



# FORACHANGE



## DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



## Foreword

I am writing this Foreword as the Director of the Social Change Initiative (SCI), a Belfast based international NGO working to improve the effectiveness of activism for progressive social change and to influence the way in which it is funded and supported.

Our activities include the provision of fellowships to enable emerging or established activists to take time out to enhance their skills, reflect on what they know and share it with others. Craig Dwyer has used one of these fellowships to produce this guide to successful digital campaigning. There are currently 24 fellows from 9 countries working on a very diverse range of issues designed to improve the effectiveness of activism.

The Social Change Initiative (SCI) is especially proud of what he has achieved. Craig has produced a comprehensive and highly accessible resource for anyone interested in learning how to use social media to secure progressive change.

At a time when it's clear that social media can be a very negative and destructive force in the world its particularly gratifying to be given very practical advice about how it can be deployed for good. Negotiating your way around the digital tools available, working out how best to use your resources and how to maximise the impact for your campaign is no easy task.

In this guide Craig has made it all very straightforward and simple. He even provides easy to use worksheets to help you to design and implement your strategy.

Of course, the practical nature of this guide and the many insights which it provides should come as no surprise. Craig has applied and honed these skills himself in the successful campaign to secure marriage equality in the Irish Republic. While producing this guide he was also asked to help drive the social media element of the Australian marriage equality campaign. He knows what campaigners need to know if they are to succeed. That he has used these tools himself and understands their strengths and weaknesses shines through on every page.

This is not a dry academic guide. Rather its one highly effective activist generously and freely sharing his knowledge with others. Often people with skills and insights like this keep them close. It's a tribute to Craig that he has done the opposite. He has put what he knows at the service of others. We should all be grateful.

*Martin O'Brien*

*Director, Social Change Initiative, Belfast*

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# What is ForaChange?



# What is ForaChange?

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ForaChange is a toolkit for campaigners, activists and nonprofit organisations to design and implement an effective digital strategy for achieving progressive social change.

“Digital transformation”, the change associated with applying digital technology to all aspects of human society, is commonly associated with the commercial and corporate sectors. But campaigning groups and nonprofits are undergoing a transformation of their own, increasingly aware of the need to fully integrate digital and social media into their overall strategy. Sometimes they just don't know where to start.

ForaChange aims to equip you with the knowledge and skills required to run your campaign online, embracing all the opportunities that social media and digital technologies can offer.

When you're campaigning for change, social media lets you **communicate** with audiences, **cultivate** relationships and **convert** observers to supporters. It enables you to **reach** and **connect** with people across geographies and demographics. It can help you **build, organise** and **mobilise** your support base. It **enables** and **encourages** meaningful engagement. It **empowers** people to take action.

The [2018 Global NGO Online Technology Report](#) found that 93% of global NGOs (non-government organisations) have a Facebook page, 77% are on Twitter and 50% are on Instagram. Yet only 32% have a written strategy. Your campaign or organisation may already have a presence on social media. But are you using it to its full potential, taking advantage of all the options it offers to help meet your aims and objectives?

Throughout this report you'll learn more about why and how to design a [digital strategy](#) and the [tools and tactics](#) to help you take social media to the next level. In these sections we take a closer look at campaigns that use digital and social media successfully to bring about real change. You'll also find an in-depth case study on the digital strategy used to help secure a Yes vote in the marriage equality referendum in Ireland. We answer some of the most frequently asked questions about social media and you'll find plenty of

resources to help get you started and keep up to date with emerging trends and innovative campaigns.

We hope that ForaChange can ease the learning curve for future campaigners and activists who wish to use digital and social media in the fight for a more progressive, fair and equal society.



## Who's behind ForaChange?



Craig Dwyer is a digital campaigns and communications consultant. He works with campaigns and organisations on harnessing digital and social media as a driver of communication and engagement. He was the Social Media Director for Yes Equality during the marriage equality referendum in Ireland and travelled to Australia in 2017 to work on their marriage equality campaign.

Craig developed ForaChange as part of his fellowship with The Social Change Initiative. He is a true believer in the power of digital and social media to achieve social change and wants to help others to learn and grow in an online world.



# Designing Your Digital Strategy

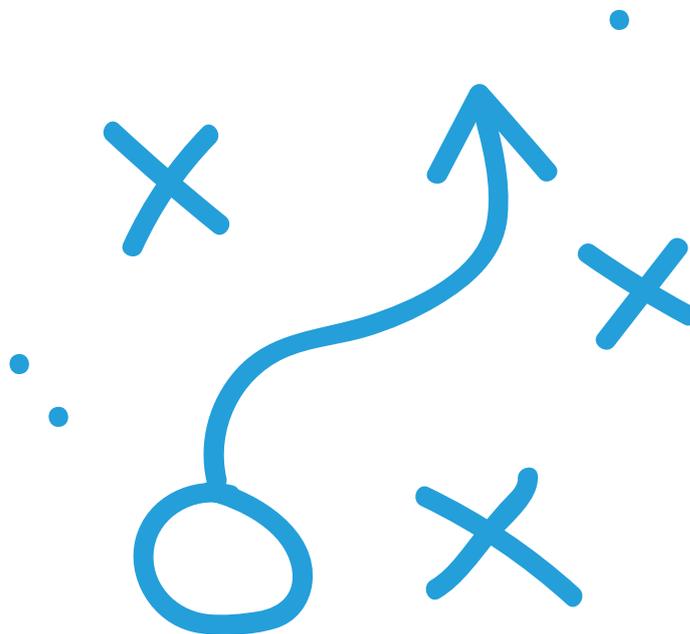
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# Designing Your Digital Strategy

