INSTAGRAM
DOs & DON’Ts
DIGITAL BRAND MARKETING // EAME
SUMMARY

As a guide we’ve put together a list Instagram dos and don’ts. Be inspired!

*Almost all examples shown – the good, the bad and the ugly - are from Starwood EAME Instagram accounts. When not good we’ve blanked out the name of the account, when good we’ve kept it in!
DO USE HASHTAGS
Hashtags are how images are categorized and filtered on Instagram, and most importantly it’s how users search for images!

Always include:
#brandname e.g. #sheraton #westin
#yourlocalhashtag e.g. #sheratonedinburgh
#brandedhashtag e.g. #socialhour #westinwellbeing etc.
Reference the brand social media playbook for relevant branded hashtags!
Post these along with the image caption

Then consider adding:
Popular destination hashtags e.g. #mydubai
Themed hashtags e.g. #crewlfe, #christmas #travel
Hashtags relevant to the image e.g. #sunset, #airport, #socialhour, #regram

DON’T POST TOO MANY HASHTAGS IN THE IMAGE CAPTION
Stick to 3-4 hashtags max to accompany the image caption. For all additional hashtags, post them in a separate comment, that way they are still valuable from a search perspective but the image caption will be clean and legible.

DON’T POST WITHOUT A HASHTAG
Your followers may see your image, but no one else will!
DO USE HASHTAGS

Simple caption

Multiple hashtags in separate comment, including brand, destination and themed hashtags.

Descriptive caption including multiple integrated hashtags
DO INCLUDE DESCRIPTIVE CAPTIONS
Write a good succinct caption on every image you post. Explain to the user what they are seeing and why it’s relevant to your hotel, destination or brand. Keep your caption short and to the point!
Check and double check for typos before you post. If you make a mistake you can easily delete the image and start again, or simply edit the caption or comment.

DON’T POST AN IMAGE WITHOUT A CAPTION
A great image without a caption is a wasted opportunity to communicate key messaging and give context.

This is a beautiful and interesting image – but there is no caption so we have no idea what it is and why it’s related to this hotel.

This image has a descriptive caption explaining what we are seeing. Even better would be to include information about how far this is from the hotel and how you can visit it during your stay.
DO POST A VARIETY OF IMAGES
Tell your hotel, destination and brand story, posting a variety of images that cover all the key selling points of your hotel including hotel imagery, destination pictures and F&B offerings etc.

DON'T POST ONLY ONE TYPE OF IMAGE
Posting, for example, only F&B images on your account does not tell the full story of what your hotel has to offer.

The images themselves are excellent but there is very little visual variety and only one type of image – food. This could easily be for a restaurant or chef, not a hotel.
DO POST SIMPLE CLEAN IMAGES

Remember Instagram is primarily a mobile platform, users are viewing your images on their smartphone or tablet in most cases. So keep your images simple and clean for easy viewing. Focus on one thing rather than on busy scenes with too much to see.

DON’T POST BUSY IMAGES

An overly “busy” image has too much going and will only be understandable on a big screen, so stick to simple images.

This is how most people will see an image you post!
DO POST BEAUTIFUL IMAGES
Remember what Instagram is all about – beautiful and inspiring imagery. It is about connecting with your guests and making them dream about visiting your hotel or destination. It is not a sales platform or a dumping ground for all and any images you take. Only post great imagery that gives and excellent impression of your hotel, destination or brand.

DON'T POST FOR THE SAKE OF POSTING!
Stop and think to yourself before posting:
- “Is this a beautiful image?”
- “Would I like this image if I saw it on Instagram?”
- “Would I post this image on my own Instagram feed?”

If the answer to any of these questions is no – then DO NOT POST THE IMAGE!

It is better to have just a few great images, than many ugly ones. Bad images will damage your brand and reputation online.
DO CREATE A CONTENT PLAN FOR YOUR INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

You can use Instagram strategically to tell your hotel story. Think this through, write a content plan, consider how Instagram fits in with your other social media platforms and content strategies. Plan themed posts around what is happening locally or events such as Halloween, Christmas and local holidays.
DO CROSS-PROMOTE YOUR INSTAGRAM IMAGES ON OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Think about how your different social media platforms can work together. Can you cross-promote your Instagram images on Facebook, possibly to drive more followers on your Instagram account? Could you post your “Instagram guest image of the week” on Facebook, for example?

