CAMPAIGNING ONLINE WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Social media (such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter) can be a campaigner's best friend but there is a lot of confusing information out there about how to use it effectively. Used well, social media can promote your campaigning, draw attention to your work, develop a community or following who support your cause and even better, convince people who don't know about your issue that it is worth caring about.

COMMON CONCERNS

Sometimes campaigners say (quietly) that social media can also feel like a distraction from substantive work, it can be uncomfortable because it sometimes relies on some self-promotion, or daunting because how to use social media effectively can change quickly. The value of social media isn't always apparent if these are your concerns, so it's worth thinking about the question, 'If a tree falls in a forest and nobody hears (or sees) it, did it happen?' This is true of some aspects of campaigning, particularly social media.

While the tree falling might disrupt the undergrowth or nearby trees, if the wider community around the forest doesn't know about it, then that disruption is kept local. So publicising your work is essential and often leads to new opportunities for effective campaigning. Admittedly, self-promotion for some is really difficult, it is important to remember that actually, you're not promoting yourself, you're promoting your work. The best way to do that is to share your story and your activities. People are more likely to connect and engage with your cause if they see the work and the people behind it.

While social media can change quickly, an understanding of the basics, that I'll provide below, should help with the quick pace of change. If not, use a search engine to ask your question. People all over the world often have the same difficulties with social media so if in doubt, ask, because invariably someone has written a solution in a blog.

SOCIAL MEDIA TERMS

There are a lot of different social media terms, if this is a new area of work for you, there are some definitions in a glossary at the end of this guide to start you off.

A FEW GOLDEN RULES!

- The internet has a long memory. Make sure that what you say online is something that won't cause difficulty or embarrassment if you are asked about it in an interview with a journalist.

- Always read back over your post. Social media engagement is only as positive as the reputation it generates. A typo, unintended mistake in the background of a photo or a post in bad taste can cause social media users to engage negatively with you and going viral for the wrong reasons won't be fun!

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- Post interactive content. Platform algorithms push content that engages users. So make sure some of your content encourages likes, follows, shares, retweets and conversation, rather than simply reading or watching. Statistics prove that social posts that have pictures perform 2-3 times better than content without a picture. It's worth taking the time to include a visual.

- Fashions and trends. Social media trends come and go quickly. What may appeal to you personally in terms of fonts and colours may not be what will engage social media users. Be mindful of this and keep an eye on what other social media users are doing.

- Use hashtags. These can be unique to your region, country, city, town. Use a search engine or look on your Facebook and Twitter feeds to see what hashtags are popular or trending and don't be afraid to use the same hashtag. In saying this, make sure you are not using a hashtag inappropriately, research the content that uses the hashtag before jumping on the bandwagon. There is also a lot of benefit in using a hashtag unique to your event or campaign, eg. #killerrobots

WHERE TO START

Develop a strategy. It doesn't have to be complex but it's good for your output to have direction. One question to begin with is, "What do you want to achieve by using social media?"

There can be a variety of answers to this question and the answer may change with time or circumstance. Is there an event coming up? Is there some media coverage you need to respond to? Do you want to build up recognition of your campaign? Do you have a minor campaign coming up under the umbrella of your larger campaign goals? Just like developing a national campaigning strategy, you'll need to know what you're working towards with your social media presence in order to promote your cause effectively.

A good strategy should include answers or points listed under the following:

- ▶ What are your goals? (it's worth taking the time to be really clear)
- ▶ Who is your target audience?
- ▶ Which social platforms will you use?
- ▶ Can you give adequate time and resources to implement this strategy?

- ▶ What style of voice will you have online?
- ▶ How will you measure your success?

GOALS

While your overall campaigning goal might be to achieve a ban on killer robots, there will be smaller goals along the way. Your social media strategy can be particularly powerful in making an impact around the smaller campaign goals. Here are some questions that may help you refine your social media strategy goals.

- ▶ What constituencies do you want to engage online? Policy and decision makers? Experts? Members of the public? Media?
- ▶ What key messages from your campaign strategy do you want to communicate to the public?
- ▶ Whose support online could make a difference to our campaigning goals?
- ▶ Do you need short term engagement or long term loyalty?
- ▶ How much time and resources can you devote to your social media?
- ▶ What content will appeal to your target audiences?

TARGET AUDIENCE?

