URL: https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/sharing-your-social-story

Kevin Weil, head of product at Instagram, discusses how the company introduced the "Stories" feature to help users feel more comfortable sharing photos again and reduce self-censoring. Inspired by an identical feature previously launched by Snapchat, Weil explains how Stories gives users exactly what they want: an ephemeral, person-oriented format that allows for private feedback.

## Transcript

- You've got Snapchat, which has a stories product, and here's where we were about a year ago.. Instagram was a product for your highlights.. It started out, if you go back to the very beginning of Instagram, as a place where you'd share anything.. You'd share all the moments of your life, but as the community grew, more and more people joined Instagram.. More and more people follow you.. You start to feel like, well, the last thing I posted got 30 likes, is this one gonna get 30 likes? I don't know.. Maybe I just won't post.. The quality bar that was required to post on Instagram kept going up.. People's self-imposed quality bar kept going up, and it meant that Instagram became a place, not for all of your moments, but for your highlights.. For the absolute best things that happen in your life..

That means it was a great product to consume.. Because what you were seeing was literally some of the greatest things that were going on in your friends lives, but how many highlights do you have in a week? Two, three.. It doesn't happen all the time, so a product that's just for your highlights, that wasn't what we set out to become.. So, we wanted to get back to the world where Instagram was a place where you felt comfortable sharing all of your moments.. When you think about, so, if that's your goal, you think about, well, why aren't people doing that today? Well, you're probably not gonna share.. If you're gonna share all of your moments, you're gonna share more of your, sort of, raw, daily, here's what I'm doing.. This isn't anything super special.. Just, like, here's what I'm doing.. Your friends care about that, right? Cause they care about you.. If you're gonna share that, you're probably not gonna share that ten times a day to a feed..

Which is the way Instagram always, historically worked.. Cause there are social norms around a feed, right? So, rather than being feed oriented, if you're gonna build a product that people share to, consistently, multiple times throughout the day, it needs to be more person oriented than feed oriented.. Another reason that people don't share all the time, is the quality bar.. Like, is this gonna be good enough? This thing just happened to me.. I kinda wanna share it, but, like, last time I got 100 likes, am I gonna get 100 likes on this? I don't think.. I'm just not gonna share that.. People self censor because the feedback is public, and they don't wanna post something that gets 50 likes when they're last one got 100.. So, if you want people to feel comfortable sharing all the time, you don't want public feedback.. You want private feedback.. Then, the other thing is, people's Instagram profiles are sacred to them..

It's a representation of who they are.. You can go to someone's Instagram profile and get a sense of, like, who they are, how they represent themselves, what their life is like.. So, if you want them to share ten times a day, rather than it being permanently posted to your profile forever, you probably want ephemerality.. Because, again, it frees you up to feel comfortable posting more.. You end up in this world where you want a person oriented format, you want private feedback, and you want ephemerality.. So, this was, sort of, the logic we went through, and as we got to this place where we were like, "oh, you put those three things together, that's Snapchat story.. Ohhhh." That's why the Snapchat story format is so powerful.. It has those things, and they work together to make you feel comfortable sharing all these moments in your life.. When we realized that, we were like, this is, we feel like this is a valuable thing to exist on Instagram.. There's no reason to call it a different name..

We don't need to give it a different label.. It is a story, and because it's stories we felt like it was going to be a format that people adopted in the same way that a mobile feed didn't used to be a thing, and a hashtag didn't used to be a thing.. Now you see them everywhere across lots of products.. Snapchat was the first to create the story format, and more power to them..

They did a fantastic job, but we felt like it was a format that was going to be powerful in a lot of different product, and, so we adopted it.. It's been the fastest growing product I think I've ever seen.. We went from zero to 200 million people using it every single day in about eight months...