

making the media work for you

A Guide for
Civil Society Organisations

European
Journalism
Centre



IMPRESSUM Making the Media Work For You | A Guide for Civil Society Organisations

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foreword

It has always been a source of immense frustration for anyone campaigning to improve people's lives – as volunteers, activists, campaigners or in any sorts of Civil Society Organisation: why is it that the really important matters in human affairs do not get the prominence they deserve in the public arenas?

Traditionally it was the elites that got the blame, groups which supposedly controlled the media – newspaper barons, big business cartels, authoritarian governments, political parties, special interest groups defined by class, religion or race. Journalists could protest that they only published and broadcast what people wanted. But the suspicion remained that the news agenda was somehow being manipulated or dictated from above.

The communications revolutions which brought us the internet, the mobile phone, Facebook, Twitter and Google, have weakened that argument. As more and more people gain access to the internet, the way we access information is being transformed. The power of the elites, if it ever existed, has been diluted, if not entirely swept away. They cannot dictate what we view. To an extent our forefathers could not even dream of, we now choose our own sources of news, of information, of comment.

And yet still we find that the really important material is often neglected, ignored, hard to find. The wires and the airwaves are awash with trivia, entertainment, gossip, and sport. The news sites and news programmes seem dominated by the same old type of story – scandal, politics, conflict, sport and the cult of celebrity. Is this really the price we have to pay for having a more “democratic” information order?

This brief guide does not pretend to have the answers. It has always been an uphill struggle to gain prominence for the work that Civil Society, or Non-Governmental, Organisations, do, for the causes they promote. If it were easy, these kind of campaigning groups probably wouldn't be needed. It is still difficult to attract the right kind of attention, and will certainly remain so.

The new, more “open” world information order is a jungle of competing demands for the public's attention. Salespeople compete for their money, politicians for their votes, performers for their endorsement, know-it-alls for their admiration. And campaigners compete for their support, their participation, their activism, their contributions in time and money.

Many of these are extremely expert at what they do. They know how to tease, how to grab the attention, how to lure you into the world of superficial excitement, “soundbite” politics and instant gratification. To make your voice heard in this cacophony of sound requires a sophisticated approach. It is not enough to care deeply; passion can only get you so far. You need a cool head and the skills to present your cause and your organisation effectively.

A successful CSO needs a well thought-out media strategy, trained communications staff and the time and money to back them up. To get your “messages” heard, it is not enough to be right; you have to be skilled as well. It is not enough to rely on winning over a few influential journalists or public figures; you have to compete on traditional and social media together, the old world and the new. Experience and training are essential.

Make a start with this Guide.

Oliver Wates

introduction

You are Head of Communications for an international NGO called KosAid, which is working to eradicate the deadly water-borne disease Aizrah in developing countries. The disease, which has killed and crippled millions of people over the past century, is particularly dangerous to malnourished children. It is worst of all in Lucidia, a large developing country devastated by decades of conflict, misgovernment and corruption.

Record-breaking rains over the past six months have caused heavy flooding in large areas of Lucidia and the disease has exploded. It is spreading at unprecedented speed among the millions of people forced to abandon their homes because of the floods and living in temporary homes or refugee camps.

KosAid decides to launch a major campaign to halt this onslaught. It draws up a six-month communications strategy aimed at:

- raising funds from the international public and major donors to finance the establishment of specialist medical teams
- raising awareness among Lucidians about the danger
- informing people in infected areas how to reduce the risk
- advising sick people and their relatives how to treat the disease

- mobilising the international aid and development community to support the campaign, and
- putting pressure on Lucidian politicians to encourage drainage and medical measures to combat Aizrah.

KosAid launches its campaign with a press conference in Atlantida (a major Western city) attended by an activist celebrity, streamed live on the net. This is accompanied by a Press Release and the opening of a new website section dedicated to the disease and the campaign. Data, photos and video are made freely available on the site. The celebrity and KosAid Chief Executive give interviews to television, radio and print journalists.

The press conference is streamed live on the internet and Tweeted frequently. A new site is opened on Facebook. Dedicated internet and telephone contacts are set up and all queries and sensible comments are answered quickly.

As the campaign gets under way, new information about the donation of funds and the progress in setting up the medical teams is made available several times a week. Tweets and Facebook updates happen daily.

When the first specialist medical teams arrive in Lucidia, a press conference is held

similar to the one held in Atlantida, this time attended by a Lucidian minister. Tweets are issued more regularly with a view to catching the very active mobile phone market. The KosAid chief writes an “op-ed” article for the main local daily, the first of several for leading Lucidian newspapers.

As the specialist teams begin to operate in the most affected parts of Lucidia, more information becomes available about the spread of the disease and the progress of the efforts to control it. This is put on the KosAid website and Facebook pages. The local KosAid chief takes a group of journalists from national media to visit a regional Aizrah clinic; they are shown the doctors and nurses at work, patients treated and untreated, flooded areas where the disease is flourishing and an eradication operation.

Doctors from different countries begin writing blogs in their languages on the work they are doing and posting photographs of the places and people. These go on the websites as well as Facebook and Instagram. Short videos with graphic footage of flooding, sick people and doctors at work are made available on YouTube.

The team also launch a mobile phone service sending messages to people displaced by the flooding about Aizrah,

how to recognise it, avoid infection and seek help if infected.

After the field operations have been working for three months, local religious leaders accuse one of your teams of raping local women. The accusation is groundless and based on their unwillingness to let outsiders treat sick women of their community, but it is picked up by an opposition radio station and international social media. KosAid immediately mounts a crisis communications operation and the programme directors in both Lucidia and Atlantida give a series of interviews to quash the reports. The story dies down after a day.

The steady stream of Tweets, Facebook posts and updates on the website continues. Two months later another Field Trip in Lucidia is organised, this time for a more international group of journalists. The celebrity, the executive director and the minister are all present and are interviewed, photographed and filmed in a badly flooded area.

As this marks six months since the campaign began, KosAid issues a press release on progress so far, including the total of money raised.

Could you handle all this? If not, this media guide is for you.



chapter 1

**understanding
the news
media**

Journalists are busy people and there is a lot of competition for their time and their attention

The Working Day

Let's start with a look at a day in the working life of a journalist.

It is a mistake to think that the word "news" implies that journalists are sitting around, waiting for "new" things to happen. Although there are sudden, unexpected events (plane crashes, for example), those "breaking news" items form only one part of the news day.

Journalists usually arrive at a newsroom that is already humming with activity. If they come in early in the morning, they are taking over from the night-shift. Most significant news organisations will have at least a couple of people physically in the newsroom overnight, even if they have another office in another time zone.

Some journalists come into their office only briefly, so you have to contact them by mobile phone, email or social media.

But many come in first thing as there may be an editorial meeting, or a news planning session to attend, or just to see what has come in overnight. This is one opportunity to get in contact.

The editorial meeting is when all the potential stories are considered as a whole, so that the editors can decide how much time or space to assign to each of them. Although you may think this is purely assigned on the importance of the news, that is too simplistic an idea.

A big proportion of the news is planned ahead, especially for television, so that crew assignments and reporting teams can be arranged and shift patterns modified. It takes time to move people and equipment into the right places, and journalists can need permits that need to be applied for in advance. These pre-planned stories are often called "diary items".

The kind of things that can be planned weeks, or even months, in advance include anniversaries, official items and scheduled company events. This is a great opportunity for you to find a "news peg" – an event or occasion which you can use to get a story published about a longer-term subject or campaign.

A huge news story – for example a missing ferry – will be pushed down the news agenda if there are no pictures, no strong interviews and no new information. If you can supply some of the elements necessary to push your story higher (a key expert, or

transport to the location) you stand a much better chance of it getting more attention.

The news organisation itself may have a specific bias – for example for or against the government – so you need to find out if there is any particular interest you need to be aware of. And of course, if there is a huge breaking story, such as a fire or a train crash, this is not the day to expect your story to get any attention!

If you miss journalists at the start of their day, they are likely to be outside of the newsroom for a good chunk of the day doing interviews, attending press conferences, doing vox populi, research or data gathering. News rarely happens in a newsroom!

Many journalists don't get a lunch break, but if they do, they will always be pleased to meet you and catch up with any good gossip. Don't always push your stories; you can be friendly and interested without constantly expecting immediate stories. You might have more luck asking them out for a quick coffee, or a drink after work, if that is something which is acceptable in your culture.

Early afternoon is another good opportunity to get hold of journalists in the office, as many organisations have an afternoon

news planning session to arrange things for the next day or finalise the evening editions.

Remember that as it gets close to the end of the day, the closer and more scary the deadlines will appear. The deadline might be the evening news show, or the time the newspaper goes to be printed (“putting the paper to bed”).

Try to call or e-mail them in the morning whenever you can. A common mistake is to spend all day crafting a press release then sending it at the close of business, right when reporters and editors are rushing to beat their deadlines. Radio reporters and agency journalists are constantly filing stories, so they can be hard to get hold of. If you’re dealing with a weekly newspaper, ask about their deadline day and try to talk to them on different days. Ask them about their schedule, they’ll appreciate it.

If you are thinking about using Twitter, remember that timing is really important because tweets flash past so quickly. It isn’t email, so if you post once a day there is a good chance that people will miss what you posted because they weren’t looking at the right time.

It isn’t a good idea to put up a lot of posts to ensure that yours is seen; you need to time your tweets correctly. Consider whether a busy journalist is looking at Twitter at all during the day, when they are out and about interviewing and writing and filming.

First thing in the morning may put your tweet in the middle of too much information, so around 10 a.m. may be smarter.

The Pitch

Once you have got hold of your journalist you have to get their attention. And that means giving them a story that they can get past their editors and into the bulletin or newspaper.

There is no point complaining that journalists OUGHT to care about your story because it is important and it matters. To a journalist with a full inbox and an editor shouting at him or her, your story will not stand out unless you sell it hard, and you don’t make the journalist work too hard to find out what the story actually means.

Make sure you check that it is a good time to talk when you call. Ask the journalist “Do you have time to talk?” or “Are you on a deadline?” which will show that you understand and respect how busy they are (and it has a little hint of flattery too!).

If you speak to a journalist, or contact them in other ways, you need to make “a pitch”.

A pitch is a description of a potential story idea that you want to be used. A pitch lays out why a story matters. It essentially makes the case for doing a certain story at a certain point in time. A good pitch should quickly and succinctly summarise the story the author wants to write and explain why that story matters **TO THE JOURNALIST OR TO SOCIETY, NOT WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU!**

We have already seen how crammed full the good journalist’s day can be, so clearly the time to make your pitch is not the day an announcement is made or a report comes out. Do it the day before, two days before, a week before, so that the journalist can make plans and get a marker down for space in the relevant issue or bulletin.

Here’s a bad example:

“Hello, Ms Journalist. I am sending you a 300-page research paper which explains why clean water matters. You should use it.”

Here’s a good example:

(note the news “peg” **AND** the pitch)

“Have you seen the news today that the government says it is delaying plans to put water mains into the central part of the country? Our research shows that 100,000 children will be put at risk of water-borne diseases and we can take you to a village where the people have been waiting for 10 years for a safe water supply.”

The Peg

A news peg is what makes the story timely or newsworthy now. You may have been running a vaccination campaign for months, but then the government releases infant mortality data. That is the element that makes the story timely and important now. This is what will make journalists want to use your story.

Most journalists need some kind of news peg before they can consider using your story idea. If there isn't an obvious one, you must try to find one or risk your hard work being rejected as irrelevant, and random. The lack of a news peg is one of the fastest ways to make journalists lose interest in your story.

As well as the releases of new data, there are other kinds of news pegs. For example, a celebrity coming to visit one of your projects, or a change in policy, or new funding.

The Quote

Journalists also need a “sound bite” or a “golden quote”. It doesn't matter how profound your message is, if you don't give it to them in a 20-second clip, they won't be able to use it. This is particularly true of television and radio. It doesn't have to come from you – in fact it's usually better if it doesn't – a specialist or a front-line aid worker or activist carries more credibility than a public relations official. But one way or another, you have to provide that material for them.

You might find this short “sound bite” approach to be superficial, and feel your subject needs more time and depth – but the reality is that the attention span of news audiences will not support long pieces. Documentaries and features will give you a longer period of time to get your message across, but they are expensive and time-consuming so news organisations cannot do many of them.

Relations with Journalists

Many journalists have a mixed relationship with media or public relations professionals. They complain that press officers are pushy, don't return calls, or fail to understand how busy they are.

It isn't enough to assume that you will have a good professional relationship with important journalists just because of your job; you have to work at it, just as you do in your personal life. Let's start with some tips on how to develop solid relationships with journalists.

- Meet journalist contacts face to face. Take them out for coffee and lunch. The better they know you, the more likely it is that they will use your material.
- Don't just call when there is a big story. Call in quiet times too. Familiarity breeds confidence and trust.
- Be polite and pleasant. Don't scream at journalists, even if you feel they have behaved badly towards you or your organisation.

