



More and more we are hearing of 'communities' on social media, with big brands creating campaigns to build that community following. Examples such as; giving offers to regular users or members, or using content generated by that community to promote their brand. A community on Social Media works really well because each member is an equal – there isn't a brand speaking down to the followers. Instead, everyone speaks the same voice and through a community, the members can promote the brand or product that is being discussed.

We all respond better to our friends or family telling us how great a product or a venue is, over the product or venue telling us themselves, so it makes sense to attract advocates who will shout about you, instead of you having to do it yourself. These advocates will then spread your message beyond your reach to all of their own networks, or communities.



Advocate marketing is different from influencer marketing, as you are building relationships with current customers who then promote you to their contacts. [Stats show](#) that only 18% of the general public trust influencers whereas an enormous 92% trust advocates, so you can't afford to ignore nurturing these advocates.



### Source

So, how about some [stats](#)?

- Marketing-induced Consumer-to-consumer word of mouth generates 2x more than the sales of paid advertising
- Customers referred by other customers have a 37% higher retention rate
- 25% of people choose to engage with brands because they want to join the community of brand fans
- 73% of millennials feel it is their responsibility to help friends and family make smart purchase decisions
- When it comes to community size, 54% of consumers agree that the smaller the community the greater the influence



So the first place to start your advocate marketing is within your community.

It is a move away from the advertising and promoting that businesses are used to, and it can be a tricky thing to master. So how can you become involved in a community, or even better – create your own, and build your own advocates?

Above all, it is about trust. Think about how you build your relationships offline. As you know, building a valuable connection is a slow process, building engagement and keeping regular communication. It has to be reciprocal and it has to involve listening to what is being said within your industry.



Firstly, you need to decide what the purpose of your listening is;

- Are you building community for your brand?
- Are you wanting to form your own community?
- Are you wanting to join a community?

Who are the people you are trying to attract?

- Do you already know?
- Where are they?
- Can you speak to them?
- Are you already engaged?

To build a strong community on social media, make sure that communication goes both ways. Let your community share ideas and feedback with you, and share useful information with them.

Firstly, we are going to look at using Facebook.

Facebook Groups are probably the best and easiest way to build a community on social media. Unlike a 'page' where there is one voice speaking to the followers, a group encourages peer support and guidance. Depending on your industry, there are various ways you can approach this.

A group can be public, private or secret. A secret group is only recommended for friends, as you need to be in contact with the other members before they can join. Creating a 'closed' group is probably the best place to start, as you can control the number of people who are joining, and also monitor those requesting to join. It is vital to have a strong admin team within a group, and to uphold that groups rules and regulations.

For our recent project, LOVE Digital, we created a closed Facebook group for all of the women who were on the project. This fulfilled a number of criteria that we had as part of the project.



It worked incredibly well, for a number of reasons;

- The women were kept up to date with new content on the website and within the project
- Questions were asked in the comfort of a private group so no-one was made to feel inferior or silly for asking what may be a straightforward question
- We were able to let them know of updates to workshops including venue and time – without having to contact them all separately
- It was open forum for all the members
- Their confidence grew through using the group, they were able to network with each other
- As the project went on, the women were able to support each other, and answer questions before we got there – further increasing their confidence and their relationships with each other.

The group was an equal forum – somewhere private and comfortable, with people that they trusted. They are now at a point where any of those members can either recommend each other, or network together, further increasing their possible reach of products and services.

A very successful Facebook Group has been created by one of our clients, Yarlington Housing.



