

BY BASIA HELLWIG

# THIS IS WHY STOREOWNERS ARE TRYING

# SNAPCHAT

Your store has a Facebook page, you're on Instagram and Twitter and Pinterest. Why add Snapchat, when keeping up with posts on social media is already hard enough? The simplest answer: because that's where your young dance customers are—on the fastest growing social-media platform today. A hundred million people a day—most of them under 25, many in their teens—use the instant messaging app to share moments in their lives via photos and videos. “Pictures are being used for talking” is how Snapchat CEO Evan Spiegel explains it, in a video for parents. “It's showing where you are and how you're feeling in the moment.”

For dancewear stores, says DanceFit Marketing founder Jill Tirone, it's a fun way to share a peek behind the scenes, promote your brand and drive traffic to your store (more on that later). “The draw of Snapchat is that it makes people feel involved, like an insider,” she says. According to Firebrand Group, which published *The Marketer's Guide to Snapchat*, “the immediacy makes users feel like they are experiencing unique, exclusive content the masses on Facebook and Instagram don't have access to. Among the fashion conscious, exclusivity is key.” BodyGear dancewear store in Ithaca, NY, uses Snapchat to give its customers this kind of insider feel, with behind-the-scenes looks as new products arrive and staff work on new displays.



Even giant retailers are still just at the experimental stage when it comes to using Snapchat. So what better time to take the plunge, learn about it and see how you can make it work for your store? We talked to experts and storeowners for tips.

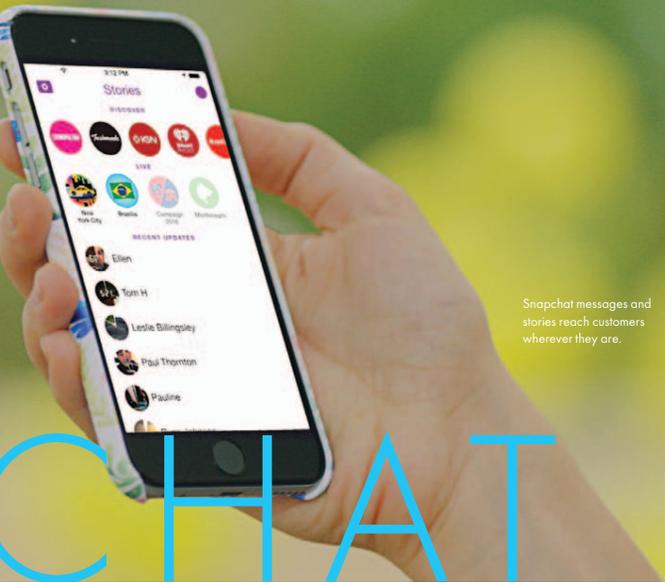
## HOW SNAPCHAT WORKS

Snapchatters create messages (“snaps”) using a mobile phone and the Snapchat app to take and share a photo or video. The sender can overlay type (changing its size and color) or an emoji (“sticker”) over the image. One of the most popular tools is doodles—made with the pencil icon on the upper right hand of the screen. This is how you can add a caption or comment to your photo or video. Geofilters also let you add Instagram-like filters, your location, even the temperature or time.

What makes Snapchat different from many other social media is that snaps only last up to 10 seconds, with one replay possible within the first 24 hours. Then they disappear forever (although the recipient can grab a screenshot to save favorites). Snapchatters can also produce a “story” by stringing together a series of snaps. These last 24 hours and can be played over and over again. Consult Snapchat support at [support.snapchat.com/ca/getting-started](http://support.snapchat.com/ca/getting-started) for more details.

## GETTING FOLLOWERS

Unlike other social media, Snapchat doesn't make recommendations to follow brands or even let you search for people. So Snapchat users need to know your exact Snapchat name or have you in their cell phone contacts to follow you, says Tirone, or they can find you through the personalized snapcode (similar to a QR code, but cuter) that each user has. Your customers can capture the code on their phone to follow you. Jessie-Emma Allinger, co-owner with her mother, Sylvia, of BodyGear, says the store cross-promotes its snapcode on Facebook posts



Snapchat messages and stories reach customers wherever they are.

and on Instagram and Twitter. And they post the snapcode image right by the register in the store. That way customers can take a photo of the code with their smartphones at the check-out, and they are connected.

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR BUSINESSES?

Some marketers have been skeptical of Snapchat, pointing out that the content disappears almost immediately, Snapchat doesn't let you target a particular audience and it has very few analytics to tell you how it's performing for you. But many small retailers are testing the waters and finding creative ways to connect with their customers, often learning about it from younger staff or interns. Here are some examples.

- Lara Nicotra, marketing manager of frozen yogurt retailer 16 Handles, uses Snapchat to show back-office taste testing of new flavors and build excitement about the brand (and the idea of trying out those new flavors at a store). Fashion designers have been early adopters, using it to give sneak peeks of their collections before runway shows.

- Allinger uses it to “get the kids engaged, watching our Snapchat to see what we have at the store,” she says—an enticement to pay a visit soon. At holiday time, the snaps showed staff unpacking and dusting off more than 150 nutcrackers that are displayed every year—again, drawing customers to the store. Snaps of new inventory arriving have a similar effect.

- Snapchat can also just remind customers what a fun place your store is. “We take pictures of the girls on pointe, when they get their new shoes. Or when an adorable little kid tries on a tutu, we'll always ask, ‘Can we take a picture of your child for Snapchat?’” Allinger adds.

- Incorporate coupons or discount codes into Snapchat to draw customers into the store, suggests Tirone. “First,

entice customers to become Snapchat friends by telling them, ‘Hey, we're on Snapchat. Make sure you friend us for great news and deals.’ Put this same message on your website and all other social media.” Then, says Tirone, you can add a promotion code at the end of a video story, or in a snap, which customers can replay in the store for an exclusive special discount or freebie. “If there's a fun promotion, you can bet a young girl will be telling the person with the wallet: ‘Mom, if we play this video in the store, we can get two for one on X or Y.’”

## Coupons or discount codes on Snapchat stories draw customers to your store.

Snapchat is the most casual of social media, with the youngest audience, although there are signs that moms are joining in, too. Make your snaps fun, colorful, active and super PG. “Getting a post out there is more important than worrying about the perfect photo,” says Tirone. “It's real-time and fleeting. Think what would be fun for your young customers.” Allinger recommends keeping the password private (she logs in for staff who are going to be posting), since you don't want any posts going out that would make your store look bad. And to get an indication of how you're doing, check how many “opens” you get and track the number of screenshots. That's a sure sign you're connecting with your audience.

To get the Snapchat app, go to Apple iTunes ([itunes.apple.com/us/app/snapchat/id447188370?mt=8](http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/snapchat/id447188370?mt=8)) or Google Play ([play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.snapchat.android](http://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.snapchat.android)). ■