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Digital campaigning has made it easier to reach and engage more people, in a more cost-efficient and timely manner. This requires plenty of planning and organisational support. As the saying goes, “You only get out what you put in.” If you can recognise the benefits of using digital and social media, and allocate resources accordingly, you will realise their full potential for your campaign.

There has never been a better time for activists and organisations to harness the potential of campaigning in a digital world. The following section contains seven questions aimed to help you design and execute an effective digital strategy. At the end of each section, you’ll find a worksheet to help you answer it.



# 1. What are your aims and objectives?

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Before you share your first post, step back and look at the bigger picture. What are the tangible aims and objectives of your digital campaign? You may wish to organise and mobilise supporters, engage new audiences, fundraise, or recruit new volunteers – or maybe all of the above.

Whatever your aims and objectives might be, it is important to concretely identify and prioritise them. Being clear and concise on what you are trying to achieve will inform your digital strategy and the resources you'll need to execute it.

Here are some aims and objectives to consider when designing your digital strategy:

- Provide compelling content
- Promote, develop and facilitate positive discussion online
- Consistently promote key messages and activities
- Actively address and clarify misinformation about your campaign
- Build and protect your campaign's reputation on digital platforms
- Help moderate online discussions appropriately
- Ensure your campaign provides an official voice online
- Create an online network of campaign supporters
- Engage with relevant stakeholders
- Respond and engage in an efficient, appropriate and timely manner
- Create a space online where people can ask questions and address concerns



## 2. Who are your target audiences?

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Once you have identified your aims and objectives, the next step is to better understand who your target audiences are. These are groups of people with a stake in an issue, or who can help bring about the change you seek. Target audiences, or “stakeholders”, can include individuals, groups, organisations or institutions that you wish to engage with your campaign. They may be directly affected by the issue, they may support your cause, or they may be in a position to influence your campaign. Stakeholders can also include active opponents of the change being proposed.

As part of your digital strategy, you should identify and list all relevant stakeholders – and how the aims and objectives of the campaign relate to each. Engaging different groups online will require different messages on different platforms. Mapping your stakeholders can help you understand how people currently think about your issue and what they value and care about. This will help shape your campaign’s frame and messages.

### **Example: Stakeholder mapping for Yes Equality**

In the months leading up to the marriage equality referendum in Ireland in 2015, much work was done on identifying target audiences and how best to engage them. Research indicated that the campaign had a strong support base of about 20% of the electorate: these individuals would vote Yes, and the No arguments would not influence that position. There were also about 20% who opposed civil marriage for same-sex couples: they would vote No, and the Yes arguments would not change their minds. That left 60% in the “moveable middle”. These were people whose position or attitude was unclear – they may have had concerns or were apathetic having had no previous engagement on the issue.

The Yes Equality campaign had a clear policy from the outset that it would not engage with or target the 20% opposition group, but would closely monitor their activity. Their efforts, online and offline, focused entirely on:

1. mobilising and motivating the 20% support base to enable them to become agents of change;

2. engaging, educating and informing the 60% in the “moveable middle”, who would effectively decide the outcome of the campaign.

The two target audiences comprised different stakeholder groups. The supporter base included: the LGBTI community, groups and organisations; civil society organisations; trade unions; student unions; and political parties. The “moveable middle” consisted of various groups segmented by demographics, how “soft” their support was, or how likely they were to be influenced by the opposition. By mapping the target audiences this way, Yes Equality could proceed with confidence to curate and craft appropriate messages and tactics to target these groups effectively.



# Workbook 2: Who are your target audiences?

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The headings below will suggest possibilities:

**Who currently supports your issue?**

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**Who is affected by your issue?**

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**Who has influence on the change you seek?**

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**Whose support do you seek?**

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**Who does not support your issue?**

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**Who actively opposes your issue?**

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### 3. What are you going to say?

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Framing is a critical step in developing your campaign strategy. Framing relates to the meaning, views and associations we attribute to all aspects of our lives. Think of it as a lens in your mind through which you view the world. How you frame your issue can determine a person's decision to engage with your cause or take action on behalf of it. You can have different messages for different target audiences, but they should all sit within an overarching frame and narrative. An effective frame will:

- articulate the issue in a compelling and authentic way
- appeal to people's values
- show how things can improve
- outline what a person can do to help achieve that.

To bring about real change, we must communicate with people in a way that creates understanding and emotional resonance, and inspires them to take action. If a person connects with your message, the issue is no longer abstract or unknown – it becomes personal and real. Strategic use of campaign messages that elicit an emotional response and create a human connection will convert observers to supporters and help meet your campaign objectives. Strategic use includes being acutely aware of what platform and when is best to share a message.