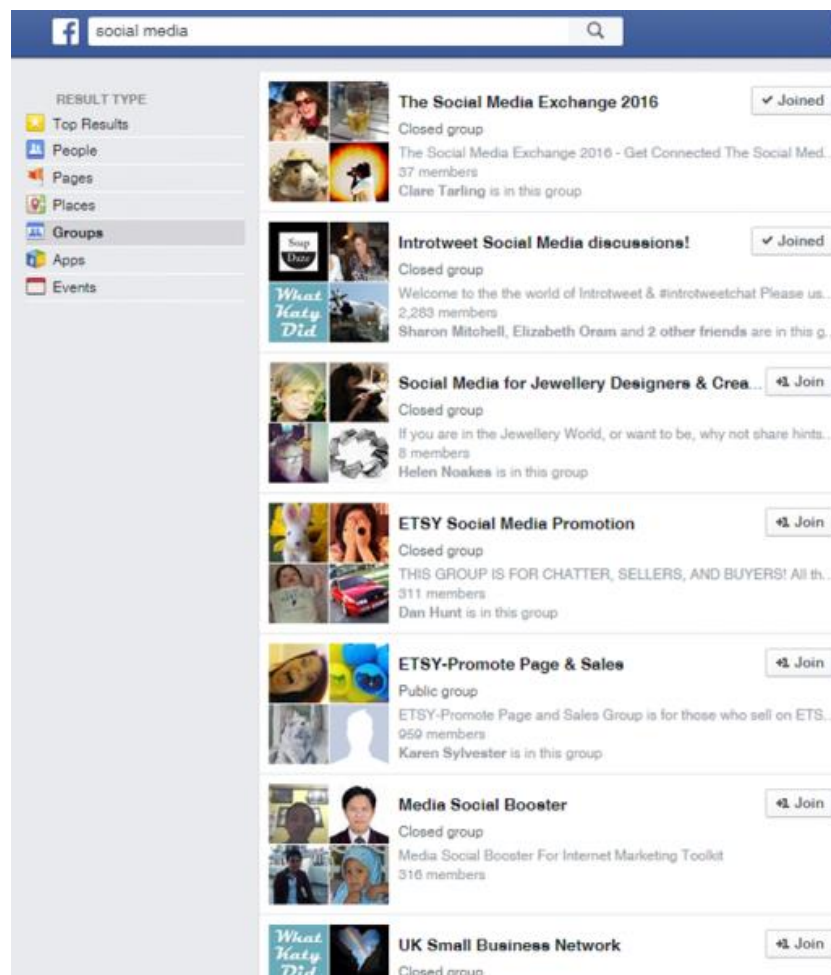
Ultimately, Yarlington Housing wanted to find a way to involve all of their residents to improve communication with them. Barriers such as mental health, physical disability or location were factors that may have affected the residents ability to attend meetings or other ways of communicating, so a Facebook group was formed – the aim to create an online community. This helped Yarlington Housing build relationships with their residents, and form the trust required for both parties to be happy with the service. Friendships were formed, questions were answered and members supported each other over a number of issues including depression and housing matters. The group continues to be a huge success and has over 4,000 members.

To read more of their success using online community you can read a Guardian article here:

<http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/sep/08/how-build-online-community-residents>

