094 - How to Improve Your Instagram Content to Drive More Engagement and Reach More Customers

Laura Moore: [00:00:00] In this episode, we're talking about how to improve your Instagram content so you can drive more engagement and reach more customers.

Laura Davis: You're listening to JFDI with The Two Lauras. This is the weekly podcast where the two of us chat about all things relating to building a business as a freelancer.

We're on a mission to help more social media freelancers to build a profitable business that funds their lifestyle and works around their families. Every week we share tips, advice, and inspiration about business, marketing, and social media. And occasionally, we have a little bit of a rant too.

In today's episode, we're talking about how we've worked on improving our Instagram content to drive more engagement and increase our conversions by 27 percent and how you can do the same too.

Laura Moore: If you're wondering how to get clients for your social media services, you're going to love our new pocket training. We're calling it The Client Attraction Kit. Because when you follow all the steps we're going to teach you, that's exactly what will happen. And you'll be able to say hello to new [00:01:00] clients, even without a small audience, before creating a portfolio and without a single testimonial. To dive straight in today, all you need to do is go to thetwolauras.com/clients or click the link that's in our show notes.

Can I just say 27%? I think that is something to be celebrated, and we're rubbish at celebrating our wins.

Laura Davis: Whoop whoop!

Laura Moore: So, good on us! Wahoo! Heard it here first!

Laura Davis: Shall we give ourselves a pat on the back?

Laura Moore: Yes, definitely.

Laura Davis: Yeah, it's fair to say that Instagram - we've always loved Instagram, but it hasn't always served us well. But we're, definitely about three months ago, wasn't it, we, we sat down and we were like, if we're going to put effort into this, this has got to work for us, otherwise what's the point? And we did just that.

094 - How to Improve Your Instagram Content to Drive More Engagement and Reach More Customers

Laura Moore: Totally. I think we've changed our mindset about how we approach Instagram a lot lately as well about, and we'll go into this, but like all of the different types of content that we're [00:02:00] now doing on Instagram is very different than what we're, well, it's not very different, but you know, it's, it's quite different to what we were doing before. We're, we're much more strategic, I think, and much more giving.

Laura Davis: I think the large problem for us and you might tell me to F off because maybe you didn't see it as a problem, but I think the problem that I think we had in hindsight is that we were trying to do like what everybody else was doing, just put reels out all the time or, you know, loads of B-Roll stuff because other people were doing it.

So we were thinking, well, clearly that's what we should be doing as well. And I suspect we're all guilty of that. Like we've just fallen into these bad habits, really. And it took us to kind of sit back and go, you know what? What actually do our audience want? Do they want loads of B-Rolls about nothing particularly useful or can we actually use our Instagram to help people?

Laura Moore: And I think as well, when we were having those conversations, I remember saying to you, like, it might've been in Slack. You sent me a [00:03:00] message about like some B-Rolls and I was like, yeah, it's boring. Like I am bored of seeing all of that kind of content. It's just so boring. But there are accounts that I actively go and look at on Instagram because I want to read their content.

And there's accounts that I've got notifications turned on because I literally, when they post, I know that their content will be really, really good and I want to read it. And I was like, well, that's what I want our account to be. I want people to actively go and look for what we're saying. And when we're just putting like, here's three tips on an Instagram B-Roll.

It's like no one gives a toss about that. No one's gonna go and turn on notifications for our next very top line, top three tips. Like no one cares. And when we're focusing on things like that, it's all about our views, isn't it? And that doesn't mean anything. And it's not the views that have increased our conversions by any stretch of the imagination.

Laura Davis: No, far from it. Well, in fact, we do far less reels anyway, don't we? But yeah, we've kind of given ourselves a bit of a slap, haven't we? And because we sit here and we'll

say to people, stop focusing on these kind of vanity metrics, but we found [00:04:00] ourselves getting sucked back into it, which was so not like us.

Normally we wouldn't give a shit really, but we unfortunately did get sucked into the vanity metrics. And actually it's by looking at the actual hardcore stat, the actual stats that make a difference to any business, which is really conversions. That is what was able to guide us in what was working and what wasn't working for us.

Laura Moore: Yeah, definitely. And if you look at our Instagram, you might be listening to this and think, well, I'm going to go and look at their Instagram and see actually how good they are. And I'll tell you now, if you look on our, like, our latest post, you'll probably think, well, they're shit. They don't get very many likes on their content.

And we don't create our content for that. And I think a lot of times we forget because of these vanity metrics when we're looking at other people's accounts, we're like, well, they haven't got very many likes. They haven't got many, very many comments. So therefore they're not smashing on social, but we create our content now with a very clear purpose, well, two very clear purposes.