- Share information. Journalists will be interested in talking to a source they know is familiar with their area of interest.
- Take your time and don't expect instant returns.
- Make clear the terms under which you are speaking to them. Agree what “off the record”, “on the record”, “on background”, etc. mean.
- Develop a personalised, friendly relationship with journalists. For example, try to take advantage of any special interest you may share with them (music, sports, etc.).
- Check which journalists other NGOs are speaking to, for possible contacts.
- Review newspapers/trade magazines/websites for who is writing about your area of expertise.
- Keep your promises. If you promise a journalist material, access or an exclusive interview by a certain time, deliver on it; or at the very least call to explain why you cannot.

Bear in Mind:

“Sometimes a friend, always a journalist” is a useful saying.

Remember – your agenda is to promote your organisation, their agenda is to publish or broadcast a story that is interesting. Whether it is positive or negative about your cause is not the point. It's what journalists do – the ones who still have a job, at least.



chapter 2

understanding social media

Social media are different from the conventional news media

Professional media relations people have to be able to deal with both audiences. Social media users may have very different backgrounds and motivations from professional journalists. While you use many of the same techniques to frame what you want to say in dealing with both audiences, and much of the same material, the way you handle them is different.

Before the early 2000s “social media” meant a group of people watching a movie together or interacting around a video game in the arcade. Today the term includes digital platforms where millions of people share ideas, likes and dislikes, form communities and respond to phenomena around the globe.

We have formed a complex digital society that demonstrates the connectedness of the individual to the world they live in and their thoughts of that world through the conversations they have. Social media includes Twitter, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn and a range of others all designed to spark conversations and form communities.

It is a difficult time for media relations professionals to navigate the social media world unless they can understand their audience, meet them on the platforms they use, and join in the conversation.

One of the most important things to keep in mind when using social media is that you are creating conversations. Conversation is a two-way process in which you, as a participant to a conversation, listen and respond. Many organisations use social media the way they would a TV advertisement or billboard – a broadcast to the audience or as a free bullhorn to announce things about the organisation.

When used in this way, the organisation will usually not have a very strong social media presence: tweets that are never re-tweeted, page views that don’t become likes and communities that tend to stay away, rather than accept you into their circle of friends.

When looking to social media think about it like entering a social gathering, the same social rules apply, join a conversation, don’t stand in the corner shouting whatever comes into your mind, especially if it’s an agenda.

The most unpopular guy in the Room

A man walks into a social event, he announces to everyone “Hi, My name is Tim, I am here”.

A crowd of people sees Tim and come over to say hi.

Tim says “Do you want to see how great I am? Last week I held a press conference. It was great.”

Tim continues “My organisation won an award, here is a picture of it”. A few of the crowd drift away.

Someone asks Tim if he saw an article that his organisation may benefit from. Tim ignores this person and continues to talk about how the organisation has just signed a deal with a new funder. Tim demands you like him.

More of the group break away and go to speak to someone else. Those that are left have started talking between themselves about Tim.

Tim makes a statement “We are going to a conference next week!”.

Finally the last few leave, but Tim stands in the corner talking to himself.



the golden rules of social media

Social media work very heavily on the creation of communities. Communities are the people that will like or follow your social media, interact with you, take part in your discussions and help you realise the aims of your campaigns.

Common Interest + Unity = Community

Here are three rules to consider when planning your social media strategy.

Know them

Most marketing professionals are very clear on whom they are talking to when they create advertisements or communication materials/campaigns for their organisations. This is called their “target audience”. Target audiences are specific. Every media professional should have a clear idea about who it is their organisation is addressing when they create communications. Are you speaking to funders, journalists, politicians, members of the community where your organisation operates, or people involved in your project? Knowing with whom you are speaking affects the way you create a communication. Consider how teenagers talk versus the way adults talk. No marketing executives would dream of speaking to teenagers the way they would to adults. They use different language or a combination of languages.

A good exercise in understanding your target audience is for your organisation to brainstorm a few ideas around who you want to reach. Consider what your audience like, what they don't like, what they respond to visually, which words they use, who their heroes are and how to get

them on your side. What clothing do they wear, what are their interests and can you find pictures of these people and discuss them with those in the group?

Once you have a good idea of what your target audience is like, consider which social media they use and how you can meet them where they are. These may not necessarily be the big platforms such as Twitter or Facebook.

Need them

Your audience doesn't need you, you need them. By showing your need or being open about what your organisation is trying to achieve, you will be surprised at the way your audience will respond to you. Your needs may be to raise awareness or help in achieving some goal. Whatever it is, reach out to your audience in an honest, authentic way for their help.

The best way to achieve honesty is sharing raw emotional content. People respond when there is an emotional connection to something or someone. By sharing an authentic, honest and emotional story or post, audiences will respond.

In 2013 a small Bolivian television programme for young people called “Pica,” aimed at youth issues and youth views, was in danger of shutting down. It had amassed a very strong following amongst young people in Bolivia. However the state broadcaster would no longer carry the programme. The Pica team, a non-profit organisation, reached out to their 4,000 Facebook fans to help them raise money in the “Salvamos Pica!” (Let's Save Pica) project.

Young Bolivians responded to the call for help and raised money, donated time and wrote letters to government, the public broadcaster and other organisations in Bolivia in support of Pica. The result was that Pica was granted funding and support and continued on air.



Involve them

The biggest campaigns in social media – The Arab Spring, The Occupy campaign or Kony 2012 – demonstrate the power of social media to create change. At the heart of these campaigns was a powerful appeal to the audience to become involved in some way. In the Arab Spring it was the uploading of video messages, transmitting messages of support and disseminating information, each person lending their voice to express dissatisfaction with living under oppressive regimes. In the Occupy campaign (against the perceived excesses of top bankers) it was about joining the cause and its specific goals. In Kony 2012 (about a murderous cult in Central and East Africa) the interactivity for the audience was to make Joseph Kony a “celebrity” in their hometown through “paint the town red” events.

Involving your audience does not have to be as monumental as the Arab Spring. You should, however, strive to build conversations, communities and interactivity between your organisation and the audience. A clear drive for action makes people respond; make sure you tell them clearly how you want the audience to respond and what they can contribute. Remember, social media users are not professional journalists. While you may use many of the same techniques in framing what you want to say to both audiences, they often have very different backgrounds and motivations.

Social media is a place to be creative. Because everyone can have access to it, every idea can be tried out. Some will take off and go “viral” – be picked up and spread by millions of people online. The constraints of the traditional media do not apply here. An example of this is the growth of the “ice bucket challenge” to raise money to combat diseases. People have buckets of ice-cold water poured over them and post videos, challenging others to do the same. When it took off, in 2014, it raised millions of dollars in a matter of weeks, as well as raising awareness about the diseases.

Bear in Mind:

Social media can also be dangerous. An intemperate comment posted from the seclusion of your own bedroom in the quiet of the evening is potentially just as public as a live interview in a television studio. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security.

**communicating
through news
media**



chapter 3

press releases

The Press Release remains at the heart of an organisation's media output

Not the old-fashioned piece of paper sent to all and sundry through the post or handed out at media "events", but a carefully prepared version of what you want to say so as to be as effective as possible. It may well form the core of your "message" across all media and social media formats.

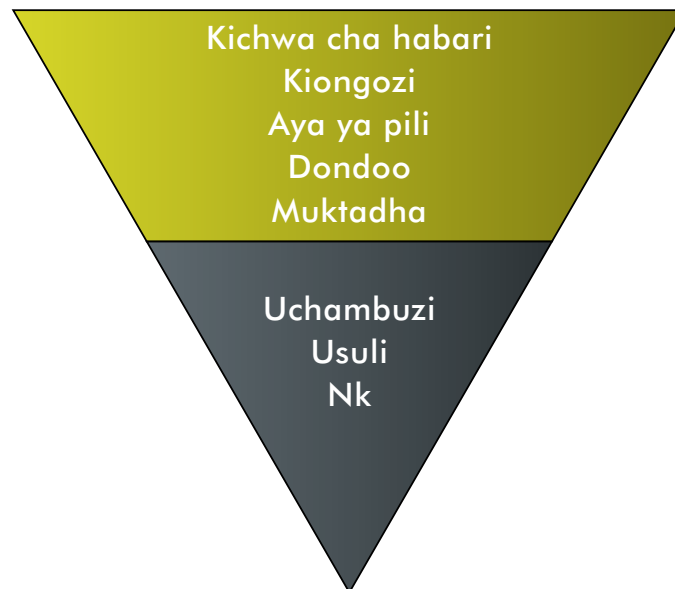
Despite this, a surprisingly large number of press releases contain no news, are badly written and are too long. It is worth spending time getting them right, so that they are informative and interesting not just to the traditional media, but to direct audiences via social media as well.

Writing a press release is a deceptively difficult task. It needs to be done well and has a lot in common with writing a good news story. While you write it to be instantly publishable for the general public, your primary target is the journalist or editor, since they are the gatekeeper to a wider audience.

Structure

When you are structuring your press release, keep in mind the structure known as the *INVERTED PYRAMID*, which is used traditionally by media organisations for news stories. The pyramid's broad base at the top of the figure represents the most substantial, interesting and important information we are trying to convey. This kind of material should head the text, while the tapered lower portion illustrates that other material should follow in order of diminishing importance.

The format is valued in writing news because readers can leave the story at any point and understand it, even if they don't have all the details. It also allows less important information to be more easily removed by editors so the article can fit a fixed size. This was historically very important when stories were being fitted into newspaper pages, but is still important to ensure discipline by reporters in sticking to a set number of words. The same principle is valid for writing press releases.



Headline

Your journalist readers will make a judgement about whether they are interested in your press release in about FIVE SECONDS or even less. An eye-catching, punchy, simple headline will give you an immediate way to grab the journalist's attention. Conversely, a weak, boring headline can condemn your announcement in an instant to the waste basket.

Why do we have to fight to get people's attention? People have a shorter attention span now because they are being bombarded with information from all different sides, internet, TV, radio, blogs. This applies to your journalist primary targets even more than the general public.

A headline is like the shop window, it invites readers in by putting interesting goods on display. It does TELL some of the "story" in your press release, but it also has to SELL that story. No one is going to want to read a piece with a headline such as "NGO holds its annual donor conference".

Remember, headlines are short. For many news organisations, you would expect a maximum of about 50 characters, including spaces and punctuation. So you must be very short, succinct, and capture the essence of the story.

Remember Twitter is only 140 characters to summarise the WHOLE story.

For a press release you have a little more latitude. And you are targeting journalists at broadcast media as well as print. So it is more important to be clear than to write a slick newspaper-style headline. But many publications, especially those with fewer resources, may want to publish your press release almost unedited. So a publishable headline is a good way to start.

Don't worry if you find this hard. Good headline writers have spent a long time practising their skills, and many newspapers have staff whose ONLY job is to write great headlines. A bad headline will stop people from reading your press release, so you have wasted your time writing it!

Some people find it easier to write the text before the headline. Others find that once you have explained the point of the story or press release simply to yourself, the headline will come! Don't try to be too clever, or cryptic.

Lead

Just as in writing news, after the headline comes the LEAD (in the US often spelled LEDE) and it is your chance to deliver on the promises made in your attention-grabbing headline. This basically means your first sentence of text, sometimes two short ones. Now you must seize your readers and hold them. Buy their time. If they are bored or confused, they won't read on. Tell them something they don't know.

Writing good leads is a great skill, for press releases just as for news stories. An active verb is vital. Have a key word close to the start of each sentence, and bear in mind the six Ws of traditional journalism – Who, What, When, Where, Why and So What. Make sure it is clearly sourced. How do you know this? A good length is 25-30 words.

One method is to try making a list of 10 key words without which you simply could not write your "story". They don't have to be the exact words you will use. Think more of the facts or concepts which must be there. So a story about water would definitely have the key words water, safe and drought. Once you have that list of keywords you have the essence of the story. Most or all should appear in the first sentence. All should appear by the end of the second paragraph.

A variation on this is to try reading your lead and then count the number of words you use before you reach one that is strong and essential and cannot be thrown away. If you go beyond three or four words before reaching that “must have” word, then stop and rewrite. You should be hitting strong, essential words very quickly after you start to read the first sentence.

A bad example:

A man walks into a social event, “A doctor, who has previously written a lot about how disease spreads, and is trying to get more funding, says that without access to clean water, hundreds of children will die.”

Look how many words come before an attention-grabbing phrase “Hundreds of children”.

Turn it around.

“Hundreds of children are facing death in a remote village as funding to give them clean water has dried up, a doctor who is an expert in water-borne diseases said on Monday.”

Text

Many of your target audience will stop reading at this point, unless your lead is so good you have given them a reason to stay with you. That’s the reason we devote so much attention to it.

The second paragraph is usually easier to write because it contains a lot of the detail which you couldn’t fit into the lead, the “leftovers”. This may be the point at which the press release introduces the role of your CSO. For instance, in the example in the box, the doctor may be working on a project run by your organisation, or be speaking to support its fund-raising campaign. So you mention its name.

The third paragraph in a press release is traditionally given to a quote. The readers may want to hear another voice instead of just that of the journalist. Quotes give credibility, human interest and a different voice. But they must add something new. A quote which just repeats what the lead said is not adding anything.

In our example of the doctor you don’t want a quote that merely says “Hundreds of children will die”. You want something with more power, such as “The children are the life and voice of the village, but soon they will fall silent, too weak to cry out any more.”

For your journalist-reader, this quote is a key part of your press release; they can write their own version of your story around that quote, it is raw material for them. If it is a good quote, it is a powerful lure; if they can contact that doctor to record their own interview with her or him, they will get similarly good material to broadcast.

