

A black and white photograph of a woman wearing a bright red knitted beanie and a dark jacket. She is holding a megaphone to her mouth and speaking. In the background, there are several riot shields and helmets, suggesting a protest or civil unrest. The image is framed by a thick grey border.

# **RAISING VOICES IN CLOSING SPACES**

Strategic Communications Planning for  
Nonpartisan Citizen Election Observer Groups

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resources are available online at <https://www.ndi.org/ndi-publications-election-monitoring>.

Note that the examples of social media, messaging, and other communications platforms used throughout this guide, including details about their interface, analytical tools, and capabilities, are reflective of when this document was written and produced in 2019. Platforms frequently introduce new features and tools, while new platforms are developed and others may be discontinued. Those using this guide should research updates made to these services as part of developing their communications strategies and plans.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen democratic institutions and practices by strengthening political parties, civic organizations and parliaments, safeguarding elections, and promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

# Acronyms

BERSIH 2.0	Gabungan Pilihanraya Bersih dan Adil (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections)
CEC	Central Election Commission of Ukraine
CODEO	Coalition of Domestic Election Observers
CRM	customer relationship manager
CRTA	Centar za istraživanje, transparentnost i odgovornost (Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability)
CSOs	civil society organizations
GDPR	European Union General Data Protection Regulations
ISFED	სამართლიანი არჩევნებისა და დემოკრატიის საერთაშორისო საზოგადოება (International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy)
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex
MOCHA	Manager, Owner, Consultant, Helper, Approver
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	non-governmental organization
OPORA	Громадянська мережа ОПОРА (Civil Network OPORA)
PACE	People's Alliance for Credible Elections
PII	personally identifiable information
PVT	parallel vote tabulation
R2C	Right To Choose
SMART	Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-sensitive
SMS	short message service (text messages)
YIAGA AFRICA	Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement



# INTRODUCTION

## AND SUMMARY

Nonpartisan citizen election observation groups and other civil society organizations (CSOs) work hard every day organizing citizens, collecting and analyzing data, and making the case for democratic reforms. In more closed environments, they also must push back against infringements by authoritarian power structures. Over the past three-plus decades, the citizen-based electoral integrity movement spread to more than 100 countries and involved more than four million activists. Working to defend and advance universal and equal suffrage through a free and informed choice simultaneously reinforces democratic norms and exposes the repression and political corruption of autocrats. That's why frustrating citizen election observation is a goal for those who seek to close democratic space and why it is important to invigorate citizen election observation to meet the challenges of closing environments.

Robust and thoughtful election observation and analysis can only foster democratic progress if compelling messages reach changemakers. In an open society they

include government officials and legislators, as well as media, advocacy groups, businesses, and citizens in general. In relatively closed societies, traditional media, legislators, and businesses may be controlled by autocratic power structures, making it harder to reach citizens and to effect change. To be effective, election observer groups' reports, analyses, and narratives need to break through, grab attention, and spur action.

Authoritarians know this, of course, and have taken steps to block, muffle, or discredit these groups and their findings. This includes making false accusations that they are instruments of foreign governments, creating government-organized nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs) to dilute the voices of genuine civic activists, and using "zombie" international observers to produce reports claiming that fraudulent elections are credible. Regimes are also using cyber attacks, online repression and disinformation tactics to discredit and intimidate citizen observer groups as well as broader civil society.





Strategies to close political space and control media in many parts of the world are designed to limit the impact of democratic activists and to tamp down any popular movements demanding accountability and change. Thus, citizen election observer groups have increasingly become the target of repression tactics that are also used against civil society groups more broadly. These include passing laws and regulations that make it difficult, if not impossible, for groups to gain and maintain legal status, or that ban the monitoring of electoral and political processes. Foreign funding or even technical assistance to CSOs has been banned in several countries, and cyber security laws have been weaponized to restrict their work. Authorities have raided the offices of citizen observer groups, and have threatened, harassed, arrested, and imprisoned their leaders and activists.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) has worked closely with citizen election observation groups throughout the world for more than 30 years. Drawing on this work and, most importantly, the experiences of our partners, it is clear that many citizen observation groups face significant challenges in adapting their communications strategies to effectively address these changing realities. While they may be nimble and strategic about overcoming authoritarian roadblocks to conducting their observation work, they have often had less success in adapting their communications to break through in the digital age, particularly when faced with active measures to repress or distort their messaging.

Communications strategies need to be updated to take into account the effects not only of authoritarian regimes, but also of conflicts and violence, weak or unprofessional media institutions, underdeveloped technological infrastructure, and the promises and pitfalls of digital and social media. Every country faces its own special mix of these challenges; thus, this guide is designed not as a one-size-fits-all solution, but to provide an adaptive process that will help users to identify and work around the specific challenges they and their organization face.

It is also true that not all communications challenges come in the form of outside threats. Sometimes the challenges are internal -- leadership that doesn't prioritize or understand the importance of effective communications, a lack of resources or funding to carry out certain strategies, insufficient staff to do the work, or a lack of expertise in how to plan or carry out effective communications. This guide seeks to build internal expertise and capacity as well as make the case for increased support, resources, and staff dedicated to communications.

This guide is primarily intended to help citizen election observation groups and other CSOs promoting electoral integrity to increase their impact with creative and artful communications. It focuses particularly on ways to break through in closing and closed political environments by developing sound communication



NDI photo, Mikhail Velmakin

strategies, leveraging new opportunities in information communication technologies, and communicating in ways that are more proactive, tailored to specific target audiences, frequent, compelling, and media savvy. While the guide is mainly focused on citizen election observation groups, the principles of good communications are applicable to any number of causes and contexts. CSOs that work on issues other than electoral integrity can use this guide to create impactful communications plans that spur action on the issues they care about. International practitioners can use this guide and the process it lays out to develop effective trainings and provide technical assistance to groups that want to strengthen their communications and outreach.

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## How to use this guide

This guide offers a step-by-step approach to strategic communications planning and programming, starting with defining goals and ending with establishing a division of labor.

Each chapter introduces a new concept and component in the strategic communications planning process. The chapters build on each other, and each new chapter relies on the information and work that came before it.

The guide is structured to be used as a workbook or to guide a group planning process. Practical exercises throughout each chapter will allow you and your team to immediately apply the concepts to your own strategic plan. There are hypothetical and real-world examples included in each chapter to illustrate how the concepts and ideas can be used, and case studies at the end to give you a sense of what others are doing and what is possible. By the time you reach the end of this guide, you should have a complete strategic communications plan in hand that you can begin implementing immediately.

Authoritarian actors have become increasingly savvy at using communications strategies to limit debate, close spaces, and silence critics. CSOs will need to increase, amplify, and professionalize their communications approaches in order to overcome these new challenges. We hope this guide will serve as an important tool to help you do just that.

This guide is also available online at [raiseavoice.net](https://raiseavoice.net).



# WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH?

## Setting Goals, Strategies and Tactics

Once you're deep into an election period, you will likely be extremely busy. To avoid getting overwhelmed and to prioritize what to spend your time on, it's important to set clear goals well in advance. Spend some time creating concrete goals at the very beginning of your communications or campaign planning before an electoral or campaign process begins, and get approval and agreement from your team and leadership that these are the goals you'll be working toward as a group.

By setting clear, well-defined goals, you'll be better able to prioritize the tasks that help you reach them, while ignoring those that get in the way. Without clear goals from the start, you won't know if you've succeeded by the end, or if you need to change course mid-stream.

You have likely already done some form of goal-setting for your organization as a whole. Communications

goals can be a part of a larger organizational goal, or they can stand alone as their own goal. For example, your larger organizational goal may be to conduct a verification of the voter list and use the findings to advocate for reforms in voter registration processes. To achieve that goal, you would need a communications goal of raising awareness of the findings of the voter list verification with the media, activists, and the public to mobilize support for influencing decisionmakers. Your communications goals should always help you advance and achieve your organizational goals.

You also want to be sure your goals are responding to the challenges your organization and your country are facing. If you have not already done a landscape analysis, organizational risk assessment, and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of the specific threats or challenges facing you



and your political environment, it's a good idea to do these before setting your goals. A risk assessment is especially important if you are operating in a closed or closing space. As you set your goals, be sure to consider what risks might be heightened as a result of your work (or your changing political environment) and take steps to mitigate, avoid, or accept those risks. Keep in mind that these risks can be very diverse in nature (physical, digital, emotional, legal, etc.), so be sure to think holistically as you consider them. A great resource to start thinking about your general digital risk is Security Planner<sup>1</sup> by Jigsaw. Those in higher risk organizations in closed or closing spaces should also seek out guidance<sup>2</sup> from professional security trainers or auditors.

## YOUR TURN

**Brainstorm communications goals by yourself or with your team by thinking about what success would look like. Here are some questions to get you started:**

- **What do we want to change or improve about the country's democratic or electoral processes?**
- **Do we want to raise awareness? If so, what does that look like?**
- **Do we want to expand our network of volunteers? If so, for what purpose?**
- **Do we want to enhance our credibility?**
- **Do we want to question the credibility of others?**
- **Do we want people to change their behavior or perceptions?**
- **Do we want people to take a specific action, like reporting irregularities, registering to vote or voting?**

## Setting Organizational Goals

Don't forget to include organizational development in your goals. In Nigeria, the election observation group YIAGA - AFRICA<sup>1</sup> sets goals about how they want the country's democratic institutions to improve through youth inclusion, transparent and credible elections, fighting corruption and increasing accountability for elected officials. But they also set goals about ensuring that YIAGA - AFRICA is well known by Nigerians, international press and donors. This ensures longevity and health of the organization itself, so it can continue its work in the long term.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.yiaga.org/>

<sup>1</sup> <https://securityplanner.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://securityplanner.org/#/tool/information-for-high-risk-users>

## Vague Goals

### Build our credibility

### Raise Awareness

### Demand better elections

## SMART Goals

**We will be seen as experts on election observation by being included in 25 media stories about the election leading up to election day, and having at least one credible source point to our findings as definitive.**

**Raise awareness by getting 10,000 people to visit our website and have an average reach of 100,000 people across our social media channels in the three weeks before the election.**

**Organization or designated spokespeople are quoted 10 times in the media demanding specific electoral reforms.**

- **Do we want to change laws or policies?**
- **What do people need to understand or be educated about?**

**You may have brainstormed a long list of things you hope to accomplish, but it's important to be pragmatic about what you can realistically achieve in the time frame you have. Try to narrow your goals down to between one and five, considering the time and capacity you have. Just because some of the things you hope to accomplish may have come off the list, that doesn't mean you have to give up on them forever - you can always turn your attention to them at a later date.**

## SMART Goals

Vague goals are hard to work toward, or to know when you've achieved them. Avoid vague or overly-broad goals by making them specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-sensitive (SMART is the English acronym). Defining concrete and specific goals will keep you focused and prevent you from feeling overwhelmed.

By defining the time-specific aspect of your goals, you'll get a better sense of what is a long- and short-term goal. Any communications plan will have both long- and short-term goals, and it's important to be clear with your team and your leadership of what you're hoping to

accomplish when. You want to especially be sure you're working toward your long-term goals even as you are carrying out the work to achieve short-term goals. You may want to break up a long-term goal into a series of short-term goals to ensure that you're making steady progress on it.

## YOUR TURN

**Take a look at your brainstorm of what success would look like. Narrow your goals down to between one and five, and make them SMART by making them specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-sensitive.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Your communications strategies and tactics will flow directly from your goals. *Try not to get distracted by tasks that do not ultimately help you achieve your goals.*

A strategy is an approach you can take to achieve your goals. Tactics are the individual actions you take to enact



think the digital ads are the best way achieve this goal but don't have the money, then one of your tactics will need to be raising the money in order to run the ad campaign.

Don't forget to consider risks, especially when identifying tactics or making assumptions about your resources. For instance, if your goals and tactics rely on a functioning website, but it's highly likely someone may disrupt or take down your website, then alternative tactics may need to be identified or sufficient personnel, time, and money should be allocated to ensure the website is secured.

To illustrate this, let's build out one of the example goals above with strategies, tactics, and resources.

**SAMPLE GOAL:** Raise awareness of what a parallel vote tabulation (PVT)<sup>3</sup> is by having 10,000 people visit our website and having an average reach of 100,000 people across our social media channels in the three weeks before the election.

your strategy.

Have a look at your goals, and think about how you can achieve them. There will likely be multiple ways you could achieve your goals: some might take a lot of time, others might take a lot of money, some might be difficult or high-risk in your political environment, while others still might depend on a little luck or another event happening first. Choose the strategies that are the most likely to get you to your goal while being realistic about your constraints, such as time, money, number of staff, media environment, digital and physical risks, and political constraints.

For example, if your goal is to raise awareness by getting 10,000 visitors to your website, one way to achieve that is to create a digital advertising campaign. But if you don't have money to pay for digital ads, this is not a realistic strategy to choose. Instead, you might choose the strategy of increasing organic traffic to the website by writing daily blog posts and asking your social media followers to share them. However, this approach requires a lot more staff time and a more engaged social media following than the digital ad campaign. If you

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<sup>3</sup> A PVT, also known as a "quick count," is a proven election observation methodology conducted by nonpartisan citizen monitoring groups to accurately characterize the quality of voting and counting processes and to independently verify official results. The methodology uses rapidly transmitted quantitative and qualitative observer data from a statistically sound, representative random sample of polling stations to produce a comprehensive and systematic assessment of the election day process and project results within a small margin of error. PVTs promote the integrity of elections, build confidence in electoral results and detect and analyze the impact of problems and fraud, where they occur. For more information on PVTs, visit <https://www.ndi.org/pvt>.

## Strategies

## Tactics

## Resources Needed

**Strategy 1:** Use digital advertising to generate web traffic and social reach.

- Raise USD 10,000 for an ads budget.
- Research and test relevant search terms.
- A/B test (split test) ads to increase their relevance and success among audiences.
- Proactively contact the Facebook, Google, and/or Twitter Advertising and Customer Service Team and ask for help refining ad campaign to make it more effective.

- \$10,000
- 10 hours/week of dedicated staff time

**Strategy 2:** Have a celebrity or other influential person share our content on social media and direct people to the website.

- Identify the celebrity or other influencer that we think would be interested in working with us and is popular with the audiences we need to reach.
- Reach out to that person and their team.
- Provide them with content and instructions on how to help on an ongoing basis.

- Two weeks of staff time to identify the right celebrity or other person and how to reach them.
- Three hours/week of staff time to manage that relationship and continue to give them updated content to share.

**Strategy 3:** Use our email list to encourage peer-to-peer social sharing.

- Write blog posts twice a week and share them on social media.
- Create graphics and videos for social media that people will want to share. Post once a day.
- Email social content to our list and ask them to share the posts with their networks.

- Two hours/day of staff time to create content and email our list.

YOUR TURN

Take the SMART goals you identified and use the below table (following the above example) to fill in the strategies, tactics, and resources you would need to achieve goals. You may find that you have to re-evaluate some of your goals if your strategies, tactics, or resources are unrealistic. That’s okay! Adjust your goals to reflect what you can realistically achieve.

Strategies	Tactics	Resources Needed
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Strategy 1:

Strategy 2:

Strategy 3:

Once you have clearly defined goals, strategies, and tactics, make sure to get broad organizational understanding and agreement on them -- from both leadership and staff. Since the Board or Steering Committee of the organization may not be as involved in day-to-day operations, they will often have a different understanding or prioritization of the group's communications goals. This can create a big problem

for the communications staff, who are then pulled in many directions and have to fulfill multiple priorities at once, making their work less effective overall. Be sure to review and discuss goals, strategies, and tactics with anyone who will be carrying out, overseeing, or assigning work so that everyone has a common understanding of what needs to happen and why.

## Working Together Toward Common Goals

In Malaysia, the BERSIH 2.0 group gathers at the start of each year to set its goals, prioritize them, and plan their activities around them. At the beginning of 2018 - an election year - they knew they'd be devoting a lot of time and resources to getting out the vote (GOTV). But they were also pursuing a long-term, four-year campaign with the goal of having election districts redrawn to make them fair. The group also needed to be sure there was time and flexibility for at least one unexpected campaign, in case authorities did something that would require organizing protests, which can take up to

three to four months. As a team, they identified these three goals as priorities and adjusted their work accordingly. When competing priorities come up during day-to-day work, staff is able to check them against their yearly planning to choose what to pursue.



“To be able to build a movement, your leadership really needs to be strong,” said Maria Chin Abdullah, former Chairperson of BERSIH 2.0.<sup>1</sup> “People will have differences of opinions, but at the end of the day, the leadership needs to be working together toward common goals.”

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bersih.org/>





# WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

## Identifying your audience

In general, if you mapped the public at the beginning of your communications campaign, it would look like the graphic on the next page.

Your “friends” are the 5 - 10 percent of the public that already support your cause, believe you are a credible organization, will show up when asked, will share your message, etc. You do not need to convince them of the importance of your cause.

Your “foes” are the 5 - 10 percent of the public that will always disagree with your cause, no matter what you say or how you try to convince them. It’s not worth spending time trying to convince them otherwise, but you will want to limit the amount of negative influence they have on you and your issue.

(The percentage of the population you can count as friends or foes will vary -- sometimes significantly -- depending on the country, political context, and issue. This chart is meant to be a starting point for mapping out your audiences.)

The biggest space in the middle, usually 80 - 90 percent of the public, are “strangers.” They don’t know about your organization or issue and so haven’t formed an opinion one way or the other. These people can be further divided into “influentials” -- the media, political operatives and leaders, government officials, civic activists, academics, and business and community leaders who help others form opinions -- and the general public.

Broadly speaking, every communications campaign is

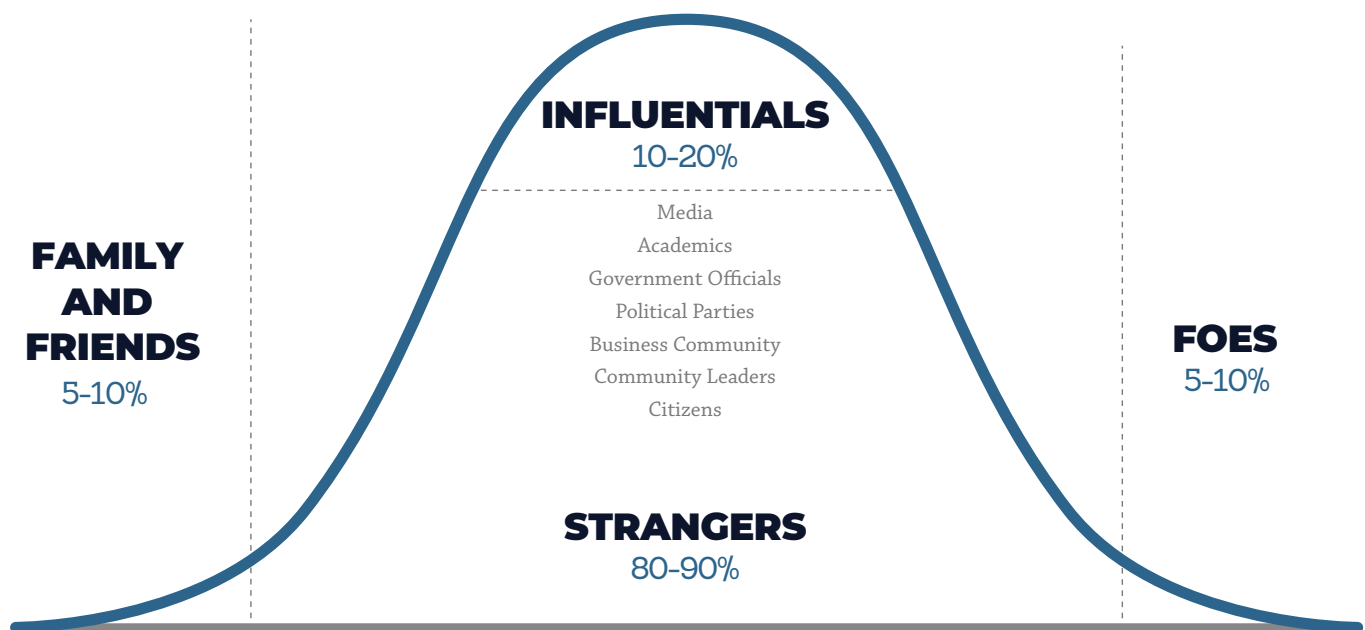


Chart adapted from Ed Grefe's lectures as an adjunct professor at George Washington University

trying to move more and more people from the middle of the above “audience map” graph into the “friends and family” portion of it, effectively moving that vertical line on the left toward the right, while keeping your “foes” line from moving.

But the “general public” is large and varied, and with limited time and resources you’ll need to specify exactly who you want to talk to and prioritize those groups that will help you achieve your overall goals.

To help you decide which segments of the general public to prioritize, it can be helpful to think about communicating with an intent to change behavior or change perceptions.. First, ask yourself whose behavior or perceptions you need to change -- these are your priority stakeholder groups. Then think about the relationships between your identified stakeholder groups. If you succeed in changing the behavior or perceptions of one group first, would this affect how other priority stakeholder groups behave or view the issue? If so, this stakeholder group belongs to the influentials category of your audience map and should be a high priority for outreach.

Let’s continue with our example to see how this works:

## Targeting The Right Audiences



Audiences depend on the campaign,” said Iryna Shvets, program manager of Civil Network OPORA, a citizen observer group in Ukraine.

“We are never targeting the ‘general public.’”

The group may end up educating members of the general public as a side-effect of more targeted communications, but it is too broad and vast an audience to try to target in and of itself. Instead, they focus on key stakeholders and decision makers for a particular campaign or lobbying effort. For example, if they want to push for changes to laws or norms to align them with international standards, they’ll target Members of Parliament or international organizations that believe will support international norms for democratic elections.

## Rationale

By selecting these audiences, we're hoping to raise awareness and understanding of the PVT with the influencers who will need to understand, accept, and share the findings of the PVT and with the people most likely to resort to election-related violence. We also want to empower the people who already understand PVTs with the ability to talk about and share this information with their own friends and family, as they'll be seen as trusted messengers in their own networks. These are the audiences we believe we need to reach to achieve our goal of raising awareness through web traffic and social media.

## Target Audiences

## Strategies

- Journalists who write about elections
- Members of the party in power
- Members of the opposition party/parties

**Strategy 1:** Use digital advertising to generate web traffic and social reach.

- Young men ages 16-26

**Strategy 2:** Have a celebrity or influential person share our content on social media and direct people to the website.