We want to create high value, [00:05:00] really useful, deep information posts that people want to save. And we want to drive leads. We want people to come and join our email list or, you know, join our Facebook group or send us a message, whatever. And those two things are our key, like, objectives with Instagram. I don't care if no one likes our content. If one person sends me a message or one person joins our email list, that post has worked.

Laura Davis: And I'd say, looking back at the content before we recorded this, the large majority of them have got whoppingly more - sorry I couldn't think of a good adjective then - whoppingly more saves than likes.

Laura Moore: 100%, yeah.

Laura Davis: You know, the likes might be like 100, but the saves are in the thousands. And, and I think that has been, it's good. Because, you know, we need that feedback, don't we? We need, we need those kind of signals to know, has our content worked? And as I just said, you know, we would say, "oh, you know, [00:06:00] we've only got a couple of

hundred likes" or "this one's not doing as well", or "this one's only got 20 likes" or what have you.

And it was kind of irritating me. I don't, and I was probably irritating Laura and Laura's probably irritated by it as well. We were lost with that. So now we can just look at those insights and go, "Oh my God, have you seen how many people have saved that?" And it's like, yes, this is actually working.

Laura Moore: And like, we're not kidding ourselves. We know that probably the vast majority of people are not going to go back in their saves folder. And go and look at all of this content, but certainly not going in mind. Exactly. But it's a psychological thing, isn't it? You see a post, you get value from it. You hit save. You are then automatically the next post you see, you're going to think, well, that's going to probably be a good post. I should probably read it. So you're kind of getting in front of those people more because they've had that value and subconsciously they remember the save.

Laura Davis: Yeah, it's like training their brain really to think this content is worth paying attention to and I think it's worth saying [00:07:00] and I think this is a good point to say it that like as you know, Laura and I are very similar but equally very different and the main difference is that I love numbers.

I love the data. I don't, I'm not, I would never call myself any kind of something like a data analyst. I just like looking at data and I like kind of picking bits out and it's like my favourite hobby. And so I was like, well, it's all very well in saying, yes, you know, all this content is getting saves, but saves are not going to pay my mortgage, quite frankly.

So what is going to, and that is conversions. So I know in the past we've reviewed where we're going to put our time and we've looked at our socials and we've looked at kind of the traffic that each account is generating. And we've always kind of said, "Oh, we're never going to see much traffic from Instagram because you know, you can't link on every post, you're expecting people to go to link in bio", all of that.

And we used to kind of use that as an excuse, I think, because we liked Instagram, but yet it wasn't performing for us. Whereas now our Instagram traffic [00:08:00] in the last 90 days, which is the period of time that we've really been putting the effort into this new kind of strategy.

094 - How to Improve Your Instagram Content to Drive More Engagement and Reach More Customers

The traffic has increased by 73% or just shy of that, which is huge. It's massive for us. And more importantly, it's increased conversions with us of 27%. Which is like, as you said before, like that's not to be sniffed at and that's just taken, it's taken a few months admittedly, and that's fine.

We've gone over, like, the kind of festive season as well. So I don't know whether that's helped or not helped, but I didn't drill that deep into that data. But I think it just goes to show, like, Instagram can be a driver of traffic. And it's actually one, it's not as good as Facebook for us, but Facebook has always been our better platform.

But Instagram was way down the list in terms of effectiveness. And it's now second on the list in [00:09:00] terms of socials.

Laura Moore: And I think, I've always had a block with Instagram because like, I don't like Reels, I don't really watch Reels. I find the content on Reels so boring.

Laura Davis: Yeah, me too.

Laura Moore: I would much rather watch Reels on Facebook because it's so much more varied. For some reason my Reels feed on Instagram is just bloody B-Rolls with text on them and they just bore me.

Laura Davis: Yeah, I only ever do TikToks.

Laura Moore: Yeah. So because of that, I, I don't want to make them because I find them boring. So I don't want to do video. I'm not really very like, yes, I'm creative, but I'm not like a graphic designer.

My strengths and the things that I like to do is I like to write.

Laura Davis: So words.

Laura Moore: Yeah. Yeah, I like words. And so, and I like to give people like deep value. And so when we were like, well, hang on, let's see if we can do what we do on our blog, but in like a mini kind of blog kind of way in a carousel, like a light bulb went off of my head.

And I was like, yes, this is how this is how I can use Instagram. This is how I like Instagram. And so a lot, you'll see that there's a [00:10:00] lot of carousel content on our Instagram.