Now we come onto the fourth paragraph. In a news story it is often called the NUT GRAPH. This is the paragraph which explains context, relevance, the PURPOSE of both a news story and a press release.

When you are writing this paragraph, it should answer the question... I am writing this press release because “This is the first time a foreign donor has entirely financed a project”, for example. I am writing this press release because..... “Foreign aid workers have been banned from the country, as the government says it cannot guarantee their safety.”

If you, as the writer, cannot complete... “I am writing this press release because...” it is probable that you don’t know why you are writing it. And if you don’t know, how can you tell journalists why it is important?

These first four paragraphs are the crux of your press release, the rest is extra detail, the order is less important.

Remember to keep your press release short. If you need more than a page of text to make your case, you haven't written it properly.

Information

It is essential to include all contact details and links in a press release. The basics, such as your name, job title, mobile phone number and email address, should already be on your organisation's template. But for each specific subject there may be specific details and links you need to include. These should come near the bottom so as not to clutter up your prose. Don't forget links to video and photo material.



Example of a good/bad press release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(This could also say: HOLD FOR RELEASE UNTIL/EMBARGOED UNTIL XXX TIME AND DATE)

Eyecatching headline.

What do people need to know? Capitalize the first letter of each main word (not conjunctions or articles). Usual rules: One sentence which is memorable and eye-catching.

BAD: Study Released about Water Security

GOOD: World's Water Supplies at Critically Low Levels

Sub-headline (if you want one).

This should not repeat the headline, but expand on it in a longer thought.

BAD: 900 page study on water security is released

GOOD: Threat to global water supplies "far worse" than previously thought.

Give the location and date of the story.

Underneath the headline/sub-headline, list your city and state. Follow that with today's date, including month, day, and year.

BAD: 11/12/2015 Press release (remember, the US uses a different date format, so is this November or December?)

GOOD: Lagos, Nigeria 10th November 2015

Body of the press release.

Remember that you are supplying sufficient, attractive information to grab the journalist and allow them to write a story about it. Remember to follow all the Ws. Who, what, where, when, why, how. Use short, punchy paragraphs. Include quotes, and keep it around 500 words. Maximum of one page. Explain all acronyms and jargon terms.

BAD: The externality analysis methodology of this study shows the TBL assessment required for effective TWCM planning and implementation at regional and sub-regional scales.

This is a result of its ability to incorporate the extensive range of interconnected environmental, economic and social factors that must be considered in integrated total water cycle management approaches.

GOOD: Groundwater accounts for more than a third of the world's water supply, and is relied on as the main source of water by 2 billion people.

Water security is an important component of regional security and sustainable development and it significantly affects regional development strategies. Flood security, water resource security, and water environment security are the basic elements of a water security system.

BAD: “The biophysical emissions and water quality consequences, linked to quantitative water supply changes from the range of potential options, has established the basis for more detailed externality analysis and economic valuation assessment of the options being considered in the study area,” said Professor Eau Aqua.

GOOD: “Many of the largest underground water sources on most continents are being mined,” Professor Eau Aqua said. “Without a sustainable groundwater reserve, global water security is at a far greater risk than is currently recognised.”

List company and contact information.

This allows the news reporter to contact you if they have more questions, or they want to arrange an interview. Provide basic information about your organisation that will help readers know what your company does.

BAD: The Water NGO creates collaborative hydro-expertise solutioneering across sustainable, multi-faceted domains.

GOOD: The Water NGO is an international non governmental organisation seeking to improve access to safe water, provide effective sanitation and hygiene education to the world’s poorest people, and influence policy at national and international levels.

Follow this with personal contact information: your name, title, phone number, mobile phone number, email address, web address, and physical address.

BAD: If you want more information, Google it ;)

GOOD: If you’d like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Professor Aqua, please contact Mary Smith on XXX-XXX email Marysmith@theWaterNgo.com. Suite 2001, Water Towers, Main Street, Lagos.

Write “END” at the bottom of the last page of the press release.

This lets journalists know that this is the end of your press release.

Place “###” underneath “END.”

These symbols appear at the bottom of most press releases. You could also put the word count of your press release here instead.

Bear in Mind:

A press release may go straight into a local newspaper or online, intended for the general public. So don’t write it just for knowledgeable journalists familiar with your jargon and context; make sure everything is set out in plain language and properly explained.

chapter 4

**press
conferences**



Conducting a press conference will be something you will have to do sooner or later

A press conference is a staged public relations event in which an organisation or individual presents information to the news media. It serves as a focus for your agenda and when used with Twitter or webcast can become a live “news event” in its own right, available to the general public too.

Communications officers use press conferences to draw media attention to a potential story. They are typically used for political campaigns, safety and health emergencies and promotional purposes, such as the launch of a new product or campaign. They can be a waste of time and money – and damage your credibility with your journalist contacts, if the story is not newsworthy or they are poorly organised or carried out. Here are some tips to help you as you plan a press conference.

1. Decide if it is necessary. If you could do it another, cheaper way, consider whether that would be better. Decide exactly what your story is. The best way to do this is to draft your Press Release – that will be the key message of your press conference. Senior executives sometimes have to be dissuaded from demanding a press conference when there is insufficient “news” to announce to justify one.

2. Selecting an appropriate venue to hold your press conference is crucial. Ask yourself the following:

- Have you got enough space?
- Is there parking for TV trucks and journalists?
- Is there adequate seating?
- Is there a stage or a podium?
- Have you got enough power points for people to plug into?
- Is there audio-visual support?
- Is there space for TV cameras, and radio mics inside?
- Is it close enough to where journalists have their offices?

3. Decide who you are going to invite. Your journalists contact list is a good starting point, but this is also an opportunity to invite a few more people on the off-chance they may be interested. Avoid sending mass email invitations – it looks unprofessional and unfocused.

How are you going to contact them? There are lots of methods – some traditional such as mailing, some creative ways such as sending an invite on a bar of chocolate. Make sure you have some idea of who is coming by following up the initial invitation with a reminder.

4. Make sure the speakers are good at dealing with the media. Don't have more than two of them to avoid confusing the audience. Tell the speakers not to speak for more than about 10 minutes at a time, and to keep focused on the key messages. Go over the material with them beforehand so they don't introduce anything inappropriate.

You can anticipate a lot of the questions in advance so the speakers should have ready, clear answers to those questions. Visual aids can be powerful – but don't let them overwhelm the conference and turn it into a lecture.

5. You will need a “moderator” or “facilitator” to introduce your speakers and make the question and answer session run smoothly. Often that person will be you. It's an important job. He or she needs to prevent more aggressive members of the audience from dominating the questioning, protect nervous speakers from bullying questioners, keep the conference on the main topic, make sure each question is clearly understood (some accents can be hard for visiting speakers to decipher) and ensure you keep to the allotted time.

6. Put together “press kits” in advance. These should include as a minimum the press release, any other background material on your organisation, paper and a pen. Free gifts such as mugs and hats can be put in too, but avoid expensive or showy goods which may suggest you are trying to bribe people (even if you are not!).

You could also prepare name identifiers on stiff card to place in front of the speakers so that the audience is always aware who is speaking.

7. Get to the venue at least an hour before the start to set up an “accreditation” table – so you can monitor who is present and who has yet to turn up – and to check the technical and physical logistics of the room and other facilities. Don’t forget the bathrooms, which may need to be labeled! A good press office has a “primary school teacher” kit with pens, scissors, tape, paper, clips, etc. just in case something goes wrong and you have to improvise.

Provide someone to greet people as they arrive and show them where to set up – this is particularly important for technical teams.

It is not necessary to provide food during a press conference, but coffee, tea and water will always be acceptable, and inexpensive to provide. After all, you want the journalists to be in a good mood! In some developing countries, poorly-paid journalists will welcome something a bit more substantial.

Stick to the timetable, and don’t let it last for more than an hour, including the question and answer session. Ensure that people identify themselves when they ask a question, and the moderator is prepared to repeat the question both to give the speakers time to think and to allow everyone in the room to hear.

Thank everyone for coming, and make sure you follow up quickly afterwards if you have said you will provide extra information. You should also offer private interviews after the press conference if you care to give TV and radio journalists the chance to ask more targeted questions.

8. You could also do tweeting “live” from the press conference. That would help spread the “buzz” beyond the journalist community and put pressure on them to issue a report. You cannot do this while moderating, so you might need to dedicate a member of staff to do it.

Bear in Mind:

Not everyone will approve of your speaker or your campaign. So, while you want to be as open as possible, make sure that hostile groups do not infiltrate your press conference to disrupt it and prevent the speaker from speaking. Only bona fide journalists and other invited guests should be allowed in.



chapter 5

interviews



Radio and TV interviews are a crucial part of what you do

Even if you don't have to do them yourself, you should ensure that you understand the basics and that everyone in your organisation who may have to be interviewed has had some basic training in how to look and act.

The Key Message

The wrong way to approach an interview is to think "I'll see what questions they ask, then answer them". The right way is to think "What is the best use I can make of this opportunity, what is the most important thing I want that audience to hear". This "most important thing" is usually known in the jargon as the Key Message.

It will vary from audience to audience – choose whatever best suits the moment. Try to avoid anything that sounds like an advertising slogan or mindless cheerleading. Back it up with some evidence – usually numbers, and what is often called the "soundbite".

This has various other names including bite, grab, clip, SOT (which stands for sound-on-tape) or Sync (sound in sync with pictures). It lasts between 10 and 45 seconds, depending on the style of the broadcaster; as a rule of thumb, aim for about 20-25 seconds.

When journalists are going through a recorded interview they are looking for a quote to include in their package which both sums up your argument and is clear and interesting. It's in your interest to give them a good "soundbite", something that best represents your Key Message. This needs preparation.

The Bridge

To get to your message, use a "bridging" technique. This involves acknowledging the journalist's question briefly, then using a linguistic device or phrase which carries you on to what you want to talk about. These devices, or "bridges", are phrases like "our chief concern at present", "what we are focusing on", or simply "however" or "but".

Try to think what questions you are likely to be asked, and write down as many ready-made answers as you can. Most difficult questions can be anticipated ahead of time. This will increase your accuracy, and make you look more professional. Try to pass on to your positive messaging as soon as you can, but do not try to minimise serious issues such as deaths as though they are not important.

First a neutral question, but on the wrong subject:

Q: How much progress have you made in Project X?

A: Project X has been going well, we are collecting the latest data and will be announcing our results next week. But our top priority at present is Project B which has become particularly urgent because of ...

Analysis

Project X has been going well, we are collecting the latest data and will be announcing our results next week. *You deal with the question with your prepared answer, you are not avoiding it, but this is not what you want to talk about.* But our top priority at present is... *This is your bridging phrase, delivered without a pause so the journalist will not intervene.*

Project B which has become particularly urgent because of ... *This is your chosen subject and will involve something interesting such as danger, crime, damage, threat, suffering, success, breakthrough – something more interesting to the audience than Project X. The word “urgent” signals that it is important. You now deliver your numbers and your soundbite.*

Now with a hostile question:

Q: But children are still dying from preventable diseases. You should be doing more of that work, shouldn't you, rather than wasting money building new headquarters?

A: Our new offices will make us far more efficient and able to do more to bring down the unacceptably high level of infant mortality. The focus now has to be on vaccinating the under-fives and for that we need funding through next year. If we can get 10,000 people to contribute just \$3 per month, we can protect every child in the country. Ten cents a day is what you spend on a piece of chewing gum, hopefully saving a child's life is worth more than that.

Analysis

Our new offices will make us far more efficient and able to do more to bring down the unacceptably high level of infant mortality... Deal with the question, and defuse the issue as briefly as possible. The focus now has to be... *A fairly blunt way of bridging/moving on.*

...on vaccinating the under-fives and for that we need funding through next year. If we can get 10,000 people to contribute just \$3 per month, we can protect every child in the country. Ten cents a day is what you spend on a piece of chewing gum, hopefully saving a child's life is worth more than that. *This is our Key Message, complete with a possible “soundbite”.*

If you *DON'T* want to answer a question, (or you cannot answer it for legal or other legitimate reasons) you should use a “close-down” technique. This can be a ready-made phrase such as “It is too soon to speculate” or “We cannot speak for the ministry”. This makes it clear that you will not talk about a subject at all.

If you simply don't know the answer to a question, it is best to simply say so; promise to find out the information and deliver it later. Do not use repeated close-downs if you can avoid it, only one or two in a whole interview.

It is crucial to remember that your body language and speaking style on television or radio can be as important as what you actually say.

- Speak slowly, and clearly, which will make you seem more professional as well as giving you additional thinking time.
- Try to look in control – not unshaven, scruffy and worried.
- Stay calm and polite even if the journalists are rude and aggressive.

- Keep bringing the issue back to the ground on which you are comfortable. Use bridge words and phrases to link you from the uncomfortable subject to the “safe” one.
- If you give a heated and angry response to a question, even if you only do it once during the whole interview, it will be the soundbite chosen by the journalists. Beware!

Bear in Mind:

By asking tough questions, the journalists are only doing their job, which is to get you to say something of interest. It isn't personal. So remember, in broadcast interviews particularly, that the journalist is not your target audience; getting angry with the interviewer is not a good way to get your messages to the viewers and listeners at home.