- Existing members (aka our "friends") and their social networks

**Strategy 3:** Use our email list to encourage peer-to-peer social sharing.

## YOUR TURN

**Look at your goals, strategies and tactics from the last exercise. Who is/are the best audience/s for each one? Who do you need to reach to be successful and why?**

**You may need to change or refine your tactics as you get a clearer picture of who your audience is. Who's missing?**

## Target Audiences

## Strategies

## Tactics

**Look at all the audiences you plan to target with your strategies and tactics. Is there a key audience or group you aren't speaking to with any of your goals, strategies or tactics? You may need to add a goal, strategy or set of tactics to ensure that you are reaching a key audience you inadvertently left out.**

**For example, let's say you've gotten this far but none of your strategies involve reaching the audience of the political party in power -- even though they will be an important group to accept the legitimacy of the PVT findings. Revisit your goals, strategies and tactics to think about how you'll talk to them and what you hope to accomplish when you do.**

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## About your foes

By definition, your foes will disagree with your goals, and you shouldn't spend time trying to convince them otherwise. But that doesn't mean you can ignore them.

Spend some time thinking about who, exactly, your foes are. Maybe it's the readers of a particular publication or viewers of a specific television station. Maybe it's the leaders of the party in power. Maybe it's the leaders of the opposition party or parties. While you may not be able to change their minds and bring them on board with your goals, you will need to limit their influence and the damage they can do to you and your own goals.

Limiting the influence of foes may need to be its own goal, with strategies, tactics, resources, and audiences identified. Or you might integrate it throughout all your goals and strategies. What you decide will depend on how powerful, trusted, and pervasive your foes are. But whatever you choose, do not ignore your foes. Assume that they will be working just as hard as you - often with significantly more resources at their disposal - to communicate with your key audiences about their goals.

## Reaching Your Audience without Mainstream Media

In Serbia, the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) targets representatives of the election commission, the independent media, political parties, other civil society organizations, and the international community in order to get its message out about the election observation process and findings. The group also communicates broadly with the public and especially with those members of the public they believe will volunteer or otherwise support CRTA and its work.

However, they have to come up with direct contact and outreach strategies for each audience, because they are blacklisted by the mainstream media, and therefore can't rely on media to disseminate their messages for them. Instead, they create a different product (videos, infographics, high-level briefings) and customized message for each target audience. They begin by creating content for a broad, public audience, since that is the largest audience. Then, they transform and repurpose those general educational materials for the public with specialized messages and formats to reach their other targeted audiences, like holding private briefings with higher-level information for the international community.



CRTA photo, Zoran Drekalovic

This is particularly important if your group is operating in a repressive environment and/or a country with closing political space. In these contexts, you will need to dedicate significantly more time and resources to the issue of addressing and/or mitigating the damage that foes can do to your ability to communicate effectively with your target audiences. Authoritarian regimes use a tremendous amount of resources to suppress, discredit, or silence credible information about elections and the findings of credible observer groups. These regimes have strong influence and, in many cases, direct or indirect control over the traditional media. Online media, including social media, may also be restricted or blocked during critical times surrounding elections. Some governments and political actors have increasingly used tools such as bots and trolls to flood citizens with disinformation<sup>1</sup> and propaganda. This includes making false accusations that election observer groups are instruments of foreign governments, creating and highlighting government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs), and using “zombie” observers<sup>2</sup> to produce reports claiming that flawed elections are credible. See Section 8 for more details on planning for crises and attacks from your opponents.

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## Get to know your target audiences

By now, you should have a list of audiences you plan to reach. To reach them effectively, you should spend some time getting to know them.

Here are three questions you’ll want to research about all your target audiences. The answers to these questions will help you determine effective messages, messengers and platforms later on.

- **WHERE ARE THEY?** This refers to where they are

both geographically and online. If your influencers are all in the capital, it doesn’t make sense to buy ads in newspapers outside of the capital. If you’re trying to reach young men ages 16-26 and they are all on Facebook, don’t invest time and resources into Twitter.

- **WHAT ARE THE MAIN WAYS THEY CONSUME INFORMATION?** Do they get it online? In print? On the radio? Are there specific websites, platforms, services, publications, TV shows, or people they trust? If your key audience listens to the same radio program at 3pm every day, you may want to buy an ad during that program. You also may not want to schedule your own event for that time.
- **WHO INFLUENCES THEM?** Who are the trusted messengers for your audiences? This could be a politician, celebrity, academic, journalist, or a member of their family or peer group. By identifying people who are already reaching your target audience, you may avoid having to build that audience from scratch. Think expansively and creatively here. The person that influences your target audience may not be well known to you.

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## A note about influencers

In some cases, in order to reach a very broad audience, you might consider reaching out to a very narrow one. Those “influentials” at the top of the above audience map already have extensive networks and audiences of their own. Be sure you’re not trying to replicate someone else’s audience from scratch if you can reach out to them directly and tap into their audience instead. For example, if you are trying to affect change in one particular community, you may be able to identify the religious or political figure who has the most influence in that community and reach out to that one person directly, rather than trying to reach out to the entire community yourself.

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<sup>1</sup> Disinformation is when false information is shared with the intent of causing harm.

<sup>2</sup> “Zombie observers” are observers used by anti-democratic governments, organizations, and parties to undermine genuine election observation and analysis. They typically only offer positive electoral assessments.

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## What If You Don't Know the Answers to These Questions?

If your audiences are different from you, you may not know these answers off the top of your head. Don't make assumptions or guesses! Try to research these audiences to get a strong and complete picture of them. Here are some ways you can research your target audiences. (Note: it is probably most practical to combine audience research with messaging research; see next section.)

- **FIND DATA THAT EXISTS.** Depending on where you're located, there may be audience data available for different websites, social media channels, newspapers, or television programs. If it's available, use it to

determine what your audience is seeing and how they are seeing it.

- **DO FOCUS GROUPS.** Get four to eight members of your target audience in a room and ask them the questions in the "Get to Know your Audience" section. Listen to their answers, and don't argue with them. The point is not to convince them to consume information the way you hope to disseminate it, but to get a clearer picture of how best you can disseminate it to them.
- **ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS.** Having a deep, one-on-one interview with a member of your audience will allow you to explore their thoughts and ask follow up questions. Again, your goal isn't to convince them to come around to your way of doing things, but to change how you do things to conform best to what your audience is already doing.

When you're done, you should have a pretty detailed picture of your target audiences. To continue our example from earlier:

### **Journalists who write about elections**

These journalists prefer to receive information via emailed press release. However, journalists X and Y are interested in receiving exclusives and welcome phone calls if there's something big. They are all on Facebook but consume most of their information on Twitter. Journalist A in particular has a large Twitter following and replies quickly to direct messages (DMs) on Twitter.

### **Members of the party in power**

These people are most influenced by the leader of the party. They tend to read *The Daily Journal* and *The Weekly Magazine*, and listen to *The Radio Newshour*. Very few of them are on Twitter but almost all are on Facebook. They are particularly distrustful of Journalist B, regarding nearly everything that person reports on as a lie, whether or not it is.

### **Young men ages 16-26**

These people all love Movie Star A and Pop Star B, but are skeptical of all politicians. They do not consume any information by print or radio, and spend most of their time on Facebook, Snapchat and Twitch. They also like websites X, Y and Z and trust those writers. They regard their peers as trusted messengers and trust the stories and messages that other young men 16-26 are telling them.



YOUR TURN

Using what you already know about them, any available data, focus groups and/or interviews, create detailed profiles of your key audiences.

With your updated and clear understanding of your audiences, take one more look at your goals, strategies and tactics. Do they still make sense knowing what you know about your target audiences? Are you reaching your audiences in the best possible ways? Are they still the right audiences to target to achieve your goals? Adjust your goals, strategies, tactics and audiences accordingly.

Target Audiences	Detailed Profile



# WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY?

## Developing a Frame and Message

### Develop a communications frame

A communications frame is the set of values and assumptions that all of your communications take for granted. Having a clear communications frame from the outset will ensure consistency across your communications, but it will also ensure that your audiences understand where you are coming from and what you are trying to communicate to them.

For example, your frame might be that democracy is preferable to other forms of government. Other assumptions of that frame might include the ideas that citizens should be able to participate freely in the democratic process, a peaceful transfer of power is preferable to one-party rule, elections should be credible, and democratic governance should improve people's lives.

If your audience does not share the values and assumptions of your frame, they will have a hard time understanding what you are trying to communicate to them.

Continuing the example above, if your audience rejects your frame and instead believes that one-party rule is preferable to democracy, then they will not be receptive to any narratives or messages about supporting competitive election processes. You won't be listened to or understood.

You may need to re-adjust your frame to match that of your audience so that they are receptive to what you are trying to convey. In places where a democracy frame won't be understood or trusted, you may need to create a communications frame around values of fairness, national strength, unity, or some other value or outlook upon which you and your audience can agree and understand each other.

YOUR TURN

Brainstorm a list of basic values and assumptions that are at the core of your work and communications.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Refine these until you have a clear list of assumptions and values that will be reflected throughout your communications.

Assess whether this frame truly matches the values and assumptions of each of your key audiences. Do they share these values and assumptions? If not, how can you adjust your frame to be understood by them without abandoning your values and principles?

Now, in the below table, list the values and assumptions of your key target audiences to assess whether this frame truly matches the values and assumptions of each of your key audiences.

Target Audiences	Values and Assumptions

Compare the values and assumptions at the core of your work with those of your audiences. Are they similar? If not, how can you adjust your frame to be understood by them without abandoning your values and principles?

## Focusing on One Message

Civil Network OPORA is a citizen group in Ukraine that has been observing elections and calling for stronger democratic institutions for more than a decade. One thing they've learned in that time is to choose one message and stick to it for the duration of a campaign. "If you present dozens of issues or messages at a time, you're not going to get people to focus," said Iryna Shvets, OPORA's program manager. Instead, OPORA will choose one focused message and push it out exclusively for at least two months, or until the group feels like it has broken through with their audience.

While the group was conducting a campaign to pressure the government to appoint new members to the Central Election Commission, its central message was that the commission had overstayed its term and needed to be updated as soon as possible. They drove the message in all their external communications until new commissioners were appointed. (See Case Studies section for more information on the campaign).

Once you have settled on a clear frame, it's important to ensure that all your communications fit within it. Share it with all the members of your team, spokespeople, leaders, board members, etc. Check all outgoing communications against the frame to ensure consistency. If you create communications that are inconsistent with your frame, your audiences will be confused and your messages will be muddled. People need to know what your underlying values are and what to expect from your organization.

For example, if your frame is that democracy is preferable to all other forms of government, elections should be competitive, and that the will of the people must be respected, but you issue a press release implying that a certain candidate should pull out of the race, your audience will become confused, you will lose credibility, and your subsequent messaging will be inconsistent or contradictory.

## Develop your topline message

Now that you're clear on your frame, it's time to start developing your topline message. This is the distillation of the key point(s) you want to get across in all your communications. Whereas a frame is a place of common understanding between you and your audience, your

topline message is what you want your audience to learn and have reinforced every time they hear from you.

Continuing with our example, if your goal is to raise awareness of your PVT and your frame is that democracy is preferable to all other forms of government, your topline message might be:

**A PVT independently verifies whether official election results are accurate and dissuades fraud, because every vote should be counted and every voice should be heard in politics.**

## What makes for a good topline message?

The message in the example above is:

- Short;
- Clear;
- Teaching the audience something it might not know; and
- Embedded with values and emotion meant to connect with the audience.

If the topline message were only "a PVT independently

verifies that official election results are accurate and dissuades fraud,” it would teach the audience about a PVT, but would lack an emotional way for the audience to connect. If the message were only “we must ensure every vote is counted and every voice is heard,” it might resonate emotionally with the audience but not meet the goal of raising awareness of what a PVT is or does.

## YOUR TURN

**Create your topline message. Start by brainstorming all of the possible things you might want to say. Don’t hold back! Some might be sentences, some might just be words.**

**Here are some questions to get you started in your brainstorm:**

- **Someone asks you what your organization is all about. How do you answer?**
- **What’s your favorite argument in favor of your cause or organization?**
- **What inspired you to take action for this issue?**
- **Who does your work help? How does it help them?**
- **What values do you uphold in your work?**
- **What will happen if your mission fails?**
- **What keeps you advocating for this cause every day?**

**Now, you are probably looking at a big mess of words. By using different colored pens or by rewriting them on different pieces of paper, start sorting the words and phrases into groups that are similar by theme or tone.**

**Keep narrowing down and honing each group. Which words or themes keep coming up? Which ones are the most persuasive? The most inspiring? The most emotional?**

**Take the most persuasive phrases and words and craft them into one or two sentences. That’s**

**your topline message.**

**Go back and look at your goals -- make sure this message supports your overall goals.**



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## Different messages resonate with different audiences

Your topline message should be clear, concise, persuasive, and support your goals and frame. However, different people may respond differently to your message, and you may need to adapt or adjust it depending on who you are communicating with.

This can mean changing the tone or vocabulary you use, or it can mean reshaping the main message to emphasize the values or emotions that will connect with a particular audience. The resulting messages shouldn’t contradict your frame or topline message, but they should resonate with the different subsets of audiences you identified so you are more easily able to connect and communicate with them.

Goal	Top Line Message	Target Audiences	Target Messages
<b>Raise awareness of what a PVT is by having 10,000 people visit our website and having an average reach of 100,000 people across our social media channels in the three weeks before the election.</b>	<b>A PVT independently verifies whether official election results are accurate and dissuades fraud, because every vote should be counted and every voice should be heard in politics.</b>	<b>Journalists who write about elections</b>	<b>A PVT is a statistically rigorous and internationally accepted practice to assess the accuracy or fraudulence of an election. The results of the PVT will help tell the story of the election by providing another data set against which to verify official election results.</b>
		<b>Members of the party in power</b>	<b>A PVT verifies that announced election results are accurate. Win or lose, great leaders respect the will of the people when every vote is counted and every voice is heard.</b>
		<b>Members of the opposition party</b>	<b>A PVT verifies that true results are known and dissuades fraud, because every vote should be counted and every voice should heard.</b>

In the examples above, the topline message has been slightly modified in each of the target messages to appeal more strongly to the emotions of each target audience. For journalists, the PVT will make their reporting easier and more accurate. For members of the party in power, respecting the PVT results will bolster their historical reputation as great leaders who respect the will of the people. For members of the opposition party, the PVT will deter fraud and the chance that the election will be stolen from them.

In each instance, these messages flow directly from the frame and topline message, and help to achieve the overall goals you already set. The messages do not contradict each other or your topline message, so even if other audiences heard them, they would still learn what you wanted them to learn, and you will not be perceived as hypocrites or opportunists by saying one thing to one audience and another to another audience.



# Messaging Around Difficult Topics

When BERSIH 2.0 set out to call attention to the unfair manner in which electoral districts were drawn in Malaysia, they faced a hard challenge: public awareness of the problem was very low, and the issue itself was complicated and hard to explain.

With complicated topics and difficult messaging, BERSIH 2.0 suggests starting early. In the first year of the campaign for fair districts, BERSIH 2.0 focused on conducting research into the ways the current districts were disadvantaging Malaysians, and how to best message those findings. In the second year, the group focused on outreach and messaging to key groups and influencers. They held several rounds of nationwide workshops and trainings, equipping community leaders and other influencers with a strong understanding of the issue, what was at stake, and how to communicate those ideas to their members or constituents. By the third year of the campaign, BERSIH 2.0 was ready to reach a broader, general audience with a simple and emotionally resonant message: All votes should count equally.

Rather than focus on the minutiae of redistricting policy, they focused on the simple fact that, when you compared the smallest and largest electoral districts, not everyone's vote was the same. This topline message distilled a complex and complicated issue into one that was easy to understand and empathize with. And -- thanks to the group's careful organizing, preparation, and training -- the message was echoed and emphasized by key leaders and influencers who were all using the same messaging and materials.

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## You're not a mind reader

Go back to your research and profiles of each of your target audiences. Make sure your targeted messages align with what you learned about each one. If you are conducting audience research at the same time as messaging research, use the focus groups and interviews with members of key audiences to test different versions of your message and see what resonates. Like with your audience research, the goal of messaging research is to learn what they respond to, not to try to convince them to respond well to messages you've already chosen. It's important to keep an open mind and really listen to how they respond to different versions of your message - you'll often be surprised that language or approaches you didn't think would work can be the most effective.

If you aren't able to do research on your messaging ahead of time, all you may be able to do is guess at what message will resonate with a certain audience.

In that case, don't be afraid to admit that something isn't working and adjust your message accordingly. Wishing that an audience will respond well to your message will not make it so.

From our example, maybe journalists don't respond to the term "statistically rigorous" but are very concerned with "accurate and trustworthy results." Maybe the party in power doesn't respond well to "win or lose" language, but responds well to a message that a PVT will enhance the credibility of a win. Once you decide on a message, you may need to continue to revisit it and refine it until it is meeting your goals and emotionally connecting with the audiences you're targeting.

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## The importance of staying on message

The best communicators are very disciplined about

# Keeping Messages Relatable and Interesting

“We focus on the quality of the process, but there is not a big public demand for a quality process,” says Jovana Djurbabic, the communications manager of CRTA in Serbia. “The media and the people are all fixated on the results, not the process.”

To combat this dilemma of getting people interested and engaged with the electoral process, which they perceived as less exciting than the election results, CRTA tried to simplify the language they used to talk about the process and make it more relatable. A part of this strategy involved using common metaphors to communicate about and connect with the electoral process. For example, they began using the metaphor of a football game: a football fan wouldn’t be happy if they knew the referees were corrupt, if one team had to play naked against another team that was armed with pistols, etc. Through this commonly understood and relatable metaphor, the group was able to introduce the concept of fair play in the electoral process and why it was so important to the outcome.

staying on message. By staying on message, you’re never in danger of hurting your cause by saying something that contradicts your goals, and you’re using every opportunity to reinforce and teach your message to your audience. You might feel like you are repeating yourself too much, but it’s the best way to have your message break through with your audience.

Your topline message should be included -- verbatim or close to -- in everything you put out. Once you develop your topline message and its variants, train your communications team, staff, spokespeople, and leadership so that they are comfortable with the message and learn how to integrate that message into anything they say or write with ease and fluency. If everyone is clear on your messages and trained to stay on message, you will have a group of master communicators who are continuously reinforcing your messages and helping you to advance your goals.

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## The power of narrative

Humans are hardwired to tell and connect to stories. Stories create an emotional and empathetic connection, and stay with people for longer than facts or statistics. Telling stories is how we teach people, connect with them, and gain their

trust and friendship. Using stories to meet your communications goals and convey your messages can be a powerful and effective approach.

All stories have settings, characters, and plots. The best stories also have a narrative arc and a moral. A narrative arc means that the plot builds to a climax rather than just a plot where one thing happens after another without any sort of build up. After the climax, there is a resolution that should contain some sort of lesson or moral.

For example, here is a story that just has a setting, character, and plot: *Yesterday, I ran errands around the city. I went to the tailor, then the supermarket, then*



ISFED photo

## Staying on Message

In Myanmar, Sai Ye Kya Swar Myint, the executive director of PACE<sup>1</sup>, has learned how to stay on message despite partisan or tricky questions from the media. The media, while relatively open in Myanmar, is highly partisan, and will often ask leading questions meant to benefit one party over another. Instead of answering directly, Sai instead pivots to messages about the process, PACE's methodology, and values like transparency in government.

For example, in the 2015 pre-election period, the media would ask frequently about anomalies they had found in the voters list. Rather than address standalone anomalies that might benefit one party or another, Sai would pivot to the value of transparency and the benefit of looking at the voter lists systematically, rather than drawing inferences from specific anomalies.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pacemyanmar.org/>

*the library. Then I went home.* The setting is the city, I am the character, and the plot is a series of actions. While technically a narrative, without a narrative arc or moral, it's pretty boring! And you are unlikely to remember anything about it or learn anything from it.

A more effective narrative would go something like this: *Yesterday, I ran errands around the city. I went to the tailor, but the tailor had ripped my pants! I demanded my money back, but instead he kept the pants and threw me out of the shop. On my way home I bought a sewing machine so that I can hem my own pants from now on.* That story builds to a climax (I got thrown out of the shop), and you learned a lesson that it's a good idea

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<sup>1</sup> <https://openelectiondata.net/en/>

to hem your pants yourself.

Narrative is powerful. Stories create a deeper personal connection than facts or data. If you had just read that incidents of tailors ripping pants had increased 33 percent in the last two years, you might not change your behavior. But after you heard the story above, you may think twice about taking your pants to a tailor, and consider hemming your pants yourself to avoid the same fate.

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## How does this relate to your communications plan?

Election observation groups tend to spend a lot of time thinking about data. This makes sense -- a key priority of election monitoring is to collect and analyze data from observers about the electoral process. This often includes data from observer reports on campaign events, election administration, election-related violence, voting, counting, complaints processes, and more. Many observer groups are also increasingly using official election data,<sup>1</sup> such as the voter list, campaign finance data, and official results, to complement their observer data.

When you're focused on data, there's a strong temptation to simply release that data and its conclusions. You may also feel tempted to generate lots of charts, tables, and graphs to highlight your work and to show how data-driven your organization is. But because of how humans learn and connect, using data alone is often the least effective way of getting your point across. Instead of planning to simply release the data and statistical findings, spend some time thinking through what stories the data tell and how best to tell those stories. Collect details -- including personal stories -- from individuals that are representative of larger trends in the data that people can more easily identify with or learn from.

For example, your PVT data may show that 40

# Using Compelling Narrative in Election Observation

During the 2016 general elections in Ghana, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)<sup>1</sup> posted a number of videos on their Facebook page<sup>2</sup> featuring different individuals undertaking key roles for the PVT. The videos were interactive, and allowed CODEO's followers to get a firsthand look at why someone was volunteering for the PVT and what exactly they are doing for the PVT. For example, one video featured Ama,<sup>3</sup> one of 60 data entry clerks. In Ama's own words, the viewer learns about her background, what is happening at CODEO's National Information Center, and why the PVT aligns with her interests, personally and professionally. Similar videos were shared featuring Newton,<sup>4</sup> an analyst, Dr. Kojo Asante, the data center manager,<sup>5</sup> Justice Crabbe,<sup>6</sup> the CODEO co-chair, and Leslie,<sup>7</sup> an observer at a polling station, among many others. The videos offer personal insight into the individuals behind the observation and their dedication to democratic progress in their country, something an election statement alone can rarely provide.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.codeoghana.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/CODEOElections/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/CODEOElections/videos/1108779319240923/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/CODEOElections/videos/1109992335786288/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/CODEOElections/videos/1111107529008102/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/CODEOElections/videos/1113075995477922/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/CODEOElections/videos/1120441241408064/>

percent of polling places opened more than an hour late. You know that that has significantly impacted who could cast ballots and may affect the credibility of the election itself. Instead of just releasing that statistic and conclusion, consider highlighting its impact by including a personal narrative along with it. Tell the story of the working mother with three children who had counted on voting before work because she knew that was the only time her husband could watch the kids and she'd be at work for the rest of the day through the time the polls closed. She left her kids with her husband so he could feed them breakfast, but when she arrived at the polling place,

it hadn't opened yet. The poll worker told her to come back in an hour, but she knew she'd be at work by then and so was denied the opportunity to vote and have her voice heard in these important elections. And this mother is not alone -- 40 percent of polling places opened late and thousands of people just like her were therefore unable to cast ballots.

