

AMP 012: How and When to Direct Message Content Curators on Instagram



Show Notes

- [009: Learn What to Post on Instagram](#)
- A few of the most popular Instagram meme curators: [@thefatjewish](#) and [@fuckjerry](#)
- A few examples of art curators on Instagram: [@taxcollection](#), [@instagood](#), [@passionpassport](#), [@worldtravelbook](#), [@folkmagazine](#), [@hifuctosemag](#), [@thevisualscollective](#), [@beautifuldestinations](#), [@avant.art](#), [@love.watts](#)
- [Rate and Review](#) the Art Marketing Podcast on iTunes

Transcribe

We have done a bit of an Instagram kick lately. We've covered how to learn what to post on Instagram, how to get those creative ideas by writing hashtags. We covered what I know is going to be the first of many episodes on Instagram stories, and our last episode was on Instagram direct messaging tactic that you can employ that does not scale.

Today we're coming with yet another Insta podcast, and I'm fired up about it. Why Instagram? Why so much attention to Instagram? It's where the attention is. This podcast has really been growing lately, and thank you so much to all you guys that are listening. I really appreciate you're here. For those new listeners that are just joining us and seeing it for the first time, welcome. This is the Art Marketing Podcast. It's a podcast where we like to talk about marketing strategy and tactics to help you sell your art online. Lately, it might feel like the Instagram marketing podcast, and you know what? It very well might be for the very near future here. Really, though, it's the attention marketing podcast. The deeper we get into creating this thing, the more feedback we're getting in, the more I realize that my job, our job with this show, is to get to where the attention is first, get good at marketing and leveraging it, and then teach you how to do it. That's the game, and I love playing it.

Permit me an analogy, if you will. I came up with this this morning, but I really like it. It's Instagram is an epic house party. That's what it is. What do I mean? You ever been to a huge hours party that just has a bunch of rooms? That's Instagram right now. The house is Instagram, and its rooms are the various

different techniques and features of Instagram, stories, hashtags, direct messages, etc. The various different rooms have different vibes, different adult beverages, and different music. First, Instagram is the house party of all house parties right now. Some people may not have heard about it yet, but they will, and they're all sure to be coming in soon, so get in now if you have not and start your account. All the beautiful, well-connected, and cool folks are already in attendance, right? The folks that you want to know, so you go to where the attention is.

Most folks have decided to congregate in the great room by the front door, and that's where the most folks are comfortable to stay. They'll congregate around the keg, talk about weather, complain about how art doesn't sell online because millennials have no money, cheap art from China, saturated market, or some such other BS. That's not you, though, right? Not you. Others, they've started exploring the house. Perhaps they've been here for days, weeks, years. They've come to find out this house is a mansion with the rooms, nooks, crannies all over the place. There's stuff going on downstairs, upstairs, in the backyard. Some folks are in the spa crushing a crisp white wine and talking about the America's Cup. The house is so amazing there's even rooms yet to be discovered and yet to be built. I'm really having fun with this analogy.

What's even better is that there is no definitive guide or summary. These rooms are in flux. They're evolving. They are changing. New formats and paradigms are literally being created all the time, and anybody can come in. It's the Wild, Wild, West. Even better, it's not a popularity contest to get started. It doesn't matter if you just walked into the house and have a few friends, you

just started your account, low follower count, or if you're the most popular person in the whole house, anybody can come party.

I realize a lot of what I want this podcast to be is meeting you at the front door of this crazy house party, handing you a map, so to speak, to all the cool stuff that's going on and what's going on in some of these amazing rooms that we've discovered so far anyway, right? So you can determine how to best leverage these techniques, these tactics for your art and your art career and to make more sales online. That's both now and in the future as we continue to learn and things evolve. It's just amazing what's going on there. All the attention is there. Even for the people that say, "Well, Instagram's been around so long. There's so many people on it. I don't have followers," and I'm telling you, what's going on in these individual rooms, these individual tactics, is brand-new to everybody. The playing field is completely level, and being that they're brand-new to everyone, there's even more access to attention in these various different rooms. It's incredible.

For today, I want to stick to this topic of Instagram direct messages, DMs. These are the messages that you can send to people on Instagram that's kind of sort of like email. To stick to my room analogy, it's a room very few people are actually hanging out in. When you think about how busy your email box is, how much noise there is in there in that thing today, how hard it is to get your attention, then you couple that with the fact of how many people are checking Instagram on a daily basis, and even more than a daily basis ... I mean, if you're really young, it swings crazy high, but even ... I'm 38 years old. I have plenty of friends. I am absolutely an art buyer. I have plenty of friends that are

checking it 5, 10, 15 ... My wife probably checks it 25 times a day. If you're not on Insta, most folks check it a lot.