**communicating
through
social media**



photo Reuters/ **David Mercado** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

chapter 6

twitter

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a free microblogging platform that asks the user to post thoughts, information and news in 140 characters of text or less. Twitter is about conversations as users 'tweet' their thoughts and can include others in their tweets or speak their mind about a specific topic. Users are able to 'follow' people they are interested in or want to receive comments about. Celebrities, politicians, journalists and other figures in the public eye use Twitter to share their thoughts or information as it happens. It is a tool used by companies to promote their goods and services and a way to track what consumers are saying about them. Twitter is also effective at delivering breaking news and is becoming a commodity in business and civil society organisations, where individuals with the most Twitter followers are recognised as leaders in their field. Twitter is collaborative, in that you can use it to form a community around a certain topic or conversation or even for fund-raising.

How does Twitter work?

A good way to think of Twitter is that it is a selected or curated view of news feeds. Every Twitter user is their own publication (like a newspaper or magazine) that finds information relevant to them and either creates articles or publishes the articles of others related to the interests of that publication. Some Twitter users like to talk about current affairs, some like to tackle political or social issues, some like to talk about fashion and pop culture. Whatever the interest of the individual or the organisation, this is what they select or choose to talk about. A mistake that many make in using Twitter is that they do not have a voice, meaning they tackle so many topics and have such a broad spectrum that they become uninteresting.

Twitter's power is that it is a personal space, it is about people, not brands. People don't buy things or accept information blindly from companies or from brands, we buy things and form opinions from "people like us", whom we trust. Twitter has tapped into this and created a platform where people can share ideas and form communities of people who trust them and their opinion.

Twitter has long been disliked by journalists who believe it to be filled with subjective, unreliable and banal information. However Twitter is one of the world's biggest social media platforms and shows increasing growth. Journalists are learning to use Twitter, not so much as a source of information, but rather as a catalyst for stories.



Tweet!
Tweet!

The basic functions of Twitter

Before opening a Twitter account there are some things that you should know. Twitter has some very specific terms. The first step in using Twitter as a platform is to learn its language.

Tweet: A (up to) 140-character message that could be an opinion, an idea, a like or dislike. It is usually a subjective take on something or it can be a news flash that begins a conversation.

Follower: A person who has chosen to receive the tweets you create. A follower is a person who believes you have something interesting to say. People with many followers are usually considered thought leaders.

Following: The people that you or your organisation follow. These are people that you wouldn't mind having a conversation with, or those who you believe to be like-minded.

Re-tweet (RT): A re-tweet is the sharing of someone else's tweet. This is a way to give them credit for something you enjoyed. Re-tweeting is you re-posting a tweet by someone you follow on your own Twitter account. Think about it as telling people how funny or smart a comment was that you overheard.

Feed: A feed is all the tweets that the people you follow have tweeted. You will usually see this when you open Twitter.

Handle: A handle is simply your name as it appears on Twitter. It can be your own name or it can be something more creative.

Mention (@): By using the @ symbol before the handle of another Twitter user you are following, you mention them in your tweet to your followers. The person who you mentioned will also be able to see your tweet and may choose to respond. This is a great way to start a conversation.

Direct Message (DM): A private, 140-character message between two people. This is like an email over Twitter. You may only DM a user who follows you.

Hashtag (#): Using a # symbol before a word makes it a topic or joins what you have to say to an existing topic. Similar hashtags are linked and form a conversation. For example #Olympics or #Oscars will usually link conversations about these things together. You can click on a hashtag and read all the tweets that mention this hashtag. Hashtags are a great way to generate buzz around something that you are doing.

Getting Started on Twitter

When devising a Twitter account for your company or organisation, think about it as a personal space. People would much rather follow a person than a company or organisation. Before you create a handle, it is best to perhaps decide who would be the spokesperson for your company or organisation and have them be the person to have conversations with.

This is an example from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation: Notice the number of followers

Bill Gates, a world leader in entrepreneurship and business, has 18.5 million followers whereas Melinda Gates has just over 600,000. The Gates Foundation itself has just over a million followers, but its smaller and more focused handles @gateshealth, @gateseducation and @gatespoverty have fewer than 50,000 followers. Who are you likely to interact with?

Bill Gates @BillGates

Sharing things I'm learning through my foundation work and other interests...

Seattle, WA

gatesnotes.com

Joined June 2009

248 Photos and videos

TWEETS 1,451 FOLLOWING 166 FOLLOWERS 18.5M FAVORITES 4

Follow

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos

Bill Gates @BillGates · 16h

Watch this short, informative video on why Ebola spread in West Africa: b-gat.es/1uAdrau by @HansRosling

YouTube

Don't miss any updates from **Bill Gates**

Full name

Email

Password

Sign up for Twitter

Worldwide Trends [Change](#)



TWEETS **1,198** FOLLOWINGS **463** FOLLOWERS **601K** FAVORITES **2** LISTS **1**

Follow

Melinda Gates

@melindagates

Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, businesswoman, and mother. Dedicated to helping all people lead healthy, productive lives.

Seattle, WA
gatesfoundation.org
 Joined July 2010

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos

Melinda Gates @melindagates · 7h
 Honored to meet the Duke of Cambridge at @ChathamHouse in London tonight. cc: @ClarenceHouse #CHPrize



Don't miss any updates from **Melinda Gates**

Full name
 Email
 Password

Sign up for Twitter



Gates Foundation

@gatesfoundation

We work to help all people lead healthy, productive lives, focused on health, poverty, and opportunity. Follow our work: @gateshealth, @gatespoverty, @gatesed.

Seattle, Washington
gatesfoundation.org
 Joined December 2008

518 Photos and videos



Don't miss any updates from **Gates Foundation**

TWEETS **9,576** FOLLOWINGS **916** FOLLOWERS **1.33M** FAVORITES **777** LISTS **24**

Follow

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos

- Gates Foundation** @gatesfoundation · 19h
 The continent of Africa "appears tantalizingly close to fully eradicating polio," writes @looshuakeed. gates.ly/1x7gZxQ [View summary](#)
- Gates Foundation** @gatesfoundation · 19h 20m
 Are We on the Verge of a Polio-Free Africa? [#endpolio](https://gates.ly/1x7gZxQ) via @state gates.ly/1x7gZxQ [View summary](#)
- Gates Foundation** @gatesfoundation · 19h
 Watch this short, informative video on why Ebola spread in West Africa: [b-gat.es/1uAdraa](https://gates.ly/1uAdraa) by @HeraPooking [View video](#)



Gates Health

@gateshealth

The Gates Foundation Global Health work harnesses advances in science and technology to save lives in developing countries.

Seattle, WA
gateshealth.org/about
 Joined April 2011

50 Photos and videos



Don't miss any updates from **Gates Health**

TWEETS **2,342** FOLLOWINGS **331** FOLLOWERS **42K** FAVORITES **3** LISTS **2**

Follow

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos

- Gates Health** @gateshealth · 2h
 The continent of Africa "appears tantalizingly close to fully eradicating polio," writes @looshuakeed. gates.ly/1x7gZxQ [View summary](#)
- Gates Health** @gateshealth · 19h 20m
 Are We on the Verge of a Polio-Free Africa? [#endpolio](https://gates.ly/1x7gZxQ) via @state gates.ly/1x7gZxQ [View summary](#)
- Rebecca Merlis, PhD** @RebeccaMerlis · 19h
 #endpolio to prevent the PREVENTABLE - we help countries [endpolio](https://gates.ly/1uAdraa) put vaccines to work for kids. gates.ly/1uAdraa [View photo](#)
- Gates Health** @gateshealth · 19h 14m
 RT @jag_wagner: New report from @CDCgov on eradication of wild polio virus type 3. We can [endpolio](https://gates.ly/1uAdraa). gates.ly/1uAdraa

Tweeting for social change: step by step

1. Keep it simple

In a previous chapter we spoke about headlines and the lead (or lede) in which you find crucial words and put them together to “hook” the reader and give them the basic facts of the story. Tweeting is very much like this. Think about a tweet as your personal lead whilst keeping those crucial words and phrases central in your tweeting. You have 140 characters to really grab your audience’s attention; don’t waste this by delaying those crucial words.

2. Start a conversation

Use a relevant hashtag (#). If there is not a current hashtag for the conversation, create one. Earlier we spoke about attention-grabbing in the headline. Look for words or combinations of words that can be a conversation hashtag. If you were creating a conversation around water conservation you may want a hashtag such as #watercrisis, #waterwise or #water4africa. Your followers can use hashtags to join the conversation and feel they are involved. The more visible the hashtag, the more people are likely to join in the conversation.

When holding a press conference or engaging with a big group of people, provide them with a hashtag at the start of the conference or event, a hashtag such as “#watercon14” could be used by everyone at your event to share their personal views or what they found inspirational.

3. Keep it personal and invite dialogue

It is important to keep your tweets personal. It’s not about announcing a fact as much as it is about how you, the person who is relaying this fact, feel about it. People who feel the same way will band with you and may re-tweet your post or mention you in theirs. Real people tend to have more passion than organisations which speak with a neutral voice. If you are an individual who is passionate about something, you are much more likely to gather a following.

If your organisation’s tweets sounds like an advert or marketing, they are likely to be ignored. You should be starting a conversation with your fellow tweeters around thoughts on a topic. When you post a tweet, think about how you are inviting others to dialogue with you, or if this was the real world, what would the person on the other end of the conversation do in response to this information?

4. Build relationships

Building relationships on Twitter helps to spread your message and connects you to your followers. Use the ‘@’ symbol to show your appreciation or response to a positive or negative comment. You can also use the re-tweet (RT) function to bring new information from someone you follow to your users. Other members of your organisation should be encouraged to re-tweet from their own Twitter accounts. This will give you a much bigger reach. Finally it is good to join or follow as many related individuals, organisations or communities as possible so that you can share information and interact with followers.

5. Keep it Frequent

Every night your followers go to bed, they forget you. Your organisation needs to continually update their Twitter feed with current happenings and information. The more current your information and the more you tweet, the higher likelihood of gathering people around your organisation. Your organisation can always have something to say, join a conversation or re-tweet something that has happened or that is of interest to you and your followers.

Twitter works well in real time and is often used as the first source of breaking news. If your organisation has called for a demonstration or rally, get the participants to tweet from the rally and use these to give a bigger picture of the event. Again, social media is all about the personal take on the event. Having many people tweet or use a particular hashtag you have created, you will be developing a nuanced look at the whole situation.

6. Involve the powerful

Twitter gives you the power to directly connect with government officials, celebrities and cultural movers and shakers. By @mentioning specific people, they could potentially see your post and re-tweet it. Similarly their followers could see your post and you could begin a great conversation and gain new audiences. In the digital age, tweets from politicians, government officials and other people in the public eye can be considered a quotable source and can be used in reports and media as commentary.

Make-A-Wish – SF Batkid



In 2013 one of the most inspiring stories was The Make-a-Wish Foundation's #SFBatKid. Miles, a five-year-old with leukemia appealed to the Make-a-Wish foundation to be turned into Batman for the day and San Francisco into Gotham City. What was going to be a simple production turned viral.

When people heard about the little boy's dream, the hashtag #SFBatkid was created with more than 500,000 tweets with a reach of 777,453,544 on Twitter. Drove of volunteers showed up to make Miles' dream come true.

Not only was a young boy's day made, but the publicity from the event helped the foundation increase donations the following month by 26 percent.



tools and resources

Twitterfall

To see what people are saying about a particular topic in real time, you can use a free application such as Twitterfall (www.twitterfall.com). This enables you to search, for instance, a topic like “Water” and it will give you everything people are saying with that in the tweet. Some of these things can be re-tweeted. If, for instance, you wanted to see what people were tweeting about your organisation during an event or press conference you could use this to comment and re-tweet in real time. This is particularly useful in a situation where you wish to develop a bigger audience or gather more support.

Tweetbeep

Every time someone tweets a specific word or phrase, tweetbeep.com will alert you via mail. If you have an organisation that you want to monitor online through reputation management or simply want to see what is being said about a person, your organisation or any topic, you will be alerted. Tweetbeep is great for the reputation management of celebrity or public personas.

The downside to Twitter:

Twitter takes a lot of work. To remain current and relevant, you need to tweet a lot and interact with other Twitter users often. This can be demanding on your time. However it can be particularly rewarding if you have a marketing campaign, conference or other event scheduled and want to gather support.

A problem with the personalised approach is: what happens when the person you have nominated as your organisation’s voice decides to leave? Will they take their following with them? The question of who “owns” the following has become a serious one for big business and the entertainment industry.

Bear in Mind:

Tweets often have to be done quickly to be relevant. Writing in a hurry can be dangerous, whether you have frontline journalism experience or not. So try to ensure a colleague casts a “second pair of eyes” over your words before you press the transmit button and save yourself embarrassment, or worse.

chapter 7

facebook

What is Facebook?

Facebook is a free social networking platform that allows users to create a dedicated page, post comments, upload photos and video, engage in live chat with other users, send messages, keep in touch with friends, family, colleagues, public figures, businesses and organisations.

Facebook comprises a series of pages dedicated to a person, a business, a cause or event. A Facebook page has information about its subject and allows other Facebook users to interact socially by allowing them to post comments, like updates to the Facebook page, add the Facebook user as a friend or send messages directly to the page owner. Facebook is available in virtually all world languages.