You can develop similar narratives for significant issues your long-term observers identify during the pre-election period. For example, if 30% of long-term observers observe verbal violence against women candidates, you could develop narratives about the impact this had on those women's campaigns.

Putting a face and personal experience to the statistic has more emotional power, helps the audience understand the stakes of the problem, and will help them retain the information -- that this election was run in an unfair and uncredible manner.

Also, notice how the story of the working mother not being able to vote exists within our established frame and drives home our topline message. For her story to have emotional impact, we are assuming that democracy is good and that people should all have an opportunity to cast a vote for the party or person of their choice. This story illustrates our main message that the PVT helps independently check whether the official election results are accurate and that every vote should count. And it emotionally resonates with the audience in a way that they will learn and remember our overall message and findings.

## YOUR TURN

**Spend some time brainstorming the stories you know of that illustrate and drive home your messages. Remember that the best stories have settings, characters, a narrative arc and a moral/message.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Now look at your messages and goals. Which stories do you wish you could tell to connect with target audiences about them? What stories do you need to be on the lookout for or spend some time researching and recording?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Integrate the stories you already know about into your communications plan. Who will tell them, how, and to which audience(s)? For the kinds of stories you need to research or be on the lookout for, who will do this work? How will you convey what to look for or ask about? How will you collect these stories and disseminate them to the right people?**



# HOW WILL YOU SAY IT?

## Identifying The Best Format

The way you present your content can often have as big an impact as the content itself on how it is received and retained. A well-packaged message will stay with the audience far longer than a dull or unattractive one. It's worth spending some time thinking about the best way to present your message and story, depending on both the type of information you're trying to relay and the way your audience is primed to absorb it.

### Written content

Text is often the preferred way of relaying information. It offers the writer tight control over the final product and ensures that the message is clear and prominent.

Press releases, written reports, emails and blog posts are all common ways of writing and relaying findings and observations. The biggest pitfalls with these forms of communications are that they can be too long and unengaging. A dry, 30-page written report of election findings doesn't do much good if no one reads past

page one. Some tips to keep in mind for your written communications:

- WITH ALL WRITTEN MATERIALS, BE SURE THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION IS CONVEYED CLOSE TO THE BEGINNING. Ask yourself, if someone only spent one minute reading this, would they have learned the most important information? With longer reports, include a short executive summary to start with that outlines your main findings.
- USE ILLUSTRATIVE STORIES AND THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE COVERED ABOVE WHENEVER YOU CAN. People are more likely to stay engaged and keep reading past that one minute mark if they are personally or emotionally drawn to what you are writing. Instead of leading with facts and statistics, focus on values and personal stakes or outcomes.
- TRY TO FIT THE TONE, VOCABULARY AND MESSAGE TO THE AUDIENCE THE WRITTEN INFORMATION IS FOR. The final product should mirror the language and



tone that your audience uses and is used to seeing. If it's a press release, it should be written as though it were an article in the newspaper. If it's a guest blog post, it should echo the tone and feeling of other blog posts. If it's a report geared toward the international community, it should place your information and findings within an international context.

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## Best practices for writing a press release

A well-written press release should read like a news article -- a news article written to reflect exactly the story and angle that you want. In addition to the general tips above regarding all written content, press releases should also reflect the following:

- The headline should be short, concise, and a clear reflection of your story or findings, framed exactly how you would like it to be framed. If a reporter or member of the public read the headline, they should learn the most important information without having to read further. For example, *Election Observation Group Conducts PVT* is not a good headline for a press release. *Major Irregularities Found in Pre-Election Period Cast Doubt on Credibility of Elections, Group Finds*, on the other hand, is much better. It conveys the most important information of the findings in a clear manner, rather than asking the audience to continue reading down to get the important information. (The headline doesn't have to be bad news to be newsworthy. *Election Results Credible, Observer Group Finds* is still newsworthy and informative while relaying good news.)
- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short. This is how good reporters tend to write, and if they want to model their story off of your press release, that is ideal.
- Craft good, newsworthy quotes. Ideally, you want the reporter to copy your quote and include it as-is in the article. Craft a short and newsworthy quote or two that is attributable to key figures in your organization or movement. (Always have the person the quote is attributed to approve the quote!) You might want to break the quote into two or three sentences to give the reporter flexibility with how much they want to print it. Example: *"All Spaniards should be proud of the accountable, transparent, and peaceful manner in which their elections were run today," said Maria Garcia, president of Spain's Election Observation Group. "Election observers were in over 200 polling locations observing everything from the poll opening to the vote count, and saw no evidence of widespread irregularities."* Whichever sentence of that quote the reporter chooses to run (or the full quote), it is newsworthy and informative.
- You can include several quotes from different principals or different organizations, just be sure each one says something different in tone and substance.
- Include a sentence or two of standard language about your organization at the end of the press release. This should be written to describe your work and organization exactly how you would like news organizations to describe your work and organization.
- Include a clear press contact that reporters can call or email for more information.
- As with all your written materials, make sure your press release is on message and does not contradict your frame.
- While the media is your primary audience for a press release, press releases can also be powerful ways to communicate your findings or issue to members of the public. If you plan to post the press release on your website, send it as an email to your members, or post it to social media, make sure it uses language and tone that all the audiences will easily understand and appreciate.
- Know the difference between a **media advisory**, a **press statement**, and a **press release**.
  - A **media advisory** is an invitation to the press to come to something newsworthy (a press conference, press call, demonstration, photo opportunity, etc). It should have clear details on when and where the event is happening, who will be there, and why it is newsworthy.



- A **press statement** is a quote that reporters can use in their stories. It should be considerably shorter than a press release, have a sentence or two about the context or precipitating event, followed by a newsworthy quote, and a sentence or two about the organization's work and mission.
- Finally, a **press release** is the longest of these three types of media documents. It should be written in the style of a news story and framed the way you want the media to frame your work, issue, or findings. See chapter 12, *Sample Press Releases and Additional Resources*. Sample Press Releases for examples of press releases from YIAGA AFRICA in Nigeria and PACE in Myanmar.

- Be sure to translate your press materials into English in order to make them easily available for international media.

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## Best practices for writing observation statements and other reports

An **observation statement** or **report** is a longer document (that may be summarized in a press release

and/or press statement) to convey the findings and recommendations from your organization's observation effort to the public. Most election observation organizations will release periodic statements on the pre-election environment as well as a statement or statements on the conduct of election day processes and a final report that provides comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the election observed. These documents serve as an important written record of the electoral integrity issues that emerged during the course of a given election cycle. They also present your group's findings about major successes and gaps in the electoral process, thereby enabling election stakeholders to set benchmarks for future elections and establish clear agendas for electoral reform. In addition to the general tips provided above regarding all written content, observation statements or reports should reflect the following:

- Even though observation statements provide an in-depth review of your observation findings, keep in mind that your audience are not all election experts. Present findings clearly and make sure to explain any election jargon. For instance, do not assume readers will understand the name of specialized methods, equipment, or documents that may be used during the electoral process.

## Choose Authenticity Over Trendiness

In Belarus, the poll watching group Right To Choose (R2C) had relied on memes to fill their social network feeds. But the memes weren't working - the tone was wrong and the memes felt inauthentic, snide and unserious. The audience felt patronized by them. Instead of showcasing memes that were unthinkingly critical of the party in power, people wanted to see the evidence for themselves and make up their own minds.

R2C's social media content now focuses on authentic, clear content based on facts, rather than recycling irrelevant memes.

- Include a brief summary of your conclusion(s), main findings, and priority recommendations; this can also serve as the basis of the content of any press releases about the statement.
- Include an explanation of your observation methodology which highlights how observers were deployed and collected information.
- Include a section providing more in-depth information on your findings and analysis. When possible, this can be broken up into sub-sections to better organize your findings. For instance, a long-term observation statement may include the sub-sections "Voter Registration," "Campaign Events," or "Candidate Nomination Process."
- Include a section for recommendations that are specific, realistic, targeted, and action-based.
- Where relevant, reference international or regional commitments and standards (such as the *Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations*; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, General Comment 25; the African Charter on

Democracy, Elections, and Governance; or the OSCE Copenhagen Document).

- Strategically incorporate data visualization, such as charts, maps, infographics, or photographs, especially if you want to highlight a particular finding or if the visualization makes it easier to understand.
- Pay attention to tone and word choice in your statements. Avoid inflammatory language or words that may otherwise resonate with your audience in a way you were not intending.
- Like press releases, always try to translate reports into English to appeal to a more international audience.

In addition, make sure to set reasonable expectations with your audience in advance regarding the timing of your observation statements, particularly those about election day; you need to allow adequate time to collect, clean, and analyze all of your observation data. Also, when you know you will need a statement within a short time frame (for instance on or immediately after election day), consider what parts of an observation statement can be drafted in advance (like the methodology section) and have a statement outline prepared and agreed upon by leadership prior to that date so that the content or findings can be slotted in quickly once they are finalized. You can also prepare data visualization, such as infographics, in advance.

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## Visual content

Many people are visual learners and can retain information better if it's presented to them in a graphic or visual form. In addition, visual representations can sometimes distill complex ideas or topics in a way that is more easily understandable for everyone. Here are some tips for creating memorable visual content:

- PHOTOGRAPHS can be a powerful and emotional way to reinforce your message. The best photographs focus on individuals and details, not settings or crowds. If you plan to use photography in your communications materials, you will need to create a clear plan of who will take the photos, when they should take pictures and of what, and how those photographs will be

# Using Video to Convey Key Information to the Public

To expand their external outreach in a more visual manner, the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)<sup>1</sup> produced an “About Us” video,<sup>2</sup> explaining the organization’s history, their work in election observation, methodologies used, and tech and outreach tools utilized. The video features several key individuals from ISFED’s staff who speak to different parts of ISFED’s story as an organization, and also includes subtitles in English (when someone is speaking in Georgian) and in Georgian (when someone is speaking in English), expanding the reach of who is able to view and understand the video.



Leading up to the 2019 general elections in Nigeria, YIAGA AFRICA released videos highlighting various components of their election observation effort and relevant voter education issues in the lead up to election day. One video<sup>3</sup> focused on political party agents’ participation in the electoral process. The video featured YIAGA AFRICA’s PVT Director explaining the need for political parties to observe the process in polling

units, yet the video also cut to infographics showing data collected from PVTs in prior years. Another video<sup>4</sup> focused on the introduction of electronic voting technologies in Nigeria, following a similar format.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.isfed.ge/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV\\_dcsCmasU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JV_dcsCmasU)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qxogx-9fagw&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWh2YHMeI\\_4&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWh2YHMeI_4&feature=youtu.be)

shared with you. You’ll also want to be sure that the photo is accurate -- ideally your volunteers or employees are the source, or the source is otherwise trustworthy. Ask people’s permission before you take their photo - especially in dangerous or compromising situations.

- Be aware of the staging, lighting, and backdrop of

your photos. For instance, as an observer group, you probably conduct a lot of trainings and may end up having a lot of training-related photos. Only use the most compelling ones and look for a variety of settings and participants. Make sure that visual content on your website or social media includes images besides and beyond trainings.



- If you have the resources to hire a professional photographer for important events, think about doing so. Good event photographs or photos of protests, rallies, trainings, or other important landmarks can be used for reports, social media, websites, donor materials, promotional materials, and so much more. If you can't hire a professional photographer, see if someone in your membership is willing to volunteer their time and photography skills. You also might want to invest in a higher quality digital camera than what's offered in a smartphone (although newer smartphones are equipped with increasingly good cameras).
- **GRAPHICS and INFOGRAPHICS** can distill complex concepts or data into an easy-to-understand and easy-to-retain format. When creating graphics or infographics, do not over-complicate things or add too much text. The final product should make your point clearly and succinctly to anyone casually scrolling through a social media feed. To help achieve this simplicity and clarity, think about the three to five points you want to be sure to make, and then come up with one clear visual and a one sentence explanation for each. Trying to convey more than one idea or statistic in a single graphic makes information incredibly difficult to digest and retain.
  - If possible, use a graphic designer to design your graphics and infographics. If you cannot afford to hire one, see if someone in your membership is willing to volunteer their time and skills. A professional designer will help you avoid common mistakes like a final graphic that is too cluttered, too complicated, or using conflicting fonts and colors.
- **VISUAL MEMES and GIFS** can be a fun and engaging way to connect with people on social media -- but only if they truly make sense with the point you're trying to make and you can use them in an authentic way. Nothing is worse than an organization trying to wedge its message into the meme of the day, and people will be quick to let you know when it doesn't ring true.
- **ANIMATION** can help distill complex ideas into simple

and more relatable concepts and can easily incorporate humor to engage your audience

- **BE CREATIVE** about other ways you can tell your story visually. Perhaps an illustrator or a graphic novelist can make a comic-style explainer or narrative, or an artist can create visually striking posters or flyers that you can distribute.




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## Audio and video content

Audio and video content can be great for capturing stories, conveying information in a short period of time, and connecting emotionally with your audience. Here are some tips for producing great video or audio content:

- **FILM QUALITY:** There is no one single rule for the quality of a video, but the quality should reflect the larger message and point you're trying to get across. A video from inside a polling station taken on a cell phone or in the middle of a protest may be shaky or grainy, but that conveys authenticity. However, an explainer video that's meant to establish your professionalism and expertise should be well-shot and nicely edited to get that point across.
- **LENGTH:** There is also no one single rule for the length of your video. As with text, be sure to include the most important information at the start of your video. People will rarely watch past the first minute, and on social media they will likely not watch past 10 seconds. Starting with an introduction to the topic or the speaker is wasting precious seconds that aren't conveying the most important information. But, while

remaining concise and getting to the point quickly, you should take the time you need to convey your information, narrative, and point of view effectively.

- **SOUND:** If you are producing audio clips for social media, radio, or podcasting, try to capture clear, high-quality sound. People are much more forgiving of bad visuals than bad sound. If you are conducting an interview, do it in a quiet place, preferably with a good microphone. If you are trying to capture ambient sounds or crowd noise, again be aware of where your microphone is pointing and what it is capturing in an attempt to keep sound clear and high-quality.
  - If you are taking video or audio clips with your phone, be aware that the microphone will be closer to you than to your subject. The microphone will be more likely to pick up your instructions or your side of the conversation due to proximity. To make this easier to fix or edit later, avoid speaking over your subject. Let your subject say everything they need to say without interruptions, then ask the next question or give the next instruction when they have finished speaking.
- **SUBTITLES:** If you plan to post your video to social media, be sure to subtitle it. Most people scrolling through Facebook or Instagram will not have their sound turned on. In addition, if people in the video are speaking in the local language you may want to consider subtitles in English, especially if your audience is the international community.

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## Live streaming video

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and some regional social networks now all allow for live streaming, which can be a powerful tool. Essentially, live streaming allows you to become your own broadcast television station, curating your own content, and showing events unfold live and unedited. Live streaming is good at conveying urgency and/or for interacting with your audience. It's a great tool for broadcasting events from the field as they unfold or for having a dialogue with your viewers. In addition, your live stream video can also be archived and shared for viewing later by your



followers. Here are some tips for producing a successful live stream:

- **LOGISTICS:** Be sure you have bandwidth and battery power. Live streaming needs a reliable internet or data connection and uses a lot of battery power if you are live streaming via cell phone. Plan for what to do if the internet goes down before or during your live stream.
- **OUTREACH:** Tell people you'll be live. Advertise your live stream ahead of time so people know how and when to tune in. Facebook even allows you to "reserve" a live streaming time so you can circulate the link ahead of time. Ask for questions or comments ahead of the live stream, if you'll be taking or addressing questions.
- **REPETITION:** Keep reiterating your main points. Your audience will be tuning in and out for small intervals. New people will be joining all the time. Be sure to reiterate your main points frequently, and introduce yourself and your purpose frequently too.
- **MAKE A PLAN:** A live stream isn't an excuse to do an improvised hour. Think about who will appear on the live stream and prep them as much as possible: what information are you sure you want to convey, what messages should be emphasized, what questions will you ask, etc.
- **TOOLS:** Software like the OBS platform allows you to produce fairly sophisticated live streams for free or cheap. You can stream to multiple platforms, insert captions or lower thirds, or other graphics, add commentary to another live stream as it happens, and more.



YOUR TURN

Look at your goals, audiences, and messages. Brainstorm different ways of packaging each message that will resonate best with the audiences you’re targeting and advance your goals.

Be creative about the communications products you want to produce, and how you might repurpose them to communicate with multiple audiences.

Topline Message	Target Audience	Target Message	Communication Products
			1.  2.  3.
			1.  2.  3.
			1.  2.  3.



# WHERE WILL YOU SAY IT?

## Identifying The Best Platform

There are dozens of ways of communicating with people, and all have their own pros and cons. Print media reaches a large audience, but the message cannot be tailored to specific audiences. It also tends to skew toward an older and literate audience. Radio is a great option for reaching people with low literacy, but the audience must fall within broadcasting range. Broadcast media (TV) reaches large audiences, but it may be difficult to get coverage, advertisements may be expensive, or the gatekeepers might be hostile to your cause. Social media allows for one-on-one interactions and wider discussions, but skews younger and for those with internet access or smartphones. Door-to-door contact can be individually targeted and highly persuasive, but it is time consuming and may be viewed with suspicion in some neighborhoods or contexts.

Depending on your goals and audiences, some tools and

platforms are better than others, and their strengths and weaknesses are important to take into account when planning how you'll deliver your messages. Whatever you choose, be sure it will reach your target audiences with maximum impact.

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### Website

Your organizational website is the place that interested people will come looking for information about your mission, work, activities, and how they can get involved to support your cause. Your website is often the way you present your organization to the digital world, and it should be designed and maintained with that in mind.

People arriving at your website should have an immediate sense of both the work of the organization and its 'personality'. Is the organization tech-focused?

Focused on people? Serious or humorous? Experts or novices? All of these answers will be reflected in both the design and content of the site.

If your organization does not currently have a website, the following are initial steps and ideas to consider:

- **What do you need your website to convey and to whom?** Most people will spend less than 10 seconds on your website -- what do you want them to learn or do in that 10 seconds? Make the most important or most requested information easy to find and access. For example, if you are trying to boost your credibility or make your expertise clear, how will you present yourself as professionals and experts in both the design and content you choose to present?
- **Look at websites of similar groups -- in your country or abroad.** What do you like and dislike about those sites? What does the design and content say about their values, work, and mission? How can you tell that they are credible experts? What content do they prioritize and what do they make hard to find?
- **Look at other popular websites from fields unrelated to yours.** Civil society organizations can learn a lot by studying the ways that business or media sites are set up -- groups with more resources that spend a lot of time and effort examining usage analytics and honing their websites in response. Ask yourself those same questions about the other sites -- what do you like and dislike? How do the design and content work together to convey values, work, and mission? How do they lay out their information so it's easy to access and draws in the audience so they spend more time on the site?
- **Design your website based on what you know about your target audiences and what you learned from researching other websites.** Websites can range from the very simple to the very complex. There is no single best practice for websites; instead the complexity, look, feel, and function should all be decided based on who you are trying to reach and what you want to say to them. If you decide that you need a simple landing page without much more than a mission statement and a mechanism to collect

emails, you can likely design that yourself using any number of free or cheap tools. If you need a very complex site with lots of information, multimedia integration, and complex logic, you may need to hire an experienced web developer.

- **Consider the security and sustainability of your website.** Consult with technical professionals to ensure you are making website design and development decisions that will allow your organization to maintain the availability and integrity of its site. A website that is hacked, taken down, or poorly maintained can have a negative impact on your organization and its reputation. Even if you are working with an external web developer for the initial build of your website, it is important to ensure that it is designed in a way that your organization can maintain over time and that you have an in-house technical expert(s) who can be responsible for updating the website after it is completed. Your organization should ensure that any decisions taken about the level of complexity, programming language and/or platform to use for web development is one that these in-house experts will be able to easily utilize to make any needed modifications or updates after the site is delivered.

If your organization already has a website, you should still review if its design and content meets your goals. This includes:

- **Evaluate it critically.** Does the homepage immediately convey the most important information? Do the design elements reflect your current branding and convey the tone and personality of your organization? Is the site's messaging aligned with your frame and topline message? Is it easy to find the information most critical to your audiences? Has the website been updated with the most recent statements, photos, and content? How does your site look when accessed in the ways your audience is most likely to access it (i.e. mobile or desktop, internet speed, etc.)? Do all the links work? Are other design elements wonky or broken? Is it accessible to those with visual or hearing impairments?

- **Protect your website from trolls, viruses, hackers, or other harmful actors.** Make sure your site has a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) certificate to encrypt any data sent and received by users to your site (such as personal details submitted via contact forms or credit card information, if you accept payments to your site). If you are concerned about adversaries taking down your website via a distributed denial of service attack (DDOS), consider setting up advanced protection through products such as Cloudflare or Google's Project Shield.
- **Look at your Google Analytics.** (See next section if you have not yet set up Google Analytics on your website). How are people traveling through the site? What pages are most popular and does that match with the content you want to prioritize? What pages are people exiting the site from most often? How long are people staying on the site? What kind of devices or internet browsers are they using to access your site?
- **Make adjustments as needed.** After examining all the data and answering the questions posed above, you may find that you only need to make just a few minor changes to your site to ensure it is accomplishing your goals. Or, you may need to make substantial changes or redesign it altogether. That can feel daunting, but if your website does not reflect your mission and isn't set up to help you achieve your goals, it is worth the time and effort to correct it.

***Ensure that your website adheres to the EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and any other such international requirements that are in effect.***

## Maintenance

As you're designing or redesigning your website, keep in mind that you'll need to keep it up-to-date and have a realistic plan for who will conduct maintenance and how they'll do it. If you have limited staff time and resources, do not include a feature that needs to be updated daily. If your staff has a low technical expertise, do not choose a web platform that requires a lot of technical expertise to maintain.