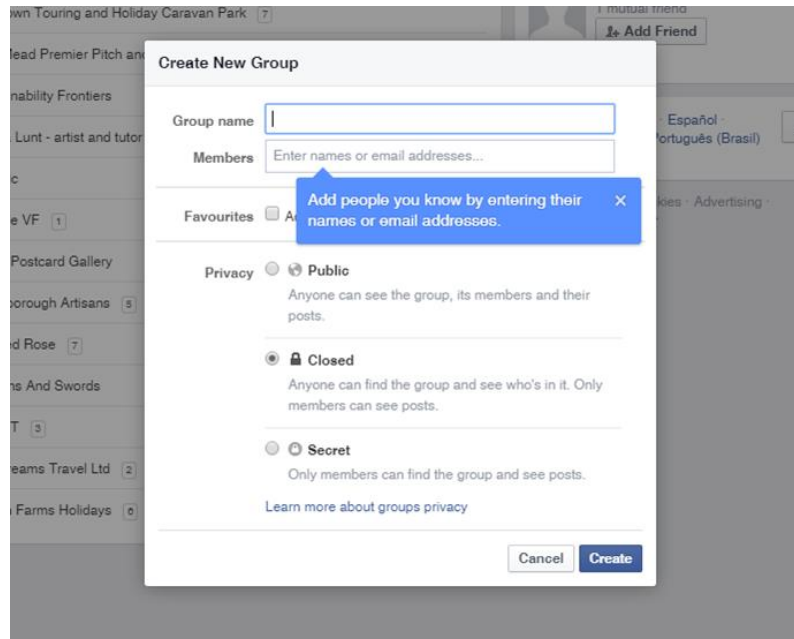
## Creating your own group

It is easy to find groups that may be relevant to you or your business by searching the keyword in Facebook and then clicking 'groups'. Remember however that you can only join a group as a person, not a business.



Creating your own group is also very easy, but be clear from the outset what the purpose of the group is, and how it can benefit your business. You may want to have it as a Q&A forum, you may want to network with other like-minded people, you may want it as a support network, however you want to use it you must make it clear to those joining.





Once you have created your group and you have regular members joining, remember to;

- Share updates that are useful for your community
- Publish updates often - both new content as well as responses to your community
- Make information easy to find for your community - fill out your bio, add links to your website, etc
- Do your best to keep your community engaged on your profile by responding to comments, holding chats, building groups, etc
- Let other members answer the questions for you - you will find that the support each member gives each other is more valuable

Give your members the opportunity to answer questions and advise others. But why?

- It boosts their confidence
- They gain realisation of their own expertise
- They have first hand experience
- Builds relationships with each other
- Open forum
- Equal between admin and members

As an admin, always monitor the activity on the group, by asking members their thoughts, which helps you tailor the content throughout your wider social media or website. Can you be writing blog content on frequently asked questions? What other content can you devise from your group chat?



Remember to always be authentic which in turn will build up trust within your group members, and they then can become your advocates and shout louder than you will be able to!

## Instagram

Like Facebook, you can use Instagram very successfully to build your community. Instagram bases most of its popularity on its ability to connect people and grow a loyal following, and this is mainly through building genuine communities between likeminded Instagrammers.

There are a few ways you can become part of a strong community, or start to create your own.

## Instameets



[Source](#)

What is an instameet?

An instameet is, quite simply, a meeting of people who use Instagram. It gives Instagrammers an opportunity to network with each other, and have a 'real life' connection. Of course it is essential that photos are taken and uploaded to the platform during the instameet. A relevant hashtag should be chosen and used so that followers can check in and feel part of the event.

Anyone can create an Instameet, but there are a few things to bear in mind. Think about your location, how many people you want to invite, and what hashtag you want to use to promote the event. Make a plan for the meetup so that all the attendees have a clear understanding of how it will work. Hootsuite have written a great article on how to create an Instameet which you can read [here](https://community.instagram.com/).

The most important thing about hosting an Instameet is to have fun, build your community and enjoy using your camera.

For more information on Instameets, take a look at <https://community.instagram.com/>