Equally important is the messenger. Consider who your message is for and who is best placed to communicate it for you. You might have a powerful story to tell, but it could get lost if the messenger is misaligned with the target audience.

Above all, you must be authentic. Honest, transparent and reliable messaging that is true to your cause will result in deeper, more meaningful engagement with audiences.

# Workbook 3: What are you going to say?

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What words do people currently use to describe your issue?

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What words do you want people to use to describe your issue?

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How can things get better for your issue? What is the change you seek?

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What can people do to help achieve that?

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## 4. Which platforms will you use?

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Social media plays a crucial role in shaping public thought about campaigns and organisations. It enables audiences to be increasingly aware and up to date on causes and campaigns. You must therefore consider carefully what platforms will be most effective for engaging with and informing your stakeholder groups. Ask questions such as: Which social media platforms are your target audiences most active on? What content do they consume there? This will help you decide which platforms to focus your efforts on.

For example, you might use Twitter to engage with stakeholder groups such as policy-makers, politicians or journalists, aiming to set the agenda with key campaign messages. You can use Facebook to amplify your voices, reach new supporters and have a greater impact on changing hearts and minds by providing engaging and shareable content. If your current supporters are more active on Instagram, you should use that platform to mobilise and motivate them with key messages and content that they can communicate to their networks.

For different platforms you will have different objectives and audiences, requiring different content, but all your approaches should complement each other in the context of the wider campaign. Social media content, informed by your campaign frame and designed for a target audience, should be fully integrated into all campaign planning and decision-making.

Below is a brief introduction to some of the most popular social media platforms. You'll also find examples of nonprofit organisations and campaigns that are using these platforms effectively to help reach their goals.

**Facebook** is the largest and most widely used social network in the world. It promotes and facilitates interaction between friends, family and colleagues. Users can like and post comments, and share videos, images and links to news or other content on the Web. Campaigns and organisations can create their own Facebook page to post different types of content, run advertising campaigns and even stream live video.

Learn more about how to use Facebook to help your cause: [nonprofits.fb.com](https://nonprofits.fb.com)

**Twitter** is a microblogging social network that allows users to publish short posts called tweets that are publicly viewable. Unlike Facebook, where members need to approve social connections, anyone can follow anyone on Twitter. Tweets are limited to 280 characters and can include images (max. 4), videos, links, polls and livestreams. Hashtags are used to discover and cultivate conversations on various topics. Twitter also offers advertising, allowing users to promote tweets into audience's Twitter feeds.

Download Twitter's "NGO Handbook: Campaigning on Twitter": <http://bit.ly/TwitterNGOHandbook>

**Instagram** is a social networking app with an emphasis on visual media. Users can only upload and share photos or videos from mobile devices. Much like on Twitter, hashtags are a common feature of Instagram. Users post images and videos with relevant hashtags to attract likes, comments and new followers. Audiences can search hashtags to discover content and Instagrammers of interest to them.

Instagram is the fastest-growing social network. It currently has 500 million daily and 800 million monthly active users, and is most popular among younger people.

**Snapchat** is a social messaging app used to share photos, videos and text. What makes Snapchat different is that messages ("snaps") disappear from the recipient's phone after ten seconds or less. Snapchat Stories is a popular feature where users can compile photos or videos for all their followers to view in one collection. Unlike normal snaps, Snapchat Stories last for 24 hours and can be viewed more than once. This feature was replicated by Instagram.

Snapchat has more than 300 million active monthly users, most of them aged 25 or less, according to research.

Messaging apps like **Whatsapp** and video-hosting platforms like **YouTube** also attract millions of daily active users. They are increasingly being adopted by campaigns and organisations to share content, advertise, and facilitate group communications.

What is important to learn from this section is that there are many options for you to explore in order to find what works best for your campaign or organisation.



## 5. What is your content strategy?

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Engaging, informative, and shareable content that promotes key campaign messages will inspire people to take action. When you create content for your audiences, you are setting the tone of the debate. This will give you a head start in any conversation.

It is important to set a positive, constructive tone that will reflect well on your campaign or organisation. Your content strategy should therefore involve creating ample content that target audiences will adopt and share, so that your tone and message are maintained and carried across networks. The aim is to place your content at the centre of the conversation as a reliable reference for anyone with questions or concerns about any aspect of your campaign. Content that can provide answers or solutions to people's problems will establish connections and build trust with supporters.

Campaigns must also create a space which encourages and helps supporters to tell their own stories and to describe, in their own words, what motivates them to support your campaign. Authentic messages from supporters to their networks can have a much greater impact and create more meaningful connections.

Organisations should look for opportunities to strengthen and leverage support. Are other stakeholder groups or individuals creating content similar in message and tone to yours? If so, identify opportunities to collaborate or cross-post content on your social channels. This can be useful when resources are limited or to ensure that your objectives are not competing.

# Workbook 5: What is your content strategy?

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Now that you've identified your target audiences and the platforms you'll find them on, the next step is to develop a content strategy that you know will engage and inform them.