## Building Traffic

Once you have a website that you are proud of and that conveys exactly what you want it to convey, you have to get people to visit it. Just building it and putting it live does not mean people will find it or go to it. Think about how you will drive traffic to your website. Some ideas include:

- **Tell people.** Email your list and tell them to visit your website. Post the link to social media. Include it on your printed materials. If you are being interviewed in the media, always include your web address for how people can learn more about you.
- **Update your site frequently with relevant information.** Having new content that is relevant to your work will help your search rankings and help people find your site when they search for it.
- **Pay for advertising.** Google ads will place your website at the top of the list for relevant searches of keywords you choose. This is a great way to find new audiences that are interested in your work and content at exactly the time they are most interested in it. If you cannot afford Google ads, you may be able to qualify for a Google grant depending on the mission and work of your organization. You can also consider ad networks or social media ads, where you can advertise your website to audiences based on demographics or interests or even specific email addresses, which can be useful when you are trying to expose your work to specific target audiences.

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## Email

Often, the best emails are short and eye-catching. If you are doing outreach to a small group of influentials or to an individual, be sure to personalize your emails and keep them short to ensure they're read. Be clear if you are asking for a response or action and how your recipients can carry that out. Put the ask as close to the top of your email as you can so people skimming through quickly see what you're asking of them.

If you have the design capability to include graphics or

gifs in your email, do it (unless it takes away from your message). Whenever possible do not include an attached document - summarize the findings of the document in the body of the email and then post a link to the full report as posted on your website. This avoids your email from being labeled as spam and you will also get data on who clicked through the email, how much time they spent on the landing page, and other important metrics.

Unlike the content you post to social media, email is not regulated by an algorithm. Everyone that you send an email to will receive it and have the opportunity to open and engage with it. This lack of gatekeeping is powerful, and organizations often rely on email if social media algorithms are keeping important content from their audiences. However, this strategy does rely on a strong email list. Think through how you plan to build your list, where those addresses will come from, how much money or time you can devote to paid list growth (if any), and how you will replenish your (inevitable) unsubscribers. When building your list, be intentional that those people on your list are from your target audiences and that your email strategy is in service to meeting your communications goals.

There are a number of free or cheap mass email systems you can use that also give good data on open rates, click through rates, and unsubscribe rates, so you can learn from your email blasts and continue to improve your content and tone. Those mass email platforms will also allow you to personalize blast emails -- an effective tactic for higher open and engagement rates. By adding the person's first name into the email text, or other custom fields like polling place, local legislator, or electoral district number, your email recipients will feel a personal connection to your organization and receive necessary information without extra steps.

## Email Security

Develop and update an email security plan. Be sure you are using an email provider that offers two-factor authentication to prevent hacking of your organization's email accounts. Require staff to use strong, complex passwords and avoid using the same password for multiple accounts. Passwords should be changed

## Building a WhatsApp Audience

In Malaysia, BERSIH 2.0 has built a robust communications plan around the messaging application WhatsApp (see case study for more information). In order to build their list of WhatsApp subscribers, they make it easy and integrate it into all of their activities. People can find them proactively on the platform, but they also invite people to subscribe to updates, make signing up easy on their website, and offer to add anyone registering to attend a BERSIH 2.0 event to the WhatsApp list for updates and alerts.

periodically. Emails that contain sensitive information about your work or contain personally identifiable information (PII) may require additional security considerations.

## Closed Messaging Services

Even those who don't have reliable internet access or don't use social media will likely be able to send and receive SMS messages. This can be a powerful platform for communicating with people who are otherwise hard to reach. As with email, the strength of your SMS program relies on the strength of your list. How will you collect and securely store phone numbers and have people opt-in to receiving SMS messages?

You can ask people to give their mobile numbers when they sign in at events, press conferences, and donor meetings, when they sign up on your website, or as an action in an email or social media post. You can also create opt-in, public groups or channels on WhatsApp or Telegram where people can find you and request updates by SMS message. Ensure that any PII is stored securely and in accordance with local data protection laws. If possible, use an encrypted cloud-based service such as



GSuite or Microsoft365, rather than a local server, to securely store data.

SMS is immediate and intimate in a way that other forms of communication are not. It can be a useful tool for fast and frequent updates such as on election day. It is also good for rapid responses -- if you need people to turn out to an event that day or push back against disinformation quickly, you'll be glad you took the time to build a robust SMS program. Platforms like Hustle also allow you to send out personalized mass SMS messages. Much like with emails, your audience is more likely to respond positively to customized messaging and responses.

If the contents of your communications are sensitive, though, keep in mind that SMS is not a secure communication tool. For sensitive communications, opt instead for an end-to-end encrypted messaging service like WhatsApp or Signal. Keep in mind that WhatsApp has a limit on the number of participants in each group. These kinds of private messaging applications facilitate peer-to-peer messaging and organized message groups to help you expand your reach and create a more engaged community. For example, if your organization is not well known or has not yet built up trust with your audience, but you have recruited a dedicated group of supporters or volunteers, you can set them up with the tools and messages to reach out to their own contacts and networks to engage and activate others. This is a powerful way to increase your reach and engagement because the messenger is already trusted and has influence over their peer group, so you don't have to start by building that trust and influence yourself.

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## Contact management for email and mobile numbers

You'll need to keep track of your contacts. The way you manage contacts will depend on the size and details of your list. If your list is very small, you can probably maintain it on a spreadsheet that contains relevant information like names, organizational affiliation, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and notes. Keep in mind some users may have multiple phone

numbers. Be sure to limit access to this data to only necessary users, and store it on a secure, password-protected platform.

If your lists contain more than 200 contacts, you'll want to use a contact management database that allows you to easily email or text your members, and track, search, and segment by any relevant activities, key words, types of organizations, addresses, and more.

Common contact management platforms (sometimes called a CRM for customer relationship manager) include but are not limited to CiviCRM, Constant Contact, MailChimp, NationBuilder, Action Network, and others. Such platforms vary in price based on how many contacts you plan to store, whether you plan to contact people by email and/or SMS, whether you need to integrate sign up forms into your website, what data you hope to track, and other factors. As you decide on what CRM to use, be sure to plan ahead for growth of your communications program and ask about capacity and features that you may need a year or two from now, not just your immediate needs. Also be sure to consider the security of the platform, and protect any CRM accounts with long, complex passwords and two factor authentication.

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## Social media

Social media's biggest distinguishing factor is its ability for two-way communication. You aren't just pushing things out in one direction as you are with broadcast media or a website, but people have the ability to engage with you and your content. This can be both an advantage and disadvantage, and you should weigh the risks of people responding to your content negatively against the benefits of positive reach, engagement, sharing, and collaboration.

Because of the growing use and reach of social media among many audiences, you will likely find it worth it to have a presence on at least one platform. However, you should have a plan in place to combat trolls or bad actors who find and engage negatively with your content on social media. (See Section 9 on crisis communications for more information about planning



for bad actors.) You should also take steps to secure all social media accounts to prevent hacking from potential adversaries. This includes requiring the use of two-factor authentication, enforcing use of strong passwords, limiting the number of account users with administrative privileges, and establishing a system for quickly removing account access for those who leave the organization.

## Facebook

Depending on what region of the world you are working in, Facebook is the most likely place you'll want to spend your time, based on its widespread use globally. Facebook has both pages and groups, and you can use either based on what you are trying to accomplish.

Groups can be open or closed, moderated or not. Think through what you'll use the group for and what the privacy settings should be before you start a group. Do you trust people to post content without a moderator? Can group members invite new members themselves? Should the group's content be visible to the public or only to group members? Each answer will have an impact on content, reach, engagement, and safety of group members, and those decisions should be made based on both your strategy and the external environment you are operating within. Facebook groups

## When To Create Multiple Facebook Pages

In Ukraine, OPORA maintains one main Facebook page<sup>1</sup> that features content that is in line with the organization's main message. When it launches different campaigns and initiatives with more specific goals, it also creates a separate Facebook page for each, so people can follow and access the more specific and narrow content about that particular initiative.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/cn.opora/>

tend to feel more informal and intimate, and are often much more interactive. Group members can post or submit their own content to share, and Facebook will prioritize group content in members' feeds and alerts.

If you decide to create a Facebook page for your organization instead of or in addition to a group, you

## Using Facebook Effectively

For Malaysian civic organization BERSIH 2.0, Facebook<sup>1</sup> is their primary social media platform. While they have a small presence on Twitter and Instagram, they have chosen to invest the bulk of their time and resources into Facebook, especially video for Facebook. They have seen a lot of engagement with their use Facebook Live for events in particular, where around 2,000 people will be tuned in to their live streams at any given time. (Their "get out the vote" Facebook Live had a high of 11,000 live views.)

Because it's a small organization, BERSIH 2.0 struggles to be consistent with their Facebook posting and content. They'd prefer to have a more active and intense presence on the platform, but have had to scale back their involvement to ensure that all work is completed, including work on competing media strategies.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/BERSIH2.0/>

will be the sole publisher of that content. Facebook shows your content to a fraction of your followers based on its ever-changing algorithm, and it can be hard to deduce exactly what will have wide reach or strong engagement. For that reason, it's important to be nimble and creative with your Facebook content, and responsive to what the data and analytics tell you (see next section). The kind of content that succeeds on Facebook might not be what you'd expect or even what you would prefer. But keep trying new ways of presenting your information until you find what works. Remember to stay on message even as you experiment with content -- if your content has wide reach and engagement but is off message, you haven't actually helped your cause or your progress toward your goals.

Facebook accommodates text, links, images, and video. It excels in particular at visual content -- pictures and photo albums, graphics and infographics, produced or live video. When planning your Facebook strategy be sure to include lots of visual content. If your group operates in a closing or closed political environment, however, make sure to use caution when posting videos and/or photos of people and whether it might expose them to security risks, such as intimidation, harassment, or retribution.

Pay attention to the types and messages of the content that gets the most engagement (likes, comments, and shares). Track it over time to see what content your audience responds to.

You can also try posting several versions or presentations of the same data. Because only a fraction of your followers will see a given post, you don't risk them seeing the same thing many times, but you gain valuable insights about which graphic or type of presentation gets the most engagement and understanding from your audience, and you can model future content on what you learn.

Facebook tends to prioritize content that spurs comments and dialogue, showing it to more people in their newsfeeds. To encourage people to comment and engage, reply to questions or engage with commenters -- when they are commenting in good faith. If you get

## Using Twitter Effectively

Twitter is a key platform in online political discussions in Nigeria. In order to reach and engage millions of young Nigerians in conversation, the Nigerian election observation group YIAGA AFRICA<sup>1</sup> uses relevant and trending hashtags. The group holds regular Twitter chats and uses an associated hashtag to spark interest in the chat and make it easy for people to ask questions and follow along. It's proven to be a useful tool and strategy to raise awareness on government accountability and oversight, youth engagement, and electoral processes.

<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/YIAGA>

the sense that commenters are fake, bots, or repeating talking points designed to harm your credibility, you may want to hide or block those accounts. Otherwise, if people come to your page with honest questions or misunderstandings, take the time to reply and engage them in dialogue. This will not only help to educate people about your work and mission, but people like to be heard and know that there is a real person behind the organizational presence.

## Other platforms

There are many other social media platforms you may want to consider in your communications planning, including Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Reddit, and Tumblr. Each highlight a certain kind of content or interaction, but also have specific and limited audiences and penetration within each country or region. For instance, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram are particularly effective in curating photo and video content, and can be used for collecting evidence of electoral manipulation from everyday citizens

## Understand Social Media's Limitations

In Belarus, people are very active on Facebook, VKontakte (a Russian-language social media platform), and YouTube. While it may appear that conversations and dialogue on these platforms are non-political, users are having covert or veiled political discussions. As a result, Right To Choose (R2C) knew that their political discussions would find an audience on these platforms and created special live streams for each platform channel, so people could learn more about politics and engage if they felt comfortable.

Unfortunately, this left out the people who weren't online at all. Because media is limited within the country and R2C is barred from state media, it created a limit on who was going to be able to watch and engage with the live streams on each channel.

(crowdsourcing), trained observers or citizen journalists. For tips on producing compelling video content, please refer to section V.

Be mindful that each additional platform you add to your communications plan means more time and resources spent creating content for that platform, and more accounts that must be protected from potential hacking by adversaries. If you have limited staff capacity, you should focus on the platform or platforms that most directly speak to your target audiences and help you achieve your goals. Do not waste time or resources creating content for a platform that doesn't help you achieve your goals or reach your targeted audiences, especially at the expense of spending more time on a platform that does.

No matter what platform(s) you decide to invest time in, be strategic about what content you can re-post or repurpose for those platforms. While each social network does have its own unique community, norms, and strengths, there will be some content that is appropriate for multiple platforms.

While content and communities may vary from network to network, all social media is social. Don't just post and walk away. Like with Facebook, monitor comments and reactions and interact with people who are genuine in their questions or dialogue. Follow relevant accounts, share or repost interesting content from followers or influencers, and demonstrate the 'personality' of the organization and that it is run by real people who are

ready to engage with followers.

### *Planning and scheduling social content*

As mentioned, the more platforms you add to your communications plan, the more time it will take to create, publish, and monitor content. This process can be made easier and more efficient by implementing editorial calendars and using some free or paid services to schedule content to publish.

An editorial calendar enables organizations to schedule and track content production and publishing. It will include internal deadlines for drafting and finalizing different content, a publishing schedule, and any themes or narrative arcs you want to reinforce over time. Depending on how much content you're producing and how complicated the production and approval process, you might use a paper calendar, an Excel or Google spreadsheet, or more sophisticated project management software to create an editorial calendar.

Start building your editorial calendar by looking at the duration of your campaign (or, if your campaign is ongoing with no clear end, three months into the future). Are there any natural milestones or events that you want to build communications around? Is there a voter registration deadline, candidate debate, organizational event, election day, etc. for which you will want to create promotional, day-of, and post-facto

content? By anchoring your communications calendar to clear events or dates, you'll start to see what you need to create and publish, and when.

With the time in between major events, you can make some choices about what types or themes of content you want to post. If your goal is to raise awareness of what a PVT is and your audiences don't have much sense of how it works or why it should be trusted, you may want to dedicate two weeks when not much else is happening to creating and posting content entirely about the different aspects of a PVT. Graphics with facts about the principles of a PVT, an infographic on the process, three short explanatory videos, photos of election observers from past PVTs, and a Facebook Live Q&A where people can ask questions and get easy answers are some examples of content you might want to schedule and prepare for those two weeks.

When mapping out your upcoming content on your editorial calendar, plan out the frequency of content you'll post based on norms of the platforms you're targeting. Maybe you'll plan to send two blast emails a week, three blast text messages a week, and post to Facebook twice a day. That will help you create and/or assign the content in advance.

Once you know in advance what content and products

you'll be creating and posting, you can start working on them right away. Sometimes you may need to leave some parts blank until right before the content is scheduled to run so that it can include timely data, but you can still work on the layouts, templates, and outlines of much of your content in advance. When it's ready, you can also load and schedule content to publish in advance on most platforms. Facebook allows you to schedule page and group posts, and you can also schedule tweets to publish through apps like TweetDeck or HootSuite. You can also schedule blast emails to send at a specified time through most CRM or blast email programs. Scheduling content to post can also be useful if your analytics show that your audiences tend to be online at times when you are not -- late at night or on weekends, for example.

Be sure to build in some flexibility in case there is breaking news to which you need to respond. While an editorial calendar is a useful tool for planning ahead, it can be reworked if circumstances change. If the election gets moved up or your organization is under attack, you'll need to change your editorial calendar -- not continue as though nothing has changed. Be careful with scheduled content. If you have a lot of content pre-loaded to publish, you can risk looking out of touch if circumstances change and your content auto-publishes anyway.

## Build Relationships with Journalists

In Myanmar, Neichi Minn, the communications and advocacy manager of PACE, is always working to find out which journalists are tracking election news and keeping in touch with them. In addition to keeping in frequent contact with journalists one-on-one, she organizes a media briefing prior to each election. This private briefing explains PACE's methodology, what PACE is tracking, what the findings will mean and how the journalists can use those findings in their reporting. "It's a useful strategy," says Minn. "A lot of journalists are now reaching out and they ask specific questions, because they know what information they can ask from PACE."



PACE photo



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## Earned media and press conferences

Earned media is any media coverage you get because of something you've done that is newsworthy. (The opposite of earned media is paid media.) One big benefit of earned media is that it's free. The downside is you can't control the content.

You should pursue an earned media strategy only if you think you can receive fair or friendly coverage. For example, focusing on an earned media strategy may be futile or counterproductive for those working in closed spaces where the national media is controlled or tightly restricted by the state. In these contexts, you may not want to pursue earned media, or your focus on earned media may be very narrow and targeted to a few, more independent outlets. In addition, you may seek to develop strong relationships with international press covering your country, who may be more open to fair coverage and more likely to cover your work and issues. Regardless of whether you focus on earned media, you should have a crisis communications plan in place for how you'll deal with unfriendly or negative press coverage (see Crisis Communications section).

If you do decide to pursue earned media, you can't just hold a press conference and hope that people come and cover your event or findings favorably. Earned media depends in large part on relationship building with reporters, and that takes time.

Reporters need to see you as a trusted and reliable source with relevant expertise. To get to that point, you'll need to do targeted and personalized outreach to reporters. Start by researching which outlets you want to prioritize. Again, this will depend on your goals and audiences -- what outlets do they trust? Which do they turn to? Which outlets have the audiences you hope to reach? Which ones do you trust to cover your organization and work fairly? Once you have that list, do some research on which reporters within the outlets specifically cover your issue. Email them and introduce yourself and your organization. Explain how you can be helpful to them and their work. Offer to meet with them

to answer their questions or provide background on issues on which you have a unique perspective or specific expertise. Over time, email them interesting leads and scoops or offer to be quoted or interviewed for stories as they emerge.

The goal is to build a relationship of respect and trust, so that the reporter knows that you can help them better perform their job. Nurturing those relationships will help you get quoted and interviewed more often. Then, when you have a genuinely newsworthy event (like a PVT, campaign, or other effort), those journalists will be more likely to cover it.

These same strategies can also be applied to members of nontraditional media. Your goals may require that you include bloggers, podcast hosts, YouTube stars, comedians, and/or social media influencers into your earned media strategy. Engaging such actors may also require sustained, trusted, one-on-one outreach. Members of the nontraditional media still want to provide popular, interesting, and relevant content to their audiences, and if they trust you to help them achieve their goals, they will amplify your message, content, and information accordingly.

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## Contact management for media

As you begin your research into relevant outlets, reporters, producers, and nontraditional media, you'll want to put a contact management system in place tracking to whom you want to reach out and what interactions you have with them when you do. This can be a simple spreadsheet you keep updated, or it can be integrated into your CRM, depending on your needs and which CRM you choose.

During your research, keep track of which reporters might be interested in your work, what outlet they work for or if they freelance, keep links to other stories they've written to get a sense of their coverage and angle, and keep notes on anything you learn about how they like to be contacted or their particular interests. Be sure to include international reporters and outlets in your research and database, especially if you are working in a country where the national media is unlikely to give



you fair coverage or any coverage.

You'll need to update your media contact lists frequently, especially around election times when international reporters will be in the country for only a week or two to cover the election. Have a plan in place for how you'll update your press lists during these busy times and how you'll reach out to people covering the election if you don't have a lot of time to form relationships with them.

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## Putting on a great press conference

There may be key moments in your campaign when you need to hold a press conference. You should consider a press conference if you are going to release a newsworthy statement, are prepared to answer questions about it, and need to reach a broad cross section of the media and stakeholders at once. Don't forget to also promote the press conference through your own social media platforms using photos, video and quotes as appropriate.

The key to a good press conference is that it should be interesting and newsworthy. The best press conferences are short and the participants are prepared to relay information in quotable soundbites that can be used in print or broadcast coverage. This can be hard if you have a lot of leaders, spokespeople, and/or partners who each want to speak at length. In order to avoid this common pitfall, spend time preparing speakers on their remarks before the conference. Keep remarks short and quotable. Do not ask spokespeople to state and then re-state the

same things over and over again or have them read straight from a longer statement. Emphasize the need to stick to the planned remarks, and take time to make sure they fully understand what they are planning to say.

Think about who will be speaking at the press conference and if they are the best messengers for the different audiences you want to address. Are they trusted by those audiences? Do the speakers reflect a necessary diversity of ages, genders, ethnicities, languages, religions, or other characteristics that should be included to ensure credibility and trust? For example, a panel of exclusively older men are probably not going to persuade a target audience of young women.

Keep in mind what was covered earlier about narrative. Listing percentages and statistics that are already in the report or press release is not as compelling as speaking from personal experience and using stories to connect with the audience. If your group found a high percentage of polling stations in which voters were intimidated or harassed by security forces, in addition to providing the percentage of polling stations where this happened, you could invite a voter to briefly share a story about the intimidation they faced, if they are comfortable doing so publicly. Similarly if your group found in the pre-election period that a high percentage of voter registration offices were not open in certain areas, you could have a voter speak about the challenges they faced when trying to register to vote. Of course, you also want to make sure that the stories you tell help emphasize the overall findings and messages you want to convey. If, for example, your group found that 97% of polling stations opened on time, then you would not want to highlight a story about a voter who was not able to vote due to late opening of a polling station.

The leaders/spokespeople of your press conference should be well-rehearsed with your topline message and should understand how to tie their stories and remarks back to the overall messages you are trying to convey. This is not the time for them to go off message. In addition to rehearsing their remarks, prepare a list of likely tough questions, and prepare them to answer those questions. Practice using the answers to reiterate your overall messages.



You should also give some thought to the venue and visual look of your press conference. Television and photojournalists will be looking for good visuals, and a well-staged press conference can add to its newsworthiness. For example, if your group found that registered voters were not permitted to vote in a high percentage of polling stations -- assuming that it would be safe and journalists would travel -- you could hold the press conference outside a venue where many voters were denied their right to vote rather than in a hotel conference room. Could several of the people who were unable to vote stand behind the speakers while they talk, perhaps holding signs? Are there other visuals you could set up or project to add to the visual interest of the press conference even if at a standard location, such as projecting slides with relevant infographics, charts, and/or photos while the spokesperson(s) is/are speaking? Would a photo of your press conference show the image of your organization that you want to project and/or tell the story you want to convey?

Candidly, a good press conference can be hard to achieve

if a lot of egos are involved. If your leaders/spokespeople insist on making long speeches, focusing on their own personal opinions rather than the organization's findings and talking points, or repeating what the others have said without adding anything new or interesting, you may want to consider other strategies to pursue earned media, like one-on-one interviews with leaders or sending small scoops to different, friendly reporters. If your press conference isn't interesting enough to earn press coverage, then it is a waste of your time and the reporters' time. Even worse, if your press conference presents differing viewpoints or goes off message, it can harm your cause and your credibility.

