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POV: INSTAGRAM STORIES: HOW PHARMA
MARKETERS CAN EMBRACE THE NEW
STORY FEATURE

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INSTAGRAM STORIES: HOW PHARMA MARKETERS CAN EMBRACE THE NEW STORY FEATURE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 2, Instagram introduced “Instagram Stories,” a new feature that lets users and brands share photos and videos in the form of a slideshow — a “story” — that stays on a user’s Instagram page for 24 hours and then disappears.



With this new format, users are encouraged to share more content on the platform — as much as they want in up to 10-second increments. Users can bring stories to life using text, filters and drawing tools.

If this sounds familiar, it is because [Instagram Stories](#) is a near perfect clone of Snapchat Stories. Snapchat’s version was introduced in 2013 and resulted in an immediate increase in user engagement on the platform. We expect Instagram’s engagement rate to follow suit.

This POV will cover how Stories works, how brands can leverage the feature and address implications for pharma marketers.

BACKGROUND

Instagram will soon allow users to snap and share photos and videos to create stories. While there are many similarities between Snapchat and Instagram Stories, there are also some differences, primarily in the ease of Instagram’s user interface, which could be the winning feature for the platform and for marketers alike.

HOW STORIES WORK

An Instagram account is needed to create a story. Content creators can publish 10-second-long stories. Users can also add text, filters and drawings to a photo or video before adding it to a story.

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Users can take photos and videos with the Instagram app or manually upload them to a story. Each photo and video added throughout the day expires 24 hours after it was posted.



An algorithm positions stories front and center, at the top of users' main feeds, rather than in chronological order. In order to see a person's or brands' story, a user must be following that account. The more the user interacts with someone, the more likely they are to see their story as the first available story at the top of their feed.

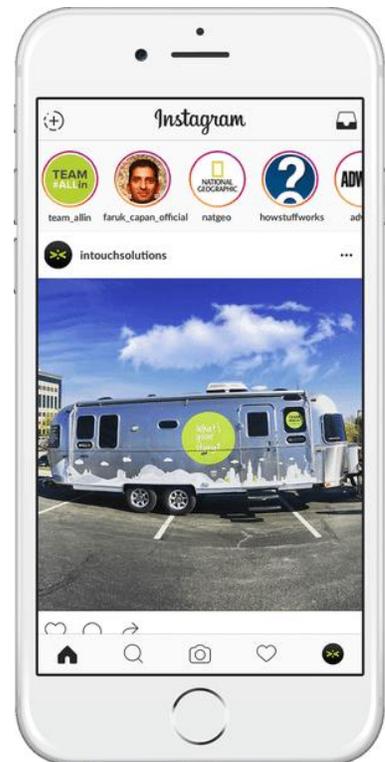
Users will be able to see when there is a story ready to view by a ring placed around the creator's profile picture. Clicking on that profile picture takes users to the account's latest story.

When viewing a story, users can tap to pause or navigate back or forward within stories.

While it is easy to view stories, users cannot "like" or comment publicly. However, if the creator allows messaging, users can send private messages on Instagram Direct.

Stories will be rolling out globally on iOS and Android over the next few weeks.

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IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

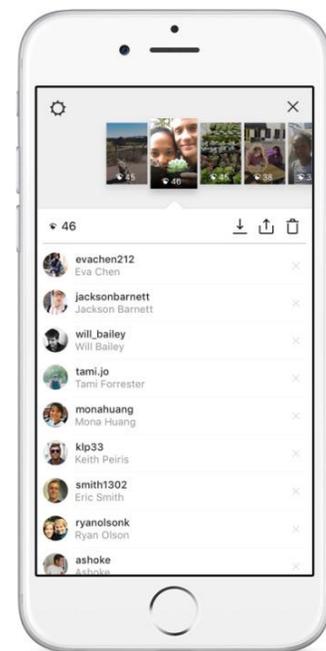
Brands can use Instagram Stories in the same ways they are [using Snapchat](#), so there are similar implications.

The benefit of Instagram Stories is that brands can post content without worrying about “oversharing.” Without Stories, brands that flood their audience’s feeds risk lost followers and lower engagement. Marketers are now in more control of sequencing and creative that can accompany content, and having users opt in to view the content means there is a lower risk of oversaturation.

The applications are endless. Using stories strategically requires a meaningful and systematic approach that can also drive traffic to other digital assets. Keep in mind, however, that going viral shouldn’t be the ultimate goal when sharing Stories on Instagram; the goal is providing engaging and relevant content.

Here are some examples of the types of stories brands can create. It is important to note that the ability for marketers to upload produced images or existing photos means all content can be reviewed by regulatory teams before publishing if necessary.

1. **Behind-the-scenes content** – This type of content humanizes a brand and may not otherwise be shared in a typical Instagram feed. Stories allow your brand to engage with users in a way that lets them connect more deeply with the content and community. For example, a pharma corporate account could create a story while attending a conference. (“We’re on the ground at ASCO 2017 ... Come see us!”)
2. **Live and/or timely content** (much like [Periscope](#)) – Instagram Stories offers the perfect “venue” to provide a view that may influence existing followers to attend a live event, such as a local patient program or educational webinar. Adding a URL to registration or opt-in as a text overlay could be convenient way for users to obtain additional information about what they see on Instagram.





3. **Takeovers** – “Takeovers” happen when brands work with others to help develop content for a day on the account's behalf. Much like the concept of hosting “chats,” Instagram “takeovers” are a great way for brands and influencers to collaborate and grow the audience by providing varied perspectives on specific topic areas. The perspective and voice of these posts are from someone other than the brand, hence the name. This may provide an opportunity for HCPs or caregivers to contribute without constantly posting to the account's feed. Account owners never have to relinquish control of the account, and all content can be preapproved. Showcasing day-to-day events, such as a daily routine for caregivers, may be valuable for some users.

ANALYTICS

Instagram has been working to provide better analytics for brands for some time. In addition to the Facebook Insights-like analytics shown to the new business profiles, Stories will show accounts the number of people and which specific users have seen each photo or video in a story.

MODERATION

Control is still in the users' hands. Brands can turn off the ability for their audience to message their account through stories or encourage direct messaging to engage and connect with their audience.

ADVERTISING

The trend of social platforms monetizing the opportunity for brands to get in front of their consumers is clear. We anticipate that Instagram might introduce paid media options to promote stories in a way that may even allow for targeting specific audiences.

ALGORITHMS

Leveraging Stories could be a way for marketers to beat [Instagram's recently introduced algorithm](#) that prioritizes posts users want to see. If a brand does not have high priority in a user's

Done	Story Settings
	Hide Story From 0 People >
	ALLOW MESSAGE REPLIES
	Everyone ✓
	People You Follow
	Off
	Choose who can reply to your story.



feed, the user may see the brand's content in their stories. Users voluntarily click to engage with stories, which means their content consumption is more intentional.

CONCLUSION

Instagram Stories provides an interesting opportunity for brands and users to leverage well-constructed, intuitive features on an easy-to-use interface. Brands with an Instagram account who may be interested in Snapchat could try out Instagram Stories first to take advantage of their existing audiences and test the story format. Instagram Stories allows brands to more efficiently meet the need for providing content of an ephemeral nature that audiences are consuming at unprecedented rates.

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