And it's because I like writing, I find it easy to write. And so that content comes easy to me, and I find it easy to give that really good value.

That might not be the case for you. You might find it easier to give value in a different way. So don't think, oh, well, it's carousels that are working for the Lauras. It's not, it's what's in the carousels and like the strategy behind it is working. And that strategy could work, you know, in different formats as well, probably.

But I think since we changed and we've given a lot more value. Like when I say value and deep information, whereas in the past, we'd be like, here's four ways that you can do blah, blah. And those four ways be very, very different. Now we would pick one of those ways and go much deeper on that one thing, right?

So it's much more useful and much more - is implementable a word? It is now - It's much more implementable. People can actually learn something and do something from it. And because of that, like we have on most of those carousels, we have a call to action card where there's either a freebie or like [00:11:00] come and join our email list or, you know, get by this product or whatever.

And we hook that up with Manychat and we get so many more comments because people are using the keyword, which is great because then we drive in the leads and we get in the traffic like Laura's just been saying. But also those comments. When you see a post in Instagram in your feed and you see there's comments subconsciously, you then want to comment, you're much more likely to comment, right?

But also it does that algorithm trick where it, you know, triggers the algorithm to more people, so that's a bonus too. That people are not just going to comment if the value isn't there before we've told them to go and get the thing. You know, I couldn't just put a post saying, join our email list and people, you know, comment daily email and people are not going to just come in for that, but because we've told them something beforehand, that's why it's working in my opinion.

Laura Davis: Yeah, no, I agree. And I do think, you know, and I've had this conversation a few times with social media freelancers. in DMs recently that I do think there's a gap for social media managers to, to go deeper, [00:12:00] like to let's stop with just giving this top

level kind of throw away content, really make it content that people want to take action on.

They trust that because of how much you give away. And because of the effort you put into it, they trust because you're giving them context, you're making it feel really useful and, and helpful that therefore you want people turning on the bell, the notifications that they want to see all of your content all of the time.

And I don't think many freelancers are doing that, you know, there are some, 100%, but there's not many, and I think there's a real gap there, and I never forget when I was just freelancing, I, do you remember, we've talked about this before, when someone messaged me, and said, and I can't, I wish I'd thought about this before we started recording this, because I could have tried to find it, but she messaged me saying, [00:13:00] will you stop with your content?

You're giving away everything. No one's going to hire us if you keep telling people how to do things. And it's like, Oh God, come on. Like, just because I'm telling people how to find some hashtags or whatever, I can't remember what kind of content I just shared years ago, but that doesn't mean someone's not going to hire us.

Like, my clients don't care about, but they like the fact that I give stuff away, like shows that I know what I'm talking about. It's trustworthy. And yeah, and I never forget that comment. And I just replied saying, I think you're approaching this totally wrong because if you approach it in a way of you can't give away all your, your skill, you'll end up just producing very top level content that has no value, doesn't make anyone take action. It doesn't build [00:14:00] your trust and your kind of profile. So what's the point? You might as well just not bother.

And I think it's way more important to think, right, I'm going to sit down and create. You know, one or two pieces of very good in depth pieces of content that I'm going to share that is going to help your specific audience and ignore everybody else and all other freelancers and all other people on social media because it's about you creating content for your audience based on what you are trying to sell to them and just go for it, go balls deep as I like to say, you know, just don't hold back because it, you're doing yourself a disservice.

094 - How to Improve Your Instagram Content to Drive More Engagement and Reach More Customers

I do think the more value you give, the more, kind of, educational content you put out there, is what is going to, at the moment, differentiate yourself from all the people who are just creating reels saying, this is a trending audio.

Laura Moore: I agree. And I think there's two things on that. [00:15:00] The first thing I would say, don't worry about giving away too much for free because you can go on Google or ChatGPT these days and find it all out anyway. But secondly, go balls deep as Laura said on that value driven content, but don't just make it valuable.

Make it promotional too and have some sort of call to action to the next thing. Because so often social media managers will say to us, yes, but you know, I can only sell in 20 percent of my content, you know, every five posts or whatever it is. But if you're giving value and that content is really useful, you can sell in every single one of them.

And no one's going to say, you gave me, you gave me value, but you ruined it because you sold to me. And if they do say that, quite frankly, they can F off. But you know, no one's going to say that.

Laura Davis: They can just be blocked.

Laura Moore: Yeah, blocked. But, but no one's going to say that, you know, and you're not creating this content for the love, for the love of it.

You're creating it because you're a business. And so therefore there has to be something in it for you, so, to make you do that.