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## Paid media

Depending on your resources, you may want to buy print, radio, television, web, or social media ads. While paying for ads costs money, the content has the benefit of being exactly how you want it, and it can be very persuasive when done well. Refer back to your target

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## Reaching Out Beyond the Web

In Nigeria, YIAGA AFRICA has developed an effective mix of in-person interactions with social and traditional media amplification of those events.

The group organizes town hall meetings for young people and lawmakers to have direct dialogue on ways to increase youth participation in politics and encourage lawmakers to be more accountable to their young constituents. YIAGA AFRICA invites radio and broadcast journalists, bloggers, and social media influencers to these town halls, and encourages the social media savvy young attendees to record, share, and tweet about the town hall, adding to the event's reach and credibility.

One town hall held in December 2017 was amplified to the point where it was trending throughout social and traditional media. In addition to reaching more people and raising awareness about the issue, the strategy worked to encourage lawmakers in attendance to vote to lower the age limit for candidates running for office.





audiences and remind yourself of where they get most of their trusted information. Those will be the programs or platforms on which you want to spend your advertising budget.

When deciding on the content of your ads, you want to promote your key message(s) through the most persuasive content matched to the specific media's format and audience. Go to the data on what is performing best on social media, email, or your website (see next chapter for details on data and analytics). Look at what content, messaging, narratives, and messengers are the most popular, most engaging, and most persuasive with your audiences. That will help to form the basis for your paid advertising.

If you're promoting posts on social media, you might want to simply boost a post that is performing well so that it reaches a wider audience. You can also create more specific and targeted ads with a narrower message and show them to a specific audience, or even advertise your page itself (instead of a particular post) to a new and wider audience. Facebook in particular (and, by extension, Instagram as they are the same company) allows you create very narrow and specific custom audiences.

There are a few ways to create custom audiences for Facebook promotions. These can be very powerful.

- **UPLOAD A LIST OF EMAIL ADDRESSES.** These people will be targeted based on the email addresses you upload (note: if you upload someone's work email and they use their personal email for their Facebook credentials, you will not be able to reach them this way). This can be slightly more expensive because often the audience is very narrow, but it can be very powerful. For example, you can advertise your work to a very narrow audience of potential international donors to promote support for your organization or enlist them in advocacy, or you can promote a reminder for an event to all of the people who have already RSVPed with an email address.
- **CREATE A LOOKALIKE AUDIENCE.** If you have a strong base of supporters that already follow your Facebook page or group, or you have built a strong email list of supporters, you can create a "lookalike" audience on Facebook. Facebook will identify a subset of people that are similar to your existing supporters but that aren't your supporters -- yet. This can be a great way to expand your base of support, because you're advertising to people who are demographically and



behaviorally inclined to support your work as modeled by your existing supporters. If you are advertising to build your email list, sign a petition, or attend an event or protest, this can be a useful approach.

- **TARGET BASED ON DEMOGRAPHICS OR SELF-IDENTIFIED INTERESTS.** The upside to Facebook collecting vast stores of our most personal data is that it is easy to find your target audiences based on geographic location, age, gender, and their self-identified interests. For example, if you want to target young men aged 16-26 in a particular province who support a particular opposition party or leader, this is the tool you would use.

However you choose to advertise, the fundamentals of good messaging and storytelling still apply. Keep your ads on message and with compelling personal stories and visuals and people will find them persuasive.

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## Offline considerations

If these tools and platforms won't reach the people you're trying to reach, such as in rural communities where social media, internet, or other media are not easily accessible, think creatively about other ways to reach them.

- You may need to pair your online communications with offline organizing techniques. If your main

audiences are offline, how can you recruit and train your online supporters to reach them? Do you need to recruit or hire organizers from within a community to host forums, events or go door-to-door?

- Who is already speaking to the people you want to speak with? Can you meet with influencers of those audiences and work with them to disseminate your message?
- Can you organize non-traditional events that will attract your key audiences, like educational forums, concerts, art shows, film screenings, sports events, contests, raffles, etc.? Be sure to think about how you will convert attendance into action or support.
- Some audiences might respond well to meetings with your organization's leaders with what they perceive as high-level briefings or other inside information. This can work well with key volunteers, journalists, community leaders, and international donors. Making people feel like they are part of something bigger, or that they are special or unique in some way, may motivate them to engage more deeply with you and your message.
- If you are operating in a more restrictive context, your organization may not be able to organize more high-profile events mentioned above. However, think creatively about ways you can safely yet effectively engage your main audiences offline.

## YOUR TURN

**Brainstorm a list of the various communications tools and platforms you have available to you. They might be all of what we listed above, they might be some of what we listed above, or they might be unique tools and platforms to where you are, your resources and your circumstances.**

**Some questions to get you started:**

- **What print publications are popular in your country, and with whom?**
- **What TV and radio stations or programs are popular in your country, and with whom?**
- **Are there blogs or websites focused on politics and elections that are widely read?**
- **What are the political leanings (if any) of the print, broadcast, or internet outlets you've listed?**

- **What social networks are popular and with whom?**
- **What messaging platforms are most popular and with whom?**
- **How do you get your information?**
- **How do your parents get their information?**
- **How do your grandparents get their information?**
- **How do your children get their information?**

**Now start matching up the different communications channels to your target audiences. Rely on your audience research here if possible, rather than guessing.**

Continuing our example, your communications plan might start to look like this:

Goal	Topline Message	Target Audience	Target Message	Communication Tool
Raise awareness of what a PVT is by having 10,000 people visit our website and having an average reach of 100,000 people across our social media channels in the three weeks before the election.	A PVT independently verifies whether official election results are accurate, because every vote should be counted and every voice should be heard.	Journalists who write about elections	A PVT is a statistically rigorous and internationally accepted standard of gauging the accuracy or fraudulence of official election results. The results of the PVT will help tell the story of the upcoming election by providing another data set against which to check election results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email press releases &amp; press conferences</li> <li>Materials on website</li> <li>One-on-one phone interviews &amp; quarterly conference calls</li> <li>Twitter</li> <li>WhatsApp group</li> <li>YouTube</li> </ul>
		Members of the party in power	A PVT verifies fair and accurate election results. Win or lose, great leaders respect the will of the people, when every vote is counted and every voice is heard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-on-one outreach to party leadership</li> <li>Ads &amp; op-eds in the <i>The Daily Journal</i>, <i>The Weekly Magazine</i>, and <i>The Radio Newshour</i></li> </ul>
		Members of the opposition party	A PVT verifies that true results are known and dissuades fraud, because every vote should be counted and every voice should be heard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facebook ads</li> <li>One-on-one outreach to the party leadership</li> <li>Ads in the <i>Opposition Weekly</i></li> <li>Blast emails</li> </ul>





## Go to people where they are

Remember to try to go to people where they already are. If your target audience is mostly on Facebook, don't try to contact them via email. If your target audience gets most of their news in the daily paper, don't play radio ads for them. If your target audience gets most of their news at the barber shop, you need to consider a barber outreach program.

Since you may not belong to the demographics you're reaching out to, you may not be fluent in the ways people are communicating with each other on these different channels.

In this case, spend as much time as you can researching and exploring the different online and offline channels before diving in. If your audience is on Facebook and you are not a member, join. See how people interact with each other and like different pages. Assess what kinds of content spark the most conversation or comments, the tone with which people speak to each other, what slang

or abbreviations might be popular on the site, how often people post, and so on. Try to get familiar with how to use the platform before you increase your organization's use of it.

If your audience listens to a certain radio program during which you want to buy advertising, listen to that program for a couple of weeks and take note of the advertising. What type and tone of advertising is already there? What does the radio program's content say about the likes and interests of your audience? If you are targeting a specific blogger, read that person's blog, post comments to the blog, and strike up a relationship with the blogger to the extent possible through available channels.

Do not try to lure people away from the networks they're already a part of just because you are uncomfortable or unaware of those networks. If you have an active and interesting Twitter feed but all of your potential supporters are on Facebook, you are wasting your time.





# CAN WE TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

## Creative Communication Strategies

Politics and elections are serious business. Pushing for democratic progress often involves facing great risks, threats, and even dangers for your organization and -- in some cases -- your own personal safety. But just because the topics and consequences of your work are serious doesn't mean they should be dense or dull.

Generally speaking, people don't like to be lectured or reminded of how bad things are. People prefer to laugh and have fun. If you can use humor, entertainment, popular culture, or first-person experience as a way to deliver important and serious information, you'll have a better chance of being listened to, and your audiences will be more likely to retain the information you are trying to impart.

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### Harness the power of art and popular culture

Popular culture is constantly teaching us what our

society values and what our role in it is. Sometimes popular culture explicitly addresses politics, and sometimes it is more subtly commenting on the politics, ethics, and values we share or aspire to. In addition to its ability to teach us, the real power of popular culture lies in the popular part. By definition, mass audiences are consuming it. If you can tap into pop culture narratives -- and, even better, if you can help shape them -- then you will be communicating relevantly with broad audiences.

It's really hard to inspire people to work for change when they can't imagine what that change can look like or result in. Especially in closed societies and places where democracy is new, transitional, fragile, or a democratic tradition is new, people might not be able to adequately picture how their lives might change if their government were more accountable. Integrating popular culture strategies into your communications campaigns can be an effective way to show and teach your values in action or push back against common narratives that

might harm or weaken your cause. Images, lyrics, and dialogues should be crafted to present improved circumstances that change could bring and not just concentrate on exposing present ills.

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## What is a culture campaign?

There are a number of ways to integrate pop culture strategies into your communications plan. Remember that popular culture is transnational in many instances, and you might be able to enlist figures outside your borders to assist your efforts, which is particularly important in closed societies.

- Praise or amplify positive narratives or trends you see in the arts or pop culture that reflect your messages.
- Correct or push back against negative or harmful narratives or trends in the arts or pop culture that undermine potentials for democratic progress.
- Work directly with artists, writers, actors, or other creators to help shape narratives that reinforce your frame and narrative during the production phase.
- Engage with your audience by drawing real-world connections to the art or culture they're fans of or giving them ways to channel their passion into real-world action.
- Ask musicians to write songs for your campaign, filmmakers to produce short videos, actors to star in an ad or video, artists to create posters or graffiti, etc., for your campaign.
- Have celebrities join your campaign as spokespeople or trusted messengers; enlist them to amplify your messages through their performances and social media presence.
- Invite the public to post or submit popular culture contributions to your efforts.

As with your other strategies, any pop culture strategies and tactics you pursue should be in service to your larger goals. If you recruit a celebrity to be your spokesperson, but that person is not popular with key audiences or isn't willing to stay on message, then it's



not worth the effort. If, however, people are becoming increasingly cynical about democracy because the dominant television shows and movies all portray elections as rigged and politicians as corrupt, then you might want to work with artists and actors to create counternarratives that emphasize the benefits of participation and the importance of voting. Inviting the public to post or submit popular culture contributions to your campaigns can also help counter cynicism, although you will need to decide how best to filter out trolls and other malign actors who may try to sabotage such efforts. This will reinforce your frame and lay a foundation that makes the rest of your work easier.

## YOUR TURN

**Spend some time brainstorming the country's most popular television shows, movies, books, music, and celebrities.**

**Looking at this list, ask yourself the following questions:**

- **Do any of these explicitly deal with politics? If so, what are they saying about it?**
- **For those that aren't dealing with politics, what are the dominant narratives? What values or morals do they impart? What ideas do they take for granted or reinforce? What frame are they operating within?**
- **Of the narratives and values you identified,**

**which reinforce your frame and message, and which contradict or undermine it?**

- **Is there anything or anyone on the list of pop culture that is particularly appealing to your target audiences?**

**For the narratives that reinforce your message and frame -- especially the ones popular with your target audiences -- how can you amplify and engage with those parts of pop culture? Can you tie your work and message to the pop culture modalities? Can you engage authentically with fans about the real-world counterparts or impact? Can you recruit the stars or spokespeople to join your campaign or collaborate with you in some way?**

**For the narratives that contradict or devalue your message and frame, think about how you can present counternarratives or rebuttals to what is harmful. Can you work directly with the creators to change how your issues are presented within the culture? Can you recruit the actors or artists involved to serve as spokespeople for your cause to debunk some of the harmful messages in their work? Can you parody or play with the original narrative to present your side or ideas instead?**

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## Tips for collaborating with artists and fans

Working in politics or for an NGO means you may have limited exposure to artists and other creative people. Here are tips for forging productive and mutually beneficial relationships with them:

- **LET THE ARTISTS CREATE THE ART.** An artist's job is to be professionally creative, and you should give them the space to do so. Don't try to tell them how to do their jobs. Let them pitch ideas about how their talents might best be used. If an idea sounds weird or out there at first, hear them out -- just because it feels uncomfortable or different from how you have done things before doesn't mean it is a bad idea.

Don't try to rein them in or change their vision unless absolutely necessary.

- **AN ARTIST'S TIME IS VALUABLE.** Artists and other creatives are paid professionals; don't assume they will volunteer their services. Be prepared to offer and pay them at their market rate. If you can't afford to pay them, ask them if they will volunteer their services or offer a reduced rate but understand this is a lot to ask and treat their time with value and respect even if you are not paying for it directly.
- **COLLABORATE, DON'T DICTATE.** You're each bringing different knowledge bases to the table. Form a collaborative partnership where you're lifting up each other's work, not trying to make it fit into your preconceived ideas.

Sometimes your plan might involve outreach and organizing to fan communities. Fan communities are self-organized groups of people who love a movie, book, comic book, TV show, artist, musician, sports team, etc.

## Using Humor and the Arts to Convey a Message

In Malaysia, BERSIH 2.0 experimented with a number of arts and culture tactics to get the public interested and engaged on the topic of redistricting. They presented film screenings followed by discussion sessions. They organized a series of concerts to raise awareness of the issue. They also organized a stand up comedy show and encouraged the comics to use material about BERSIH 2.0 and the issues - even if it meant poking fun at the issues and the organization - in an effort to teach through laughter. The comedy show proved to be so popular they extended its run - it ended up running for 10 days, and 300-400 people came to each show.

Fan communities most frequently gather online around certain platforms or hashtags, but they also gather in person to enjoy performances, matches, or conventions. Fan communities often generate their own customs, language, and norms. One example is when Black Panther (a popular superhero movie that takes place in the mythical African nation of Wakanda) fans organized a “Wakanda The Vote” campaign to register people attending Black Panther film screenings to vote. The idea was not only to watch a screening about a fictional country built on the power of black people, but also to simultaneously build black power in the real world.

If you plan to communicate with fan communities, here are some practical tips to keep in mind:

- **BE A FAN.** If you want to talk to fan communities about a movie, TV show, book, or musician, be a fan! Fans are fiercely loyal and passionate about the object of their adoration -- don't start by criticizing or pointing out the shortcomings, but rather approach from a place of authentic admiration.
- **LISTEN.** Spend some time listening to the fans to understand how they interact, what their internal references and jokes are, and what they love about the thing they're a fan of. It's okay to lurk online or at events for a while, just listening to get a sense for the tone and topics to use once you're ready to engage.
- **HAVE AUTHENTIC INTERACTIONS.** Don't always try to wedge in your talking points or web address. Interact authentically and have real conversations with fans -- pivot to your message when it feels natural.

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## The power of comedy<sup>1</sup>

Using humor and comedy in your communications can help your message break through and stick -- even when the issues themselves aren't lighthearted or humorous.

Comedy can help overcome couple of messaging pitfalls, namely, messages that are over-complicated,



and messages that are dire or hopeless. Sometimes democracy issues can be hard to understand and the details are often very specialized and technical -- for example, the importance of reforming an electoral code. It might make the difference between credible elections or not -- but once you start talking about the legal framework, people may get bored and stop listening to you. There is also the danger that, especially in closing spaces, the situations you are addressing feel dire and hopeless -- there is nothing but bad news. When people feel hopeless, they are again likely to stop listening to you. They don't want to be reminded that things are bad, and the path forward is arduous.

The power of comedy is in humanizing issues and generating positive emotions about something that might otherwise seem dull, overly complicated, or hopeless.

Research shows that people take seriously the information they learn through comedy. By introducing a topic and information through humor, people's minds are more open and ready to absorb otherwise challenging or complicated information. Comedians are often trusted messengers because they are seen as telling the truth or poking fun at power structures. This makes comedy an effective strategy for getting people to learn, care about, and take action on issues that might otherwise seem overly complicated, dull, or pessimistic.

There are, of course, times when a light-hearted or humorous approach is inappropriate. But this approach is overlooked often and is so effective that it should at least be considered and integrated when appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> This section is largely based on the work and findings of Caty Borum Chattoo's research and report *The Laughter Effect*: <http://cmsimpact.org/program/comedy/>

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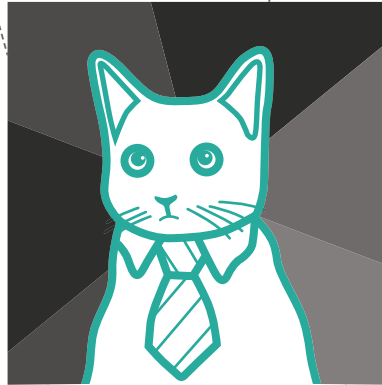
# How Comedy Works

There are five main ways comedy works to influence your audience:

## Breaking Social Barriers and Taboos

Comedy can introduce the experiences of marginalized people or experiences to a larger audience in a nonthreatening way and help expose audiences to new people or ideas without alienating them.

- **Attracting Attention** Comedy can attract -- and keep -- the attention of new audiences. Comedy can help new audiences retain the information they learn.



## Making Us Feel

Comedy can make us feel a range of emotions and help us empathize and understand experiences different from our own.

## Sharing With Others and Creating Community

People like to laugh with others, and they like to share what makes them laugh. In addition to spreading your message, finding something funny along with another person can create bonds and a sense of community that transcends ethnic, class, or political lines.

## Giving a Foothold for Complex Issues

Comedy can soften the ground and open the mind for exploring complex issues. Laughter keeps people engaged as new information or concepts are introduced.

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## The format of your comedy matters

Satirical news. Satirical news points out and reframes absurdity. For it to work, your audience must have some basic familiarity with the situation being satirized, or they will not understand it or find it funny. Satire is good for motivating the base of people who already agree with you, but is likely to alienate or turn off people who don't agree with you.

- **SCRIPTED, COMEDIC STORYTELLING.** Funny scripted

stories -- TV shows, public service announcements (PSAs), movies, online videos, etc. -- are great for creating relationships between the viewers and your characters. This understanding or empathy can help normalize unfamiliar experiences and expose the viewer to people or situations they might not otherwise encounter.

- **HUMOROUS ADS.** Making someone laugh in a short amount of time captures their attention and sticks in their memory. Humorous ads -- print, online, televised, or radio -- work to quickly grab your



attention and can be very memorable. They can also spark discussion and sharing with friends and family.

- **STAND UP COMEDY AND SKETCH COMEDY.** These forms of comedy can introduce longer topics, help people critically evaluate them, and break taboos.

Comedy works best when people like or trust the comedian. Choose your messenger wisely for maximum impact. Your comedy should also be funny (this sounds obvious but is surprisingly hard to put into practice). Partnering with a professional or experienced comedian can help you ensure you're funny and therefore successful.

## YOUR TURN

**Look back at your topline and related messages in your communications plan. Are there any messages or concepts that are difficult to explain, overly complicated, dull, or very dire and hopeless?**

**If so, brainstorm ways humor might help you better convey those messages. Here are some questions to get you started:**

- **Are there common experiences that could be parodied or satirized?**
- **Is there an absurd or ridiculous news event you can satirize in a way that reinforces your message?**
- **Is there a well-known expression or idiom that can be changed for your purposes?**
- **What issue or aspect of your work do you often have the hardest time explaining? Is there a funny way to approach it or a funny outcome you could use to better explain it?**
- **Are there any comedians or comedic actors you can work with?**

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## Experiential learning and communications

Experiential learning is the process of experiencing something new and then reflecting on that experience to gain new knowledge or draw larger lessons. It is commonly used in the classroom or in job training programs, and, used creatively, the same principles can be applied to a communications campaign.

In some cases, your audience will undergo a new experience themselves, and you can help enrich the reflection stage of the experience so they learn new lessons. For example, if people are showing up at the polls and there is only one candidate on the ballot (or only one viable candidate), they may vote for that one candidate (the experience) and not think much of it because there's only ever been one candidate on the ballot (no reflection). Instead, you can aim your communications to interact with that voter shortly before or after their experience of voting to add context and encourage reflection on their experience. Why was there only one candidate on the ballot? Can you have a credible election without choice? How would the country be different with a real choice at the ballot?

This type of communication can occur through any of the platforms or formats already discussed. For example, you might host a Facebook Live shortly after the election in which you pose questions to the audience to spur reflection and ask them to contribute their thoughts and reactions about their experience of registering to vote. You could run newspaper or digital ads aimed at provoking reflections on common experiences that the audiences had while voting. You could hold community forums or go canvassing door-to-door to hold in-depth conversations in which people share their experiences over the course of the election period and, through guided discussion, reflect on that experience to learn larger lessons about democracy, credible elections or accountability in government.

In other cases, your audience may not undergo the experience themselves, and so you'll want to simulate it for them or otherwise create some kind of empathic

connection to the experience. For example, you could create a simple first person role-playing game that puts the user in the position of having to vote with a physical disability. At each barrier in the process, the player would have to decide what to do or how to handle it. If there are stairs to the entrance of the polling place, players would have the option of asking others to carry them up the stairs or not voting that day and going home instead. By forcing able-bodied players to make choices from the point of view of a disabled voter, the player might reflect on the importance of accessible polling places, something they may not have given much thought to in the past.

You can achieve a similar outcome with videos, virtual reality, slide decks, online quizzes, or first person essays aimed at putting the audience through an experience different from their own. Be sure to structure it in such a way that there is room for reflection about the experience to increase the chance of the audience retaining what it learns.

With any of these approaches, it's best to have immediate actions ready for someone to take in order to channel their newfound knowledge and enthusiasm into useful action. This might mean something as simple as signing up for your email list for updates and alerts, or something more involved like protesting inaccessible polling places at the election commission -- but you want to be sure people take action based on what they've just experienced and learned.

## YOUR TURN

**Are there experiences that your audiences will have or should have that can teach valuable lessons about your work and mission? Brainstorm what those experiences could be:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Now for each experience, decide whether your audience is likely to experience it themselves, or will need it simulated for them in some way.**

**If they'll experience it themselves, how will you encourage them to reflect and act upon the experience? If they will not experience it for themselves, what are effective ways to simulate the experience and encourage them to reflect on it?**

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## Sharing people's stories

As already discussed, using narrative is a powerful way to emotionally connect with your audience and relay the story of your work, organization, or findings. For the most part, the narrative approaches in Chapter IV are for stories that you created or sought out -- and as a result, stories for which you can maintain careful control of the narrative.