## Challenges

# #MARCH MEET THE MAKER

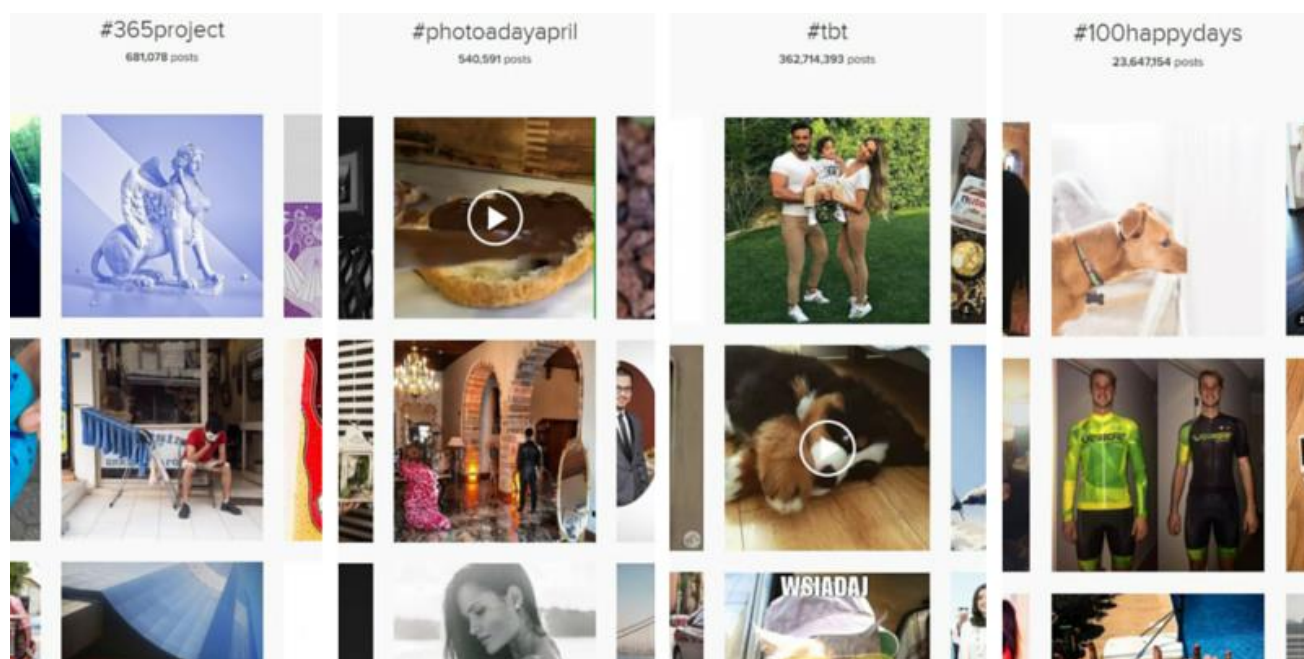
Instagram challenge by  
**@JOANNEHAWKER**

Tell your business story...

1. Brand image
2. You
3. Workspace
4. Tools
5. Can't live without
6. Raw materials
7. How & why?
8. Where
9. Goals
10. Favourite small business
11. Post run
12. First ever sale
13. Feedback
14. Creative friends
15. Inspiration
16. Time to relax
17. Photography
18. Shelfie
19. Helper
20. Sketchbook
21. Work clothes
22. Best seller
23. Studio playlist
24. Milestone
25. Packaging
26. Colour/texture
27. Routine
28. Organised
29. In action
30. Books or blogs
31. Customers

Challenges are getting more and more popular on Instagram, with new ones popping up every week. But what are they?

