

The Five Keys to Drafting A Compelling Caption

+ an easy to reference caption checklist

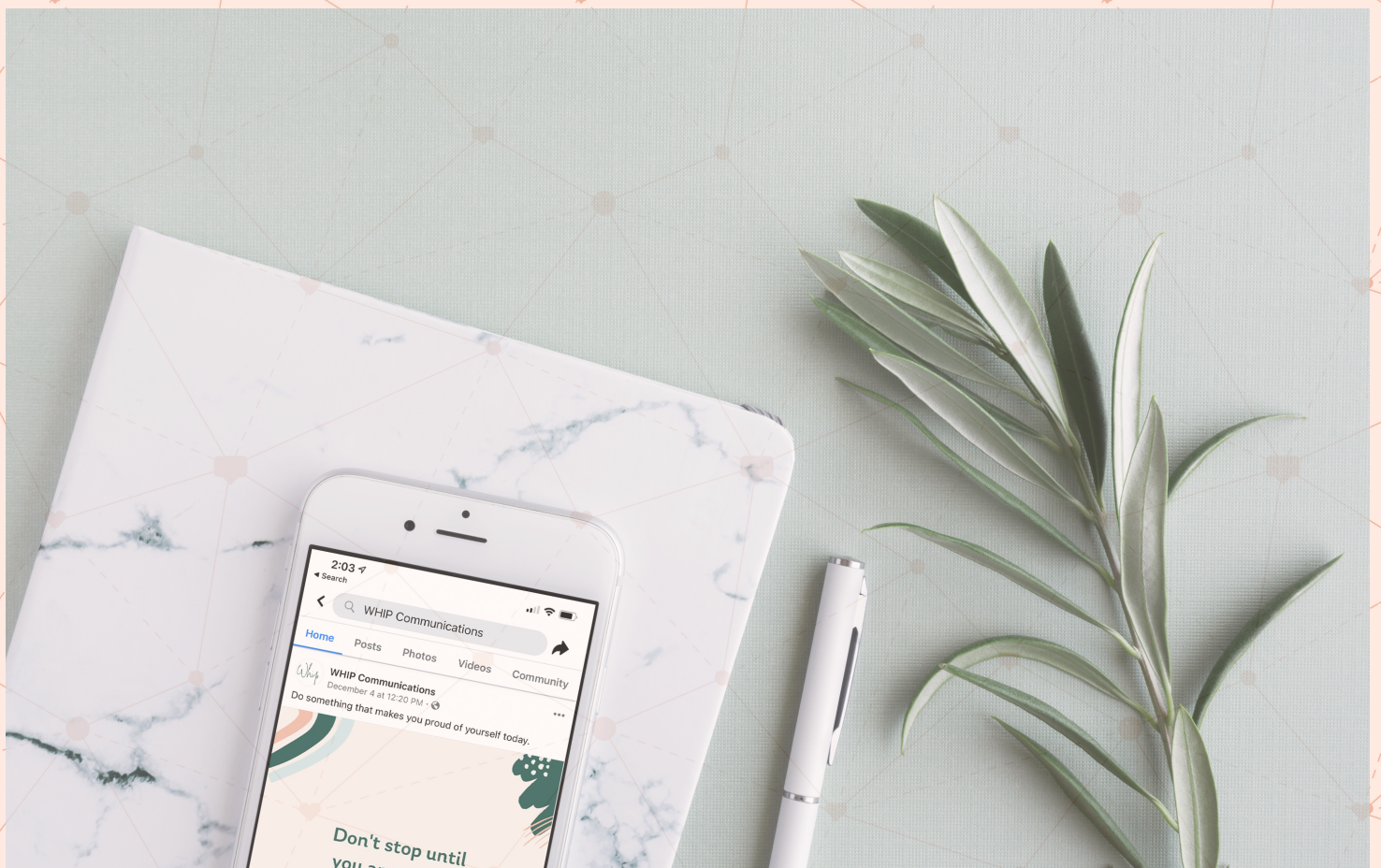


SO...YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO POST.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but there's no better feeling than finding words that fit just right. But we know that doesn't always come easy. We hear from small business owners, nonprofit directors, and even fellow PR professionals all the time —

"Coming up with compelling captions takes too much time!"