As a related strategy, it can be very compelling to hear from different people about a range of personal experiences or stories. Collecting and curating user-generated videos or stories can show the diversity of experiences and ideas about different issues, increasing the chances that the audience will connect with one of them. This format can also encourage an audience to learn about the variety of experiences and to empathize with different people and points of view.

This strategy can be difficult to carry out for a number of reasons. People must have an interesting or compelling story to tell. They need to feel safe -- emotionally and physically -- sharing it with you. They need to feel comfortable with the technical aspects of submitting their story (if it requires special equipment, internet bandwidth, etc.). Finally, you need to have the staff capacity to vet and curate the stories as they come in. While you want to showcase a range of experiences and emotions, you still want the stories to fall within your frame and reinforce your message, and -- at the very least -- not contribute to hate speech or abuse.

But, if you can overcome those challenges, the benefits can be great. People love to tell and listen to stories.



Showing a range of personal stories can create empathy, understanding, and engagement that data, messaging, and talking points never will. This strategy also gives regular people a way to get involved and feel like their story and experiences are part of a larger community. Learning you are not alone in how you think or what you've experienced creates a powerful form of community that will strengthen people's commitment to your work and cause.

You might consider this strategy when you think a range of stories will reinforce your overall message and frame, or when a behavior or outcome would benefit from being reinforced by a person's peer group. For example, perhaps you are trying to boost voter turnout with young women or men ages 18-25. If they aren't voting because they don't perceive it as cool or worth their time, then videos, statements, and infographics from an election observation group might not be enough to convince them. However, if they can explore 100 videos of other young women and men telling their personal stories of the first time they voted and how it made them feel, your audience is more likely to trust these authentic narratives. They'll want to belong to a community that votes, like the communities in the videos.

In some instances, you may want to recruit and collect the stories yourself. This is a good approach to take if you want them all to look similar aesthetically (you can control how they're filmed), or you want to solicit stories from specific people and you want to make it easy on them. The drawbacks to this approach are that you'll need enough staff time and skills to identify the storytellers, film or otherwise collect their story, and then edit or produce the final narrative.

Instead, you might opt to have users submit their own stories. This will result in a wider variety of stories and experiences, but they will vary in quality and you will still need staff time to ensure that the stories you display help your mission.

However you decide to solicit and collect people's stories, you'll need to think about how you plan to display them, how people will find them, and what you hope the audience will do once they hear the stories. You may also need to include some kind of legal disclaimer about how and who can publish or share stories, and how they can be used.



# IS IT WORKING?

## Evaluation and Analysis

Having clear criteria to measure your success will allow you to know if your communications plan is working and achieving your goals -- or if it's not performing as you had hoped and you need to revisit and adjust your strategies and tactics. You'll need to know what you're measuring and ideally you'll be collecting data frequently enough to see problems early and adjust before it's too late or too hard.

You're not starting totally from scratch, as the "M" in your SMART goals is "measurable." If you've written your goals with measurability in mind, then you'll have some idea of what metrics you need to collect and use as benchmarks on your way to your goal.

During your planning process, think about what metrics are meaningful and matter to your work. You don't want to be in a position where you are tracking metrics that are easy to track but that aren't a meaningful measure of the success of your program. It can also be difficult or impossible in some cases to gather data from the past, so you want to have a clear understanding of what is relevant before you begin.

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### Reach vs. Engagement

There are two broad ways to measure your communications: reach and engagement.

Reach looks at how many people saw your content. It does not distinguish between active and passive consumption. If a person sees your TV ad, receives your email, or scrolls past your content in their newsfeed, it will count toward your reach. Reach can be a useful metric if you are trying to saturate a market, strengthen your brand, or raise awareness of an issue -- merely ensuring that a certain audience is continually viewing your content can sometimes be an effective strategy, even if they are passively consuming your information.

Engagement measures whether someone took action based on your content in some way. On social media, this might include leaving a comment, sharing your post, or clicking through to join your email list or sign up to volunteer. In an email, it might include opening the email, clicking through your call to action, forwarding the email to a friend, or replying to your

## Changing Your Measurements of Success

In Nicaragua, the election observation coalition Panorama Electoral<sup>1</sup> was initially measuring success purely by reach, rather than the assessing the discussions and debates generated.

In order to achieve their goals of fostering dialogue and increasing participation, the group shifted their strategy to collecting more meaningful metrics on engagement and interaction, prompting them to see the need for a community manager to moderate the dialogue on their social media feeds.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.panoramaelectoral.org/>

email. With a text message, it might mean replying or showing up to the protest you are informing them about.

Engagement numbers will be lower than reach, but the interactions will be deeper and the audience more heavily invested in your mission and its success. Think carefully about whether you need a smaller-but-active or a larger-but-passive audience to achieve your goals before deciding whether you will emphasize reach or engagement in your metrics of success.

You can also measure both -- and indeed, they are not necessarily unrelated. To achieve the engagement numbers you want, you may need to reach more people. However, you should be clear about what metrics are relevant to achieve your goals and you should prioritize those.

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## Common Analytics and Metrics Available

A number of digital platforms have built-in analytics that you can access for free (or that are included in the overall price of the platform) that are very powerful when used well.

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### Email analytics

Any mass emailer you use should provide you with basic analytic data you can use to refine your email strategy.

- **OPEN RATE:** This is the rate at which people open your email. A healthy and active email list will have around a 20 percent open rate for any given email sent.
- **CLICK-THROUGH RATE:** This is the rate at which people click on whatever links you put in your emails. For emails with a clear call to action, you should expect a click-through rate of 20 percent. Most mass emailers will also show you which links were clicked on the most, so you can learn whether placing your call to action at the top or bottom of your email is more effective, or whether there is one link people were more interested in than others, for example.
- **UNSUBSCRIBE RATE:** This is the rate at which people unsubscribe from any given email. A normal unsubscribe rate is less than 1 percent per send. If you see a sudden spike in unsubscribes, you should figure out whether you're emailing too often or if your language, tone, or content are alienating your audience.

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### Google Analytics

Google Analytics tracks all your web traffic and the behavior of the people who visit your website. Once you have a Gmail address, you can use it to open an account at [analytics.google.com](https://analytics.google.com). There, you can get a few lines of code that you place into your website (follow Google's instructions for how to do this). After that, you will



# Using Analytics to Spur Engagement

In Serbia, the CRTA team measures their social media impact by tracking Facebook insights, Twitter analytics, Google analytics, and Youtube analytics. They employ a media monitoring agency that tracks stories published about them and their work.

However, they don't just want to measure reach, they want to measure engagement, and so they began to track new engagement metrics in 2018. The group is calling people to action three times in the lead up to elections, to not only collect and publish data, but also to get members of the public engaged in their democracy. For example, they asked people to submit information to help with CRTA's research and to join the election observation mission by volunteering to be an observer (and pass the training to become an observer).

CRTA will be tracking these higher-level commitments over time to see if people are willing to participate, in an effort to grow their base of supporters.

be able to track all of your web traffic in real time and over time. Be sure to install Google Analytics on your websites from the very beginning -- the analytics cannot collect data on your site from a time before they were installed.

There is a lot of information available through site analytics, and you should spend some time exploring to see what's available. Google Analytics was primarily designed to help business websites maximize their customers' experience, but there is nevertheless a lot of useful information for civic groups.

- **AUDIENCE:** You can learn about the visitors to your website through the audience features. How many unique visitors did you get and how often did they come back? How long did they stay on the site and how many pages did they view during a visit? What are the demographics of your audience and what are their interests? If you were hoping for deep engagement on your website from young men ages 16-26, but your analytics reveal that your primary audience is older women ages 60-75 and they are only staying on the site for an average of 8 seconds, then you may need re-evaluate either the content of your website or the ways that you are promoting it (or both).
- **DEVICES AND BROWSERS:** You will also receive information on the browsers and devices audiences use to access your site. Be sure that your site is optimized to look its best on the most popular devices and browsers among your audience.
- **BEHAVIOR:** You can learn about how people actually use your site from the behavior features. You can see what content is most popular and how long people spend engaging with each page. You can also see the most common site behavior flows -- what pages do people start on and how do they travel through the site? Are they finding the information you most want them to find? Are they engaging deeply with your site or spending only a few seconds on it? Is the path through the site the one you had envisioned? If not, do you need to change your menu or page configuration to ensure that people are seeing the information you want them to prioritize? Use the behavior information to maximize the impact of your content and refine your site to ensure that your audience has an easy time finding the information it needs.
- **ACQUISITION:** You can learn a lot about how your audience found your site from the acquisition features. You can identify how many people found you through organic searches and the search terms they used to do so. You can also see what websites account for your

web referrals -- if they are coming from your social media posts, news articles, other referring websites, etc. If your social media referrals are low but your organic search rates are high, you might want to spend more time creating content that performs well based on common searches, rather than creating more posts for social media that refer back to your website, for example. If you are paying for site promotion, you can also link your Google AdWords account to your Analytics account and monitor it in this section.

- You can create sophisticated searches and reports by combining data. Click on “add a segment” to any report screen to add additional data points. For example, if you want to see how young men ages 16-26 are finding your site versus older women ages 60-75, you can add a demographics segment to your channels analytics screen and find the breakdown. These two groups may have totally different referrals, which will allow you to refine your site promotion strategy to cater to these two groups more effectively.
- You can also assess site performance over time with the date range feature. You can look at your analytics over any period of time you choose, and you can also overlay that time period over any comparable period of time by clicking “compare to.” This can help you analyze trends over time in the data.

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## Facebook Insights

Facebook offers free analytics (called Insights) for your page, and is also compatible with your website if you are tracking users’ behavior from Facebook through to your website. There is a lot of useful information collected here, too, and you should explore it to see what’s available and relevant to you. Ultimately, however, you should decide on which metrics matter the most to your success and focus on them.

- **DEMOGRAPHICS:** You can learn about your audiences’ demographics, i.e. the geographic location, age, gender, and preferred language of the people who are following your page, seeing your content and engaging with it.

## Evaluating Outreach Efforts On and Offline

In Malaysia, BERSIH 2.0 tracks all relevant social analytics on the platforms they use. They also track metrics related to their offline organizing -- measuring number of groups coordinators connect with and turnout for events. By measuring turnout, the group knew that crowds were getting progressively larger at small rallies in the weeks leading up to their big rally. Measuring the turnout and watching it grow, they felt comfortable predicting and planning for 200,000 attendees at their biggest rally seven weeks later.



BERSIH 2.0 photo

- **REACH AND ENGAGEMENT:** You can track likes, followers, and reach over time. You can also determine which posts have the highest reach and engagement rates.
- **VIDEO VIEWS:** You can see how many people watched and reacted to your videos, how long they spent viewing the video on average, and at what point most people quit watching.
- **FACEBOOK TO WEBSITE BEHAVIOR:** You can place a pixel associated with your Facebook page into the code of your website. This will allow you to track how

people who go from Facebook to your website behave. This is particularly useful if you want them to go from Facebook to complete an action on your website like signing up for your email list.

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## Twitter analytics

By going to [analytics.twitter.com](https://analytics.twitter.com), you can see free analytics associated with your Twitter account, regardless of whether you are paying for ads. Some of the metrics you can collect are:

- How individual tweets perform, in terms of reach and engagement.
- How your native videos perform, including how long people watch your videos.
- Who your audience is, including occupation, interests, gender, education, and income.

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## Other metrics

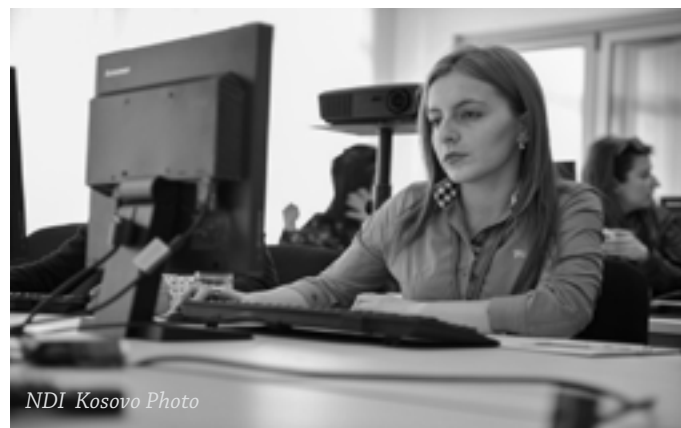
Most social media platforms have some kind of free, built-in analytics platform. You can dig into other analytics options and see what's available to you to measure. Play around with what's available, research what each number means, and decide which metrics are important to track over time.

Some strategies may require metrics that aren't readily available but are a good measure of success: number of times quoted in the media, number of attendees at an event, number of off-the-record meetings with reporters, number of times a donor replied to an email with feedback, trends in public opinion, etc. These sorts of metrics may be better measures of your success than reach on Facebook. Think critically about what is a meaningful measurement of your goal and track that, even if it is not necessarily the easiest metric available.

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## A/B testing

As you use metrics to learn what works and how to effectively meet your goals, you may want to



integrate an A/B testing plan into some or all of your communications. A/B testing means providing two different subject lines, contents, graphics, tones, messages, etc. to random subsets of similar audiences to see which they respond to best.

For example, you could send an email with a red call-to-action button at the very top of the email to half of your list and one without the button to the other half. After a day or so, compare click-through rates of both tests -- were people who received the button email more likely to click through? If so, you may want to include a red call-to-action button in all of your emails as a best practice to increase engagement with your emails. Or you may want to test a red call-to-action button against a blue call-to-action button in your next email to see which button is more effective.

A/B testing can help you refine the effectiveness of your message, appeals, subject lines, tone, and design over time on email, websites, and social media. However, it does require carefully tracking results and integrating lessons learned and new best practices into future communications for maximum impact.

## YOUR TURN

**Review each of your goals. Brainstorm different indicators that will help you know if you've achieved them.**

**Goal 1:**

**A.**

B.

C.

**Now assign each a concrete method (such as Google analytics, Facebook Insights, etc.) you will use to measure and track each of these indicators.**

Continuing our example, it might look something like this:

GOAL 1: Raise awareness of what a PVT is by having 10,000 people visit our website and having an average reach of 100,000 people across our social media channels in the three weeks before the election.

- 10,000 unique visitors to our website who stayed longer than 5 seconds. (Google Analytics)
- 100,000 reach per week on social media channels with at least a 5 percent engagement rate. Our target demographic of young men ages 16-26 should comprise 50 percent of our reach audience. (Facebook & YouTube analytics)
- Emails to journalists have a 30 percent open rate and 10 percent click-through rate. (MailChimp analytics)
- Quarterly calls with journalists are attended by at least 12 journalists per call. (Internal tracking)
- Political contestants are opening our emails at a 20 percent open rate and replying to our emails at least once a week. (MailChimp analytics and internal tracking)

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## Put a system in place

Once you have decided which metrics you need to track to achieve your goals, you will need to put a system in place to collect that data regularly. Your tracking system should collect the data you need but should not be so arduous that it requires inordinate time or effort. It should also be tracked or presented in such a way that you can easily see your progress toward your goals, or quickly identify problems or strategies that aren't working.

Questions to keep in mind when you are setting up your



metrics collection process:

- Who will be collecting and compiling the data, including data that needs be manually collected (like number of meetings held)?
- Will the metrics be tracked by one person or by many contributors? How much time do they have to do this task, taking into account their other work?
- How long does the collection process take and is it overly arduous?
- Can the process or part of the process be automated?
- How often does the data need to be collected?
- Are all the necessary data points being collected?
- Is the data displayed in a way that is easy to read and draw conclusions from?
- Who needs access to the data? Do they have it?

Once you have a system in place, schedule regular meetings with any team members or leadership that helped create the goals and/or are carrying out the strategies under the plan. Discuss how each strategy is performing according to its metric. Are you on track to meet your goals? Are some strategies working better than others? Are some strategies not working at all? Be honest with yourself and your team about your progress and what is or is not working.

Use these regular check-ins to refine and update your strategies and tactics based on real data. This should be an iterative and ongoing process.

Goal	Topline Message	Target Audience	Target Message	Communication Tool	Metrics
Raise awareness of what a PVT is by having 10,000 people visit our website and having an average reach of 100,000 people across our social media channels in the three weeks before the election.	A PVT independently verifies whether election results are accurate and dissuades fraud, because every vote should be counted and every voice should be heard in politics.	Journalists who write about elections	A PVT is a statistically rigorous and internationally accepted standard of gauging the accuracy or fraudulence of an election. The results of the PVT will help tell the story of the upcoming election by providing another data set against which to check election results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email press releases &amp; press conferences</li> <li>Materials on website</li> <li>One-on-one phone interviews &amp; quarterly conference calls</li> <li>Twitter</li> <li>WhatsApp group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 percent open rate and 10 percent click-through rate for emails, 50 journalists attend conference and 20 write about it</li> <li>Page is visited 50 times per quarter</li> <li>Attendance of 12 journalists per call.</li> <li>At least one journalist DMs with us on Twitter regularly</li> <li>Journalist WhatsApp group membership is 100 or more</li> </ul>
		Members of the party in power	A PVT verifies fair and accurate election results. Win or lose, great leaders respect the will of the people, when every vote is counted and every voice is heard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-on-one outreach to party leadership</li> <li>Ads &amp; op-eds in the The Daily Journal, The Weekly Magazine, and The Radio Newshour</li> <li>Facebook ads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 meetings per quarter</li> <li>Once a week placements</li> <li>Click through rate to call to action is 40 percent</li> </ul>



Goal	Topline Message	Target Audience	Target Message	Communication Tool	Metrics
<p>Raise awareness of what a PVT is by having 10,000 people visit our website and having an average reach of 100,000 people across our social media channels in the three weeks before the election.</p>	<p>A PVT independently verifies whether election results are accurate and dissuades fraud, because every vote should be counted and every voice should be heard in politics.</p>	<p>Members of the opposition party</p>	<p>A PVT verifies that true results are known and dissuades fraud, because every vote should be counted and every voice should be heard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one outreach to the party leadership</li> <li>• Ads in the Opposition Weekly</li> <li>• Blast emails</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 meetings per quarter</li> <li>• Weekly placements</li> <li>• List is 250 people with an open rate of 25 percent</li> </ul>
		<p>Young men ages 16-26</p>	<p>A PVT is a way of verifying that your voice is heard in these elections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook posts and videos</li> <li>• Paid Facebook promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25,000 reach from this demographic per week; 10 percent engagement rate and average video watch is 15 seconds</li> <li>• 25,000 reach from these ads and 5 percent conversion to page likes</li> </ul>



# WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

## Crisis Communications\*

By now you've created a strategic and thorough communications plan. You have a clear sense of what needs to happen when, how, and to whom. Now is also a good time to ensure that you've assessed your risks and adopted technical and operational best practices

to mitigate them. In addition to consulting a trusted security trainer, you can also reference resources like the Cybersecurity Campaign Playbook,<sup>1</sup> the Digital First Aid Kit,<sup>2</sup> the Surveillance Self Defense Guide,<sup>3</sup> and others<sup>4</sup> for basic guidance on how to limit your information

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ndi.org/publications/cybersecurity-campaign-playbook-global-edition>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.digitaldefenders.org/digitalfirstaid/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ssd.eff.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/digital-security-resources>

\*Thanks to Melissa Ryan of Ctrl Alt-Right Delete for her expertise in this section.

## Rapid Response in a Crisis

In Belarus, Right To Choose (R2C) was the target of a PR campaign designed to smear the coalition and cast doubt on its motives. A secret audio recording of the coalition's leadership was published to a blog, and edited to make it sound like the coalition was trying to harm the election. Luckily, the audio was first published early in the day and was not picked up by other media outlets until the evening, so R2C had a day to prepare its response and wait to see if the story broke through and gained traction. With the day to prepare, the group quickly came together and was able to have a statement ready that emphasized the false nature of the recording and the international observation protocols to which the group adheres.

The recording would have been a lot harder to combat if it had gone immediately to major news outlets, and underscored to the group the importance of having a plan and sample drafts prepared in order to respond quickly and forcefully should something similar happen in the future.

and communication related risks. These resources won't cover all of your organization's needs perfectly, but they're a great place to start to help build out your holistic communications plan.

But what will you do when events deviate from the plan?

Inevitably, you will encounter roadblocks, mistakes, and crises. This is true of any communications plan, but especially true when doing work that might be perceived as threatening to existing power structures. Moving to more credible and democratic systems of government doesn't happen without entrenched interests putting up a fight, and it can get ugly.

## Make a Plan

You won't be able to plan for every possible crisis, but you can and should plan for the most likely ones.

Remember when we said your foes would be working just as hard -- and in most cases have significantly more resources -- to enact their own goals? This is the time to think through how they might do that. Will they put out disinformation about your organization and its goals or sources of funding? Will they come after you or your colleagues with personal attacks or smears? Will they try to flood the airwaves and social media channels with disinformation about the elections so your message can't break through? Do your employees or supporters face the risk of arrest? Will your internet access or mobile service be restricted or suspended? Will they refuse to grant your organization and/or observers accreditation to observe? Will they threaten or take action to shut down your organization?

Think back to previous crises or attacks on your organization or organizations similar to yours. Where did the threat(s) come from? How was it carried out? How did the organization in crisis respond, and what worked or didn't work about that response?

Since you don't know exactly what is coming your way, it's normal for your crisis plan to be a bit vague. But try to make general outlines for how you'll handle each type of crisis or attack. If you think it is a possibility that the government will release disinformation about your funding or leadership, for example, think through what messages will work best as a counternarrative, what prominent people you can have lined up and ready to vouch for you, what materials you'll need to distribute, whether you'll need to activate your supporters to show up, etc. You can also take preemptive measures in some cases, like having a clear explanation on your website about where your funding comes from and how it is spent, if you think that is a likely line of attack. That way, you can point to the public information and you don't look like you were hiding something or acting suspicious by putting out the information hastily in response to attacks.

# Planning Ahead for Likely Threats

In Serbia, CRTA develops a crisis plan for a variety of different scenarios on election day, including violence, failure of communications channels, etc.

This planning proved useful when one of their observers was physically attacked on election day. Because the group had a clear process for centralizing decision making and controlling information, they were able to release a measured message about the attack without causing panic among other observers or the public. The group made clear that it would not allow other observers to be attacked, and that they had the backing of the public on their side -- a message that resonated with the public and was successful at stopping more violence against observers.

“Plan for risks and how to mitigate them,” says Rasa Nedeljkov, CRTA’s program director. “Be as imaginative as possible, write them down, and plan a simulation.”

## Prepare what you can

A crisis, by definition, is fast-moving and high-stress.

