

Dominate Instagram this lockdown

 By [Jacqueline Raw](#)

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As the second-largest social media platform in South Africa (and growing quickly!), cracking the Instagram code has never been more critical. Instagram is an ever-evolving platform. It stays close to what their users want and have a keen eye on their competitors; a key factor that has contributed to the platform's growing popularity. It is also for this reason that if you intend winning on social media in the next couple of months (and especially during this lockdown period), you need to ensure you are featuring on Instagram!



Image credit: [Pexels](#).

From leveraging stories, creating the right content and owning IGTV (IGTV is a standalone video application by Instagram for Android and iOS smartphones); there are many ways to build a brand through Instagram. Those things aside, there is a single biggest missed opportunity on Instagram – the strategic use of hashtags! Using hashtags strategically to reach new audiences and engage your current followers is a massive opportunity and when done right, is one of the single biggest contributors to your organic growth.

Hashtags are like art museums. Some are huge like the Hermitage in Russia and others are as small as the Irma Steyn Museum in our home country. The size of the museum is dictated by the amount of pieces of art it has on display. The same rings true for a hashtag. The more images attached to one specific hashtag the bigger, more relevant that hashtag becomes.



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Each hashtag 'museum' displays its own set of 'artwork'. Understanding this and then going on to select the right hashtag for your business or brand is incredibly crucial in your Instagram strategy. However, selecting popular hashtags in hopes of gaining exposure, will simply put your 'artwork' up in a museum against gazillion pieces of other content. And then, what are your chances of being seen – really?

So if you don't go for the popular ones, how do you select hashtags? Here are three top tips:

1. Identify your hashtags: You have a better chance of reaching new followers by posting your content in a hashtag museum that is not overly populated. The strategy is to search for and find hashtags right for you, in relevance and size, and then to post quality content consistently until you outgrow the hashtag and move into a bigger museum.

Take a minute jot down a list of all the hashtags you think would work for your business, ask yourself the question, who is my target audience, what is my niche and what makes me different from my competitors?

2. Research your hashtags: Go onto Instagram and type in your hashtags in the search bar and look at how big that museum is. If it's a reasonable size - compared to your current following, then bed that down as one of your new hashtags!

3. Be selective: Instagram allows you up to 30 hashtags for each piece of content, so make sure each hashtag is there on purpose and not because it sounds good! You want to reach the correct audience that will engage in your content and in turn create that all-important lead generation that you have been looking for. Plus, you don't want to be labelled as a hashtag spammer by Instagram because you're simply reposting the same hashtags onto each post - create 4 or 5 different groups of hashtags that are relevant for you and rotate them!



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This tactic works wonders – it might take a bit of research and planning in the beginning, but it's going to work miracles in terms of growing your following organically.

ABOUT JACQUELINE RAW

Jacqueline Raw is a Sales and Marketing Strategist. She is the founder of Ycagel, a Marketing consulting and services firm and SkillX an online skills incubator for entrepreneurs and professionals. As a thought-leader and influencer in her markets, she is passionate about driving change and equipping people with the skills they need to grow successful businesses and brands.

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