Many organisations confuse Facebook with a website. A Facebook page is a two-way communication platform whereas a website is traditionally a broadcast, one-way communication channel. Think about Facebook as a digital storefront to your organisation, as the “Face” of your organisation to the digital customer. Many people will use this as a place to interact with your organisation, tell you what they think about your products or services and

share their stories with you. Facebook will also be the place where people who support your cause or who feel your organisation is of substance, will become part of your network by becoming a Facebook friend or liking your page.

In the digital age, the organisations with the most friends or likes are those that are seen as powerful. Facebook is the world’s biggest social network with more than 1.3 billion active users as of January 2015. It is untrue that social media is a young person’s platform as Facebook’s highest growth group currently is between 45 and 55 years old. Individuals, communities and organisations are using Facebook to educate, inspire and mobilise for positive change. In the section on Twitter, we discussed the importance of generating conversation rather than one-way communication. Facebook is also about creating dialogues and conversations through the forming of communities.



How does Facebook work?

Before starting a Facebook page, there are some terms and tools that you should be aware of.

Page vs. Personal Profiles:

As you will be creating a page for your organisation, it is important that you select this when setting up a Facebook account. A page for a business or organisation is different from a standard Facebook profile for an individual. Individual profiles do not have the abilities that pages do. Pages allow many people to like them whereas there is a limit on how many friends an individual profile may have.

Profile Pictures and Coverphoto:

These are visuals of your organisation. Many organisations choose to use their logo as their profile picture and a snapshot of their projects as a cover photo. These usually give people an idea of what you do and where you work.

Post:

Every time you create a new piece of content, you post it on your timeline. A post can be a picture, a statement, a link to a webpage, an interesting article you wish to share, or a check-in that shows your location or whereabouts if it is significant. For example a check-in at "The Climate

Change Summit, The Hague" may be of interest to those who are fans of your page.

Share:

You can draw the attention of the people who follow your Facebook posts (your friends) to anything published on the internet by sharing it, in other words posting a link. The more your own original content is shared on Facebook, the more widely it will be seen.

Timeline:

A timeline is like a bulletin board. Here everything you post or the people who are part of your page post, will be seen in date order. People visiting your page can see your activity and like or comment on these posts. This has replaced the Facebook "wall".

Hashtag:

As with Twitter, using a "#" symbol before a keyword or conjunction (#climatechange) turns it into a conversation that people can join and everyone who uses this hashtag in their own posts can be seen by clicking on this hashtag.

Like or Liking:

This is a button that people use to show their appreciation for your organisation (by liking your page, people join the page and can see your posts). The like button can also be used to show support or appreciation for a post on your timeline.

Comment:

Comments are conversations or responses to what has been posted on your timeline.

Insights:

Insights is a tool for page owners to see what impact you have made with your Facebook page over the course of a set time. You will be able to see how many people liked your page, how many people saw your posts and what the "reach" of your posts and page was. Insights are a great tool to understand what is working and what is not on your Facebook page. It also gives you good information about who is viewing your page and how to better target their support.

Reach:

Reach is a reflection of how many people saw your post, clicked on your post, liked your post, and commented on your post and by doing this, how many people saw this activity as part of the “newsfeed”. The average Facebook user has over 100 friends. When they like your page or do anything related to your page, this shows up in their newsfeed and is visible to their friends.

Newsfeed:

A list of happenings on your page (new likes, comments, etc), mentions of you by others on their pages and any and all activity of those you follow or who you have liked and joined.

Tag:

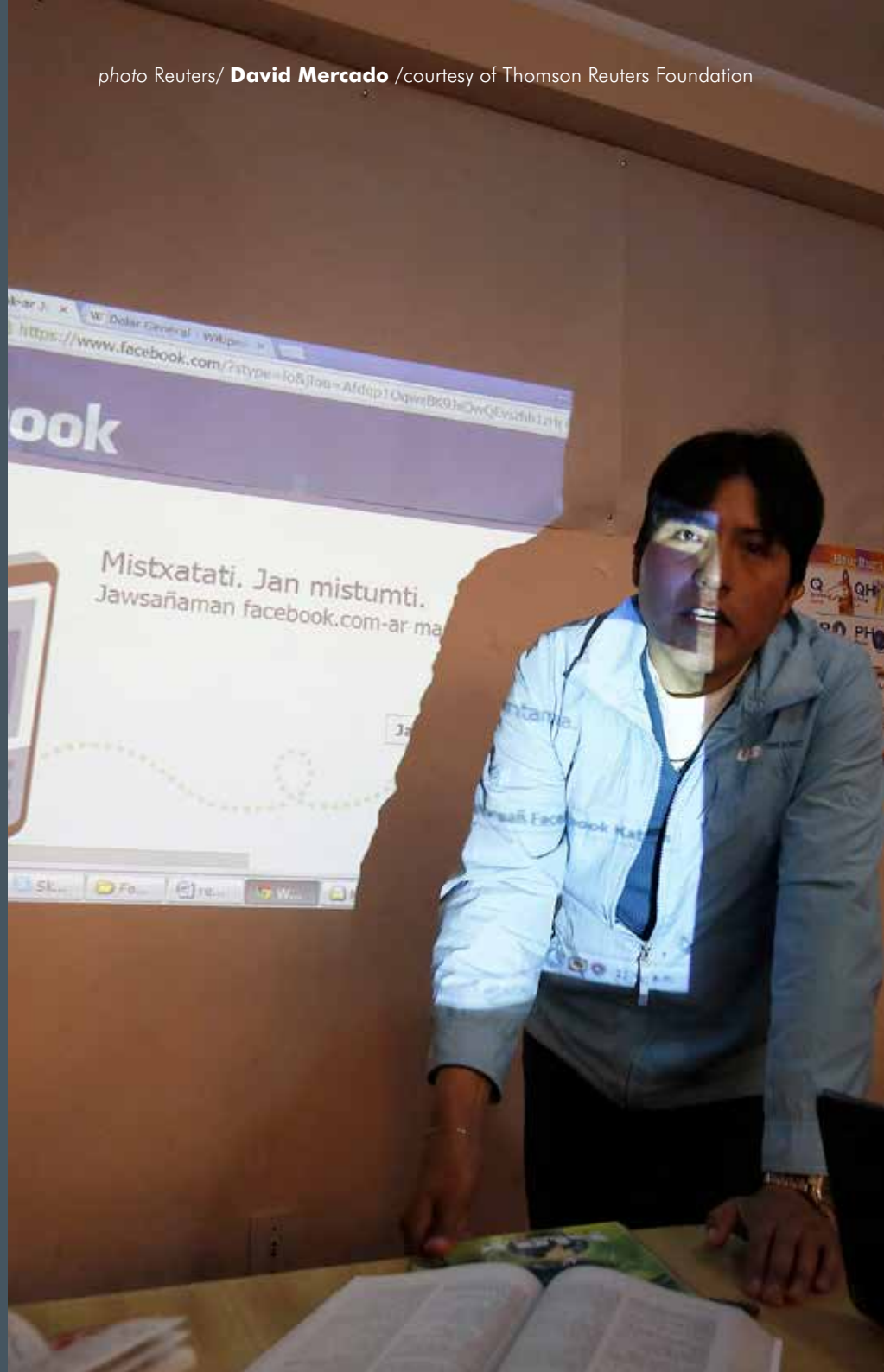
Tag or Tagging means to ascribe an identity to someone or something in a picture. For instance you may tag people in a photograph taken at a fundraiser by adding the names of the people in that picture to your post. By tagging people in photos, your post appears on their timeline. This is a good way to be visible to their followers or friends.

Chat:

The chat function on Facebook allows you to chat with friends or fans of your page.

Message:

This allows those who follow or are fans of your page to message you, much like email. This is unseen from the newsfeed or timeline.



Getting Started on Facebook

Before you go onto Facebook and create a page it is important to gather some information about your organisation: visuals such as photos and the organisation's logo or art work, its physical address, telephone number and all the details that will help you look professional and legitimate to the visitors on your page. Once you have collected these materials, visit www.Facebook.com/pages; here you will be able to create a page in a simple step-by-step way.

Remember that Facebook is built for community formation. You need to know what you want to get out of your Facebook page. Is your Facebook page going to be about gathering volunteers? Is the page going to be used as a fundraising tool? Do you want to gather support for your cause through sharing of stories? Whatever your goal is, having a clear idea of how you want to engage people on Facebook is going to be important as this will set your agenda for how you post and how you measure the effectiveness of your Facebook page.

Some Practical Pointers

Facebook allows your organisation to post stories that are significant to you. Like Twitter, Facebook is built on creating personalised experiences. Potential supporters really want to feel there are passionate people behind the organisation, rather than just the dull neutral tone of "official messaging". What is significant about social media is that it is a democratised media, it is the news, views and opinions of the ordinary citizen. Because of this, social media really flourishes when the organisation feels like a person, rather than a machine. In order to tell the story of your organisation effectively, here are some pointers:

- Speaking in the first person helps personalise the Facebook experience for your audience, rather than a neutral tone. Use "we" and "I" in your story updates. Include a picture of who is posting this piece, or tag people in the post that you mention.
- Personal stories may include: the story of someone your organisation has helped, a picture of the field work your organisation is doing, perhaps a link to a news article about the organisation by a journalist.
- Share the triumphs and the difficulties that your organisation is experiencing. In these posts be clear about your needs, your challenges and the way people can get involved in helping your organisation. Some of the most successful campaigns for non-profit organisations on Facebook have been when these organisations admit that they have failed and ask for help.
- Post relevant information, articles and links that you feel are linked to your organisation's work. For instance if your projects involve food security, a link to a video on how to grow a vertical garden in a very small space will be a great thing to share with your fans.
- When re-posting, add commentary or analysis. By adding your voice, you show you understand your audience and are not just forwarding junk, but rather starting a conversation, of which the original post is a part.
- The most effective Facebook campaigns put people in the centre of their story. These could be about whatever you feel necessary, but they should be personal. Non-profit organisations with the most Facebook likes or fans have understood this.

Use Photos and Video to help explain your story

The old adage “a picture is worth a thousand words” is absolutely true. A picture or video gives your community a visual of what you and your organisation look like, the people you help and the places you visit. It puts a human face to your organisation. When looking at the timelines of organisations, most people look at the pictures and the videos first as they grab our attention. A video, image or link usually has a much better response from fans or friends. These are also things that people can share and send to their friends.

It is an advantage if your audience creates content for you and posts this, tags your organisation in it, or creates conversations on your behalf using hashtags or sharing a link to your page. User-generated content has almost 80 percent likelihood of being shared and distributed, whereas the content you post is likely to be shared only about 12 percent of the time. You can ask your fans to help you spread your message by changing their profile pictures or their cover photos to your campaign or logo. A great example of this was a campaign by The Human Rights Campaign.

CASE STUDY: The Red HRC Logo

In March 2013 The Human Rights Campaign (HRC.org) began a campaign as the United States Supreme Court was about to hear two cases on equal marriage rights. In an attempt to create public support, awaken social consciousness and ignite debate around the issues of gay marriage, the Human Rights Campaign changed the colour of their logo from blue and yellow to red and pink and asked their fans, celebrities and policy makers to share this in support of equal marriage. The red and pink logo soon took over the news feeds of Facebook. Actors, celebrities, sports stars and politicians were talking about the logo and sharing it. Many brands such as Smirnoff, Maybelline, Marc Jacobs, Kenneth Cole and HBO used the logo (or interpretations of it) in support of the cause. The logo change, shared across Facebook, did exactly what the HRC intended; with almost 200,000 shares and 100,000 likes, the campaign is currently one of the most successful in the history of non-profit organisation campaigning. The logo also spurred thousands of creative interpretations that continued the conversation.



Create a dialogue

When posting always ask yourself: “In the real world, how will someone respond to this statement?”. If your post is not going to drive a discussion, create a conversation or add to an existing discussion, why are you posting? Posts should be about creating good conversations that connect you to your community and them to you. They should be likeable, shareable and allow your audience to comment on them and form discussions.

Build your community

Find organisations like yours, partner organisations, journalists you know and want to share information with and individuals you respect and admire and add them as friends to your Facebook page, or like them on behalf of your organisation’s page. Should they accept your like and reciprocate it, they will be able to receive your posts and see your stories. Journalists you have created a relationship with are able to have access to photos, stories and a steady stream of interesting content.

When people comment on your page or your posts, acknowledge them. Make them feel their opinion counts and that your organisation appreciates their input. You may re-share their post so that it is visible to everyone on your page. You may mention them in your post by linking their name in your post or you can simply like their addition to the conversation. It is important to understand that by building strong relationships with the people in your community, you will have to do less work as they will help spread your message.



tools and resources

Facebook Insights

Facebook Insights is a powerful tool for page owners. As a page owner or administrator, you can see lots of information about the page and the people who interact with it. This tool allows you to see who has visited your page, their demographics, what posts have been your most effective dialogues and what people are saying about your organisation on Facebook. Facebook Insights is also able to generate reports that will help you see what is effective and what is not effective. This way you can create better conversations and continually improve your interaction with your fans.

