Using Instagram

Did you know that the human brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than words? This is why Instagram is such a powerful platform for sharing stories and ideas, in particular for research.

80% of Instragram's users are outside of the US and it has a much higher engagement rate than other platforms. So if you build up a following and manage to pitch it right, it could be a simple way to engage and share research.

Building a profile
Whether an individual or an organisation, it is important to have a consistent image/logo so followers can connect with you easily.

1. Bio
This is your opportunity to introduce your 'message', 'vision' or 'idea' – tell your follower who you are and what you do; and perhaps include a call to action!

Include awards or accolades, to build trust; and link to your website, or one that speaks to your ideas (this is something you can change regularly as you can't put links in).

This is also your opportunity to explain if you are someone that 'regrams', as in, do you re-share other images that aren't your own. If you do want to do this, you need to be explicit that you do, and make it clear in each individual image.

What's your Strategy?
It helps to have a clear sense of what you want to achieve by using Instagram. This will give you a structure and focus, even if it is as simple as wanting to connect and engage with those who share a similar interest.

1. Goal
If you identify your goal from the outset, it will help you work out what you want to share.

2. Audience
Start by following people and organisations you're interested in, and see who they're following. Hopefully, it will start to build up, once they see that you have similar interests.

3. Timing and frequency
Be mindful not to bombard followers; around 1-3 images a day is the general quota for sharing. Obviously, this may be flexible according to context, but useful to keep it in mind.

Telling Stories
Instagram has introduced its 'stories' feature. This is where you can post a set of images/videos, and it will appear on the top-line of your followers' Instagram. These disappear 24 hours, and are a great way for telling the 'behind the scenes' version of that event you are participating in, or the project you are working on, rather than the more polished pictures and videos that will stay in your Instagram library.

These might work well for a campaign, or a finite period. You could do up to 5-10 a day of these.

Remember: keep the camera vertical, as that's how people will watch them on their phone.

Hashtags and captions

This is a way to stream your content into categories, and allow people to find your content even if they aren't following you, or for you to build up content, even if they don't mention you in their post.

Spend some time researching the most relevant hashtags as it's a good way to build a following.

Use the captions to tell the back story of the image. You are not limited to the Twitter 140 characters – so feel free to provide the full context.

Taking your pictures/videos

Be mindful that these **images** will stay on your account long after that event or workshop, so they need to present more than the 'here and now' and show what you or your organisation are all about. You could use the caption to provide the context of the image as well.

The better the quality of these images, the stronger your account will be. There are plenty of tools to improve your images, but keep in mind, that clear and interesting images will work well. For example, if you are at a conference, try to avoid the classic 'back of heads shot' – look for something unique and striking that tells a story.

You can also share short videos, and use tools like:

- Hyperlapse – to capture live events
- Boomerang – a quick reaction
- LoopVid – gif; a way to deepen people's perception of your message

Followers and following

Obviously, the main aim is to build that following and all the points above should help you to achieve that. The main points are:

- Post regularly, but do not bombard your followers
- Make sure images are high quality and fit with your goal
- Think about what you are sharing and whether it will peak someone's interest
- If you are using stories, plan it out as you would any other story
- Use hashtags to get new followers; who is using the # you are interested in? Follow them! You can also show you are part of their community by using the same #
- Spend some time finding relevant hashtags; do this regularly as they often change
- Follow influencers - if they follow you that will encourage their followers to follow you as well.