

FREE PLAYBOOK

The Instagram Growth Playbook

You know *when* to post. This is the *how* — from idea to Reel script to monthly review — in one repeatable system.

WHO IT'S FOR

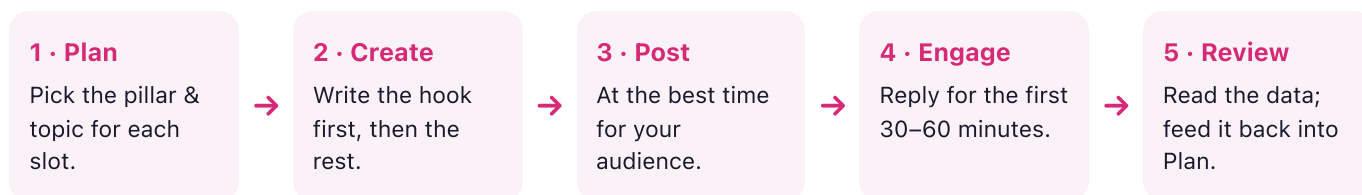
Founders, creators, and small teams growing an Instagram account without a big budget.

HOW TO USE IT

Read once end to end, then keep it open as a checklist while you plan each week.

The growth loop

Growth isn't one big move — it's a small loop you run every week. Most accounts stall because they only do the first half (create & post) and skip the second (engage & review). Run the whole loop.



Timing (step 3) is covered by the companion 90-Day Calendar and the best-time guide at leadmore.ai. This playbook covers steps 1, 2, 4, and 5 — the parts that decide whether good timing actually pays off.

THE ONE RULE THAT TIES IT TOGETHER

Ship a consistent volume you can sustain, judge each post by **saves and shares** (not likes), and make more of whatever earns them. Everything below serves that rule.

1 · Plan — pillars & an idea bank

"What do I post?" stops being hard once you have pillars. Pick 3–5 recurring themes and rotate them, so every slot in your calendar maps to a pillar.

FIVE PILLARS THAT WORK FOR ALMOST ANY ACCOUNT

Pillar	What it does	Example
Educate	Teaches one useful thing — builds authority & saves	"3 mistakes that kill your reach"
Behind-the-scenes	Shows the human/process — builds trust	"How we make one Reel in 20 min"
Social proof	Results, reviews, UGC — lowers buying friction	"What 30 days of this looked like"
Point of view	A take people agree or argue with — drives shares	"Stop posting at 9am. Here's why."
Offer	What you sell / do — the occasional direct ask	"Here's how to work with us"

THE IDEA BANK: 8 HOOK TEMPLATES

A post lives or dies on its first line. Fill these in:

- "X mistakes that are killing your [result]"
- "How to [outcome] in [time] — even if [objection]"
- "Stop doing X. Do Y instead."
- "I tried X for 30 days. Here's what happened."
- "The [tool/trick] nobody talks about for [goal]"
- "If I started [thing] today, I'd do these 3 things"
- "[Common belief] is wrong. Here's the truth."
- "Save this if you ever [situation]"

Keep a running note of 20+ filled-in hooks. When it's time to post, you pull one — you never stare at a blank screen.

2 · Create — the Reel script structure

Reels are the fastest way to reach people who don't follow you yet. Every high-performing Reel follows the same four-part shape. Use this as a fill-in template.

HOOK

0–3 sec

Say the payoff or the tension immediately. No "hey guys". Match the hook to an on-screen caption so it lands with sound off.

Your hook: _____

VALUE

3–20 sec

Deliver the promise in 2–4 quick beats. One idea per beat. Cut every word that isn't pulling weight.

Beat 1 _____

Beat 2 _____

Beat 3 _____

RETAIN

mid

Add a small loop or "but here's the part most people miss..." to hold watch time — the metric that drives reach.

CTA

end

One ask only: *save*, *follow for part 2*, or *comment a word*. Never stack three asks.