Facebook Applications

Facebook has a number of applications or apps you can use. Visit the Facebook App Centre (search for it on the top bar of your Facebook page). There are a range of apps that you can add to your page, usually searching for what they do will yield a result. For example, searching in Facebook for “live video app” will return an app such as Livestream through which you can hold a digital press conference, broadcast live from an event or host a live discussion your organisation is hosting. Depending on what your organisation does, there should be an app for what you would like to achieve.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-orientated social networking service. Much like Facebook, LinkedIn allows its users to create pages, profiles and timelines that list their experience and expertise so as to develop and grow their professional networks. Each user’s page is very much like an online resume that lists the companies they work for, their experience, awards and accolades and other business-type information. LinkedIn is a top resource for recruiting new employees and is used by businesses to post vacancies and calls for applicants. Another key feature is the endorsement function in which people can be endorsed and have people write references for them. Companies can create profile pages of their organisations and list their employees that have LinkedIn pages. LinkedIn allows its user to be part of or create 50 groups. Groups are people with shared interests or belong to a similar sector or industry, for example the “Small Business owners of Lima” or “The Zambian television industry group”.

Bear in Mind:

When you re-post an article, a photo or a comment, you are in effect re-publishing it and bear some legal responsibility for the content. Just as with Twitter, people and organisations have been sued for carelessly sharing an item which turns out to be defamatory. So before you hit the share button, ask yourself whether you want your organisation’s name associated with this content.



chapter 8

blogging

What is Blogging?

Blogging involves a person who writes opinions or shares content via a dedicated website known as a blog (originally weblog, or web diary). Content is written or shared almost in the same way a diary would, listed in date order, with the most recent post at the top. A blog can contain a range of content including videos, pictures and articles (sometimes called entries) that a blogger writes, curates and contributes. It is published to the internet and can be read by the public.

There are different strategies for creating a blog. Some people do so simply because they are passionate about a particular theme or subject. Others create blogs to fill a gap in information or content on the internet. A good reason to start one is if you feel a particular type of voice is missing from a conversation: for example a Muslim mother's blog about parenting or a vegan's restaurant guide of a city. Blogging can provide an organisation with space to tell stories in a more in-depth way (than would be possible on other social media), contribute articles of interest and manage problems immediately.

On blogs people may post comments and reply, share content and form discussions. As with the social media sites, a blog generates discussions through creating content. A blog is not a website, it differs in the following key ways:

BLOG	WEBSITE
Content is regularly updated	Content is static (doesn't change much)
Informal	Formal/professional
Interactive	Interactivity does not exist. There is only one-way communication
Informative and educational	Transactional and usually centres around communication about products and/or services
Some organisations have a blog	Every organisation needs a website

Creating a website is technical and requires skill; because of this websites are not updated very often unless there is an in-house web person. The result is that your organisation's website may not be as current or may not have the updated information that people may require. For this reason, some organisations have a blog built into their website that communications staff for the organisation can update. Blog posts are as easy to create as a Word document and can be used to keep the website current.



How does Blogging work?

The process of creating a blog post is not difficult. Many people can do it with ease. Before creating a blog for your organisation, it is important that you understand some technical terms about blogging.

Dashboard:

Is the landing page of sites like Wordpress – a commonly used website that helps you design your own blog page. Once you create a Wordpress account this will be where you start. From here you are able to create new posts, see how many comments you have and see how many people have visited.

Blogroll:

Is a blogger's list of links to other blogs you read or support. Ideally these only include blogs that you really like and recommend.

Comments:

Are opinions your readers leave in response to a blog post. This is a useful way for you to connect with your audience and create conversations with them. If negative comments come up, use this as an opportunity to begin a dialogue.

Content:

Not exclusively a blogging term, content includes work that you create. This could be an article, a video, a podcast, etc.

Hyperlink:

This is the full version of "link", that is clickable content within a web page that takes the user to another page, website, or within part of the same page. You may provide a hyperlink on your Facebook page or in a tweet that will connect your reader to the blog site.

Subscribe:

Is a way of joining a blog. A blog should have different ways in which users can subscribe to blog content. These should include email and RSS.

RSS:

Is short for Really Simple Syndication, a way in which users can subscribe. Whenever you post an article or content on your blog, people who have enabled RSS on your blog will be notified. If you find someone's blog particularly interesting, you will be notified when they post something new.

Tags:

Tags or keywords are terms that you think are important in your article or post. For example "water crisis", "education" or "Johannesburg". By creating tags, you are telling search engines like Google or Yahoo how to find your piece. If your keywords match those entered by users, the search engine will bring them your article on top of their search results.

Getting Started on Blogging

There are a range of free blogging websites, the biggest are Wordpress (www.wordpress.org) and Blogger (www.blogger.com). These sites are not technical and can be updated by people who have a medium proficiency in computers. Setting up a gmail account through Google is recommended. This is a simple process that will take not longer than about two minutes.

Before you begin it is important to come up with a good name that you will call your blog site. If it is related to an organisation, you could include them in the name of your blog. It should be easy to remember and spell as well as concise. Avoid punctuation or special characters. Once you have decided on a domain name for your site, it is time to start creating content.

1. Content is King

People visit the Internet for two reasons: to be entertained and to find information about a particular subject. People read blogs for the same reason. If you are able to answer people's questions or provide insight that no other site does about a particular topic, then your blog is likely to be successful. The other reason a person may read your blog is that it is entertaining. It is important to understand that 'entertaining' does not mean people have to roll on the floor at your side-splitting humour, instead people get some satisfaction from the stories you chose to post, the images and video you share and way that you communicate. Excellent content usually makes the reader feel something. This could be joy, anger, frustration or sadness. Most often if you are passionate about your topic, this will be evident in the content you post and how you communicate about the topic. In all of this it is important to realise that your content is king. The content you create will find an audience if it is relevant. Blog articles or posts should include the following content:

- Expert Knowledge (useful)
- Special interest subject matter (useful)
- Entertainment (entertaining)
- Personal interaction (emotive/useful/entertaining)
- Unique tone or voice (entertaining/emotive)

A great starting place is to tell stories that you are passionate about. In Chapter Three of this guide we introduced you to the way a press release is structured. This holds true of the way good articles are written. Consult Chapter Three if you are struggling to format your articles.

CASE STUDY: The Exit Syria Blog

A team of journalists ventured into Za'atari, the world's second largest refugee camp, on the border between Syria and Jordan. Over four weeks they posted the daily struggles of three ordinary refugees in the camps and gave frank descriptions of the living conditions.

The blog included video, pictures and articles written by the journalists talking about their experiences. Created to be a real-time documentary project, the content is shocking, emotionally raw and, most important, honest. What the blog does well is that it offers everything expected of a great blog: it has specific subject matter, unique voice, personal interaction and entertainment. The blog was nominated for the Webby Awards best blogs award in 2014.



2. Tone and voice

Blogs are not websites. It is important to mention this again as it sets our discussion for choosing the tone for your articles and posts. In the creation of content for a website we aim for a formal tone. It is written in a simple, to-the-point fashion that gives it a feeling of being neutral.

Blogs on the other hand are conversational, less formal and more personality-driven. The best blogs are by those people who have interesting views or a unique voice and share these in their blog posts. Not only do you filter the content you think is relevant, you should lend your voice to the discussion (or start it) by presenting your point of view.

3. Creating dialogue

Blogging involves you creating content on the blog site and sharing this content with the public. People are able to respond, comment and quote your blog site as a source. Blogging is particularly effective in reacting to events, writing open letters, creating relevant commentary on subjects that affect your organisation, publishing findings and sharing news.

You should respond to your audience if they comment on your posts, build up your following and ask their opinions. You should encourage comments. You can also attract new followers through links on Facebook or Twitter that direct the user to a full article on your blog.

Great bloggers grow their blogs through continually posting on others' blogs, guest blogging and sharing their insights as comments across blog posts. This becomes almost like a debate or discussion between different blogs if you have varying points of view about the same subject. When done well, the result is really engaging. By creating blogs, you and your organisation become recognised as a relevant voice in the particular area of focus.

4. The Visual Style

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and others have created clean design that is simple and easy to read and navigate. These sites are uniform in their look. The developers of these sites have spent millions in research and creative understanding around user experience. Blogs on the other hand enable the creator some creative license and the ability to customise the look of the blog. As a result blogs tend towards the tacky and overly complex in their design.

Instead of choosing busy backgrounds, hard-to-read texts and over-complicated templates, put yourself in the place of the reader. It is proven that black text on a white background is the easiest to read. Include some relevant pictures to create visual interest on your blog, choose easy-to-read, simple text. Lastly, consider using headings and sub-headings to break up slabs of text.

5. Frequency

Post regularly (at least once a month). This will allow your site to remain fresh and your content to be listed by search engines as current. Your followers will notice this pattern and be sure to check back continually. Reader and writer burnout is also an issue if you over-post articles or content. For those in your RSS feed this may become irritating and your opinion will be seen as diluted

tools and resources

Blogcatalog.com and Technorati.com

These are online blog directories on which you can search, rate and review thousands of blogs. They allow you to search for blogs within a list of topics.

Google Analytics

If you use a blogger (also known as blogspot) site, Google analytics can be activated on your blog site. This is a tool that lets you see who has accessed your blog site, what tags brought them to your site, where they are in the world and how they interacted with your content.

Bear in Mind:

To set up a smart-looking website is ordinary for Civil Society Organisations these days; by contrast, having a distinctive blog page makes you stand out. And it will bring in traffic to your website. You can include links to other pages on the site, to your Facebook page and Twitter feed. It's worth the effort.

chapter 9

**online
strategy**

Before you get started on your Online Strategy

Take a moment to think about this question: who is going to do all the work? Do you have enough time yourself? If not, does someone on your staff?

An active online strategy can be a full-time job for a major NGO; don't bite off more than you can chew. It is a pretty poor advertisement for your organisation if questions go unanswered, requests are ignored, comments not dealt with, because no one has the time. A blog site which hasn't been updated for months speaks volumes about you. How many times have you visited websites of large organisations only to find them advertising events long past, profiles of staff long since departed, redundant stories screaming to be updated!

If well done, an active social media profile can generate enough revenue to more than compensate the staff-hours it takes. But make sure you can allocate the time before you embark on an ambitious list of onscreen projects. Calculate the hours and set aside the necessary time.

Online Strategy

As a communications professional, you need to create a strategy for your organisation; it looks at goals you want to achieve and then creates a plan of how to reach them using the tools you have available. An online strategy is precisely the same. Devising an effective online strategy is easy and if done creatively can cost an organisation no more than time.

A strategy for your online campaign is essential as it

- Recognises your limitations
- Focuses on your audience
- Forces you to understand what you would like to achieve
- Allows you to measure your successes and failures
- Provides a way to reach a goal by setting targets

Here is a step-by-step approach:

1. Start with your audience

Who are you addressing? By understanding who your target audience is, you will be able to craft your strategy around them. You will also be able to understand their habits, their likes and dislikes and the competitors to your organisation who are targeting the same group. Who you are hoping to reach will determine the platforms you use.


In the example below

for a television programme in South Africa, the target audience used the cell/mobile social media site MXIT, Facebook and Twitter. By understanding this, the organisation chose to engage with them on those platforms rather than on ones they did not use.



The youth audience we intend targeting with Bona Retsang Digital Marketing Strategy is between 14- 24 year olds. This strategy includes a focus on web-based social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as well as the use of mobile social media platform MXIT.

Snap shot Demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Urban: 80%- Majority High school- 25% post matric.- Johannesburg, Durban, Western Cape- major centers.	Digital Platforms on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- MXIT- Facebook- Some Twitter.- Whatsapp/BBM	Listen to: Metro/ Five FM Hero: DJ Fresh Best Clothing store: Mr. Price Favorite Brands: Nike, Converse, Vodacom, Ama-Kip Kip.	Biggest competitor: Hectic 9 Nine is a daily youth lifestyle program that has a similar target audience. Daily 4-5
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Now compare them with the target audience below. You will notice an immediate change in digital platforms on which to engage.



Snap shot Demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biggest donors of our programme: The Netherlands• Biggest global donors: The	Digital Platforms: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Website• blogs• linkedIN	Buzz Words: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stories of Change (stories of change on the ground).• "Capacity building"
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2. Create your on-line communication goals

Before you are able to create goals, you must understand what your organisation's current situation is. What are you currently doing on the web? How effective is it? Take a look at your communications and use this to get a good understanding of what you are doing wrong and right.

Once you have understood this, set your goals. What do you want to achieve through an online presence? More than just having a website, what does your organisation want to achieve by being online?

Here are some goals that organisations typically use:

- Generate exposure for the organisation
- Increase online traffic to its website or projects
- Create new leads for projects or collaborations

- Distribute information in a simple way
- Receive feedback from its audience
- Build connections and communities online
- Create conversations, join conversations and interact about a subject it is passionate about
- Draw public attention to an issue or cause

Every organisation will have its own goals. Your organisation may be content with just adding a Facebook page or getting a Twitter handle. Don't do it, unless it is a goal of your organisation, it is a tool your audience use and something that you can dedicate time and effort to; a lackluster Facebook or Twitter presence will not benefit your organisation. Once you know what you would like to achieve, it is a matter of finding the best way to achieve these goals.