The good news is that creating captions that engage your audience, reflect your brand, and build your organization aren't out of reach. With a little guidance and just an hour of your time, you can craft impactful captions without breaking a sweat. This guide teaches you how.



| · “Here’s lookin’ at you, kid”

Whip

Know your audience.

Imagine your child asks you “where do babies come from?” Your response to a 13 year old boy would be different than your response to a 4 year old girl, yes? (I hope so!)

That’s because they are two very different audiences.



The captions you write will always depend on who you are writing to — so that’s the first step before you even get out your pen and paper.

Or typewriter.

Or computer.

Or smartphone.

Whatever.

Once you have nailed this down, let the creative juices flow and start captioning!

Ask yourself...



Who do I want this post to resonate with?

How old are they? Where do they live?

What do they value? What matters to them?

What would make that person interested in this post?

2.

“You had me at hello”

Whip

Lead with something interesting.

Make them stop dead in their tracks. If you only have 5 words to get someone's attention, what would you say? Start there.

One of the keys to engaging followers is to come up with a show-stopping first line.

This could be something intriguing and vague that makes them want to read more, a call to action, a question, or anything that makes your audience keep reading.

Need an example? Here's one you might not have thought of.

You know those tantalizing headlines of BuzzFeed articles that make you want to click to read more? That's the sign of a good hook – and that's how you need to start your caption.



(an example of a great first line!)



“Once upon a time...”

Whip

Tell a story to make a connection.

The nice thing about Instagram is that it's conducive to longer captions. This allows you to sell, teach, or inspire in more detail than you would on Twitter. Use this to your advantage and maximize that space by telling a story.

(Though we never recommend literally maxing out a caption — because that maxes out your audience's attention span, too.)

Having more characters gives you time to connect: that's the goal.

Are you a nonprofit trying to engage donors and build a large following? Tell beneficiary stories in a way that brings your work to life.

Are you the owner of an accounting firm? Share how your business can solve your audiences' problem — AKA by taking payroll and taxes off of their plate.

This is the real meat of the caption and builds on your teaser from the first line. You got them to read more, so now is the time to tell them why!

Add value, teach them something, tell them a unique story, and connect them to your mission.



Add line breaks and emojis where relevant.

PLEASE don't write an essay for a caption, copy and paste it into Instagram and call it a day. If you're drafting a caption with more than 5 sentences, repeat after us: *line breaks are my friend.*

If you've tried to add line breaks but can't seem to figure it out, here's the secret: make sure there is no space after the text you want to break. Boom, it's like magic.

You can add plain old line breaks to captions if you're writing a more long form, prose caption, or you can use emojis. We're big fans of emojis! Who doesn't love...

a cute smiley face 😊

a dancing queen 💃

or even a rainbow after a storm 🌈

Emojis are a great tool to catch someone's eye and tell a fun story. They can also help you organize your thoughts by creating a bulleted list, adding numbers, or highlighting what you want readers to see.



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- 📢 Make sure that the nursing voice is heard in the halls of power
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Donate at the link in our bio!

5. “I’ll have what she’s having”

Whip

Add a call to action.

Social media is all about getting people to want what you offer. Once you draw them in with a hook and captivate them with a story, lead them to the next step: taking action.

Most captions should end with a CTA like:

- Donate.
- Learn more.
- Buy now.
- Sign a petition.
- Leave a comment.

If you want people to do something after reading your post, you have to tell them! Never assume that people will be so intrigued by your caption that they visit your blog page without being told to: they won’t.

The average attention span is just 8 seconds – which means if someone has read this far, it’s the best chance you have to level up.

Be clear, concise, and strategic if you’re including a call to action. Make sure it’s something that makes sense, connects with the rest of the caption, and is easy.



NOW IT'S TIME TO START DRAFTING.

You have the content and we know you have the creativity to create some awesome, engaging Instagram posts! This guide is just the beginning of your social media marketing journey.

It's time to bring it all together.

Remember that nonprofit organization that's trying to engage prospective donors and build a large following? Here's how their caption might look.

Use the sample caption — and the checklist below — as a guide while you draft your captions.

- Know your audience
- Lead with something interesting
- Tell a story to make a connection
- Use line breaks and emojis
- Add a call to action

Now that you know the secret sauce to creating strong captions that convert, there's no stopping you.

You've got this!