Be wary of targeting "the general public", it's likely that you're not providing content specific enough to engage individuals or communities. It is important to direct your content. Select a target group, and produce content relevant to their concerns and consumer tastes. This will increase engagement with your content and in turn your issue. Helpful questions:

- ▶ What type of content does your target audience enjoy?
- ▶ What defines their demographic? Age? Gender? Ethnicity? Geographical location? Political affiliation? Religious values? Profession? A mixture of some or all?
- ▶ Which platform(s) are they using?

WHICH SOCIAL PLATFORMS WILL YOU USE?

If your time and resources are limited, choose one or two platforms that you can engage with properly rather than setting up accounts across all platforms. Does platform use vary according to your target audience's demographic? Focus on the platform most popular with your target audience. What platforms are popular in your region? What tone will resonate with your target audience? Formal? Humorous? Technical? Educational? A mixture?

How often should you post on each platform? There's no hard and fast answer to this question, often it's down to a little experimentation, seeing what works and when in terms of engagement. Our time as campaigners is often limited, so before launching your social media strategy, it's important to look at your team and see if the work can be shared or is it the responsibility of one person? Set aside some time to create a weekly (or monthly) schedule of anchor content so your platforms are never too quiet. Social media algorithms reward engagement.

Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/stopkillerrobots

Facebook is the most widely used platform internationally. Ideal for visual content, the use

of images and videos encourages engagement on Facebook's algorithms. Facebook has live streaming capabilities (Facebook live). It is an intergenerational platform with powerful local targeting and advertising tools, and a variety of content. Facebook wants you to focus on engagement so every post should be interesting enough for your supporters to like, share, or comment. As a general but very malleable rule, aim for 2-4 posts per week. It's about quality, not quantity. Facebook's algorithms reward less text. Statistically, posts with less than 70 characters perform best, while those with less than 250 characters still garner engagement, more than that though and you're limiting your post reach. Remember, you can always put the words in your image and it won't affect your character count!

Instagram
https://www.instagram.com/stopkillerrobots

Millennials are the most ardent users of Instagram. A visual platform where high quality, creative images or videos are necessary, reliant on good quality images, interesting graphics, and videos. A general rule is to aim for 1-2 posts a week.

Twitter
https://twitter.com/bankillerrobots

This fast-moving platform puts no limit to the number of tweets you can post daily so long as they're adding value. It's a conversational platform, and often about real-time interaction. It's a great opportunity to engage in conversation with your followers and news quickly. Aim for a third of your time on twitter being spent on replying to people or having conversations. Tweets also tend to get a lot more engagement when they include images or videos.

LinkedIn
https://www.linkedin.com/company/campaign-to-stop-killer-robots/

LinkedIn used by professionals for sharing updates relating to their work, links to relevant news stories, events, conferences etc. It's a great space to network and from the perspective of your organisation can be used to share information that those working in your field would be interested in. Photos and videos can also be effective here. Aim for 1-3 posts per week.

Snapchat
Snapchat is a mobile-only messaging app that allows users to send a photo or video "snap" that automatically deletes after being viewed. It is popular with those under 25 years old and creates what feels like a one to one experience. If youth is your demographic, Snapchat is the platform for you.

DEVELOP YOUR VOICE

It's worth thinking about the initial question I asked earlier in this guide, "what do you want to achieve by using social media?". How do you need to communicate in order to best achieve your goals? Take a step back and think about what influences you, your colleagues, friends, and family of different ages and backgrounds. You are the expert in your region, you know your culture. Use this knowledge and remember that social media allows for informality and humour. Remember that it's not just the text you put out, but the style of your visual input that also defines your voice. Pay attention to successful social media users in your region and learn from them, but remember that your message and your voice is unique.

CROSS PROMOTION

Find new conversations to join, new accounts to follow, search for relevant hashtags and build relationships with other organisations and influencers. These are small steps that can amplify your work ten-fold. Share each other's content and successes. Look out for opportunities to collaborate with others, every opportunity to grow and diversify is also an opportunity to reach a new audience.

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MEASURE YOUR RESULTS

Monitoring and measuring your engagement is an important way of making sure that your hard work is not being invested in the wrong place. How you measure your results will depend on what goals you set. Most social media platforms have basic to detailed analytics available, essentially though, if one post is getting a lot of likes, shares etc. and another didn't, look at the difference between them. Social media is a lot of trial and error, often a post is less successful because of the time it was posted or if there was too much text. Helpful markers for measuring results are to look at how often your account is 'mentioned' online, has this grown? Is your reach and engagement rate increasing? In a nutshell, moving forward, do more of what worked, less of what didn't and continue to try new things!

