



BOOK 1: FIVE STRATEGIES TO GUIDE YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY

BOOK 2: CONTENT TACTICS FOR BOOSTING ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

BOOK 3: AGILE CONTENT OPERATIONS

BOOK 4: HEALTHY AND SAFE CONTENT PRACTICES

CASE STUDIES: FRAMEWORKS INSTITUTE, GUN FREE SA, LOVELIFE

ASSIGNMENT 3

TOOLKIT 3:

ONLINE CONTENT STRATEGY



Amplify Mobilise Change is a DG Murray Trust Innovation project designed to help South African civil society shift its thinking about and develop more creative, impactful and efficient online communication and technology practices.

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2023 TOOLKIT 3: ONLINE CONTENT STRATEGY

BOOK 4: HEALTHY AND SAFE CONTENT PRACTICES

Description

Managing content also means managing operations and responsibilities. Having an online media protocol in place protects your team and helps you respond to community voices and needs with clear, ethical practices. We take you through some of the core elements of a publishing and community protocol plan.

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Chapter 1. Online communication guideline/ policy

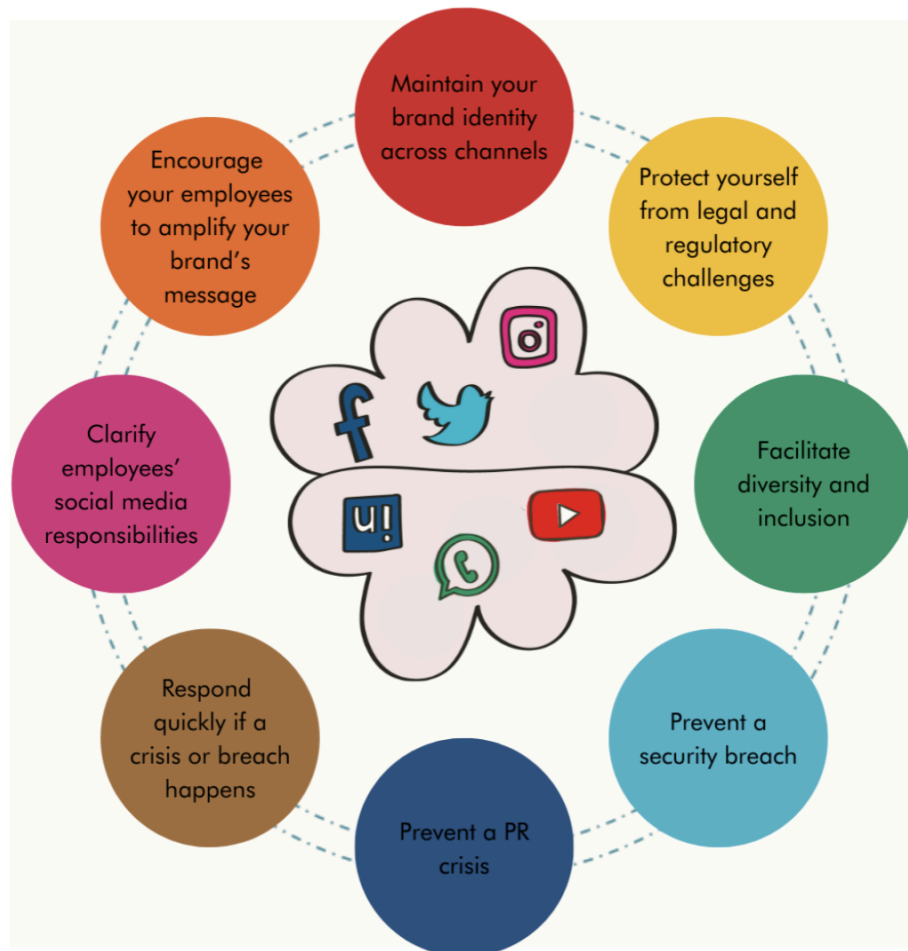
In this book, we talk through some of the ways you can be proactive in your guidelines for the staff or anyone communicating on your behalf in how they publish and engage with the public online.

It's a good idea to map out the rules of how your organisation, and any affiliated staff or partners, publish online when acting on behalf of your organisation. A communication policy will guide staff in basic publishing and community management protocols, and help your organisation handle public issues or conflict, should they happen. It's much easier to manage problems if everyone understands what the codes are first, and when and how to respond to a situation.

Here are some core benefits of having an online communication policy in place:

Maintains your brand identity across channels	A solid guideline or policy keeps your voice and content consistent with your organisation's values and positions.
Protects you from legal and regulatory challenges	A well-crafted and enforced social policy can protect you if you mistakenly publish something in error or are challenged legally.
Facilitates diversity and inclusion	Kansas State University created a social media policy for students to facilitate inclusion and diversity on campus. Among other requirements, it bans cyberbullying and doxing, as well as 'comments or conduct constituting discrimination, harassment [or] retaliation'.
Prevents a security breach	Combined with proper security protocols, your policy helps protect your accounts against phishing, hacking, and impostor accounts.
Prevents a PR crisis	Unclear social policies, or an inconsistent application of these policies, caused problems for The Associated Press when they abruptly fired journalist Emily Wilder. Clearer guidelines for applying policies and steps for addressing breaches would have prevented this from becoming a significant PR concern.
Helps you respond quickly if a crisis or breach happens	Despite your best efforts, a breach or crisis could still happen. A social policy makes sure you have an emergency response plan in place.
Clarifies employees'	You can't assume employees or associates will make the right call

online media responsibilities	on channels like social media unless you specifically spell it out.
Encourages your employees to amplify your brand's message:	You don't want to discourage employees from amplifying your brand message on social media. A clear social policy helps employees know what they can and should share on social media, and what they should skip.