3. Develop a plan of attack

Creighton Abrahams, a US general in the Vietnam War, said "When eating an elephant, take one bite at a time." As the communications professional for your organisation, create a list of steps that you will take in reaching your goal, the time you will allow yourself to complete that goal and the resources you will need. By doing this, you will be able to see what you have accomplished and what needs to be done in reaching your goal. A plan lists your goals and the strategies that you want to use in achieving it.

Here is an example:

Goal	Strategy	Channel	Targets
Creation of social media sites dedicated to "Our Organisation" through which collaboration and conversations may be established with young people (18 – 24 year olds) about safe sex practices. We would like to offer a space where young people can ask us questions, either publicly or anonymously.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create a Twitter handle.2. Join and follow people in our target audience who are influencers.3. Reach out to dominant voices for support.4. Post regular updates, pictures, articles and retweets, a minimum of five per day.5. Answer all questions within one hour of receiving them.	Twitter	A minimum of 1,000 followers on Twitter by date X.

4. Iterate and Adapt

Iteration is the process of learning from what you are doing as you are doing it. In the digital world, things move quickly and you are able to see what is working and what is not working. You may discover that your posts made on Facebook at nine o'clock in the morning get very few likes while posts done at nine in the evening do very well. Iteration would be to first identify this trend, make sense of it and then adapt to it. It is acceptable for your strategy plan of attack to change over time; in fact, most digital strategies will change in response to the audience.

In order to iterate, you must be listening to what your audience is saying. This can be through identifying trends or seeing how your interactions are received over time. A great way to see a trend is through the use of analytics.

Analytics is like a report card for your platform. Analytics can:

- Track how your sites or platforms are performing
- Tell you how many people you reached
- Inform you on how many people are new or unique visitors
- Give you specific information as to how these people came to find you
- The average duration they stayed on your pages
- What the average user liked most
- Their behaviour on your site or platform

Most social media sites have dedicated analytics functions or sites that will give you this information. These include Google analytics (to track how your website, blog site or social media is received), Facebook Insights (for Facebook only) and Hootsuite or Tweetdeck (Twitter analytics). Analytics is a powerful tool in understanding your impact in a given time period (a day, a week, a month).

How to Plan Your Day: Digital Media Needs

A key issue that many people face in grassroots organisations, non-profits and CSOs is a lack of resources, particularly staff. With so many media channels competing for your time, you need to understand how each will affect your day. Here is a simple diagram of the typical demands of the various social and digital media channels on your schedule.

Listen	Promote	Participate	Publish	Community Building
15 minutes per day	20 minutes per day	30 minutes per day	3-5 hours per week	1-2 hours per day
Track alerts, mentions, notifications and other instances of your organisation's keywords on the web. (Analytics)	Twitter Tweet 3-5 times a day.	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Answer questions, respond to tweets, add Likes, add members.	Blogger Wordpress YouTube Create content of value for the blog, create or upload video content and podcasts.	Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Connect with influencers, comment on others' pages and tweets, build relationships, search for topics of interest and share them with the community.
No Engagement	Share and Broadcast	Low Engagement	Content Intensive	High Engagement.

tools and resources

Google Analytics

Google analytics (www.google.com/analytics) is a tool that gives you insights into user behaviour on your website, blogs or other connected platforms.

Hootsuite

Hootsuite is an analytics tool for Twitter and Facebook that allows you to see the analytics of both accounts simultaneously.

Bear in Mind:

An organisation's online presence must not become a cage for a small number of people with technical skills; every activist and staffer needs to understand how it works, why it works and what they can contribute to it. Most of the raw material has to come from them and they have to initiate it. While social media is not yet relevant for poor communities in much of the world, it is spreading and sooner or later will reach everywhere.





photo Reuters/ **David Mercado** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

managing your communications



chapter 10

developing media campaigns

Now that we have looked at the tools for both the news media and social media...

Let's look at the principles behind a successful campaign.

First choose your objective.

Don't try to win a "war" – e.g. ending all animal cruelty. Don't even try to win a "battle" – e.g. a demonstration outside a laboratory or a boycott of certain products. Identify a specific, direct and achievable goal e.g. getting a company to commit to recycling or to clean up its pollution. It is through a series of small steps like this, that wars are eventually won.

When setting out your objectives for your campaign, make sure you do not include any of the following:

- Raise awareness
- Education
- Improve Profile
- Deepen Understanding

Certainly these may well be by-products. But as objectives, they are too bland and vague. Your campaign objective should be more measurable, a specific change or action. Ask yourself "Who do I want to make do what differently?" – when they do it, you know your campaign has succeeded.

Second, map the key groups you need to target in order to ensure your campaign's success.

Who can actually make the change?

- Who can influence them?
- Who's against the change?
- Who's for the change?
- Who can help you?

Put yourself in the shoes of your audience

- What keeps them awake at night?
- What or who influences them?
- What do they listen to, read, watch?
- What communication channels will be most effective at reaching them?
- What are they likely to think and feel about you and your campaign?

Third, deploy your forces.

Use your News Media and Social Media tools to achieve your objectives. A good campaign communications team should seek to do most of these:

- Persuade, provoke, inspire
- Speak to the heart as well as the head
- Tell stories, paint pictures and create events
- Use humour and surprise
- Speak their audience's language

- Make people feel empowered – that they can DO something

You must be:

- Consistent
- Persistent
- Focused
- Responsive

It's hard to predict the response of your target audiences – and not all campaigns have an "enemy" – but a classic response from an unwilling target might look like this:

1. Ignore you
2. Try to win you over
3. Oppose you
4. Capitulate

So plan for the long haul.

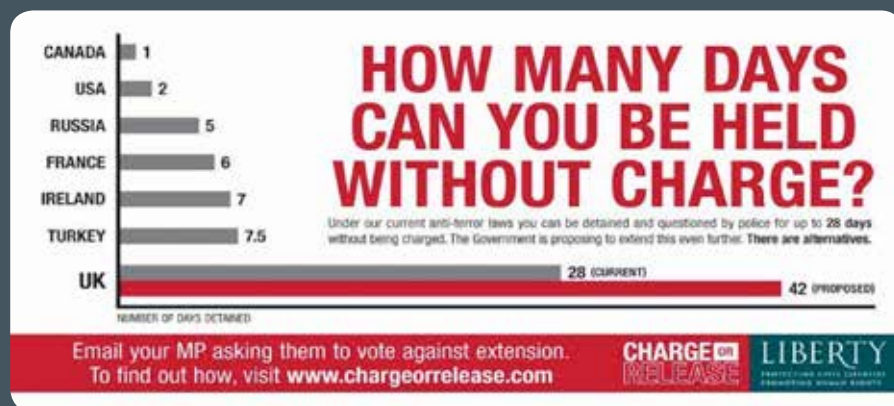
Here is an example of a successful campaign carried out by Liberty,

a British organisation which campaigns for rights and freedoms in the UK.

<http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/campaigning/other-campaigns/charge-or-release>

On 6 December 2007 the British government announced new anti-terror proposals, which included extending the maximum time someone could be held without charge from 28 to 42 days. The motto the campaign used was "Charge or Release" – short, very active and easy to remember.

Liberty used easy-to-compare graphics.



They used everyday images (for a UK audience) to bring home the number of days.



They used very human images, which all people, no matter what their culture, could relate to.



They reached out to any allies they could.

And they set a specific, achievable goal – defeating the government’s proposed extension to the term of detention, in the British parliament.

THEY WON!

After an overwhelming defeat in the House of Lords (the UK’s upper house) on 12 October 2008, the government dropped the proposal.



Bear in Mind:

Journalists have a different agenda from you. Don't think to yourself "They SHOULD care about what my CSO is trying to do". You have to ensure your campaign makes them care, and also gives them stories that makes the journalist look good! They won't care unless you make them care.



photo Reuters/ **Thomas Mukoya** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundations

chapter 11

crisis communication

It is sometimes said that a lie travels round the world before the truth has got out of bed. It is certainly true that bad news tends to spread fast – we are all human and a juicy scandal is much more interesting than some routine good news.

Things can go wrong in even the best-run organisation and when they do, it is important to handle the crisis properly. A brand or reputation is one of the hardest things to build and one of the easiest to destroy. It is even more important when the “bad news” about you is untrue or inaccurate.

There are three basic principles to follow in Crisis Communication:

- Know what is being said about you
- React publicly as quickly as you can
- Be as open and truthful as you can

Let's look at these in detail.

1. Monitoring

With the traditional news media, the bad news will usually come to you quickly. Journalists will contact you for comment on a report or a rumour before they publish or broadcast it to give you a chance to tell your side of the story. In any case, Twitter will soon bring it to your attention.

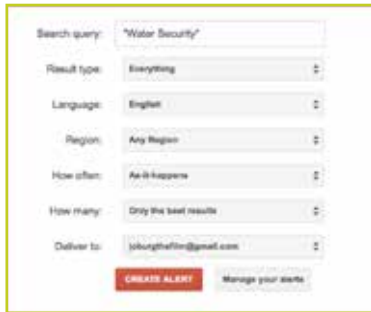
Online monitoring is more complicated. Unpleasant comments about you can be published anywhere, at any time, without advance warning. As the communications person of your organisation, you need to ensure that you know what is being said about it. (The jargon phrase for this is Online Reputation Management). One negative comment on the wrong platform can follow your organisation around for a long time. Remember, the internet is like an elephant, it doesn't easily forget.

There are a number of internet programmes you can use to send you an alert every time a keyword you have nominated is used. For example, every time your organisation's name is mentioned in a social media post, on a blog, a news article or in a website you will be alerted by email. You can also put in keywords for similar organisations, or a particular industry or subject, or if you have a high-profile leader or celebrity supporter. Keep the list to manageable size.



photo Reuters/ **Barry Malone** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

Here's an example



The image shows a search alert configuration interface. It includes a search query field with the text "Water Security". Below this are several dropdown menus for filtering results: "Result type" set to "Everything", "Language" set to "English", "Region" set to "Any Region", "How often" set to "As it happens", and "How many" set to "Only the best results". There is also a "Deliver to" field with the email address "j.kurghel@in@gmail.com". At the bottom of the form are two buttons: "CREATE ALERT" in red and "Manage your alerts" in grey.

of genetically modified crops; support for Israeli military policy; opposition to Israeli military policy. You may want to ask your team to show restraint, for example in limiting access to their postings on Facebook to *friends* or *friends of friends* rather than the general public.

For high-profile CSOs, this monitoring can be extended to organisations you have a close partnership with. Negative association can be damaging to your brand or reputation. A government, an NGO or company you work closely with can do things that upset your own supporters or sponsors. For example, a partner NGO may choose to work on renewable energy projects with a big oil company. Whether you approve or not, you need to know and decide how this affects your relationship.

And – a sensitive matter – the online postings of your own co-workers or employees can cause trouble. While they clearly have a right to air their own views, if they do so while openly declaring their status as part of your team, it can cause embarrassment or worse. For example: support for the growing of genetically-modified crops; opposition to the growing

2. Reacting

This has to be done QUICKLY. Professional journalists will not hold back a story because you are not ready to respond. A short delay is the best you can hope for while you make a few calls. If you really don't know about the matter they are reporting, tell them you will find out and will get back to them within a set period of time. And then do so.

Likewise the internet waits for no man, or woman. In general it is best to engage with genuine online critics. A good organisation listens when people share their point of view. Encourage your audience to talk to you through the sharing of comments, insights or reviews. You may not convince people with a different point of view, but you will show all onlookers that yours is an organisation which listens to people's opinions. It shows your "community" that you value them. Your community will care about you, if you care about them; this begins by listening to what they have to say.

3. Being open

This is the difficult bit. Every organisation has things it does not want to make public, quite legitimately. But as a general principle, try to be as open and frank as possible. Your biggest difficulty as a communications officer may well be to persuade your colleagues or bosses to open up to the public.

Here are some tips:

- Always be polite, however unpleasant or unfair a persistent journalist or internet critic can be. Your real audience is everybody else listening or watching.
- If you need time to go and search for information, give a deadline for when you will be able to provide it, and respect that deadline.

- Don't speculate or lie. You will be found out and the damage to your organisation's reputation will be much worse.
- If you have a legitimate reason for withholding information, say what it is. Legitimate reasons may include that it is a personal matter of an individual member of staff, or cannot be aired for legal reasons.
- If your organisation has blundered, admit it and apologise as openly and as fully as you can, and promise whatever action you can undertake to compensate or prevent it happening again.

- For a significant crisis, this means a statement or full Press Release, made available on all channels of communication. For a minor matter, an apology on whichever online platforms the error occurred or was made public should be sufficient.
- If it is a major crisis, be prepared for journalists to “doorstep” you or your senior executives. If you find television cameras and microphones lying in wait outside the front door, be prepared to read out your prepared statement or give your prepared answers. Don’t give an off-the-cuff response.
- Don’t hide from the news media; leaving an “empty chair” allows your opponents a free run; better to defend a weak position in public than not to appear at all.

CASE STUDY: British Airways and Lost Luggage.