Then you think about how many Instagram direct messages you are getting a day. I think, for most people listening to this podcast, it's almost never extremely frequent, perhaps it's a few here or there. If you're a teenage girl, it might be 50 a day. Anyway you slice it, it is an empty space. There is an arbitrage opportunity in the Instagram direct message box. Again, why I think this house analogy works and why I enjoy using the adjective amazing in terms of these techniques ... Yes, Instagram's been around for a while. You're not late to the party. Art Storefronts, our business, 2,000 followers, we're late to the party. We're just getting started. It does not matter. It does not matter. You can get in and start operating in these space, start operating in these direct messages, and you're just as strong as anybody else out there. The point is, no excuses, anybody can do this. You can get started tomorrow. I want to attempt to be encouraging in that regard. It's certainly encouraging for us. We're just getting started a business, and I don't think you guys are any different or should be any different.

The technique I want to cover today involves approaching what I call content curators. More on that in a second. These are people that have huge followings, and the the idea is to deliver some value to these folks. Send them a direct message with the idea of getting them to share your work plus links to your Instagram profile and feeds. This has the potential to send hundreds to thousands to even, potentially, hundreds of thousands of people to your work. You hear that, it's like, "What? That many?" Yes. Yes. I'm here to tell you yes.

People say it is a difficult time in history to sell art online. It might be, but the opportunity has never been greater. By effectively exercising this technique, you can get your art in front of hundreds of thousands of people on ... Those are hard ones to do, but it's a possibility which just is amazing. When else in time has somebody been able to do that from the comforts of their home?

Anyway, let's define the terms. What's a content curator, right? I've mentioned them before, I think on this podcast. They're folks that literally just search the Internet all day for the best content, and they curate it and release it. This is something that's been going on for a long time. It was big in the early days of blogging, like The 10 Best Websites on the Internet. They would go find the 10 best websites on the Internet, in terms of design, and then they would put that on their site, right? They're going out and finding those things and they're curating it. It's just blown up on a crazy level on Instagram. Facebook, too, but it's just blown up to a crazy level. It starts at the macro level and goes down to the micro, the biggest catchall niches all the way down to the small niches. There's players at every single solitary level.

I think, after some fun context, there's an example of two that are not art-related, but these guys purely curate comedic memes and Internet themes. They literally go out and find everyone else's work that's funny, share it, and they've grown massive followers. One's called The Fat Jewish, and the other one's called F-word Jerry. Yes, he actually uses the real f-word in it. These two gentleman have amassed 10-million and 12-million-person followings. They've built businesses off of just curating and sharing other people's stuff. Everybody thinks it's hilarious. Some of their content's questionable, some

might say questionable, but most people think it's pretty funny. They're really popular. I'll throw links to these guys in the show notes. This is an example of doing it not in the art niche.

Once you get into the art world, there's some really big curators that just do cool art, so think image of the day or photo of the day that could cover all topics, so big catchalls, all the way down to niche-specific curators. Say if your niche is long-exposure photography or light painting or whatever, there's a curator that just shares the best of the best of that. The sheer amount of these folks out there is crazy. Another easy way to think of it, I've got ... I've used this example before. I have a Sheepadoodle as a dog. There are people out there that are just sharing the best dog stuff, like at that macro. There are people that have created groups around Doodles, that's just sharing the Doodle stuff. Then there's people that are talking about Sheepadoodles, right? An extreme example, maybe just male Sheepadoodles and female Sheepadoodles. It makes it a little bit easier to understand. Throughout all of those things ... I mean, obviously, the smaller the niche, the smaller the follower count, and at the very top, the larger the follower count. Anywhere in that particular range, you can find people that really can deliver some tremendous little bumps of value. Some of the smaller ones can punch way above their weight. You just don't know until you find it and you start engaging it.

Let's go through the steps one by one, the tactical and how this is done. Step one, you find the curators in your niche. Now, we have a podcast episode on how to search Instagram. I'll link to it in the show notes, so listen to that if you

need to. You search for these folks. You find them. You follow them. You make a list of them. I would start out from the biggest of the big, the whales, and go all the way down to the smaller ones. Again, sometimes the power of the smaller guys will blow you way.