TOOLS

There are some great tools available to help you create and manage your online content. Often there are free versions that work well and they can be worth investing in for access to more options if you are finding them useful. Don't worry if you have never used this kind of tool before, usually, the software provides step by step assistance but if in doubt, YouTube has numerous video tutorials to learn how to use the software listed below.

Images/graphics/photos/gifs:

In a world where we are inundated with images all day every day, making sure that your images are attractive and the correct sizing for the platform you are using is essential to communicate that you are en trend and professional.

1. Adobe Spark (free version with watermark, the paid version is very good)
2. Canva (free version available)
3. Google advanced image search (free but make sure the usage rights are open to your use)
4. Giphy (free)

Film editing:

Video is the fastest way to educate and communicate on social media. If possible, subtitle your videos. Firstly, it makes them accessible but also 85% of Facebook videos are viewed without sound.

1. iMovie (free with mac computer)
2. Lightworks (free)
3. Adobe Premiere Pro (paid)
4. Final Cut Pro (paid)

Scheduling:

This is a way of dispersing the content generation load. Take some time to add to your calendar of content and know that your content will go live without you having to press the post/tweet button!

1. Hootsuite
2. Tweetdeck
3. Lightly

SOME RESOURCES & VIDEO TUTORIALS:

How to create a Facebook page:
https://nonprofits.fb.com/topic/create-a-page/

How to use Facebook:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGcHOcj1SQA

How to Live stream on Facebook:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEiHuF9DAFU

How to use Twitter:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jWNpLvdocU

How to use Instagram:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z4AEDyKGdI

How to use Snapchat:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HM_xU-YcVsAmY

Intro to LinkedIn:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wb0yl4svas

Intro to LinkedIn video:
https://blog.linkedin.com/2017/august/22/Introducing-LinkedIn-Video-Show-Your-Experience-and-Perspective

GLOSSARY:

Bitly: Bitly is a free web address (URL) shortening service used to condense long URLs to make them easier to share on social networks such as Twitter.

Blog: Blog was created from two words: "web log." Blogs are regularly updated webpage usually managed by an individual or small group. Its content can be written or visual content that is topic specific or experience based. Blogs are usually informal or conversational.

Clickbait: Clickbait is a term to describe content that uses sensational headlines to encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page and boost engagement with their post.

Engagement: Engagement is a common way of evaluating your social media performance. For example, on Twitter, this translates to how many times your post on Twitter (tweet) is shared (retweeted), liked and how many followers you have and develop.

Follower: In the context of social media, a follower refers to a person who subscribes to your account in order to receive your updates.

Handle: Handle is the term used to describe someone's @username on Twitter. For example, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robot's Twitter handle is @bankillerrobots.

Hashtag: A hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#), used on various social media platforms to identify content produced on a specific topic and make it easily searchable for users. For example, #killerrobots

Like: A user can use the 'Like' function across a number of platforms as a quick way to show approval or support (without having to make a written comment) for specific comments, tweets, posts, pictures, wall posts, statuses, or pages.

Live streaming: Live streaming is when a social media account transmits content over the internet in real-time.

Meme: A meme is typically an image or video with text above, below or on it that is humorous in nature. Often a meme is copied and spread rapidly by Internet users, often with slight variations.

Mention: A mention is a term used to describe one account using another account's handle in their tweet or post to start a discussion or recognise their relevance to the situation.

Newsfeed: On Facebook, the News Feed is the homepage of users' accounts where they can see all the latest updates from their friends. The news feed on Twitter is called Timeline. News Feed is the constantly updating list of stories in the middle of your home page.

Retweet: A retweet is when someone on Twitter sees your message and decides to re-share it with his or her followers. A retweet button allows them to quickly resend the message with attribution to the original sharer's name.

Post: A piece of writing, an image, or other items of content published online, typically on a blog or social media website or application.

Tag: Tags allow social media users to engage an individual, business or any entity with a social profile when they mention them in a post or comment.

Troll: A troll refers to a person who is deliberately creating controversy or interacting with content online to provoke a reaction.

Viral: When a piece of social media content achieves noteworthy awareness. Viral distribution relies heavily on word of mouth and the frequent sharing of one particular piece of content all over the internet.

Vlogging: A video blog, a vlog uses a video to tell a story or report on information.

Webinar: A webinar is a seminar conducted over the Internet. Webinars are held to educate audiences about a particular topic.

This is an overview of common terms, if you come across one that you are unfamiliar with, a search engine will be able to provide the answer.