

## Build Confidence, but First, Build a Following

Dean Street Society, a website and lifestyle organization created by Hilary Rushford, is exactly what you've been needing to help you achieve your life goals—you just didn't know it yet. Hilary, living on Dean Street in Brooklyn, created Dean Street Society to help her become a personal stylist, entrepreneurial mentor, author, and expert on photo shoots, writing, and public speaking for the people around her. By building confidence for her clients with style and branding, Hilary makes it her job to help them achieve whatever they have their eyes set on. She has been one of Deep South Social's inspirations, and we can't wait to share more about her techniques.

One of the integral ways Hilary has highlighted for building influence, clientele, and revenue for a business is through an Instagram following. With these steps and advice supplied by Hilary at one of her online workshops, you can double your following, and consequentially, double your business.

Instagram, one of the fastest growing and most successful forms of social media, develops a deeper, simpler, and more authentic relationship with its clients than other platforms. In the business world, you can give customers a behind-the-scenes look at your production and management, a priceless intimacy that cannot be created in any other fashion that reaches so many people. This "daily ritual" gives your clients the opportunity to not only know the real you, but to also like and trust you and the services you can supply them with. When customers feel like they are friends with a business, they are much more inclined to make a purchase from them.

Logistically, Instagram has succeeded at much greater strides than any other social media platform. This can be attributed to the fact that Instagram is based on visuals and conversation. Users tend to think that interactions on the platform are more genuine than on other sites, whether it be in comments or double tapping. Numbers wise, Instagram grew at a much faster rate than Twitter. Think back to its introduction in 2010. Just three months after its release, it had 1 million registered users. A year and a half after that, in April of 2012, 30 million users had created an Instagram account. Today, Instagram has acquired 400 million active users. Those are insane numbers! In case that wasn't enough for you, Instagram is backed by Facebook, which guarantees it is here to stay.

Hilary Rushford strongly believes that your business Instagram account can be both popular and profitable. These are her "4 Steps for Popular Plus Profitable." First, develop a professional level profile and realize that first impressions matter. One of the best ways to catch someone's attention will be in your bio. Elements to include are information about you, your city and email, and a clear indication of why your clients and potential clients should follow you (a.k.a. "what's in it for them"). Secondly, create your eye-catching content. Always consider giveaways every few posts to make following your account worth it to the user. It creates a return on investment for both you and your clients. Overall, polish your profile by making your username and url easy to find. Make sure your company or personal name is on the profile and delete any old profiles that might add clutter to a search. Third, attract your audience with your growth! According to Hilary, the best way to do this is through photography. When posting pictures, cater your efforts towards two audiences: new followers and existing followers. New followers will be focusing on

the overall look of your profile (about 12 photos at a time), while current followers will be looking at your profile one picture at a time (appearing on their personal feed). When taking photos for your business account, focus on the rule of thirds, a quality lighting source, and framing. The final step to a popular and profitable Instagram account lies in mastering your marketing from start to finish. Your success lies in the fine details, and the best finishing touches will be in photo editing apps like VSCO, Snapseed for shadow work, and Afterlight for light work.

Overall, make sure the story behind your brand is evident in your Instagram profile. Come up with a “brand story;” embed one of five themes in your posts to attract potential customers who want to follow accounts that are based on those elements. Your themes could be about style, community, travel, inspiration, and entrepreneurs. These are just examples, so come up with some that pinpoint what your specific mission is as a company! Also, remember to be intentional and thoughtful with your posting—this platform is all about quality over quantity. Choose a color palate that represents your brand accurately and stick with it when choosing photos. This will make your profile look cohesive and professional. For example, on apps like VSCO, choose a couple of filters and stay consistent.

Dean Street Society considers this method to work for all industries, but that isn’t necessarily true. Instagram isn’t the fit for every brand. Consider who your target audience is and how much time and talent you would be able to invest in your account. If you’re targeting an elderly or even middle-aged market, you might benefit more from investing in another platform. Also, if you think your account would turn into an afterthought (posting an ordinary image of your product once a day or logging in once a month and posting multiple pictures all at once), then the effort of having the account probably won’t equal the attention you want out of it.

If you decide a method like this is for you, Hilary’s final two points in her workshop were perhaps the most important. First, hashtags can make or break you. Be sure to choose meaningful ones that will create more traffic if potential customers are looking at related topics; don’t make your hashtags look desperate (a.k.a. do your research). Secondly, balance your spontaneous and planned posts, and make sure that all of your posts fall under your brand umbrella (think back to the themes you want to convey).

Finally, Hilary suggests that you find your mix between personal and professional—this is the key to your Instagram success! Give your followers something to look forward to on their feed and let them know that it is safe to entrust their business with you. Visit [deanstreetsociety.com](http://deanstreetsociety.com) for more information on their method of how to get the most out of your business.