Step number two is you run some counterintelligence. You find out and learn about these folks. Remember, you're about to cold email them out of the dark, so it would help to have some intel to make it seem a little bit less spammy. You do this by following the account. You check out everything they posted. You understand the account. You research and see what other information you might be able to find out about them. Do they have a website? If they do have a website, check it out. See the About Me. Do they have a personal Twitter account, a personal Facebook account? Go and find and follow whatever you can. Sometimes it's going to be harder than others depending on the size, but the point is is that you do your homework. You do what you can to find out who you are going to be approaching.

Step three is you determine how you might be able to provide these folks with some value. There's a large range here. I'll cover it briefly. It could be something as little as saying some nice things about them in direct message and starting a conversation. It could be asking them how you can help. It could be complimenting them, providing them feedback, sending a gift box. Quite literally, everything is on the table. We're going to get into what I would consider one of those bigger accounts, but the idea is value, value, value. You need some way to figure out how to provide these people with value. We're working off the subtle psychology of reciprocation here, and you want them in

a position where they want to help you out as well, and that comes from giving them value.

Step four, once you've done this homework and you've determined how you're going to provide them value, it's time for the DM, the direct message, on Instagram. In most cases, and especially for the big accounts, and I'm going to give you three examples here in a second, you really need to provide value. I cannot overstate that part enough. Otherwise, they'll just never respond. You're not going to get it done. It's hard. If it's a small account, a simple ask might actually work, but for any of the big ones it's going to take more than that, as it should, as any good relationship should, right?

Let's start with the small one, and this one's not so small, but let's just say Steve has 10,000 followers. He posts daily. He's somewhat small, but you could send him a DM. This is a smaller case, so I might say something like, "Hey, Steve. Love your account. Love what you do. I know you work hard at finding the best beach paintings on the Internet," let's say that's his niche, "In the hopes that I might make the cut, I figured I would share an image or two with you. I'm not expecting anything, mind you, but I know you're always looking for new stuff. I figured I would at least share something and make it easy. Your fan and Buddy, Patrick." I covered the value portion there, because I know he's sharing and trying to build his following, so I'm just saying, "Hey, here's something that might help you do that." You can, on the small guys, do something like that. The value can be as small as, "Hey, I know you're searching the Internet for this stuff all day," conceptually, "Here's me bringing

it to you so it makes your life a little bit easier. Yes, it's my stuff, but maybe that works." All right. That's example one on the small scale.

Let's go to example two, and let's get a bit bigger. Let's just say this account is called Landscape Photos Today. It's run by Susan. Let's say it has 500,000 followers, which is actually a lot. I start doing my homework, my counterintel. I found out that the woman that runs this is named Susan. I find out that Susan likes cats. Turns out, I like cats too. I know Susan likely gets a fair amount of followers or direct messages, too, and she probably does not respond to most direct messages. I need a good opener to even get in there, right? I'm a pretty creative, cheeky-type person, so I send the following, "Hey, Susan. I love your profile and all that you share. I'm inspired by it daily. How inspired? So inspired, in fact, in thanks for all that you do, I am prepared to come to your house and empty the kitty litter box for the rest of the year for free. That's how much I love what you're doing. Thanks. Patrick." If I send something like that, I took the time to do my homework, find out that she loves cats. I reference cats in it. It's a little cheeky, kind of a fun comment. I'll likely get a response on that, or I stand a much better chance at getting a response, right?

If so, you start the conversation, and when she comes back, it's like, "Lol. Seriously, though, I'm a landscape photographer and would do anything to get featured on your site. Is there anything I can do to help with what you are doing?" Start a relationship. Go back and forth. Try to figure out how to provide some value. Perhaps she comes back with something, asks you to do

that you could help her out. You do it. Next thing you know, your photos are shared on there and you're reaping the benefits.

Now let's talk about the whale situation. Grab your harpoon. You are Ahab. Let's go after a whale. Let's say this account has 10 million followers. This is pretty much the best curator on Instagram. It's the biggest of the biggest. You've heard of people getting shared on this and making their career overnight. This account literally has the potential to make a huge impact on you, so let's treat it as such, right? We got out, we do our homework. As a result of our research and serious digging, let's just say we find out this person loves craft beer, Huzzah. We do too. We also have a geographical asset our disposal. We send this person, let's call him Atlas ... I heard some kid in the park named Atlas the other day. That was really cool.