It’s worth spending time at the beginning of a campaign preparing your crisis materials and preparing your staff and validators while you have the time and space to be more relaxed and thoughtful.

- **CREATE YOUR MATERIALS.** Prepare sample blog posts, fact sheets, frequently asked questions (FAQs) for reporters, press releases, emails, text messages, and/or social media content. There will inevitably be some placeholder content and edits that need to be made in the moment, but if you have pre-prepared outlines and templates done, you will feel more in control and able to respond more quickly in the moment.
- **APPOINT AND PREPARE YOUR SPOKESPEOPLE.** Have a clear plan and internal understanding of who can speak on behalf of the organization in a crisis situation. Do all staff have the authority to speak directly to reporters or post on social media? Or do they need to refer all inquiries to an organizational spokesperson? If the spokesperson is unavailable (out of the country, in jail, etc.), who is next in line to serve as spokesperson? Once this plan is clearly laid out to your staff, spend some time training and preparing those who have been designated as spokespeople. Practice your messaging and responses with them so the responses sound natural. Try asking them hard questions and “gotcha” questions so they get comfortable responding in hostile situations.
- **LINE UP YOUR VALIDATORS.** If you believe there is a realistic chance that you, your leadership, or your organization will be attacked for being un-credible, corrupt, foreign agents, or otherwise untrustworthy, your own denials or responses may not be enough. In that case, you’ll need to line up and prepare any third-party validators and influencers that you believe would be willing to speak up on your behalf and vouch for your good values and intentions. Approach these people early on and see if they would be willing to join a “rapid response” list, then give them materials and briefings on what to do and what to say if called upon.
- **SECURE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS.** If you think your mobile or internet access will be restricted or blocked at a crucial time, or if you think your emails or digital communications are in danger of being hacked, take the necessary digital safety precautions. Train your staff on best practices for keeping safe online. Have a plan for getting your message and content out when the internet or mobile networks are disabled.
- **PREPARE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT.** It might be hard for your message to break through if social media or state media is being flooded by mis- or disinformation.

In that case, you might want to rely on organized diaspora communities or international influencers to get your message through on social media or through other trusted, unofficial channels. Inform these international supporters ahead of time about the kinds of attacks you expect, why they should be skeptical of them, and how they can help you fight back against mis- or disinformation and attacks. You want them to feel empowered to stand up for the truth or come to your defense if needed.

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## Tracking and anticipating attacks

In some cases, your opposition or attackers may be using easily accessed tools and platforms to plan their attacks or opposition to your organization and/or the issues you care about. You should be actively monitoring these online spaces to anticipate their messaging and tactics. This will help you to get ahead of your detractors and prepare for any opposition or attacks to the greatest extent possible.

Set up a dummy account in the relevant chat rooms or platforms. Depending on your country context, some places where your opposition might be organizing are Reddit, Twitter, Facebook, 4chan, 8chan, Gab, YouTube, or WhatsApp. Listen to and monitor what people are saying. If you start to see some messages or tactics gain momentum, prepare your response. It can also be an effective tactic if you warn relevant audiences that this argument or attack may be coming, and why they shouldn't believe it. It's harder to disprove an argument once it is in the public domain, but if you can tell people to disregard disinformation ahead of time, they may be more skeptical of it or more likely to reject it when they encounter it.

Advance warning can be an especially effective tactic with the media. If the state is doing the attacking, and the media is state-run, it can also be an effective tactic with international media. Preparing your response to likely disinformation ahead of time, and educating the media about where it might come from, what form it might take, and why they should distrust it, can lead

to the media not reporting on harmful disinformation. At the very least, they may check with you about the truthfulness of a potential story first.

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## Call out the liars, not the lies

There is some debate over whether repeating a particular lie or piece of disinformation in order to debunk it further reinforces the lie itself. In general, you should try to avoid repeating your opponents' messages.

This doesn't mean you should ignore attacks or lies, however. You should be intentional and conscientious of how you're responding. If you need to debunk something, begin by stating the truth and your own messaging, while nevertheless making clear what you are responding to.

Another effective tactic is to ignore the lie, but focus on the liars who are perpetuating it. If you discredit the source of the information, it can be more effective than trying to debunk the lie itself. It can also weaken the source of the threat, which may alleviate the need to respond to repeated new lies. If the source remains trusted and in good standing, you'll have a new crisis every time they attack you. If you can work to make them a less trusted messenger, their future attacks will have less power.

You can also try to have their content or accounts removed or deactivated if they are on social media platforms. Get the contact information for a representative of Twitter, Facebook, and/or other social platforms operating in your country, particularly if they have an office there. Establish a relationship with them at the outset of your campaign, and get clear guidance from them on what to do if you see false or abusive information about yourself or your cause online. Review the terms of service of the major platforms so you know on what grounds you can recommend that content or a user be removed from a platform. Get a commitment from your contact at the company that they will help you take down or flag harmful or slanderous information. (You can also use these relationships to get tips on how to better optimize your own social content.) This relationship may be easier to secure if you are able to





*The losers of the election are always going to accuse you of being an agent,”*

*says Iryna Shvets, program manager for OPORA. “[You]... always have to stick to the standards -- the standards for independent observations, and the values of your organization.” She advises making those standards and values open and available to the public, so anyone can easily find and understand your methodology and purpose. This can help preempt or mitigate those accusations.*

buy ads on the platform (tech companies are for-profit, at the end of the day), but you should reach out and establish contacts even if you don’t have the resources to buy ads.

**Use your best judgment about when to engage or when to ignore.** If there are just a handful of trolls without many followers saying the same thing over and over in their own little echo chamber, you probably can ignore it. You don’t need to bring additional attention from outside of their circles to the attacks or lies. If, however, you see the messages breaking out of the echo chamber of the original trolls and gaining traction in larger circles or being picked up by mainstream news outlets, you need to act immediately.

## Spot the bot

Fake, automated social media accounts, aka bots, are becoming an increasingly popular tool for attacking organizations, spreading disinformation, and generally being annoying and wasting your time.

Signs that an account is actually a bot:

- **THE BIO OR PROFILE PICTURE ARE SUSPECT.** Look at the bio of the account -- does it sound like a real person? Is there any personal information in it? Is the profile picture of a real person or a blank silhouette? If it’s a silhouette, that strongly increases the chances it’s a bot. If it’s a real person, do a reverse image search of the picture. If the picture appears frequently across the internet, it is probably a fake account.
- **THE ACCOUNT’S POSTING BEHAVIOR IS SUSPECT.** Is the account posting more frequently than even an energetic person would likely be able to (for example, more than 50 times per day<sup>5</sup>)? Is it retweeting what look to be other fake accounts with frequency? Is it posting political propaganda or fake news? Is it posting commercial or advertising messages frequently? Retweeting messages in a number of different languages? These are all signs the account may be fake.
- **THE ACCOUNT’S FOLLOWERS ARE SUSPECT.** Does the account have a high percentage of followers with silhouette avatars or that show other signs that they may be fake? Did the account receive a large number of followers in a very short period of time? Is the account following a huge amount of accounts but has almost no followers itself? These are signs that the account is likely to be a bot.
- Check <https://botcheck.me/> or <https://botometer.iuni.iu.edu>. If you don’t have the time or the inclination to analyze each account to determine if it’s a bot, run the profile through one of these bot detection tools to see if it’s likely to be a bot.

<sup>5</sup> A widely applied benchmark, from the Oxford Internet Institute’s Computational Propaganda initiative, is an average of more than 50 posts or tweets a day.



NDI Kosovo Photo

If the account is fake, report or flag it on the platform for violating the terms of service. Feel free to block or mute the fake account, and don't waste any time arguing with the bot.

## Responding to crises of your own making

It happens to the best of us -- sometimes the crisis is something we create ourselves. Maybe the leadership got caught doing something wrong, maybe a tweet was offensive or insensitive, maybe the newsletter went out with inaccurate information. These things will happen. It's how you handle them that will be remembered.

- **DON'T OBSESS OVER THE MISTAKE.** Yes, it would be nice if there was a time machine you could take and not hit "send" on that email, but wishing will not make it so. Accept the mistake, and focus on the response and making things right.
- **LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE WHO TOLD YOU ABOUT THE MISTAKE.** You may have said or published something not realizing it hurt people's feelings or offended a person or group of people. Instead of shrugging off their complaints, listen to what they are saying. That doesn't mean you have to accept their critique, but you should take it seriously and if you have inadvertently
- made a mistake, promptly admit it, and correct it.
- **APOLOGIZE SINCERELY.** If you or your organization did something wrong, admit it and apologize in a timely manner. Don't apologize "if people were offended." If you published something offensive, acknowledge that and explain what you've learned and what you're doing to ensure it never happens again. People are much more likely to remain favorable toward your work and organization if they believe you are authentic and are genuinely committed to learning from your mistakes.
- **TAKE ANY NECESSARY STEPS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM.** Depending on the nature of the crisis, this might mean implementing a better proofreading system, hiring a staff member from an underrepresented group, or even firing the president of the organization. Take meaningful and appropriate action to ensure the crisis doesn't happen again.
- **ASSUME ANYTHING YOU WRITE OR SAY WILL BE PUBLISHED.** Private emails get hacked, private conversations get recorded and leaked. Don't write or say anything you wouldn't feel comfortable being published or broadcast. Choose your words carefully and don't casually insult your co-workers, coalition partners, or opponents. Don't use offensive language, racist or misogynistic slurs, or anything else that could tarnish your reputation if it got out.



For additional crisis communication planning guidelines -- particularly in response to cyber incidents -- take a look at the Harvard Belfer Center's Election Cyber Incident Communications Plan Template.<sup>6</sup> Although developed for a political party audience, the template is a great resource for any group looking to develop a structured crisis communications plan in response to cyber incidents, including the spread of disinformation or hacked websites or social media accounts.

## YOUR TURN

**Make a list of the most likely threats or crises you are likely to face. These don't have to be very specific, but general types of threats or lines of attack.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**For each type of crisis you might face, make a list**

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/InternationalCommsTemplate.pdf>

**of messages and materials you would need in a rapid-response situation and assign a person to prepare them by a deadline.**

**Make a list of staff spokespeople and third-party validators you will need to help you in times of crisis.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Schedule time with your spokespeople and potential validators where you can practice crisis scenarios. Drill them with hard questions until they are confident staying on message and responding naturally.**



# WHO IS GOING TO DO ALL THIS WORK?

## Staffing and Resources

Every group is organized differently and has differing amounts of resources to devote to its communications. Part of the reason to work through the exercises and steps in this guide is to have a clear understanding of what work needs to be done, what roles need to be filled and by how many people, as well as what work should be prioritized and urgent, and what work can wait for a later time.

Once you have a clear understanding of what needs to be done, you'll be better equipped to structure your team in a way that reasonably divides up the workload and you'll know if you need to bring on additional full-time employees, contract employees, or volunteers.

Depending on how many people you have on staff and what work you need to accomplish, there are a number of ways to structure a communications team. You may

have a one-person communications team whose job is to do everything, or you may have a large team that is highly segmented and specialized. Your team may grow and shrink depending on where you are in relation to the next election. There is no single correct approach or structure -- just be sure that you are staffed in whatever way allows you to carry out your communications plan as efficiently and effectively as you can.

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### MOCHA<sup>12</sup>

Regardless of how many people are on the communications team or on your organization's staff, the MOCHA model for assigning responsibility for each project or strategy can help clarify who is charge of what and ensure that each project moves forward. The

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<sup>1</sup> The MOCHA model is adapted from The Management Center <http://www.managementcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/MOCHA-for-managers.pdf>



*PACE photo*

MOCHA model assigns the following roles to each goal, project, or strategy:

- **MANAGER:** The Manager assigns responsibility and holds the Owner accountable. The Manager asks hard questions, reviews progress toward goals, serves as a resource, and intervenes if the work is off-track or needs to be approached differently.
- **OWNER:** The Owner has overall responsibility for the success or failure of a project. The Owner ensures that all work gets done (either themselves or by delegating work to Helpers). The Owner decides who else to involve in the project and at what times and reports to the Manager. There can only be one Owner of any project or goal.
- **CONSULTANT:** Consultants are like advisors -- they offer input or sign off on parts of a project that require their specific expertise.
- **HELPER:** Helpers assist with or do some of the work.
- **APPROVER:** The Approver signs off on all decisions

before they are final. The Approver might be the same as the Manager, but it could also be an executive director, external partner, funder, or board chair.

The MOCHA model gives your team a clear but flexible structure for every project. If you assign MOCHA roles to each goal or discreet project from the outset, the Owner will know who to rely on for help and advice as well as who must manage and approve the work, and everyone will understand who is ultimately responsible for driving each project forward to completion.

This model also allows for flexibility within and across teams. When there is a small communications team (or just one person handling communications), that person(s) might feel overwhelmed and unsure who they can ask for help. By clearly identifying who else in the organization is assigned to be Helpers, Consultants, Managers, or Approvers, teams can expand to meet the workload as it needs to get done.

The other benefit of assigning MOCHA roles to each project is that this method allows you to evaluate more





clearly the capacity of each staff member and whether they realistically have enough time to accomplish their goals and assignments. If you MOCHA all five of your goals and one person is the Owner for all five, and there are no Helpers assigned, then that person is almost certainly going to fail. If, however, you MOCHA each goal and no one feels like they're overcommitted or have signed up for too much when looking at everyone's workload, then the work is likely to get done well and on time.

## YOUR TURN

**Go back through your communications plan and assign MOCHA roles to each goal, and any large strategies or standalone projects that have been identified within each goal.**

**Looking at the full list of MOCHA responsibilities and deadlines, ask yourself the following questions:**

- **Is it realistic to assign this amount of work to each of person?**
- **Do the assignees have additional non-communications responsibilities you need to take into account? How much of their time will be taken up by communications duties, and can they spare it?**
- **If there is too much work to do (and there often**

**is!), can you hire an additional person or people?**

- **Do you have skilled volunteers in your membership that would be willing and able to act as Helpers or Consultants?**

## Staff accountability and prioritization

However you ultimately end up organizing your team and assigning roles, it's important that each person has a clear understanding of what they are responsible for completing, knows how that fits into the overall communications plan, and is aware of whom and when to ask for help if they do not believe they'll be able to meet their goals in time.

Consider having a regularly scheduled meeting with everyone involved to report on their progress, identify any problems they may have early on, and brainstorm ways to solve or work around any challenges. You may also want to do individual check-ins or follow-ups with all or key staff members or volunteers. Try to foster a team that is creative and takes criticism well. Don't fault someone for failing, but strive to create an atmosphere where they feel free to admit to mistakes and work together to solve problems and achieve progress on your goals as a team.

There will inevitably come a time when there is too much to do and the communications team will need to choose to prioritize some work while putting aside other work. Doing this in an open and transparent manner, based on your identified goals, will help your team understand which work to prioritize and why, so that the most important things get done and you make maximum progress on your goals as an organization.



# WHAT HAVE OTHERS TRIED?

## Case Studies

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### Case Study: YouTube Stars Interview President Obama

Midway through President Barack Obama's second term, the midterm elections delivered a dire warning about the future behavior of young voters. In the 2014 elections, Obama's party lost nine Senate seats and control of the chamber, as well as losing 13 seats in the House of Representatives. Voter turnout was down among all age groups, but was especially low among millennial voters. With his eye on the 2016 elections and cementing his legacy achievements, Obama sought to engage millennial audiences in the hopes of increasing enthusiasm, turnout, and participation in his political agenda.

Only 19.9 percent of voters ages 18-29 voted in the 2014 midterms: the lowest youth turnout in 40 years and a significant drop from the 24 percent that had cast ballots in the 2010 midterms. Obama knew that if those

voters remained disengaged and didn't turn out in 2016 and beyond, many of his signature policy achievements would be in danger of being overturned or weakened -- such as policies health coverage and immigration.

Rather than go to the same media outlets that he had relied on up to this point, Obama's communications team decided to speak to this younger audience through trusted messengers and on platforms and channels that already attracted young people. They concluded that trying to attract young people to the platforms and channels that Obama was more familiar or comfortable with had proven ineffective. His communications team took a broad look at the media and social media landscape and realized that many young people were on YouTube, where YouTube stars unknown to the general public had millions of young subscribers to their



*Official White House Photo, Pete Souza*

channels.

The Obama team reached out to Hank Green, Bethany Mota, and GloZell Green asking them each to interview the president the day after the State of the Union. That is historically a time when the president touts his policy vision and agenda in traditional media outlets. Instead, Obama spent 15 minutes each with Hank Green, one of the “Vlog Brothers” with a following of more than 3 million; Bethany Mota, a young woman with more than 10 million followers who creates videos about style, travel, beauty, and cooking; and GloZell Green, the most-followed African American woman on YouTube, whose signature green lipstick and funny videos are watched by her more than 4 million subscribers.

While none of the YouTube stars had much (or any) experience with political topics, each shared the common traits of having large audiences that the president wanted to speak to, a different and signature style, and an authenticity that their subscribers trusted and believed in.

To ensure that the interviews and encounters were authentic and “on brand” for the stars’ regular

subscribers, the Obama team let the YouTubers be themselves and drive the conversation. The interviews took place at the White House, but each YouTube star brought a backdrop that reflected their personality and brand, making each interview feel different and intimate. Their questions were not vetted by the Obama team and included some that challenged the president and his policies, including questions about his use of drone technology, racist policing, and sanctions on North Korea. There were also some humorous moments, like when GloZell gave President Obama a gift for his “first wife” (instead of calling her the First Lady). The YouTubers also asked non-political questions that allowed for moments of authentic connection, like when Bethany Mota asked the president what super power he’d choose. (Obama said he’d like to be able to fly or speak every language.)

Obama discussed his legacy with GloZell and the challenges the U.S. will face in the future. Bethany Mota, 19 years old at the time of the interview, asked about why young people like herself should pay attention to politics, and Obama was able to explain the ways politics and government affect young people’s lives directly. “There’s no decision in our lives that isn’t touched in some ways by our laws, and we’re lucky we live in a democracy where our voice matters,” he told her and, by extension, her 10 million subscribers, many of whom had sat out the last election.

The interviews were watched more than 5 million times by a predominantly millennial audience.

Watch the interviews: <https://youtu.be/GbR6iQ62v9k>

You can also see great examples of Barack Obama using non-traditional platforms and outlets to reach young audiences on Marc Maron’s podcast,<sup>1</sup> Funny or Die,<sup>2</sup> BuzzFeed,<sup>3</sup> and Vine.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wtfpod.com/podcast/episodes/episode\\_613\\_-\\_President\\_Barack\\_Obama](http://www.wtfpod.com/podcast/episodes/episode_613_-_President_Barack_Obama)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnW3xkHxIEQ>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/BuzzFeedVideo/videos/1631492713658271/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQCFdOOUDtM>

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# Case Study: Telling Stories in Support of LGBTI Rights

In Nicaragua, where stigma and discrimination of LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex) people is pervasive, activists from the LGBTI community were trying to grow their political power in order to pass a nondiscrimination ordinance to protect themselves and their communities. The activists knew they didn't wield enough political power by themselves and would have to recruit a critical mass of allies and supporters from outside their community to support the ordinance if it were to have a chance of passing.

NDI brought together a diverse and representative group of LGBTI activists to better learn about the audience and design an effective campaign to communicate with the target audiences to persuade them to join the cause and support the anti-discrimination ordinance.

To better understand their target audiences, the activists first worked with NDI to design a nationwide study on attitudes toward LGBTI people. They wanted to identify how those audiences thought about the LGBTI community, how those attitudes came about, and what influenced them. The activists also wanted a sense of what messages might work for straight audiences, instead of trying to guess or impose messages that

resonate within the LGBTI community but might not connect with those outside the community.

The research uncovered some interesting opportunities. A large percentage of those polled recognized LGBTI rights in the abstract, but a much smaller percentage of those people reported a willingness to act in support of those rights. Of those who did report a willingness to act in support of those rights, a very high percentage also reported having an LGBTI family member or loved one. When asked where the stigma or discrimination against LGBTI people came from, most respondents recognized it came from the Catholic Church: the predominant faith in Nicaragua. Most of those who reported that they had LGBTI family or loved ones also reported that they were regular church-goers.

Based on these findings, the activists decided to amplify the stories and examples of straight people who had become allies to LGBTI rights because of their personal connections to LGBTI people. They hoped to humanize the issue for people who might not have a close family member or loved one who was LGBTI, and create recognition and empathy with those who did.

They also decided to use explicitly faith-based, biblical language and messaging, to provide new allies a path to reconcile their faith with support for LGBTI rights. This was not necessarily the frame or message the activists would have used to describe themselves or within their communities, but it was important to use a frame and message that their target audience was comfortable with and steeped in.

The resulting communications campaign was called "In The Lord's Vineyard." The website,



NDI photo

www.enlaviñadelseñor.com, includes a library with “postcards” and video stories created to resonate with the target audience of straight people open to becoming allies for LGBTI rights.

The original postcards and videos were created by the campaign. The activists discussed and selected whom they wanted to share their stories, so that the stories would be representative of the target audiences and messages they wanted to get across. Then the selected individuals were interviewed with specific questions to shape and elicit the “journey narratives” at the heart of the campaign.

With the campaign’s curated content at the heart of the site, followers and fans of the campaign could submit their own stories and photos, and a few of them were added to the website using existing templates. This dual approach of proactively seeking out specific narratives while also allowing users to submit their own content allowed the campaign to control the message while remaining participatory and collaborative with the audience.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/enlavinadelsenornica/>

The campaign was also active on Facebook: the most popular and widely used social media platform in Nicaragua. The Facebook page<sup>1</sup> was used to disseminate the multimedia stories to a wider audience, direct people back to the website, and interact with the audience by answering questions, receiving feedback, and connecting those who wanted to become active allies with campaign opportunities.

Several months after launching “In The Lord’s Vineyard,” the group presented a nondiscrimination ordinance to the Managua City Council and Mayor’s office. That was accompanied by a campaign to enlist allied businesses to establish themselves as “discrimination-free zones.” To date, more than 40 businesses have signed on.

While the ordinance has not yet passed, the group continues to build support for it by targeting key audiences like businesses and straight allies with its messaging, in order to get them more involved in the issue and to demonstrate wide support across different, powerful demographics.



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# Case Study: Live Streaming Election Day

In Belarus, where political competition is severely restricted and political organizing can be challenged or stopped by the government, a coalition of opposition political parties came together to both observe and contest the elections. Right To Choose (R2C) engages in pollwatching for each election -- elections that are compromised in a variety of ways by the government.

R2C seeks not only to inform the public of problems with the election, but also gives evidence of unfair election practices to the candidates that are harmed. They want to both document electoral problems and spur change in how elections are carried out, increasing the competitiveness of elections to level the playing field and ensure that more people have a fair chance of winning office.