Hassan Syed was travelling on a British Airways flight between New York and London with his father when the airline lost his father’s luggage. After a bad experience with the airlines staff, Hassan tweeted the company. His comment was responded to with an automated twitter response telling him that the airline would respond to his social media message between office hours. Failing to understand the nature of social media, British Airways let the tweet stay on their page for eight hours before Mr Syed escalated the matter by paying for the tweet to be seen across Twitter. 76 000 people on Twitter saw his tweet.



photo Reuters/ **David Mercado** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation

tools and resources

IFTTT.com

“If This Then That” (IFTTT) is an excellent tool for monitoring your online reputation and allows you great flexibility. So for instance if someone posts a comment on your organisation’s YouTube page you will be notified by SMS or if your blog post is shared you will be notified by email.

Socialmention.com

This is a real-time search engine designed to track social media sites for mentions. It searches across the web to see where the search terms you entered are mentioned. It also tracks if the mention was positive, negative or neutral.

Boardreader.com

This is an online tool that searches in comments, on forums and boards to see if your search has been mentioned.

Bear in Mind:

Before you go public with an indignant reaction to some false accusation, consider whether it is worth reacting at all. A mildly inaccurate detail in an obscure publication or a routine bit of bile from a pathologically hostile internet “troll” are often best ignored. In such cases, reacting just brings unwanted publicity and delights your opponents.

Communicating with Crisis Victims

What

The one group of people that often gets forgotten in communications planning is the people CSOs are trying to help – the victims of crises. This does not really apply for organisations working among settled populations, such as environmental or animal rights groups. You use the traditional and new media as described in this guide.

But if your organisation is involved in helping people in distress – refugees, fugitives from war or civil conflict, people displaced by flooding, drought or other natural catastrophes, victims of disease, persecution or other threats to their security and survival – communicating with them can be complicated. They often do not have access to news media or social media, normal communications systems are either disrupted or non-existent.

Special effort has to be made to open up communication channels to them and, just as important, to hear what they have to say. Such efforts can be costly, time-consuming and difficult; but they need to be made.

Why

All worthwhile CSOs operate on the basis of consent; the aim is usually to persuade governments, businesses, farmers, specific groups and the people in general to change their behaviour or to do something specific, such as having their children vaccinated. Even when simply offering food, shelter and medical care to people in need, you want them to know what they are getting and to accept it.

So your organisation needs to tell them some basic information:

- who you are, what type of organisation and where from;
- what you can offer them, how long it will last;
- what you expect from them, what strings, if any, are attached.

Put yourself in their shoes

Imagine that your village has been destroyed by a hurricane. Your life as you knew it is in ruins around you. Many of your neighbours are dead, some of your own relatives too. Your possessions are destroyed or scattered, you have no means of feeding your children, no income, no idea how to look after your family in future. You have no food, no shelter, no drinking water, no latrines. Thieves and thugs have begun to appear among the ruins. You are dazed and confused. Some foreigners, who don't speak your language, suddenly appear and start handing out packages. A neighbour who speaks a little of their language explains that they contain blankets, some kit to enable you to drink water safely and a little food. You accept, because you are desperate. But you are confused and suspicious. You want to know more.

That's the basics. Now you also need to give them specific information about your campaign, whether this is about clean water, washing hands before touching food, use of condoms, vaccinations, baby clinics, schooling or whatever. What you decide to tell them is up to you.

Equally important is for these "beneficiaries" to be able to communicate with you. As any marketing executive will tell you, customer feedback is essential if you are to be sure you are selling the right product in the right way. The same applies to sick, hungry and vulnerable people receiving aid or advice from CSOs; if they cannot tell you what they think, how do you know you are doing it right?

It is essential that all communication with victims be two-way. You need to listen to them as well as talk to them. Even though some feedback may be negative or based on incorrect assumptions, you need to give them an opportunity to state their views.

How

This is the difficult bit. There is no simple answer. You have to be flexible and creative. Look at each situation and work out the best method to use. This will vary from country to country, from group to group, from case to case. What works in some situations may be ineffective in others.

Here are some suggestions as to how a CSO might reach the victims of a disaster or conflict:

- Leaflets
- Community radio
- Loudspeaker vans
- Social media
- Mobile/Cell phones

- Posters
- Interviews with local radio
- Interviews with local television
- Interviews with local newspapers
- E-mails

Here are some suggestions about how a CSO might get feedback from people it is trying to help:

- Community radio phone-ins
- Distributing questionnaires
- Focus Groups
- Opinion Surveys
- Telephone Hotlines
- Social Media

All of these methods have their advantages and disadvantages. Ask yourself: Does this cater for the illiterate? Do the victims have enough access to the internet, or telephone networks? Is it representative or does it rely on self-selecting activists? Is it too expensive?

The key thing is to be creative and use your imagination.

Reach

One fundamental question, in both providing information and receiving feedback: are you reaching the whole community?

Information is power, and you have to ask yourself whether the methods of communicating with communities you have chosen are reinforcing existing power structures and penalising the weaker sectors. Consider the elderly, teenagers, the disabled, ethnic or religious minorities and women. Victim communities tend to be more patriarchal than in the developed world. It is your duty to ensure your

information reaches women as well as men. They may have different priorities.

The outbreak of Ebola in West Africa in 2014 illustrated the need for effective communications with the sufferers. The first victims were mainly in remote regions and villages where the people knew very little about how the disease was passed from person to person and how to avoid infection. The sight of medical teams from the big cities swathed from head to toe in coloured "swabs" or medical protective clothing was terrifying for many people already traumatised by the loss of their loved ones. Sometimes they reacted by attacking the doctors and nurses, and sometimes by fleeing from their villages, spreading the disease to new areas and communities.

Bear in Mind:

"Listening" to victims does not mean you always do what they want or believe what they say. It's for you to judge whether the feedback you are getting is representative of the whole victim community and even if it is, whether they are misguided, misinformed or simply wrong. Often you really do know better.

chapter 12

**being a
communications
officer**

This is a tough job

You are in charge of the “brand”, the public profile and reputation of your organisation; it is often a thankless task. If media relations go smoothly, no one notices; if they go wrong, the world is on your back.

There are many contradictions. It is your job to be friendly with professional journalists, yet try to influence the news they produce. You want your organisation to be open, democratic and accessible online, yet you have to control its output closely. You are keen to get lots of media attention, yet all too aware of the havoc journalists can wreak. You try to keep both your organisation and the news media happy.

Often your main enemy as a media relations professional is not the cynical journalist or venomous blogger but your own boss. Too little democracy in your organisation can mean your attempts to craft hard-hitting and attractive “messages” for the media are routinely sabotaged by a manager who may not understand the importance of targeted communication and insists on imposing dull and jargon-filled wording. Too much democracy can be just as damaging; endless debating and attempts to please all parties can lead to messages which are rambling and unfocused.

You need to have the autonomy and authority to work quickly and in ways that you know will be effective online and with the news media. You need to be close to the top decision-makers so that your organisation’s decisions at critical moments can be immediately reflected in its public face. And you need to ensure that everyone in the organisation who presents a public message is following the same coherent line.

Part of the job is making lists of “Key Messages” on important areas, policy positions or even FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) available for all your colleagues. They need to be expressed in clear, media-friendly language and kept updated

Internet Ethics

The internet is still a very new resource and can be dangerous as well as life-enhancing. The internet does not easily forget and any posting you make in a careless moment may be preserved somewhere to embarrass you many years later. Laws governing its usage vary in different parts of the world, and are often unenforceable. Wikileaks showed the limitations of civil authority. The thrill of social media is its ability to be seen instantly by millions; but once the genie is out of the bottle, it is at best incredibly difficult, at worst impossible, to put back.

Just as significantly for you, we are still far away from a comprehensive ethical code as new case studies and combinations are created each day. Many organisations draw up their own codes of ethics and standards for their employees or active members, who are expected to abide by them. When it comes to the internet and social media, it may well be your job to guide and, where necessary, police the behaviour of your colleagues in their work online.



“Racist” Tweet

Before the 2012 Summer Olympics even began Paraskevi “Voula” Papachristou, a 23-year-old Greek triple-jumper, was kicked out of the games over a Twitter post.

She wrote “With so many Africans in Greece... the West Nile mosquitoes will at least eat homemade food!!!” A misguided attempt at a joke, or a racist slur?

The Greek team decided not to argue the point and sent her home anyway after international calls for her expulsion from the London games. Her personal tweet had endangered the reputation of the whole team.

Here are a few pointers to guide your own behaviour and that of those people you advise:

Accuracy

Be accurate about what you write. Do not repeat, by re-tweeting or sharing, any information from other sources unless you know it to be correct or the source a completely reliable one. You may be liable for damages if it turns out to be defamatory and your reputation will suffer if it is merely incorrect. A story from “[hystericalallegations.com](#)” may look as neat on your screen as one from Reuters, but only one of them is a respected source.

Accountability

Your organisation is legally liable for whatever it says online on its website, Facebook pages or Twitter account. The difference between expressing a strong view and “hate speech” or incitement, for example, can be slight. So be aware of the laws of the country you are operating in at all times. And avoid plagiarism. If you re-use material composed by others, be sure to credit them.

Photographs

It is tempting to simply copy and paste good-quality images which match your purposes onto your site. But watch out for copyright and, more important, check that the image is real and not a fake, enhanced or distorted by photoshopping, or simply from a different place and at a different time. Reporting of conflicts in Syria and Ukraine has been bedeviled by attempts to use faked images to prove a propaganda point.

Disclosure

Always operate openly, disclosing who you are and which organisation you represent. This lends credibility to your online presence. It also makes people more likely to have real interaction with you. Fake profiles and online identities will get you into trouble.

Balance

As a campaigning organisation, your CSO presumably has strong opinions about certain themes. You cannot be expected to include opinions opposed to your own on your website. However, when you make allegations about specific parties, companies, organisations or people, you would do well to allow them the right of reply on your comment pages.

Integrity

The internet is a public space. Everything published there by your organisation or anyone connected overtly to your organisation has to live up to the public profile you need. So any display of prejudice, any abuse, or any other behaviour you would consider inappropriate has to be kept offline.

Separation

You cannot prevent your staff, associates or colleagues from having their own internet presence in the style they choose. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right. On the other hand, they have to understand that if they are known to be connected to your organisation, expressing online opinions which go counter to its public profile could damage its ability to achieve its goals and jeopardise its reputation. So maybe a set of guidance notes on how to keep personal Facebook or Twitter accounts personal – and separate – would be advisable.

Security

Any campaigning organisation can be a target for hackers or other malicious intruders. So ensure that your sites are protected by legitimate internet security systems and keep them updated. Users within your organisation must use passwords and keep them secure.

photo Reuters/ **David Mercado**
courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation



General Tips

In all your dealings with social media or the news media, there are certain standards you should try to maintain, as the public face of your organisation.

Write well

No one likes poor writing, whether in a press release, a blog, or a website article. You lose respect unnecessarily. Keep it crisp and clear.

Be accurate and factual

Ensure your work is well sourced, all names are spelled properly, the numbers are checked, the captions match the pictures, spelling errors are corrected. Sloppy “copy” gives an impression of incompetence and unreliability and harms your credibility.

Think Multi-Media

Always consider how you can provide images, video, audio, graphics and links for all your media contributions, whether online or for flesh-and-blood journalists.

Be contactable

Return calls as rapidly as possible, leave messages, make yourself available to enquirers. If you cannot provide what a journalist or online visitor wants, say so at once.

Be enthusiastic

It sounds simple, but if you don't “sell” your story or campaign, why should anyone else care? It may be the same old stuff to you, but to a reader or internet visitor, it may be new and exciting.

Keep your promises

Be reliable, honest and trustworthy in your dealings. If you try to keep enquirers at arm's length, they will find a way around you. Even when news is bad, don't stop taking calls. Hiding won't help.

Keep your temper

You may need the patience of a saint, but if you lose your cool, you lose. You need journalists, you need online conversations. Think long-term and think of the silent audience beyond.

good luck!

The European Journalism Centre (EJC) is a non-profit international foundation registered and based in the Netherlands. Its mission is to improve, strengthen, and underpin journalism and the news media in the interest of a functioning democratic public sphere. The EJC seeks to safeguard and enhance quality journalism in Europe and at the global level and supports initiatives towards media freedom in developing countries. To these ends, the EJC engages in professional capacity development, journalism-related funding programmes, analysis and research. Its target groups and beneficiaries are news and information-oriented journalists, communicators, media organisations and civil society stakeholders.



The Press Freedom 2.0 Consortium (PF 2.0) consists of the European Journalism Centre, Free Press Unlimited, World Press Photo, Mensen met een Missie and European Partnership for Democracy. Through its global collaboration linking press freedom defence, media development, and democracy advocacy in 13 countries across the developing world, the PF 2.0 Consortium examined the cooperation between media, democracy support and grassroots organisations as an effective way of implementing constructive change and dialogue at the individual and societal levels. Additionally, the PF2.0 Consortium examined how new media and information technology can be catalysts for the establishment of two-way connections between organisations and their target groups and audiences.

A key outcome of these collaborations is Making the Media Work for You: A Guide for Civil Society Organisations. Co-authored by veteran Reuters journalists Lisa Essex and Oliver Wates, and social media whiz Brandon Oelofse of Vuselela Media, Making the Media Work for You provides practical, cost-effective strategies for organisations that seek to raise and maintain their visibility and impact both in the real and virtual worlds. Press Freedom 2.0 is supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.





photo Reuters/ **David Mdzinarishvili** /courtesy of Thomson Reuters Foundation



Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken



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