Your CTA: _____

Watch-time > length. A tight 12-second Reel that gets re-watched beats a 45-second one people drop. When in doubt, cut.

2 · Create — carousels & captions

THE CAROUSEL FRAME

Slide	Job
Slide 1	The hook — a bold claim or promise. This is the cover that decides the swipe.
Slides 2–6	One point per slide. Big text, little clutter. Build a reason to keep swiping.
Second-to-last	The summary or "the one that matters most".
Last slide	The CTA — save, share, or follow. Ask for the save: saves are the strongest ranking signal.

THE THREE-PART CAPTION

1. **Hook line.** Repeat or extend the visual hook so the first line in the feed earns the "more".
2. **Body.** 2–4 short paragraphs. Tell the story or expand the points. Write like you talk.
3. **CTA + question.** One ask, then a genuine question to invite comments — comments in the first hour widen reach.

Captions are searchable. Work your real topic words into the first line naturally — it helps you surface in search and suggested.

2 · Create — a hashtag strategy that isn't guessing

Don't dump 30 of the biggest tags — you'll drown. Use a layered mix so you can rank in smaller pools while reaching for bigger ones.

Layer	Size	How many	Why
Broad	500k+ posts	2–3	Big reach, hard to rank — a lottery ticket
Mid	50k–500k	4–5	The sweet spot — reachable and still sizeable
Niche	under 50k	3–4	You can actually top these; highly relevant audience
Branded	yours	1	Builds your own searchable pool over time

BUILD YOUR SETS

Make 2–3 saved sets by pillar so you're not rebuilding them each time:

Set A (pillar: _____) _____

Set B (pillar: _____) _____

Set C (pillar: _____) _____

Relevance beats size. A niche tag where your post is genuinely the best answer will out-perform a giant tag where it's invisible.

3 · Engage — the first 30–60 minutes

This is the step almost everyone skips, and it's why good timing matters in the first place: posting when your audience is online only helps if you're there to fan the first sparks of engagement.

YOUR POST-PUBLISH CHECKLIST

- ✓ Reply to every comment in the first hour — fast replies invite more.
- ✓ Ask a follow-up question back; turn comments into conversations.
- ✓ Spend 10 minutes engaging on other accounts in your niche before and after posting — you show up in their world too.
- ✓ Re-share the post to your Story to pull your existing audience in early.
- ✓ Don't post and disappear. The first hour teaches the algorithm whether this post is worth showing to more people.

A modest post you actively engage with often out-reaches a better post you abandoned. Presence is part of the work.

4 · Review — read your own data

Once a month, look back. You're hunting for patterns, not vanity numbers. Likes feel nice; **saves, shares, and follows** tell you what actually worked.

THE METRICS THAT MATTER (IN ORDER)

1. **Saves & shares** — people found it worth keeping or sending. Make more like this.
2. **Reach & non-follower %** — is it escaping your bubble?
3. **Follows from a post** — did it earn new people?
4. **Watch time / completion** (Reels) — the engine behind reach.
5. *Then* likes & comments — the easy signals, last.

MONTHLY REVIEW — FILL THIS IN

Top 3 posts this month	Format	Why it worked (your guess)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

One thing to do MORE next month _____

One thing to STOP next month _____

Feed these two answers straight into your 90-Day Calendar's next month. That's the loop closing.

Putting it together: your 90 days

Phase	Focus	What "done" looks like
Month 1 Base	One pillar, a sustainable cadence, the full loop every week	You post consistently and engage every time — no gaps
Month 2 Output	Add a second pillar; test Reels vs carousels; build hashtag sets	You know which 1–2 formats earn the most saves
Month 3 Winners	Re-make your best posts in new formats; cut what flops; lean into your top pillar	A repeatable formula you trust, backed by your own data

Run this loop across every platform — automatically

Leadmore AI helps you plan, schedule, and grow across social media, so the loop in this playbook runs without the busywork. Start free.

leadmore.ai