In previous years, R2C had grown more sophisticated and skilled at its observation efforts, but communication about those efforts and findings was stunted. The group would primarily put out a press release and hold a press conference. Too often, those press conferences were long and unfocused. In addition, the media environment in Belarus is incredibly restricted -- there is simply no way that state-run print and broadcast outlets were going to report on R2C's findings. These tactics weren't able to break through and couldn't reach the mass audience required to gain momentum for change.

Every year after their observation efforts, R2C coalition members come together to assess what went right and what they can do better. Out of these discussions, they came to the conclusion that their press release and press conference model was not achieving their goals. They evaluated how people were used to receiving news and how they could reach the large-scale audiences they needed. Livestreaming had proved to be a popular and effective way to broadcast protests, and -- crucially -- audiences had become used to consuming news and accepting the authenticity of these livestreams.

Building on this insight, the R2C team decided to center their communications strategy for the next elections

on livestreaming. The team set up an Election Media Center and scheduled programming throughout the day with news, analysis, candidate interviews, and streams from poll watchers in the field. They planned all their content out for the day and scripted what they could to limit dead airtime and ensure that important messages were emphasized. They partnered with TV and radio outlets that were open to their message, providing not only wider reach but also a further level of professionalization and expertise. R2C invested in a multicast tool and software, which allowed them to livestream simultaneously to all the major social media platforms and professionalize transitions and the overall appearance of the livestream. They also hired someone with enough technical proficiency and experience to run the livestream throughout the day.

On election day, within the first 35 minutes of the media center being active, internet access was shut down by the government. The team had anticipated such a crisis and moved quickly to a second location. They were able to livestream from that second location for the rest of the day although internet access was at times sporadic.

In the lead-up to election day, R2C trained and equipped candidates and poll watchers to livestream their findings. In anticipation of equipment being confiscated or access being restricted, poll watchers were briefed not to start livestreaming until something newsworthy happened. That way the team was able to focus on livestreaming election irregularities and weren't wasting their brief window of opportunity on less important content.

The livestream was watched by more than 300,000 people on election day and shared by social media influencers and media. It proved to be a much more successful approach than relying on the traditional media itself to be the gatekeeper and disseminator of their findings.

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# Case Study: Creative, Ongoing Tactics for Increased Engagement

One major challenge facing CRTA, the civic election observation group in Serbia, was the declining rates of voter participation among Serbians. Participation in voting had been declining since 2008, and by 2016 CRTA felt it was important to re-engage the public and educate them on how important it was to participate in elections and how to protect their own rights while doing so.

CRTA employed a number of strategies and a variety of channels and products to accomplish this goal in order to reach their key audiences with messages that would resonate.

The group strove to make its messaging simple and relatable, employing common metaphors that people could relate to and that would make the electoral process and principles more interesting to regular people. They worked to frame statistics on why elections are important within a human context, showing how each statistic related to real people, and making infographics and short Q&As to emphasize these points.

To raise awareness of people's rights and responsibilities in the voting booth, CRTA created a series of videos with actors simulating common scenarios encountered at polling stations to show people what behaviors were violations of their rights. They re-enacted common ways

that bad actors might try to control voting behavior and how voters could protect themselves and their rights.

They also used social media to bring transparency to previously secretive processes. They live tweeted from inside local electoral commission sessions, (meetings that had previously been closed to the public), with a live report of what was being said and done. CRTA observers' live tweets from within the sessions were the public's first glimpse into the recklessness and lack of professionalism of the commissions. The live tweeting built the group's following and credibility, along with bringing increased transparency to the process. CRTA also deployed observers to the locations where ballots were printed to tweet and livestream that process, shedding light on that process and getting people engaged in the elections before election day.

"You have to have content about the elections continuously," said Jovana Djurbabic, the communications manager of CRTA. "Not just when the campaign starts, but a continuous effort on how to find ways to interest people." By deploying different strategies and types of communications all year-round, CRTA has increased interest and engagement in the electoral process in Serbia.



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# Case Study: Poking Fun at the Aging Central Election Commission

With experience monitoring elections and engaging with the Ukrainian public since 2005, OPORA has had to adapt to a changing political and social environment over time. Although the group got its start observing elections in a challenging environment, more recently it has taken on a broader set of issues. While the group still monitors and reports on elections -- and has become a trusted national source for doing so -- in recent years it has turned its attention to campaigns to strengthen other aspects of an emerging democracy.

One topic of attention has been the need for the president to appoint a new Central Election Commission (CEC). The Central Election Commission -- the body responsible for overseeing the proper functioning of national elections -- is composed of 15 members. In June of 2014, 12 members' terms expired. In February of 2017, a 13th member's term expired. The president continued to delay the appointment of new members, and, in the meantime, the old members continued to sit on the commission long past their legal term limit.

"Even though it was a serious topic, it became hard to take seriously because it was getting so ridiculous," said Iryna Shvets, program manager of OPORA. Every month, the president put off new appointments to the commission until the next month. "In the nearest future' is the phrase they kept using," Shvets recalled.

To highlight the absurdity of the situation and simultaneously drive demand for action, OPORA took a humorous approach to the problem. They launched a campaign on social media comparing the Central Election Commission to wine. "The Central Election Commission is not like wine, it isn't aging well" was their topline message. From that premise, they created a series of funny images, graphics, and other Facebook and Twitter content, like polls. They asked their followers what was likely to happen first -- a new metro line being built or the CEC being re-appointed, for example, highlighting the length of time it was taking to

complete something that should be comparatively easy.

Shvets credits the success of this campaign to the strong and trusted brand of OPORA. "When we're communicating with MPs [members of parliament] or international organizations we might do a serious report," she said. "But with the public, we can have more fun. We are a well-known organization from our election campaigns, which means we can make jokes and be creative, we don't just have to stick to one format." For example, when OPORA presented an analysis of electoral campaigns in conflict zones, and couldn't risk being misunderstood about the nature of the matter, they decided against employing humor

Using humor in the case of the Central Election Commission not only raised awareness of the issue with a larger audience but made an otherwise complicated or boring issue feel relevant and urgent to the public. They may not have known specific details about the commission, its composition, or even its role in overseeing elections -- but they could understand and identify with a government promising something and putting it off indefinitely. The humor also quickly conveyed the concept that this should be a speedy process -- wine might age well, but this commission most certainly did not.

Ultimately the campaign contributed to a new CEC being appointed. In January of 2018, the president formally dismissed the 13 members whose terms had expired and officially appointed their replacements, well ahead of the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections.



## Case Study: “Communications Is Everyone’s Business”

*YIAGA Africa photo*

The communications team of Nigerian election observation group YIAGA AFRICA consists of five staff members: one to write and produce video and radio content, a photography editor, a web manager to update and manage the website, one person to manage the blast email and text program, and a graphic designer who works on social media and infographic content. Together, the team works to normalize and integrate more participatory practices into Nigeria’s political system -- like the importance of young people running for office and the importance of registering to vote.

However, the communications team is aware of the limitations of even a five-person team. To increase the internal capacity of their organization, the communications team has trained and empowered all staff at YIAGA AFRICA to be effective communicators and offer additional support to the team when time allows.

“Communications is everyone’s business,” says Moshood Isah, the communications officer of YIAGA AFRICA. “There is a communications team, but generally, everyone at the organization is responsible.”

To distribute communications knowledge and skills

to all members of the staff, the communications team organizes regular trainings for the full staff. The team has conducted trainings on writing for the web, how to use hashtags and why, how to write news stories for the media, how to speak to media and stay on message, and on other aspects of communications vital to the organization’s success.

For example, ahead of a PVT, the communications team knew that they would not share their results until after the electoral commission released the official results. To ensure that this strategy was effectively carried out, the communications team trained all staff on why and how to keep the results private, and when and how to publicize them at the appropriate time.

By training the larger staff on basic good communications practices and strategy, the team has been able to broaden its reach and influence. Non-communications staff feel comfortable contributing to the website, creating social media content, and talking to the media. The increase in capacity also frees up the communications team to do some of the higher level tasks and strategizing to allow them to plan for the future and make the organization more prevalent and effective.





# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Narrative & storytelling

Case Studies, Tips & Examples, The Opportunity Agenda  
<https://toolkit.opportunityagenda.org/narrative/more>

It Gets Better Project  
<https://itgetsbetter.org/stories/>

En La Viña del Señor  
<http://xn--enlaviadelseor-vnbg.com/>

Framing for Activists, George Lakoff  
<https://georgelakoff.com/framingforactivists/>

“How the American Cancer Society Learned to Touch Hearts to Boost Donations,” Carmine Gallo, Forbes  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carminegallo/2018/11/19/how-the-american-cancer-society-learned-to-touch-hearts-to-boost-donations/#265045296203>

## Audience & Messaging

How To Run Focus Groups, Citizens Advice  
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Equalities/How%20to%20run%20focus%20groups%20guide.pdf>

A Guide for Planning, Organizing, and Managing Focus Groups, the Puget Sound Consortium for Manufacturing Excellence  
<https://www.shoreline.edu/pscme/reports/Y4/FocusGroupGuide.pdf>

Top Ten Tips for Great Focus Groups, The Experience Business  
[http://www.theexperiencebusiness.co.uk/downloads/content-docs/top\\_ten\\_tips.pdf](http://www.theexperiencebusiness.co.uk/downloads/content-docs/top_ten_tips.pdf)

Tips for Facilitating Focus Groups, Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace  
[https://www.uml.edu/docs/FG%20Tips%20sheet\\_RK\\_](https://www.uml.edu/docs/FG%20Tips%20sheet_RK_)



tcm18-167588.pdf

Google Trends

<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore>

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## Platforms

“Google Thinks the Future of the Web Is...Email,” Mark Wilson, Fast Company

<https://www.fastcodesign.com/90160460/google-thinks-the-future-of-the-web-is-email>

Care2

<https://www.care2.com/>

Change.org

<https://www.change.org/>

“29 Simple Ways to Grow Your Email List,” Andy Pitre, HubSpot

<https://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/32028/25-clever-ways-to-grow-your-email-marketing-list.aspx>

Beautiful Trouble

<https://beautifultrouble.org/>

Hustle texting platform

<https://hustle.com/>

WhatsApp Uses for Campaigns

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mGs26iM1aRKnTcTviNizO17VZTLpadKctzK30KtsxYs/edit>

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## Video

OBS Studio, Open Broadcaster Software

<https://obsproject.com/>

YouTube Creator Academy

<https://creatoracademy.youtube.com/page/education>

“12 Tips For Crafting Compelling Video Content That Draws More Views”

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunications>

[council/2018/07/26/12-tips-for-crafting-compelling-video-content-that-draws-more-views/#53b647664762](https://council/2018/07/26/12-tips-for-crafting-compelling-video-content-that-draws-more-views/#53b647664762)

“What Video Editing Software Do YouTubers Use”

<https://editinginsider.com/youtube/what-video-editing-youtubers-use/>

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## Data visualization

Storytelling with Data

<http://www.storytellingwithdata.com/>

“How To Tell a Powerful Story with Data Visualization,”

Brian Bimschleger, Telepathy

<https://www.dtelepathy.com/blog/business/how-to-tell-a-powerful-story-with-data-visualization>

“How To Properly Tell a Story with Data-- and Common Pitfalls to Avoid,” Outlier AI, Towards Data Science

<https://towardsdatascience.com/how-to-properly-tell-a-story-with-data-and-common-pitfalls-to-avoid-317d8817e0c9>

Data Smart Cities Solutions Search

<https://datasmart.ash.harvard.edu/civic-analytics-network/solutions-search>

“2018 Report Engaging Your Audience with Visual Content,” The Content Strategist

<https://the-content-strategist-13.docs.contently.com/v/2018-report-engaging-your-audience-with-visual-content>

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## Creative strategies

“#PopJustice: Social Justice and the Promise of Pop

Culture Strategies” reports, Liz Mann Strategy

<http://www.lizmanne.com/popjustice/>

The Laughter Effect, Center for Media & Social Impact, American University School of Communication

<http://cmsimpact.org/program/comedy/>

Race in the Writer’s Room: How Hollywood

Whitewashes the Stories that Shape America, Darnell

Hunt

<https://hollywood.colorofchange.org/>

#IfIwasTheMayor

<https://everyvoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/IIWTM-casestudy.pdf>

The Voter Suppression Trail, Chris Baker, Brian Moore and Mike Lacher, The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/01/opinion/voting-suppression-videogame.html>

“The Back-of-the-Envelope Guide to Communications Strategy,” Ann Christiano and Annie Neimand, Stanford Social Innovation Review

[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_back\\_of\\_the\\_envelope\\_guide\\_to\\_communications\\_strategy?utm\\_source=Enews&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=SSIR\\_Now&utm\\_content=Title](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_back_of_the_envelope_guide_to_communications_strategy?utm_source=Enews&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=SSIR_Now&utm_content=Title)

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## Crisis Communications

Election Cyber Incident Communications Plan Template for Political Parties and Campaigns, International Edition, Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

<https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/International%20CommTemplate%20-%20web%202.pdf>

Botcheck.me

<https://botcheck.me/>

Botometer

<https://botometer.iuni.iu.edu/>

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## Digital Security

Digital First Aid Kit, Digital Defenders Partnership

<https://www.digitaldefenders.org/digitalfirstaid/>

Surveillance Self-Defense, Electronic Frontier Foundation

<https://ssd.eff.org/>

“Digital Security Resources,” Front Line Defenders

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/digital-security-resources>

The Cybersecurity Campaign Playbook, European Edition, Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs

[https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/european\\_campaign\\_playbook\\_-\\_web.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/european_campaign_playbook_-_web.pdf)

Citizen Election Observation

Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM)

<https://gndem.org>

Declaration of Global Principles for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations (DoGP)

<https://gndem.org/declaration-of-global-principles/>

How Domestic Organizations Monitor Elections: an A to Z Guide, National Democratic Institute (NDI)

<https://www.ndi.org/publications/ndi-handbook-how-domestic-organizations-monitor-elections-z-guide>

Systematic Methods for Advancing Election

Observation, West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON) Field Guide Series

[https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Systematic%20Methods%20for%20Advancing%20Election%20Observation\\_WAEON\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Systematic%20Methods%20for%20Advancing%20Election%20Observation_WAEON_EN.pdf)

Outreach and External Communication, West Africa Election Observers Network (WAEON) Field Guide Series

[https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Outreach%20and%20Communication\\_WAEON\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Outreach%20and%20Communication_WAEON_EN.pdf)

Open Election Data Initiative

<https://www.openelectiondata.net/en/>

“Parallel Vote Tabulations,” National Democratic Institute (NDI)

<https://www.ndi.org/pvt>

# Sample Press Release

## PACE Myanmar (page 1)



ယုံကြည်စိတ်ချရသော ရွေးကောက်ပွဲများအပေါ်ဝီရိယ  
ပြည်သူများမှူးမင်းလှုပ်ရှားမှု  
PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE FOR CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

**Press Release:** October 1, 2015

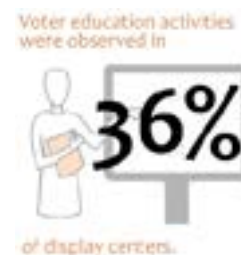
*For Immediate Release*

### **PACE observes a generally open voter list process but notes limited mobilization efforts, modest voter participation**

Starting on September 14, the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE) deployed 110 Long Term Observers to 110 townships across the country to observe the national voter list display process. From September 14-27, PACE observed 868 display centers across all states and regions in a roughly equal number of urban and rural display locations. Overall, PACE found that the process was generally open to voters who wanted to participate. However, voter education and mobilization was limited. Civil society organizations and political parties were notably absent in centers where PACE observed. Voter turnout seemed quite modest and not as high as many had hoped given concerns about the lists' quality. According to officials in locations where PACE observed, most voters were submitting forms to add names to the list, some were correcting details, and few were deleting names. Positively, PACE was allowed to observe in nearly every display center. Overall, most display centers observed had the materials they needed, were set up in a convenient way for voters and had staff providing assistance to voters. However, some locations PACE observed were not open during all official hours as mandated by the UEC.



Sai Ye Kyaw Swar Myint from PACE said, "Mobilizing voters to check their name is a good way to relieve the public concerns over the voter list, but we didn't see high participation this time. Nevertheless we definitely need a solution for those concerns for the long-term. We hope that the UEC and parties can have a dialogue to mitigate concerns before the election and discuss areas for improvement in future voter list processes."



According to PACE's methodology, observers stayed in display locations for the entire day to observe the whole process. PACE observers did not check the names or data on the voter list. PACE observers deployed each day of the display period except for September 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

# Sample Press Release

## PACE Myanmar (page 2)



ယုံကြည်စိတ်ချရသော ရွေးကောက်ပွဲများပေါ်ပေါက်စေရန်  
ပြည်သူများမှူးမောင်းလုပ်ကိုင်ရန်။  
PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE FOR CREDIBLE ELECTIONS

In most centers observed, PACE did not see serious problems that prevented voters from participating in the process, like intimidation or interference. However, PACE observers noted a lack of voter outreach in many display locations and political parties and civil society organizations were absent from 90% and 82% of centers observed respectively. Throughout the two-week process, PACE observers noted quite modest turnout in centers observed.



In 28% of locations observed, PACE did not see any voters submitting forms. However, 26% of locations were more active with dozens of voters submitting forms to add names or make changes to the list. According to information received from display officials in locations observed, most voters were submitting forms to add their name to the list, some were changing details on the list and few were deleting names from the list. In approximately 10% of locations, PACE observers noted that a few (between 1-10) voters left without making a change to the list because they could not prove their identity or residency—this problem was twice as common in urban places.

Positively, PACE observers were allowed to observe in 99% of display centers visited. In addition, 93% of observed centers had all the necessary forms and 82% were set up in a convenient way for voters. In 89% of locations observed, officials were providing assistance to voters and in most centers, observers said officials were providing equal help to all voters. However, 17% of locations observed were not open during all official hours of the display.

Overall, PACE was pleased that they were able to observe the process with few problems. Looking forward to the election, PACE hopes that voter mobilization efforts by the UEC, political parties and CSO will increase to improve voter participation.

PACE is a nonpartisan, election observation organization working in all states and regions in Myanmar to promote better elections. In the 2015 Elections, PACE will be deploying more than 2000 STOs (Short Term observers) on Election Day across the country and around 130 LTOs (Long Term Observers) for national voter list display and campaign observation. PACE will be using “Systematic observation” methodology on Election Day, which has been using in more than 50 countries.

For further information, please contact:

Sai Ye Kyaw Swar Myint, [syksmyint@pacemyanmar.org](mailto:syksmyint@pacemyanmar.org), 09253379442

# Sample Press Release

## YIAGA Africa



### Mid-day Situational Statement on the 2018 Ekiti Gubernatorial Election (Summary for Media) Saturday, July 14, 2018

**ELEVENTH HOUSE, ADO-EKITI, Nigeria** – With voting underway, YIAGA AFRICA presented its #WatchingTheVote (WTV) project mid-day situational statement on the electoral process for the Saturday, July 14, Ekiti state gubernatorial polls. As of 12:00, YIAGA AFRICA had received reports from 240 of 250 sampled polling units across the 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Their findings were as follows:

According to YIAGA AFRICA's representative sample of observers, polling units throughout the state have largely opened on time with all essential materials present. As of 7:30am, YIAGA AFRICA WTV observers reported that INEC officials had arrived at 78% of polling units. By 9:00am 91% of polling units had commenced accreditation. In addition, 99% had security agents at the polling station. 100% of polling units had card readers. All essential materials (register of voters, indelible ink-marker pen, polling official stamp, voting cubicle, ink pad, Form EC.8A Statement of Results and Form EC.40H Voter Information) were present in 99% of polling units. ADP party agents were seen at 15% of polling units, APC at 100% of polling units, and PDP at 100% of polling units.

In view of the foregoing, YIAGA AFRICA urges voters to turn out confident that polling units are open with essential materials present. YIAGA AFRICA calls upon parties to ensure their representatives are present to observe the process and counting and upon INEC to continue to adhere to the election guidelines throughout the day. Security agents deployed to polling units should continue to ensure a peaceful process and should apprehend any individuals or groups involved in vote buying.

YIAGA AFRICA is employing the parallel vote tabulation (PVT) methodology – the gold standard for citizen observation. WTV has deployed 500 stationary observers to a representative statistical sample of 250 polling units and 24 mobile observers located in all 16 LGAs of Ekiti state. YIAGA AFRICA will also deploy 16 observers to the LGA Collation Centres. This strategy enables YIAGA AFRICA to provide timely and accurate information on accreditation, voting, and counting as well as to independently verify the official results of the Ekiti gubernatorial election as announced by INEC.

YIAGA AFRICA will provide updates on the conduct of the election throughout the day, including on social media at YIAGA AFRICA's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/yiaga.org](http://www.facebook.com/yiaga.org)) and YIAGA AFRICA's Twitter page (@YIAGA). On Saturday, July 15, 2018 at 7pm at Eleventh House, Ado-Ekiti, YIAGA AFRICA will share its preliminary WTV findings on the conduct of set-up, accreditation, voting and counting. Immediately after INEC announces the official results for the gubernatorial election, YIAGA AFRICA will hold its own press conference and issue its election results verification statement.

YIAGA AFRICA is a non-profit civic hub of changemakers building democratic societies in Africa anchored on the principles of inclusion, justice, rule of law and accountability. YIAGA Africa achieves its goal through research, capacity development and policy advocacy. YIAGA Africa has been involved in election observation since 2007 and it is one of the leading organizations working on elections in Nigeria.

#### For media inquiries please contact:

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Learn more about #WatchingTheVote at [www.watchingthevote.org](http://www.watchingthevote.org) or on social media on Facebook at [facebook.com/yiaga.org](http://facebook.com/yiaga.org) or on Twitter [@YIAGA](https://twitter.com/YIAGA)



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Sasha Maksymenko, January 2014

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## Interview with President Obama

Pete Souza, January 2012

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/obamawhitehouse/6892977999/in/photolist-rhWMsE-nLD2NW-bwcw9Q-ri47sa-nb8mET-6iWEBf-dx2mGF-dV5ZXL-8SC6hy-6sEFWy-6iWLG5-8Zw884-dx7R1A-oc5ACa-oRMLE8-bv7jdg-diPERq-8SC6hq-9Haep7-6v55UZ-6tHP9w-r1Nt9V-rhPPu5-6BxzgI-7tJMhB-7kjFJY-7tJMwK-7keRKw-F8EF2N-xRVbBz-xRVbvc-wUfUaL-xLuNju-R5tutD-PQRh9p-xLtHHh>

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Kyrgyz Debates: NDI

Yiaga Photos (Ekiti)

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