Let's just say this guy's name is Atlas, "Yo, Atlas. Love your account and what you're doing on IG. Also saw you loved craft beer. Me too. What's more, I live in an interesting part of the country. I'm actually in Vermont right next to the Alchemist Brewery. I'm sure you've heard of Heady Topper before. Have you had it? Tell you what. I love your account and everything you're doing so much, I'd love to send you a case of it. Just respond to this DM with your address and it's in the mail. Thanks so much." That's something that I would do. I would go to that level of sending this guy an entire huge case of beer which is really geographically hard to get, which is one of the top-rated beers, which everyone loves, to potentially get his attention and open up that DM stream, because if you get shared by that account, it is a game changer.

Quickly summing things up, how you do it is not so important as trade craft, so you go to make it your trade craft. Be you. Roll the way you like to roll. Just remember to provide value. Figure out how to do that. Be patient, and send the direct message. I have found that if I engage in this technique in my various different niches and I really drop some value and make sure that part of the equation is out of balance in terms of the value that I've shared to them, you don't even have to ask for them to share. They'll go to your profile, see your stuff, share it for you automatically. That's cooking with gas.

Just stay focused on providing value, the more value the better, before you ask for anything in return. Also, be patient. Remember to be patient. On the big accounts, sometimes getting this accomplished can take months, literally months. Don't be afraid to go big after the big guys. For some of these curators, if they share your stuff, you might be able to peel off several thousand followers, reach several thousand potential art buyers with a single share of one of your images, sometimes more, sometimes less. The technique can be really, really powerful. It's even more so powerful in aggregate when you give it a shot with a bunch of different curators, depending on what's in your niche. Not every niche is going to have 50 different content curators, but you go after the ones that you can in your niche, and you stack up a couple of wins there. It's tremendous.

I mean, what does it look like when it works, right? Let's go into hardcore data on it. I got a message last week from a customer, actually, sent me a DM, as it were, on Instagram. He kind of stumbled into this technique working out for him in a different way, but he took some of my advice about advertising on

Instagram. He advertised on Instagram. One of his ads was BeSeen, one of these content curators, and it was pretty cool what happened. I went and looked at the results and dug into it, and he got a 2,000 follower bump on Instagram.

In addition to it being shared on Instagram, this content curator also has a blog and a Facebook page, shared at both of those places, so he got an additional 400 Facebook followers out of the deal. He got 30 emails that he captured on his website, and he's gotten one sale so far just off of this one mention. As time goes on, more and more of these followers might be ready to buy art and will turn to him. It's going to turn into more sales. This is how you build career and you build a following, but stacking up these wins like this, and so he's doubling down on his Instagram ads and he's staying at it. I told him, "Stay at it where the attention is, where the opportunity is." This is just one of those things. You got to give it a shot.

Let's sum it up. Direct messages on Instagram present an incredible opportunity. You follow the content curators, get to know them, figure out how to bring them value. You start a DM relationship, direct message, with them on Instagram. You get them to share your images. Invest time daily, weekly, monthly working this technique. If it was me, I would keep at this until the attention leaves Instagram or this technique gets played out, which is likely years away. Instagram's a house party. The DMs, the direct messages, are a room in that house party that only the cool people and early movers know

about, so come join the party, crack an adult beverage, and start some conversations.

I really do believe that some conversations with the right people, and it has the potential to really move your career and online sales. All it takes is showing up and doing the work. I get so many comments about, "How do I find high net worth individuals, and how do I find gallery owners, and how do I find art collectors?" I'm telling you, this is how you find them. This is absolutely how you find them. They're not going to follow you. They're not going to find you, but they're following the content curators because they're looking for the new up-and-comers. You get your art on a few of these sites, the next thing you know, your art is in front of the stated goal that I see so often, which is art collectors, high-net-worth individuals, buyers. This is it. It's waiting for you. All you got to do is just roll with it and go for it.

Show notes. All links, resources, additional assets for this episode can be found artmarketingpodcast.com. Think A-M-P, artmarketingpodcast.com. I'm going to include in there, too, I'll do a few links to some of the content curators as well as some of the ones I didn't mention just so you can kind of see and get the visual idea if you don't just get it. If you run this tactic and it works for you, the best thing you can do is send me a DM on Instagram, of course. We're [@art_storefronts](https://www.instagram.com/art_storefronts). I'd love to hear about it. I'd love to hear about how it works, how it worked for you. On that note, yeah, have a great day.