DON’T SHARE THE SAME IMAGES ON EVERY SINGLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

Facebook and Instagram are different and should be used differently. Facebook for example can be used to create albums with multiple images e.g. of an event or activation. It may even be a good place to promote associate activations. Instagram should not be used for this. You might post ONE image of an event on Instagram, and it should be a carefully chosen, visually attractive image. If you don’t have a great photo from the event, don’t post! Remember Instagram is channel to connect with your potential guests, not a sales platform and definitely not a place to document each and every thing that happens in your hotel.
DO SHARE USER GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

Guests posting on Instagram will often use hashtags and geo-tags that let you find their images of your hotel. Often this imagery is very beautiful and as such it can be a great source of content for your Instagram account. You should actively look for great user images by searching for a specific hashtag on Instagram (e.g. #sheratonfrankfurt) or by searching your hotel’s geotag using an online tool like worldc.am. Once you find a great image you’d like to share, make sure you follow the approved process on slide 13.

DON’T SHARE ONLY UGC

Users follow your account to find out more about your hotel and destination from you. Sharing UGC is great, but it’s important to share your own original images too.

Every post here (over several days) is UGC via a sharing app. Make sure you include original images too.
The best (and approved) way to repost another user’s image...

Comment on the photo, asking the user if we may repost their photo through our account and tag them in it.

Once user responds with their permission to repost their photo, screen-shot the confirmation.

Save the picture repost to your account crediting and tagging the original owner and including the hashtag #regram and/or #repost as well as any local hashtags, #sheraton and #betterwhenshared

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DON’T SHARE SOMEONE ELSE’S PHOTO WITHOUT EXPRESS PERMISSION

This is a big no no on Instagram!

Original poster was not credited in the caption and complained …

DON’T USE PHOTO SHARING APPS

Our recommendation is not to use photo sharing apps (like ReGram or Repost), as they can seriously compromise the quality of the image. Instead follow the UGC sharing process outlined on slide 13 and once you have permission from the user, save and repost the original image. Check out @SheratonHotels (the global brand Instagram account), they do this successfully on a regular basis.
The original images on the left are much more attractive in a newsfeed than the shared images on the right. The images shared via a regram/sharing app place an ugly banner on the image, which takes up a lot of space and takes away from the strength of the image.

Follow the global UGC sharing guidelines on the next slide and once you have been granted permission, post the original photo with the photo credit in the caption (not in a comment)!
DO POST ORIGINAL IMAGES
The best photos for Instagram are photos your (or your colleagues) or a professional photographer hired by your hotel have taken. User content, once permission is given, is always good content to post.

DON’T POST THE SAME IMAGE/VERY SIMILAR IMAGES TWICE
If you accidentally post an image twice, delete one of the images. It may be acceptable to post an old image a second time if you are recalling a past event or initiative, but make sure you specify this in the caption!

DON’T POST STOCK IMAGES
While SAL images may work on Instagram, other stock imagery that you find on a google image search is not acceptable content on Instagram. Again Instagram is about beautiful original imagery. Never post a stock image that you find online or purchase. These images stand out in a bad way on Instagram.

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DON’T POST LOW QUALITY IMAGES OF PRESS COVERAGE / AWARDS

Taking a picture of a magazine or website where your hotel is featured, or of your Trip Advisor ranking, or of an award is not acceptable. Instagram is not a sales/marketing channel – you’re aiming to inspire! Be creative and find a beautiful way to present this information instead.

These types of image have no place on Instagram, find a more creative way to share this news using beautiful images. Provide the detail of an award in the caption.

For example use a nice image of the award ceremony and include the details in the caption.
DON’T USE INSTAGRAM AS A SALES CHANNEL BY POSTING MARKETING FLYERS

As already mentioned Instagram is about beautiful and inspiring images, with the goal of connecting with your audience and making them dream! It is not a space to promote every offer and F&B promotion you run in your hotel. Posting images with a lot of marketing copy, or taking pictures of marketing flyers/posters is simply not a good approach to using Instagram. We strongly recommend you do not do this. It looks ugly and is illegible on mobile screens.

If there is one thing you take from this document, let it be:
don’t post marketing flyers!! These types of images do not belong on Instagram.
DO GET CREATIVE WHEN PROMOTING AN EVENT OR OFFER

You can promote an offer or event via Instagram, but be sensitive as to how you do it. It always comes back to a great image (or video) as a starting point. Promotional information or marketing messaging (including prices, contact details, dates etc.) should never be superimposed on the image. If you need to include this information place it in the caption. Even following these guidelines, try not to promote offers and events too often on Instagram, it's not the right channel to do this.