## List the content types that are relevant for your selected social media platforms

1 _____	2 _____
3 _____	4 _____
5 _____	6 _____



## Do you have the skills required to execute the content types outlined?

YES  NO

(If no, see the "Resources" section for inspiration on creating content. Alternatively, if you have the budget, consider outsourcing some of your content requirements.)



## The tone of your campaign is very important. Have you an agreed tone of voice that you wish to underpin all of your content and communications with audiences online?

YES  NO

(If no, establishing an agreed tone should be a priority for your campaign, as it can make or break a person's decision to get involved. See "The Importance of Tone" in the Yes Equality case study.)



## Are there other organisations or groups campaigning on the same issue, where collaboration or cross-posting of content could be an option? If so, who are they?

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**Each channel requires its own, ongoing content strategy to reach the target audience and meet specific goals. Use the following table to map out content ideas for your campaign.**







## 6. How will you engage your audiences?

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There are many ways to engage with audiences online. Remember that people are willing to support your campaign. To build momentum online, campaigns must make it as easy as possible for people to participate and show their support. If you provide a spectrum of participation, with different levels of engagement or points of entry, then supporters – whether active or passive – can identify ways they could get involved. Some people may want to show support by simply changing their social media avatars; others may want to donate online or even make a video. However supporters want to participate, it is important that they can.

Ultimately, you want more people to get involved with your campaign. This requires being specific and explicit. Including calls to action such as “Click here to learn more”, “Show your support”, “Sign up here” and relevant web links will prompt audiences and clearly show your objectives. All your campaign content should state clearly what action you want people to take. Ensure that calls to action are realistic and achievable.

Creating and sharing high-quality content is the backbone of any online campaign. Equally important, however, is the ability to listen to the conversation and interact with supporters and stakeholders. This gives campaigns a real opportunity to hear first-hand what is important to target audiences. Social media has changed how audiences interact with campaigns and organisations. Communicating has become a dialogue, with social media providing the other voice. Users have come to expect that when they engage with a campaign or organisation on social media, they will receive a meaningful response. Responding to genuine questions or comments and joining discussions on social media will help campaigns and organisations to deepen engagement, build rapport and convert audiences to supporters and advocates.

How you respond to feedback, questions and concerns also affects the tone of the campaign. Consider what people post, and respond calmly and constructively. Or, where appropriate, refrain from responding in a heated debate when it is best just to ignore. Most social media platforms have ways to report harmful or abusive behaviour.

Engaging confidently with audiences on social media requires time and practice. Establishing social media guidelines for your campaign, and preparing responses to frequently asked questions, will make it more enjoyable and efficient. The benefits of engaging with audiences far outweigh the risks.

Social media listening tools such as [Keyhole](#), [Tweetreach](#) and [FollowtheHashtag](#) will allow you to monitor the conversation, mentions of your username, and any campaign hashtags and relevant keywords. This will help you identify opportunities to join in the conversation.

# Workbook 6: How will you engage your audiences?

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To engage with your audiences, you need to be able to listen to the conversation on social media and respond where appropriate.

The table below will help you to outline what you should be listening for to identify opportunities for engagement. Social listening will also help you understand what people are saying about your campaign, what the tone of the conversation is like, and what the output is from any opposition groups.

<b>Your Campaign Name / Associated Groups</b>	
<b>Opposition Names</b>	
<b>Influencers in the Conversation</b>	
<b>Relevant Keywords / Hashtags</b>	
<b>Positive and Negative Terms</b>	



## 7. What does success look like?

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There are many reasons why you should measure the results and analyse the impact of your digital and social media campaign. When you can recognise the importance of online efforts, and adequately resource them, you will realise all that it has to offer. Social media is often perceived as being less important than traditional campaigning methods and means of communication, and this can be a barrier to receiving support or budget allocation. One of the benefits of social media is the ability to accurately track performance and show return on investment (ROI), which can be useful when seeking organisational buy-in. You must be able to show successes and demonstrate how people are taking action online. But first you must establish what success looks like.

It is important to know what counts as meaningful engagement for your campaign. For example, if you create a video for your digital-storytelling strategy, and your target audience is new supporters in the “moveable middle”, then a measure of success would be a large number of “shares”, which would translate into increased reach and impressions. Or you may be running a volunteer drive, using social media to promote the sign-up page on your website. In this case, you could measure the number of click-throughs from social media, compared with the number of new sign-ups.

### **Social media analytics explained**

One of the benefits of social media is the ability to measure virtually anything. But this also presents a challenge – campaigns and organisations may struggle to understand what metrics they should be analysing and, more importantly, what it all means. Here is an overview of some of the most important and popular metrics.

**Conversions** are often described as the most important thing to measure: they represent a user taking a desired action on your social media channels. This could be subscribing to your mailing list, clicking through to your website, making an online donation, filling in a volunteer sign-up form, or any other action that helps you achieve your aims and objectives.

**Reach** is the total number of *unique* people who see your content, as opposed to **Impressions**, which is the number of times your content has been delivered to a person's social media feed. A person seeing a post from a campaign three times in their Facebook feed would count as three impressions, but as one person reached.

