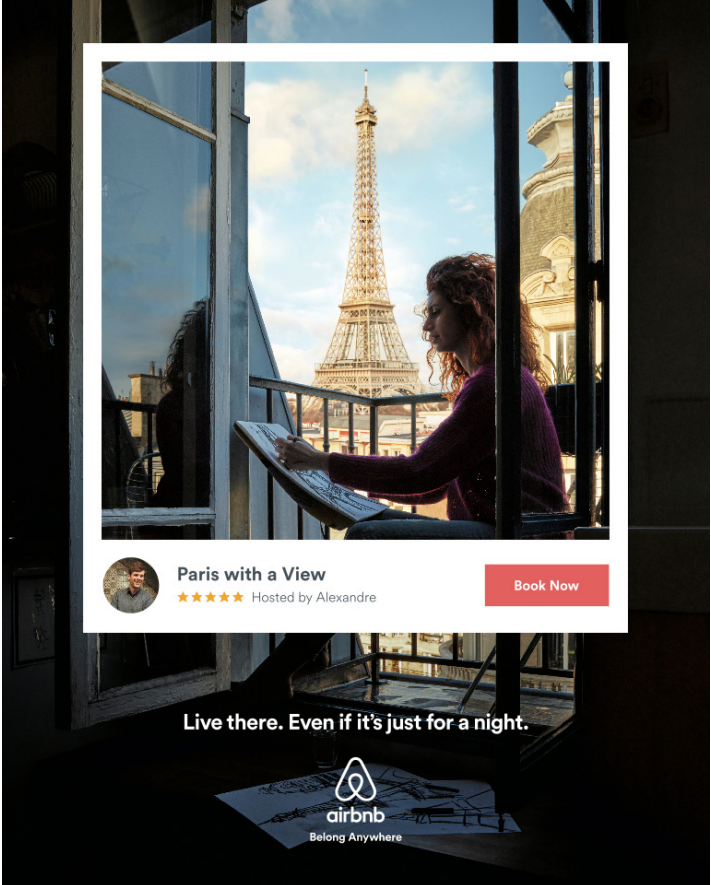
The link in your bio is the best way to drive traffic from Instagram. Use a Bitly link for any piece of content in your bio and you'll be able to track exactly how many unique clicks your Instagram page has driven to your content. To add polish and improve engagement, many major brands use a customized [branded domain](#) for all their Bitly links, like [E! News](#) and [CB2](#).

For savvy social media managers who are constantly rotating their profile link, upgrading to Bitly Enterprise allows you to [redirect your link to a new URL](#) without actually changing the link in your profile, making it easy to update and track new campaigns on the fly.

Interacting

The most successful businesses don't just respond to comments, they favorite and comment on other posts as well. By favoriting posts related to your industry or brand, you can actually create outbound awareness.





Case Study: AIRBNB

The best campaign ideas work everywhere - regardless of the channel you are working with. But just coming up with a snappy tagline alone won't cut it. [Airbnb](#) is a good example of that in a social marketing effort.

Their campaign tagline 'Don't just go there, live there' was a strong call to action. But Airbnb didn't stop there. They brought it to life on their Instagram channel by posting user-generated photos from both hosts and guests. This campaign allowed users a genuine way to truly engage and earned Airbnb thousands of likes per post.

It's a powerful example of how important of it is for brands be true to who they are and follow through on promises, especially on social. The takeaway? Make sure your campaign your campaign concepts reflect your brand and then keep that promise in all of your marketing.

Tips to Measure Social Media ROI

Social media can impact your organization - that's no longer a question. It's where your customers are. It's where they expect direct access to you and a way for you to share your brand with the world.

But without tangible metrics, it can be difficult to convince your leadership team that social media really works and is worth the time and resources.



Tracking ROI From Social Media is Still a Problem for Brands

Measuring social media performance doesn't have to be difficult. As a baseline, you have to know the right metrics to monitor and have the right tools in place.