Use interesting content to show, not tell!
Event details and CTA are in the caption, not the image/video.
Click video to view.
DON’T POST MULTIPLE IMAGES OF AN EVENT OR ACTIVATION ON INSTAGRAM

Use a facebook album to show multiple pictures of one event. On Instagram you should post max. 2-3 images of one event or activation, and only if they are visually attractive images that make sense for this channel, and provide variety and different points of view on the event. By posting multiple images one after the other in quick succession you are “flooding” your followers’ feed, forcing them to scroll through many of your images before reaching other content – a frustrating experience that can often lead to “unfollows”. One image and a great caption should be all you need to post to tell an event/activation story.

DON’T USE INSTAGRAM AS A CHANNEL TO PROMOTE INTERNAL/ASSOCIATE ACTIVATIONS

Instagram is a guest facing channel, your associates are not your audience here! Keep content related to associate activation for other internal channels.
DO GIVE USERS A SNEAK PEEK BEHIND THE SCENES IN YOUR HOTEL

Behind the scenes content and a sneak peek into life in a hotel can be very interesting content for your social channels.

Think about ways to show this on Instagram via attractive imagery e.g. chefs preparing food in the kitchen, bar staff preparing a cocktail, a hyperlapse video of housekeeping dressing a bed, a film crew in action etc.

Plan this content carefully and make sure the image/video, as always, is first and foremost a stunning image.

Use the popular hashtags #bts or #behindthescenes on these posts.
DON’T POST IMAGES OF PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN, WITHOUT EXPRESS PERMISSION

Our recommendation is to steer clear of posting images of recognizable people in Instagram. Why?
1. Strictly speaking, you need a person’s express written permission to post a picture of them. This will be a tricky and resource-intensive process.
2. Never post photos of children, it’s just not worth the risk of running into legal issues.

DON’T FOCUS ON, OR EXPRESSLY ENCOURAGE, SELFIES

While the selfie is a big trend, it is not content we want to particularly encourage from our guests. They will take a selfie anyway, they don’t need to be told to! Remember that a selfie is not content that we can share on our own Instagram channels (see above re. posting pictures of people’s faces), it will never be fed into the brand.com/IDP guest gallery and will never be featured on the #BetterWhenShared microsite. So let selfies happen naturally!
DO THINK ABOUT HOW YOU CAN CREATIVELY SHOW PEOPLE INTERACTING IN YOUR HOTEL

Sheraton is after all a social brand so we want to be able to show people interacting in our hotel from time to time. Silhouettes or shots of people where their face is not recognizable are both good techniques without running into trouble.
DO USE INSTAGRAM AS IT WAS INTENDED – SQUARE IMAGES ARE BEST!

Instagram is about square format images, reminiscent of old polaroid pictures. Try to use square format images as much as possible – it will mean your feed is consistent and you will avoid big white or black lines around your images.

If you have an image that is in landscape format, please crop it to the correct square dimensions before loading it to Instagram.

Note: If you do choose to use a landscape image format, be consistent. Always post landscape images and ensure that the framing (i.e. the block of colour that appears top and bottom of the image) is consistent, choose a colour and stick with it.

DON’T SQUEEZE AND IMAGE WHEN RESIZING!

Crop, yes. Change the aspect ratio … never. Never post a “squeezed” image!
DO ENSURE YOUR PROFILE PIC IS HIGH QUALITY

Check your profile picture and make sure it is a high quality image cropped to a square format. This is the image that represents your account and your hotel so it's important to make sure it looks professional. We advise you to use your hotel logo.

DO INCLUDE A STRONG DESCRIPTION ON YOUR ACCOUNT, INCLUDING A URL

Look at the description of your account. Is it succinct? Does it represent your hotel well? Is it professional? If not, fix it! Your account description is the only place on Instagram that you can include a url. Think about what url you should include – your IDP or perhaps facebook? Use a nice clean link (not a long url) – if it’s a long ugly url, consider creating a vanity url instead. Make sure to test that the url you use works on mobile.

Logo is crowded and cut off at top and bottom.

Logo is low res, fuzzy and illegible

Very limited description

No account description

Complete, engaging and includes CTA & url.
DO POST CONSISTENTLY
Aim to post at least once a week to keep your followers interested.

DON’T POST TOO OFTEN, OR IN BATCHES
Be careful of “flooding” your followers’ feed. Posting multiple pictures in one day is not advisable. Work on a content plan and think ahead.