**Engagements** are the total number of interactions on a social media post, including likes, comments, shares, video views, retweets and replies.

**Community Growth** is the increase in new likes or followers of your social media accounts compared to the previous week, month, quarter or year.

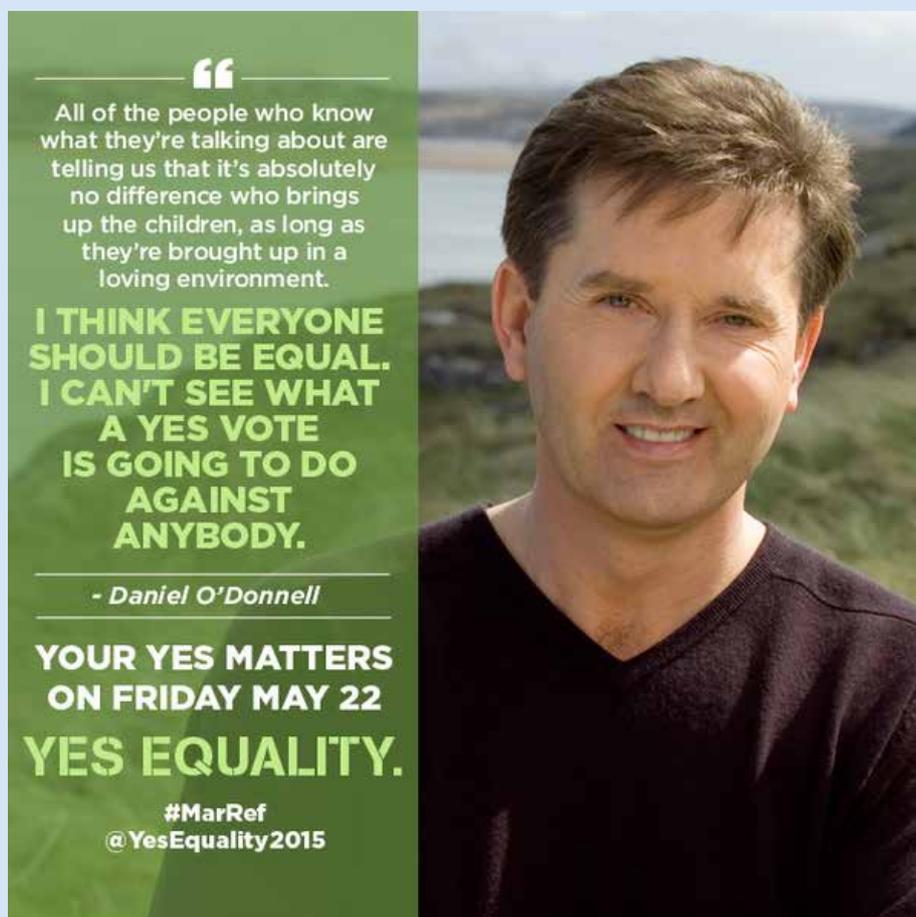
Many social media platforms offer their own analytics tools, and there are numerous third-party options.

Facebook Insights provides a comprehensive analysis of the metrics described above, with additional features such as when your fans are online and a breakdown of your audiences by age, gender and location. "Pages to Watch" is another useful tool: it compares the performance of your Page and posts with similar Pages on Facebook, defined by you. Take some time to familiarise yourself with Facebook Insights and other analytic tools, to better understand what metrics are important for your campaign. This in turn will help you to better understand who your audiences are and what content they are engaging with.

Success on social media also means being able to set goals, monitor progress and adapt accordingly. Set out weekly, monthly or quarterly goals, with aims such as an increase in new followers, growth in engagements, and mailing list sign-ups. Then it is about keeping an eye on your insights and analytics to track performance and monitor progress towards meeting those goals. Being able to adapt requires recognising what content is working, what is not, and what may need to be tweaked or changed.

### Example: Yes Equality memes

A “meme” is an idea, behaviour or style that spreads from person to person in a culture – often with the aim of conveying a particular phenomenon, theme, or meaning. In the early stages of the Yes Equality campaign for civil marriage equality in Ireland, images of celebrities and influential Yes supporters holding branded signs with the phrase “I’m ready to vote” were performing extremely well on the campaign’s social media channels. The team could see this trend developing, and responded by creating a template for a meme. Then, whenever a high-profile person made a supportive statement, the creative team could quickly turn it into a meme using the image and quote and push it out on social media. Throughout the campaign, these memes were often among the most popular content.



# Workbook 7: What does success look like?

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What would success on social media look like for your campaign?

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Which social media metrics will help you measure performance towards those goals?

