

April 4, 2016

Quick News

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#TurnMeOn

#keepinstagramchronological

#MS181

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- [March Madness Championship Game](#): April 4, 2016
- [The Shorty Awards](#): April 10, 2016
- [E3](#): June 14–16, 2016

Instagram updates to algorithm-based feeds

Instagram co-founders Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom announced Tuesday, March 15, 2016, that the social network is testing a new algorithm to show posts in order of relevance to each user, rather than chronologically. Systrom explained that users regularly miss approximately 70% of posts on their feed with the default settings. This new algorithm is put in place to declutter feeds and filter the quality of content in the 30% that users will see.

Facebook, which owns Instagram, first introduced a similar news feed update back in 2009. Facebook sought out to please the everyday user by prioritizing personal posts over promotional content. The social network became pickier about the content it chose to promote for free, resulting in decreased organic reach for many brand and business pages.

Now Instagram will test the same algorithm—so, what does this mean for the future of Instagram?

For Brands

Brands use Instagram as a platform to reach hundreds and thousands of customers for free. Now the new algorithm poses a threat to all brand pages, since Instagram will gain more control over what each user sees or does not see on their feeds. Instagram clarifies that this algorithm is being tested to help brands reach their target demo, meaning those who are more interested in the product will continue to see the posts at the top of their feeds. However, brand managers are not quite buying in and foresee an outcome similar to that of Facebook—brands will not reach the same audiences and will eventually have to start paying for sponsored ad space or create new content to conciliate the algorithm.

The Facebook algorithm favored videos over static posts, which resulted in brand Pages creating video content to appease the algorithm. Instagram also offers a video feature and has recently announced that they will extend the maximum video length from :15 to :60 seconds. Though it is unclear if the timing of this new rollout directly relates to the algorithm change, it is worth noting that advertisers will now be able to utilize a full minute video to promote their message and create longer form content.

For Influencers

Though this algorithm is far from permanent (regardless of what rumors are floating around), influencers are already panicking about the outcome it could have. Their fear is warranted, considering many social media influencers are paid to promote products. If the algorithm has a negative effect on an influencers' reach, the impact over their followers lessens. It is difficult to say whether or not influencers' reach will ultimately decrease as a result of the

algorithm, but the simple blog announcement from Instagram was enough to throw influencers in a frenzy. In fact, a petition pleading to #KeepInstagramChronological started on Change.org and gained some traction with over 300,000 supporters.

Influencers are flustered because they think the algorithm would change the amount of users that see their posts; however, the initial hysteria has started to affect the influencer-user relationship in another way. Users are being asked—told, rather—to click “Turn on Notifications” so they receive an alert any time the influencer posts a photo or video. Needless to say, the requests have not been received well by users.



<http://recode.net/2016/03/28/instagram-influencers-are-suddenly-freaking-out-over-the-looming-algorithm-change/>
<http://www.buzzfeed.com/stephaniemcneal/turn-off-notifications#.dmN94Enrxj>

Even though Instagram has officially stated that no big rollouts are looming, influencers fear they will be unable to reach their audience and lose their value.

For Users

Since word got out about the new algorithm, the general consensus from all users seems to be, “Why fix what isn’t broken?” Some users mistrust the algorithm and worry they might miss more when the algorithm muddles with the chronological order. Others argue that their tastes and interests are continually changing, so the algorithm cannot accurately determine what they want to see on any given day.

The pushback from the Instagram community was severe enough to incite a response from Instagram, who stressed that no permanent change will happen without notice or anytime in the immediate future. The social network has only just now began testing the algorithm on small groups. Nonetheless, all users, influencers, and brands anxiously await what effect the algorithm will have on the future of Instagram.

By Allison Lee
Assistant Media Planner

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & THE FUTURE?

- Will Instagram revert back to chronological feeds or stick with this new algorithm, despite criticism considering Facebook's ultimate success with the change previously?
- How will other competitors (like Snapchat who are already gaining traction) capitalize on this news and convert users—will the Instagram app stay relevant to the millennial audience?
- Will this change devalue influencers or will they find ways to utilize the new :60 video feature and/or potentially pay for promotion (similarly to YouTube) to remain valuable to brands?
- Will brands rethink their investments on Instagram influencers as potential reach and engagement could decrease?

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