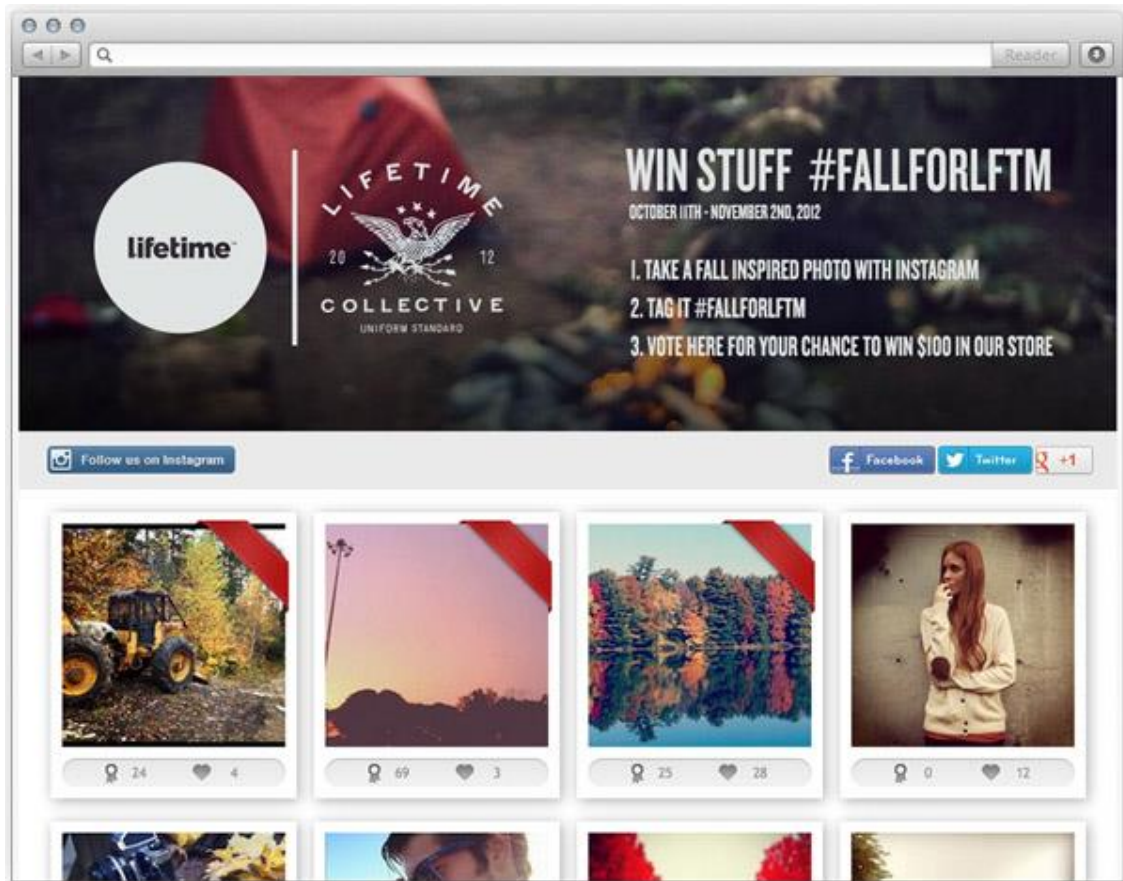
Challenges come in lots of forms, but ultimately they are another form of engaging with other accounts with the aim of becoming part of a growing community. Anyone can create a challenge on Instagram, choosing any subject or any timeframe. Below are some generic examples of how they can work.



It is really easy to set up your own challenge, you just need to set a clear theme. Make it easy for people to get involved and remember to promote it well before it starts throughout all of your social media to get as much engagement as possible. You will find as the challenge progresses more and more people will get involved as they have a snowball effect. Decide on the timeframe beforehand – do you want it to run for a week? A month? A year? Monthly challenges are the most popular as it gives followers enough time to join in and create a buzz about it. This gives you, the host, a great opportunity to build up your followers, but remember to engage with the accounts that are involved in the campaign. This will all feed back to the influencer marketing that we [spoke about](#) in part one of this blog series.



## Campaigns



### Source

Campaigns work similarly to challenges, but they are usually held by larger brands, and there is usually a prize involved for those that engage. The purpose of the campaign is always to gain influencers through the general public. Therefore, campaigns are a great addition to a brand's marketing strategy, and allows them to build reputation through user-generated content that is usually required to 'enter' the challenge.

Like challenges, anyone can create a campaign. However, it is key to have a clear plan of how the campaign will run, and how followers can enter. Have a great prize on hand for them, and remember to have a memorable hashtag that needs to be used within all campaign entries.

The beauty of Instagram is that through hosting instameets, challenges or campaigns, you are essentially building your following and reputation through using other people's content. The more other accounts get involved, tagging you and using your hashtag, the bigger the buzz surrounding you.





Make sure you acknowledge those getting involved, and keep the energy created going, following each campaign or challenge.

Ultimately, anyone can build a following but by nurturing your audience and keeping them happy you can create a huge influential following which in turn become your tribe, your community. It does require time and sometimes investment, but if you remain authentic, passionate and involved, it won't feel like effort.

If you would like more information about building a community through using social media please get in touch.