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As you monitor your social media performance on an ongoing basis, you should aim to answer the following questions:

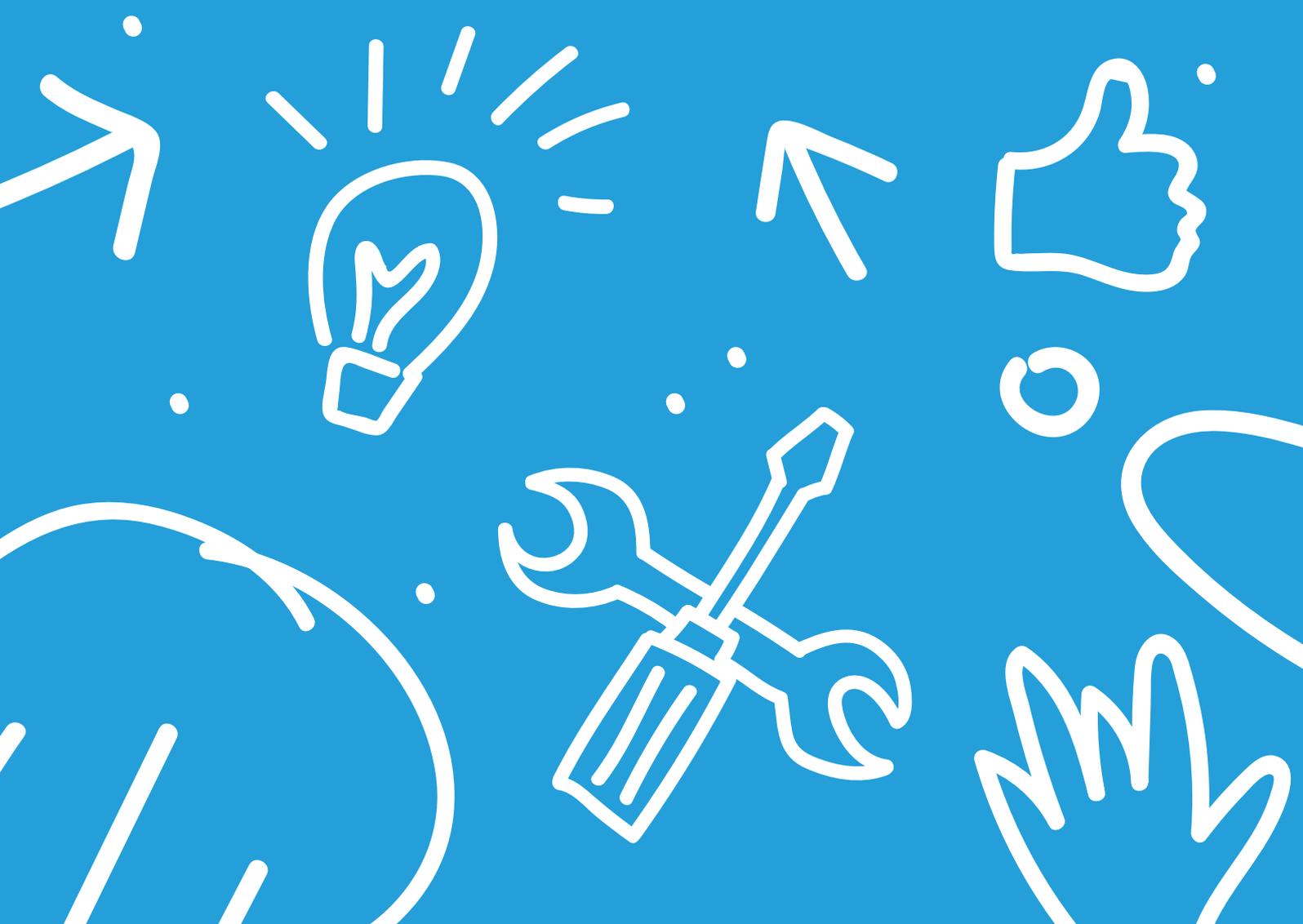
What's working, and in what sense?

What's not working, and why?

How will we amplify and do more of what's working?



# Tools and Tactics



## Tools and Tactics

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This section is designed to help you get the most out of your digital strategy and raise your social media game. Here you'll find practical examples from different campaigns and organisations.

### **Content Creation**

Relevant and informative content that delivers key messages is integral to engaging with stakeholders and growing your presence online. When creating content, campaigns should be innovative, creative and open-minded, but conscious of target audiences and the campaign's tone and message. Test a variety of content types to determine which format and style resonate best with your audiences. Visual communications, such as video, images and infographics, tend to do better than text on social media. Resources available to campaigns, such as budget and in-house expertise, will affect content output. But many free tools and apps are available to help. You can find these in the Resources section.

You should also align your content with campaign priorities. If you're running a volunteer drive, for example, ensure that your social media channels include posts with a volunteer sign-up call to action. Content designed specifically for social media should also be developed as part of any key campaign activity, announcement, launch, and so on.

Keep your aims and objectives in mind when creating content for your campaign. Is the content you're proposing aimed at meeting a particular goal? If so, and if you have the resources to execute, go ahead. If not, it might be worth revisiting your digital strategy to ensure efforts are best allocated.

It's also important to consider where and when to execute the content you have created. Great content is of little benefit to your campaign unless it is engaging and reaches the target audiences. When responding to emerging events, it is best to post as soon as possible. If there are no time constraints, use analytics to identify when your audiences are most active (usually in the evenings), then schedule or post content during that period.

If you have spent time and resources creating specific content to promote key campaign activities, it is worth allocating additional budget for social media

advertising to give it a boost. This will ensure it reaches the audiences you specify through targeting.