Tracking social ROI will help you decide a few things, including whether to:

- Step up your investment and dedicate more resources
- Scale back your social effort
- Diversify your approach to find new channels that might work
- Continue exactly as you are

Let's take a look at why and how you should go about this — all to help your team make smarter business decisions.

For your business to succeed, you need to use tactics that will get results.

The fact is, many brands use social media simply because everyone else is.

They invest time and energy to post content that just sits there. Or maybe those posts drive serious traffic and lead to sales – but they either don't know or can't prove it.

The point is, you shouldn't use social media marketing "just because." If you're going to put money into this strategy, you have to know if it's worth it.

Begin with Clear Goals

As a first step, you should answer: What do you actually hope to achieve with social media? There are so many marketing opportunities on these platforms that it's tempting to try everything.

But to begin, it's best to clearly define your most important objectives. What are you going to judge your performance on?

For example, your goals might be to:

- Increase brand exposure
- Send traffic to your website
- Generate marketing leads
- Sell your product

Now try to make these more specific. How much site traffic would you like to gain? And by when? Give yourself a target and a timeframe, then commit to assessing your performance when the time comes. Of course to do this, you need to start collecting results.

Tracking Metrics

In order to really measure ROI, you need data and proof. Best-selling author and digital marketing consultant Jay Baer says the best way to approach this is not to think of social media ROI as some catch-all. Instead, "define and measure specific customer behaviors" that have value to your brand.

For example, offer discount codes and special offers through social media. When customers redeem these, you have direct evidence that they came to you from social media. You can even use different codes for different platforms to figure out which is best for your brand.

This is great for small, one-off campaigns. If you want long-term metrics, here are a few good examples:

Clicks to Your Website (By Source)

If you want to drive traffic with social media, you need to know whether or not you're succeeding. Track all clicks to your website to see what portion of them comes from each social media platform. Make sure you monitor [first click attribution](#) for all web traffic, so you can see what drove them to your site.

Email Opt-Ins (By Source)

If you're generating leads, you're generally asking people for an email address (at least). This could mean they downloaded an ebook, signed up for a webinar, or joined your weekly newsletter.

Prove that these users come from social media, then compare the number generated with your other channels. This will help to prove (or disprove) the value of social marketing overall. Of course, if you can prove that these conversions turn into sales, you've done one better.



Total Sales (By Source)

Social content that leads directly to sales is obviously wonderful. To track this, you need good tools that will tell you the first interaction each buyer has with your brand.

For this, there are two key metrics:

- **First click attribution: Track the user from the sale right back to that first click.**
- **Most recent conversion: It's possible that the user visited your site, left, and then was compelled to buy thanks to social content.**

Tracking sales by source lets you work backwards to determine your social media ROI. If you did \$10,000 in sales thanks to social for example, you can compare this against what you spent. This is about the clearest calculation of return on investment you can get: revenue versus spend.

Share of Voice

If you're in a competitive market, this is a great way to visualize your digital market share. In other words, which brands are talked about most.

You want to know whether people talk about you as much as your competitors. This shows you how strong your brand is compared with the rest of the market, and whether you're moving in the right direction.

Good social listening tools make this easy. They'll show you share of voice on each social network, as well as the rest of the web. If you're running a new Facebook campaign, and this leads to an increase in share of voice overall, you'll know that Facebook is a valuable channel. If you push hard on social media for a month and you see no change, maybe social just isn't returning value.

Use the Right Tools

There are a wide range of tools designed to help you measure marketing ROI. Many of these cover social media, so it's worth checking to see whether your current tools do the job. If not, here are a few suggestions to get you started.

Google Analytics

[Google Analytics](#) is the industry standard for tracking website traffic. Virtually every company uses it in some capacity.

If you've set clear goals (as discussed earlier), Google Analytics becomes very useful. It lets you [create specific conversion points](#) on your site (i.e. a user signed up for your newsletter, requested a demo, or made a purchase), then track those by source. So you'll know whether more conversions come from social media, search engines, or other sources.