DON’T LET YOUR ACCOUNT GO INACTIVE FOR LONG PERIODS
Don’t post a batch of pictures one day and then nothing for weeks before posting another batch and so on. This is guaranteed to annoy your followers. Try to post consistently, within your resource capabilities. Commit to posting a minimum of once a week and focus on quality not quantity.
DO ENGAGE ASSOCIATES AS A CONTENT SOURCE

Think about how you can rally your colleagues to be active contributors to your Instagram account. The account definitely needs one person/small team to run it, but many people can contribute content …

Are there ways you can motivate or incentivize associates to contribute on an on-going basis? Run a photo of the week contest and hang the winning photo in the canteen? Have other associates vote on the best picture? Incentives don’t have to be monetary, just being recognized can be a strong motivator.

If you are concerned about running into issues about associates using mobile phones during their shift, you could specify that the photos should be taken outside the hotel e.g. of the destination, over the weekend.

DO DISPLAY SOCIAL CONTENT IN THE HEART OF HOUSE FOR ASSOCIATES TO VIEW

Display the social media wall in the Heart of House so Associates can see what your guests and followers are saying about the hotel/posting online.

DO RUN AN INSTAGRAM TRAINING SESSION FOR ASSOCIATES

Instagram is a popular, easy and fun channel, lots of people really enjoy using it and find it to be the simplest social network around! Why not run a short training session for Associates who want to know more about Instagram, or need help to figure out how it works. It will help them understand what you’re trying to achieve via this channel and you might find you have some expert photographers right under your nose.
DO FOLLOW OTHER INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS FOR INSPIRATION

Find and follow accounts that you love on Instagram – this is the best source of inspiration! Look also at the global brand account, other hotels in your brand, competitors in your destination, or other similar hotels (e.g. airport/resort) as well as influential Instagrammers in your destination.

DO INTERACT WITH OTHER ACCOUNTS

Like and comment on pictures you like, both when they are UGC related to your hotel and destination, or if they inspire you! By interacting with other accounts you extend your reach and visibility, may attract more followers and you might make some friends! (For example: by interacting with an influential Instagrammer from time to time you might then have an opportunity to invite them to an event in your hotel in the future). Be genuine in your communications with other users.
DO THINK ABOUT WHAT LANGUAGE YOU POST IN

There are several options when you think about language of your captions in Instagram and you need to think about what makes most sense for your hotel and audience:

- English only
- Local language only
- Multi-lingual posting

If posting in more than one language, here are some guidelines:

- Either post your caption in both languages (ex. 1 below), or
- Use the comments to post in the second language (ex. 2 below)
- Be consistent, always follow the same model once you’ve found one that works best for you
- Do not post in more than 2 languages, it will be confusing to users and difficult to manage

Ex. 1: Caption has both EN and local language. Use // or ** to separate the two languages. Hashtag can be added once at the end of the caption, or in a separate comment.

Ex. 2: Caption is in English. 2nd language translated caption is then added in a separate comment.
DO LOOK FOR ARTICLES AND BEST PRACTICE FOR BRANDS/BUSINESSES ON INSTAGRAM

There are many good articles and blogs out there that can teach you more about how to manage a great Instagram account, make this part of your reading! Look for articles that give tips on taking great smartphone photography, or what the best companion apps for Instagram are. Read, learn and test.

Here are a few examples to get you started:

- Creative Smartphone Photography hacks
- 10 Tips for Mastering Instagram
- Official Instagram blog, news, tips and inspiration
DO DISCOVER COMPANION APPS

There are lots of great apps out there than can be used to make your images even better for Instagram. Play around and test these to see how you can improve your image quality. Remember though that Instagram itself has a lot of photo editing capabilities, use them too!

DON’T OVERUSE COLLAGE APPS

Try not to use collage apps like Diptic, PhotoGrid or InstaCollage too much. They can be nice from time to time, but again remember that the simpler and cleaner and image is the better for mobile viewing on Instagram.

Check out these free apps:

* Faded
* VSCOcam
* Rookie
* and more …
DO ACTIVATE INSTAGRAM ACROSS OTHER ONLINE CHANNELS

- Activate the Instagram icon on the social media bar of your IDP
- Pull your Instagram feed (or popular hashtag feed) into your social media wall
- Consider pulling your Instagram feed into Facebook via the Iconosquare app

http://iconosquare.com/instagram-promote
DO LOOK AT WHAT’S TRENDING ON INSTAGRAM AND FIND OPPORTUNITIES

Is there a fun trend you can jump on and make work from your hotel?
E.g. #fromwhereistand - got a great view from somewhere in your hotel?
E.g. #tbt or #throwbackthursday -

#fromwhereistand

#throwbackthursday
DO LOOK AT NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUR FOLLOWERS
E.g. a competition, a popular approach to photos, a great hashtag etc. Share with us when you come across an effective concept, we’ll share it with all hotels.