You should also identify what content is working – or, more importantly, what is not. This will help you revise and refine content during your campaign.

### **Social Media Advertising**

Social media advertising is an effective way to directly target audiences that you define based on publicly available, self-reported information such as age, location, gender and interests. It can be particularly useful around launches and key announcements, to build momentum and ensure engagement on your campaign's content and message. You can set and control the parameters of your ads: duration, cost per engagement, maximum budget, etc. Depending on the objective, most social media platforms give an approximation of reach, engagements or number of clicks to expect, based on your budget. Even if your financial resources are limited, a little investment in social media advertising can produce high levels of return for your campaign.

Paid advertising allows you to test different content types and messages with different audiences, providing in-depth analytics and metrics from which you can glean insight for your campaign. Try to be specific when defining the target audience for your ads – it is better for your campaign to reach the right people than the most people. Experimenting with advertising will help you to understand what your audiences find most engaging. It is worth keeping a close eye on how your ads perform. If certain ads are outperforming others – getting more reach, clicks and engagements – it may be worth re-allocating the budget for the rest of the ad campaign.

Social media advertising, while effective in growing the reach of your campaign, comes with caveats. Trust and authenticity are key factors in the success of campaigns on social media. Audiences generally respond better to organic content, so you should combine any paid advertising campaign with consistent organic efforts to engage with current followers and attract new ones. Also, while certain ads may have been successful, it doesn't always follow that similar content will have the same result. What works well for one audience, on one occasion, might not work for another.

## **Plan, plan, plan**

Effective planning can cut down on the resourcing needed to execute your digital strategy. To help meet your goals, create and populate a content calendar that outlines what you're going to say and when. Spend two hours at the start of the week developing and planning content for the week ahead. Proactive content can be scheduled for peak times, freeing up time during the week for listening, engaging, and monitoring performance on social media. Tools such as [Tweetdeck](#), [Hootsuite](#) and [Buffer](#) can help with all this.

Your calendar should set out the following each week:

- Key messages or campaign priorities (volunteer sign-ups, growing the number of supporters, fundraising, etc.)
- Target audiences for set objectives
- Channels for reaching those audiences
- Content to be posted and when (scheduling where appropriate).

Your calendar is subject to sudden change in response to ongoing developments. Planning can help with consistency in style, tone and output, but it is important to be flexible and adapt to opportunities and situations as they arise. The purpose of a content calendar is to help structure your week so you get the most from your resources and meet the aims and objectives in your digital strategy.

## **Online Video**

Online videos are now an essential part of digital communications. Mobile video consumption is growing enormously, with the weekly share of time spent watching TV and video on mobile devices increasing by 85% from 2010 to 2016. Short-form, sharable, engaging videos are fast becoming the primary means of communicating with digital native audiences. This should therefore be integral to any campaign's digital strategy.

People generally consume video on mobile and on the go, with 85% of social video watched without sound. If you are creating video content for your campaign, be sure to add captions and aim to grab viewers' attention in the first 3 seconds. Retaining that attention can be a challenge, so keep your videos concise and to the point. Research indicates that the optimum length for mobile video is under 2 minutes.

Some stats:

- Social video generates 1200% more shares than text and images combined
- 82% of users watch video content on Twitter
- Viewers retain 95% of a message when they watch it in a video, compared to 10% when reading it in text
- Videos on Facebook pages increase end-user engagement by 33%
- Just mentioning the word “video” in an email subject line increases the click-through rate by 13%
- Video can increase landing page conversions by 80% or more
- By 2019, videos will account for 80% of all consumer internet traffic.

### **Social Media Crisis Communications**

It is paramount to pay attention and listen to the conversation. Monitoring social media allows you to have a finger on the pulse of the conversation online. This will give you an early warning if a crisis occurs – or, in an unfolding crisis, it will help you understand how audiences are responding. This helps you tailor your response accordingly.

If a crisis is identified, you should be ready to respond appropriately on social media. Responding quickly, even if it’s just “We’re looking into it”, shows users that the problem has been acknowledged. Draft key messages and ensure they are communicated to target audiences and influencers. Acknowledging and responding early will allow you to own the narrative and claim the online space, often preventing a crisis from spiralling. Social media lets you take control of the situation.

If social media users post criticisms of your campaign, interest or organisation, do not delete or suppress such posts if they make valid points. Let the comments stand. Quickly address any inappropriate messages or misuse. Correct misinformation, but don’t engage in heated arguments. Often, the community will correct itself and step in to correct inaccuracies or defend the institution. If this happens and is sufficient to resolve the issue, there may be no need for an additional official response.

## Hashtag Activism

“Hashtag activism” occurs when groups organise conversations on social media through a hashtagged word, phrase or sentence with social or political significance. Successful hashtag campaigns see exponential growth and enriched discourse on an issue, while also converting new heightened awareness into a wider social movement that inspires people to take action, both online and offline. Hashtag campaigning is about using hashtags to strategically frame, convene, and drive key conversations. A well-chosen hashtag will positively define the values associated with your political position, and draw more people to your side of the debate.