If your goal is to increase newsletter subscribers through social media for example, you've now got a clear way to monitor this. And since you'll use Google Analytics to monitor your web traffic anyway, it just makes sense to include social metrics where possible.

Perhaps the only downside is that it can be a little complicated to work with. But there are endless tutorials to assist you. If you need help with Google Analytics, just Google it! You can also save time by using [Google Analytics with Bitly](#).

Bitly

One simple way to measure ROI is to zero in on individual campaigns. Rather than trying to monitor its day-to-day value, see how social media helps you boost your latest product or promotion.

If you can show that social media brought in 30% of the signups for your latest giveaway, you'll have a clear understanding of its value. Bitly can help you do just this.

[Bitly OneView](#), a feature of Bitly Enterprise, gives you a holistic view of how your content is performing across each channel, platform, or device. Just use a Bitlink in each of your social posts and you'll be able to track incoming traffic in real-time back in your Bitly dashboard. You can even compare organic content to paid efforts to see how social is affecting your bottom line.

Cut Out The Guesswork

If you don't know your social media ROI, you're not alone. But it's time to turn over a new leaf and start making smarter business decisions.

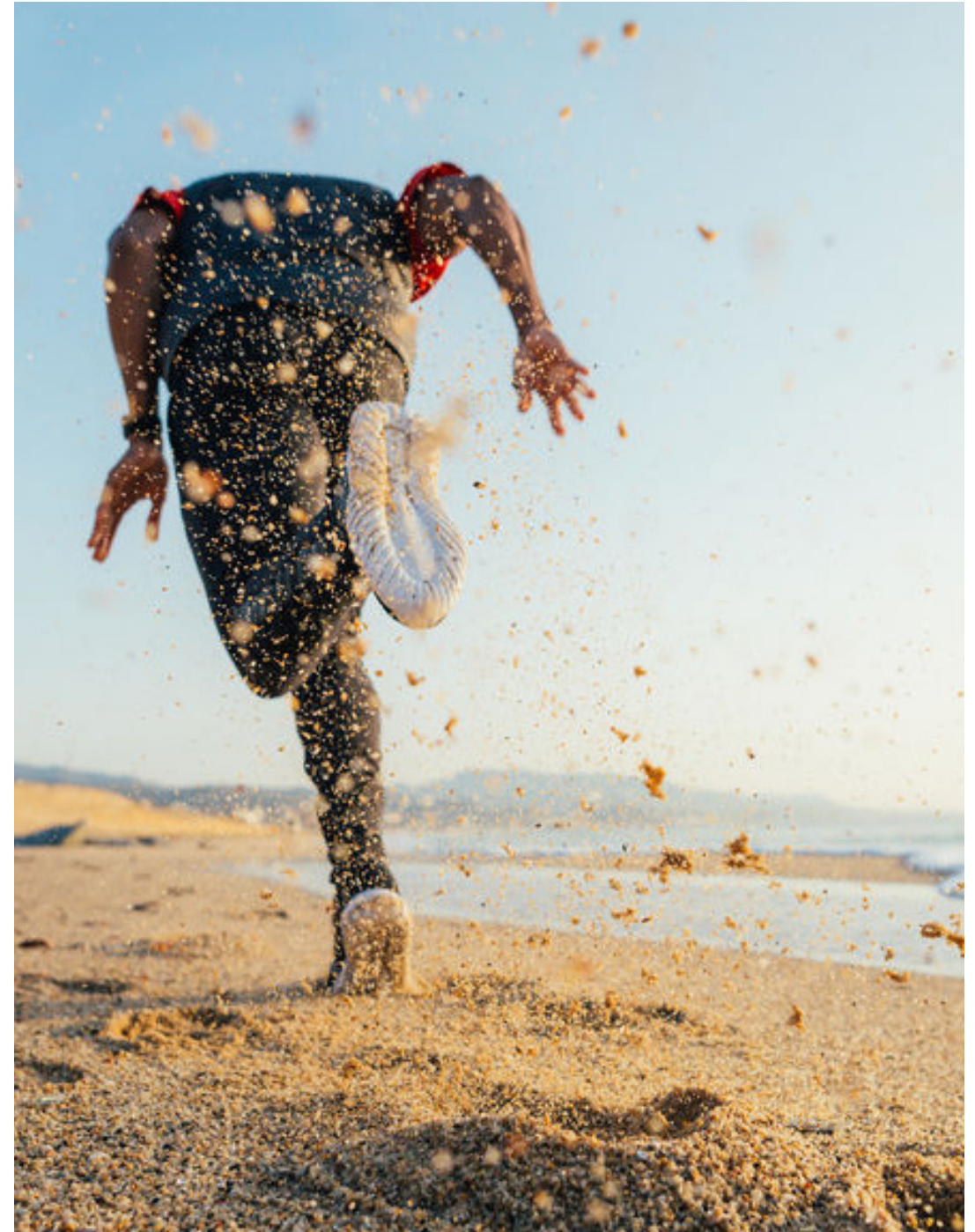
You have three simple steps:

- Set clear social media goals
- Choose the right metrics to track
- Get the tools you need

Assess your performance monthly, and be honest. If something isn't working, it either needs to change, or it needs to go. No more "blind" social media marketing.

The Future of Social Media ROI

Moving forward, it's not just about what we're sharing with potential customers, but also what consumers are sharing with each other (ie: over text, slack, whatsapp, email, etc) and how that impacts your business. It's your job to better understand the consumer and create content that resonates with them and is worth sharing.





Conclusion

Visual storytelling on social media isn't going away and marketers will continue to face a few ongoing challenges:

1. Meeting the demand from content-hungry followers, without compromising on quality and creativity.
2. Measuring ROI and using data to communicate the value of visual storytelling on social media to all stakeholders.

As the sharing landscape evolves, it's your job to better understand the consumer and distribute engaging visual content that resonates wholeheartedly with your audience.

Libris is the **simplest and fastest digital asset management platform** built for visual media.

We help brands and organizations create visual stories effortlessly. With 13 years in the cloud and more than 500 million assets managed, our cutting-edge software helps over **800 top universities, professional sports teams, travel brands and organizations of all sizes** easily organize, collaborate on and share their photos and videos. It's a powerful media library that will centralize your team's assets and change the way you communicate visually.

FIND US ON SOCIAL:



Libris Blog

**Find out how
Bitly Enterprise
can help you
track and prove
social media ROI
across every channel.**

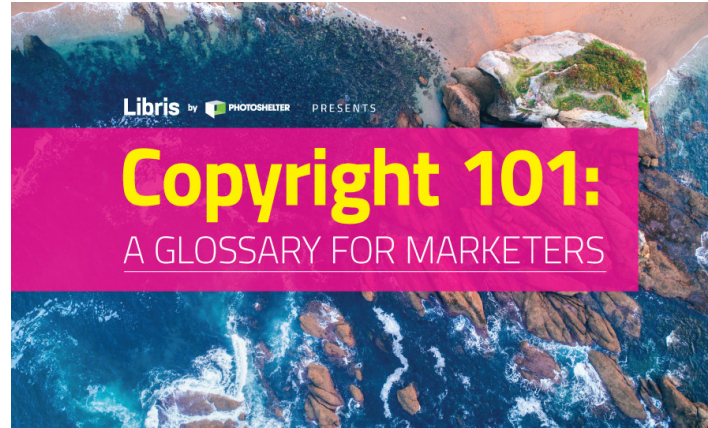
Learn More: bitly.is/TrackROI



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HOW TO SET UP REAL-TIME PHOTO WORKFLOW



3 TIPS FOR ENGAGING AUDIENCES WITH CREATIVE VISUAL STORYTELLING



WINNING FAN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BLACKHAWKS AND THE GOLDEN KNIGHTS: ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



DEVELOPING AND ENFORCING A COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE POLICY