Check out WEBSTA_ME on Instagram, they regularly run user competitions selecting a winner (#WebstaPick) of the week.
DO EXPERIMENT WITH VIDEO ON INSTAGRAM, HYPERLAPSE AND APPS LIKE FLIPAGRAM

Learn more about Hyperlapse and check out some cool examples, see what Flipagram offers. BUT only post if the quality is good!!

Video
APPENDIX

Instagram quick wins – back to basics
INSTAGRAM QUICK WINS

Profile

Add description and website url to your account profile
- log in, tap “Edit Your Profile”, complete fields “Website” & “Bio”
- e.g. SheratonFrankfurtAirport Official Instagram account of the Sheraton Frankfurt Airport Hotel.
Share your experiences with #sheratonfrankfurtairport http://www.sheratonfrankfurtairport.com

Hashtags

Use hashtags
Hashtags are the way that users search for images on Instagram
You can use multiple hashtags on each image, so think about using:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>#sheraton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campaign</td>
<td>#betterwhenshared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiator</td>
<td>#sheratonclub, #sheratonfitness, #socialhour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>e.g. #sheratonmunich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>e.g. #munich, #mydubai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>e.g. #travel #holiday #golf #cocktail #summertime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INSTAGRAM QUICK WINS

Captions
Add captions to your images
Give people a little information about the image you share.
E.g. #SundaySnapshot: Discover the #desert beaches of #Egypt. We've got a chaise waiting for you at the Sheraton Sharm Hotel & Spa.

Inspiration
Follow other Starwood accounts for inspiration
Here are just a few of our favourites:
Sheraton Frankfurt Airport http://instagram.com/sheratonfrankfurtairport
Sheraton Edinburgh http://instagram.com/sheratonedinburgh
Sheraton Hotels (global brand) http://instagram.com/sheratonhotels

Follow & engage
If you want followers, likes and comment, then follow, like and comment!
Follow: other Sheraton hotels; Starwood hotels in your city/region; important Instagramers in your destination – tourist boards, airlines, bloggers; users who like or comment on your pictures; users who’ve geo-tagged images to your location.
Interact – like, comment and ask permission to re-post.
INSTAGRAM QUICK WINS

Geo-tag your images
By geo-tagging your images you are linking them to your location and making them more searchable and findable!
When posting an image turn on the “Add to photo map” setting, and select your location from the list.

Link your Instagram account to facebook and twitter
By linking your accounts you can easily share content across platforms.
Instagram images look great on facebook and twitter.
You can add other social profiles in Settings > Share settings
Take it a step further by adding your Instagram feed to your facebook page using free tool Statigram – find out how here: https://apps.facebook.com/instagram_feed/

Top tip!

Crowd source your content
The associates in the hotel are perfectly placed to capture great images. They see the hotel every day, in every light and from every angle. You can create a team of photographers to help generate Instagram content.
Activate the “Sheraton Associate Photo Competition” which provides an incentive for any associate to take great pictures that can be shared on the hotel’s Instagram feed.
INSTAGRAM QUICK WINS

UGC

Source and share user generated content

Lots of Instagramers are sharing great pictures of your hotel and destinations. You can use this content on your channels, once you ask for permission and credit the user who took the photo! Here’s a step-by-step guide to sourcing and sharing user generated images:

1. Search for hashtags specific to your hotel or destination on http://iconosquare.com/viewer.php (free desktop Instagram viewer)
2. Search for images geo-tagged to your hotel by clicking on your geotag on Instagram, or searching on www.worldcam.
3. Find an image you’d like to share, log in to Instagram and post a comment on the image asking the user’s permission to post it on your account
4. If the user responds yes, save a screenshot of the conversation
5. Save the image (from a desktop on iconosquare simply right click and save as)
6. Post the image on your Instagram account making sure to tag and credit the owner in the caption (not in a comment) - see sample below, and including the hashtags #regram

Tip: search for the images using a desktop computer – then you’ll be able to right click and save the image. Then switch to your mobile device to post the image.

The image

The post crediting and tagging

Instagramer @aboud and including #regram

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Q&A

Any questions please don’t hesitate to reach out to us:
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