Laura Davis: That's so true. And I think when people buy [00:16:00] from us, we ask them kind of where they heard from us and why they bought what they bought. And it's so interesting, really like 2023 for us was the year that everyone started mentioning the podcast, which was brilliant.

And, but without a doubt in the last few weeks, probably the back end of 2023, people were saying to us. I saw your Instagram content. You got me hooked. I came and checked out everything out. And I love the value that you give to, I'm, I know that all, everything you produce will be brilliant. So I'm, I'm buying and, and these aren't small investments.

094 - How to Improve Your Instagram Content to Drive More Engagement and Reach More Customers

Sometimes people are investing kind of heavily and I think, you know, that just speaks volumes. Yeah. Doesn't it? And. I think we've all just got to stop kind of gatekeeping so much.

Laura Moore: There are a couple of other things we've kind of done as well. You might have noticed if you are one of those people that goes and, like, really pays attention, we don't really tend to use hashtags anymore on Instagram.

And it's not because hashtags don't work and all of that crap. Well, we stopped using hashtags because we were getting a lot of [00:17:00] AI kind of responses, and it was really winding Laura up, because as soon as we posted, we would get like an automated reply, and she was like, I can't deal with this. So we stopped using hashtags for a while, but we found that actually it didn't make any difference.

So we have never started using them again. But what we do do instead is we optimise for search. So we're really clever. Well, we're not really clever. We're really thoughtful about, like, the words that we'll put in. So if, for example, we're trying to reach you guys, we will always try and make sure that the word social media manager is somewhere in our caption so that if you're searching for social media manager hopefully it will pop up and we just kind of think about what I would generally write most of our captions and I'll write them and then I'll go back and edit and be like is this keyword optimised and don't do that thing where everyone's just shoving a load of keywords at the bottom of their caption because that's just like

Laura Davis: Oh god no, ugh.

Laura Moore: Yeah, no, but you can be really clever about how you can put the keywords in, into your captions. But obviously you need to go and see what people are searching for. So you need to know your audience in order to do that. So we're [00:18:00] optimising for search that way. But we're also thinking about the explore feed and I and I may be wrong. I don't think you can create content that makes you go on to the explore feed.

But I think when you're optimising, you can make sure that if your content lands on the explore feed, people will click it. And so with our, especially with our carousels recently, you'll see that they've got a big headline in big words. Because if you open Instagram and you look at the explore feed, the squares are tiny.

They're really small. So if someone's in their explore feed, and the same for search, and they see a small square, you want yours to be able to read it, if it's words, and you want them to want to click on yours rather than other, other people's. So, you need to kind of have a think about what might they be seeing in their explore and how can mine stand out.

And don't forget that everybody's explore feed is very, very different. So yes, you can look in yours and see, well, this is what mine looks like, so I can make it stand out. But that might not be what they're seeing. But we just think about how can we make sure that it's legible and really easy [00:19:00] to see. And if it says the word social media manager in it, even better. Because then, if you're a social media manager, you're likely to click it and open it.

Laura Davis: I'm fairly confident people aren't going to click on a picture if you're just sitting there hugging a mug. You know, it's, you've got to think, you've got to think of your audience and what they're looking for. And I don't, I'm not someone who really, by choice, goes in the explore, like I know you do.

But I do when I want to see what other people are posting more strategically to kind of help us. And it is always big, bold, clear words that obviously, for some reason, they're not meant for me. I don't know why they're in my explore. But they do, they are the things that stand out. And, you know, sometimes I can see great content, but it's not legible.

The colours they've used don't work, like, the writing isn't standing out against the background colour, for example, and it's so [00:20:00] important because you've got to capture someone's attention in this split second. Which is why, you know, like Laura said, having, for us, the word social media manager, social media freelancer, freelancer, those kind of keywords are so important for us to try and get on that front page of that carousel or on that single image or Reel cover, whatever it may be.

And so, you know, and I, I feel like I go on about this a lot, but knowing who your audience is and that niche, use it, use it to your advantage, because that is what will make your content stand out in a sea of content ideas, content ideas, content ideas, but content ideas for. Blah, blah will make such a difference and I can't kind of stress it enough that you've just got to choose that niche, own it and create content for those people and it will start to stand out in their feed too.

094 - How to Improve Your Instagram Content to Drive More Engagement and Reach More Customers

Laura Moore: Yeah, and what you just said about [00:21:00] photos, you need to remember as well that the people who see you in explore, they don't know you. So you won't stand out because they recognize your face, because they don't know you because you're in the explore feed, they haven't found you yet. So yes, sometimes your followers might see you there, but they're much more likely to see you in the news feed.