Top Tip!

Your online communication policy does not have to be public but it would be linked to your privacy policy, which is a POPI Act requirement and does need to be publicly available on your website.

Sections in your policy

The details of your online communications policy will vary depending on an organisation's needs but these are some of the core elements you want to include:

1. Setting of terms and explaining context of the policy
2. Communication roles and responsibilities of each role
3. Explanation of the POPI Act and how it affects the way your organisation gathers, stores, processes and shares personal data. A link to your privacy policy.
4. Explanation of POPIA compliance protocols you have in place.
5. Security: explain systems in place, like firewalls, encourage protected passwords, what to do in case of a password breach, phishing, etc.
6. Rules of conduct for engaging with public through online channels: do's and don'ts that apply to anyone affiliated with your organisation representing your organisation directly on your official channels or indirectly through their own channels.
7. A larger section on your social media policy as this is where things tend to get the most out of hand!
8. Communication crisis protocol: lay out careful steps on how to handle a communication crisis (see more tips in the next chapter).

Your document will need regular updates. Networks and channels change, new media sites emerge, and others fall away every year. Your policy should not just sit in a document. Why not make it creative and graphic and have it printed or readily visible to encourage everyone to engage with it and follow it?



RESOURCES

Here are some excellent global sources of online media policies (mostly social media, but you can adapt): [Charity Village](#), [Red Cross](#), [Reuters](#), [Diabetes UK](#)

Chapter 2. When information is wrong

We live in an age where fake news spreads fast and easily. It is, therefore, more important than ever to aim to share truthful and valid information. This requires that you regularly fact-check your content before putting it online and double check people's quotes. If possible, have another colleague read over your content before putting it out in public. While you wouldn't do formal referencing in social media posts, the best practice when referencing reports or articles is to share a link to the article or report in your social media post.

However, there may be times when you mistakenly misquote, mistype or share incorrect information online. While this might go unnoticed by your audience, it can sometimes cause a strong reaction leading many people to share your post. Whether this goes viral or not, it is always best to be transparent about the error. Rather than deleting the post, as others might have already shared it, admit to the error and correct it across your digital platforms. By admitting fault, you both address the issue and build your audience's trust in your organisation.

Correcting information on social media

Messaging can indeed go wrong sometimes. It can happen to even the best communicators.

The various social media channels have different functions for how you can correct information. We recommend editing a post if you have made an error, and recognise the error in your edit. We recommend deleting when the post is causing severe issues, and posting an apology in a new post.



For more information on correcting your content online, read:

[How to correct website and social media errors correctly.](#)

The key is that you do not hide and delete, but rather show up, own up and correct - as soon as possible. Do not take your online audiences for granted. Address them as you would if they were standing in front of you. Words written with honesty and sincerity will always hit the spot.

Chapter 3. When people get upset

What happens when you make a mistake and people get upset?

The more public you are and the more outspoken your voice, it is inevitable that your messaging may offend or upset online users from time to time. While you can't control everyone's reactions to your content or messaging, if someone you are aiming to build trust with and align with gets upset with your messaging, aside from checking your messaging strategy, you will need to ensure you respond in a way that respectfully handles the situation and protects you and them from further harm.

The following questions would typically be mapped out in your policy in your communication in crisis section:

- What type of complaints or crises will we typically respond to?
- Who should handle our communication crises? Designate a small team that knows your organisation and communicates well to represent your organisation in crises. (For example, this may include your director and head of communication.)
- How much time should pass before we respond to complaints or accusations?
- What tone should we use when responding to complaints or accusations?



Sometimes someone may make a complaint or incite a situation on social media in a comment – watch out for all online spaces where voices can be heard.

What should I do if my messaging upsets my audience?

- Determine whether the complaint or complainant poses a reputational risk to your organisation and whether this is a real crisis or whether it is merely aimed at expressing an opposing opinion or getting a rise out of your NGO.
- If you made a simple error, fix it, and let your audiences know you fixed it.
- If the complaint is more serious and poses a reputational risk to your NGO, reach out to the complainant. If one person is upset, reach out to that individual. If a group of people are upset and things have escalated with the media getting involved, you may have to send out a press statement explaining the problem and why the messaging was done in

the way it was. If your organisation does not feel equipped to write a press statement, reach out to a public relations agency to assist you.

- Respond with a well-thought-out answer as soon as you can – preferably within the first 24 hours. This will help prevent online users’ feeling that you are either hiding something or incapable of responding to their complaints.
- To avoid mixed messages being shared with the public, ensure that all your employees understand your NGO’s stance on the matter and can recommend a member from your organisation who will handle all communications with the public. (this will be in your policy)

How to speak to someone who is upset with your organisation for a miscommunication or communication error:

- Start by trying to understand where the complainant is coming from. If you require clarity, ask the complainant for more information before providing a response.
- Try and help the complainant understand what the thinking was behind your message while acknowledging responsibility in events where you were in the wrong or where you miscommunicated something.
- Move the conversation from the public to the private realm as soon as you can. With the option for people to comment and share on public social media posts, issues can escalate quickly. You can reply to the person’s public comment, acknowledging their complaint and taking responsibility where valid, while inviting them to discuss this further with you on a private platform, such as Facebook Messenger or over the phone.
- Explain what measures you’ll take to prevent this error from happening in the future.

[illegible]