When you're optimising for search and explore, you're trying to find people who don't know you yet. So your photo, they're not going to recognize you. So just think about that as well. And I think also, and I think we kind of touched on this a little bit, but where we were saying earlier about if you looked at our stats, you'd think that our Instagram is shit.

I think you need to just remember that you can't judge somebody else's success by the stats you can see. So if you are looking in that explore feed and you're finding, you know, maybe a competitor or whatever, and you're going and looking at their stats, you can't see if that content's working because they may have thousands of likes, but they may have driven no traffic to their website.

They may have had no leads. They may have had no DMs. You know, they may be all the wrong people. So you don't know that it's working and this is one of the things like we'll often get people posting in our [00:22:00] groups asking like, you know, they've got a new client. Maybe it's, I don't know, a green grocer, I don't know why I always use green grocers as the example. Anyway, they've got a new, new client who's a green grocer and they'll post "anyone know any green grocers that are smashing it on instagram?"

And I'd love to find one if there is by the way, but you can't know who's smashing it because those stats might not tell you the whole story and what I think is great content. It's going to be very different to what you think, maybe, is great content. So instead of doing that and asking who, you know, who's smashing it in this industry, you really need to get to know that audience and see who already has that audience's attention and why do they have it?

And what can I do to get their attention that's, you know, similar or very different or whatever, rather than what are the competitors doing and let's go and do something similar because they're obviously smashing it. That's not how you're going to stand out, is it?

094 - How to Improve Your Instagram Content to Drive More Engagement and Reach More Customers

Laura Davis: Yeah, 100%. Bloody green grocers.

Laura Moore: I don't know why it always comes up.

Laura Davis: And, and look at your target audience and see what they're [00:23:00] kind of, it's hard to see this, but look at kind of the content that they're sharing, for example. You can start to see and then, and go back to that account that they've shared it from. Like, what is it that's resonating with people on that account?

Laura Moore: And, and if you're a real stalker, you can go and see if they're actually following that account. Because if they're not, maybe they found that post in explore and they've shared it that way.

Laura Davis: Nice. Detective work.

Laura Moore: Yeah. Love the old detective work.

Laura Davis: But it's so, it's so important to go and do that, you know, and like, let's just stop with the vanity metrics.

Stop going and looking at an account going, Oh, well this must be doing well because it's got, you know, a hundred thousand followers when actually that doesn't mean anything. We could go out tomorrow and get 100,000 followers. Well, maybe not tomorrow, but you know. But that to us is not important. And I think we all just need to just remember that.

And this is a, everything we're saying today is great content for you guys. [00:24:00] You need to educate businesses that this isn't them. You know. I have a client that I've had for five years and I cannot, I probably put money on that every single meeting once a month he talks about bloody follower numbers and it drives me up the wall and I'm like, I've just turned up with my pretty report saying you've got like all these new leads and your cost per acquisition is like really low and you've got this and you've got that and he'd go, have we hit like 20,000 followers yet?

And he's just like, oh my god. And like I went on TikTok. I've got a TikTok account for him. He's got one reel which has nearly hit a million, but the large majority of them are, and this is just views, which I know isn't important, but for him, and he's like, oh look, that one only had 20,000 views. That's not very good, is it, for TikTok? And I'm like, oh god.

094 - How to Improve Your Instagram Content to Drive More Engagement and Reach More Customers

Laura Moore: We'd think we were viral if we had that.

Laura Davis: Yeah, I'm like, oh my God, I was like, what world do you live in? Like, I just, and so, you know, it's hard, it is hard to [00:25:00] get, you know, I've been trying for five years. I get how hard it is to educate on these value metrics not being the be all and end all.

Yeah, so that's great. So, so just rinse and repeat your content. Keep that in your content bank. It's something that you need to kind of constantly be sharing with people because it's so, it's so important that people realise that.

Laura Moore: Definitely agree. So there we go. That's it. That's how we've done it. And if you're not already following us on Instagram, by the way, do come and find us.

We are on there as @thetwolauras. Come and have a look at our content. See if you like it. See if you know, you can get some value from it and drop into our DMs and let us know that you found us on the podcast because we don't actually know who's listening and we would love to know who's listening. So come and come and say hi.

And yeah, that's @thetwolauras on Instagram. We'll put the link in the show notes as usual. And that's it. We'll be back, same time, same place next week. And yeah, we'll see you then.

Laura Davis: Au revoir!

Laura Moore: Auf Wiedersehen! Ooh, German![00:26:00]