When choosing a hashtag for your campaign, be strategic. Ensure that it is easily identifiable with your campaign, is clear and concise, and encourages participation. To avoid confusion or potential pitfalls, search social media platforms to make sure your chosen hashtag has not been used elsewhere. There are steps you can take to ensure your hashtag gets noticed:

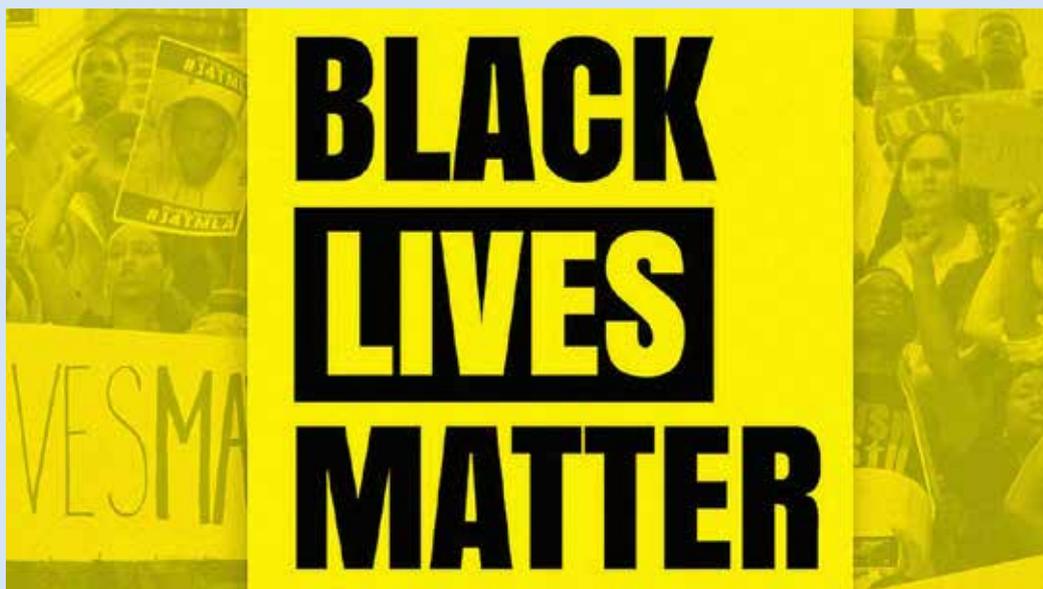
1. **Leverage supporters:** Contact your most active supporters, outlining the plan to launch your new hashtag. Ask for their support, by using the hashtag during a specified time period for the launch, and then afterwards to build momentum.
2. **Influencers:** Invite influential voices on your issue to join the conversation and use the campaign hashtag. The more voices you have, the more likely you will succeed in cutting through the noise.
3. **Cross-campaign:** Identify any opportunities to promote and amplify your hashtag. For example, if you are printing campaign flyers, consider asking people to join the conversation using #\_\_\_\_\_. When engaging with traditional media or sending press releases, include your hashtag and social media usernames.
4. **[Thunderclap](#):** This tool allows a single message to be mass-shared at an allocated time and date. You write a message you want shared (in this case including your hashtag), pick a time and date, and set a goal for the number of people you want to sign up to pledge their support. When you reach that goal, your message is published concurrently on all the social media accounts of those who signed up. This is a potential way to get your campaign hashtag “trending”, if enough people sign up, and it can be useful for launches and key events.

Alternatively, it might be more beneficial for your campaign to “piggyback” on an established hashtag where discussions on your campaign issue are already taking place. It is worth doing some research to find out what works best for your campaign.

### **Example: #BlackLivesMatter**

#BlackLivesMatter, the powerful phrase synonymous with the struggle for racial justice, has its roots in the protest movement that occurred as a call to action after the murder of African American teenager Trayvon Martin and the subsequent acquittal of George Zimmerman in July 2013. #BlackLivesMatter was used not only to build awareness and enrich the discussion, but also to organise protests in a combined effort to shine a spotlight on racial profiling and police brutality in the US and build solidarity across the globe.

The movement expanded rapidly, in part because of the low barrier to entry offered by social media. Anyone with a smartphone and social media account could align themselves with the cause and join the movement. From its initial appearance in mid-2013 through to March 2016, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter appeared on Twitter [almost 11.8 million times](#). The momentum of online and offline activity has seen Black Lives Matter develop into a chapter-based activist organisation, and the movement to bring about real racial justice continues to grow.



## Social Pressure

Social pressure has been defined as communications that play on a basic human drive to win praise and avoid criticism. Research on how social pressure influences participation found that people are motivated by how others perceive them. If by taking action they are likely to be perceived as pro-social, fair and caring, people are more inclined to participate. This isn't a new phenomenon – it has been used in countless campaigns over the years. But when Facebook conducted a 61-million-person experiment back in 2010, to see how they could influence people's voting behaviour, we began to see how social pressure through social media could be used to influence people's decision to participate. But what we are beginning to see is how social pressure through social media is being used to influence people's decision to participate.

### **Example: Australian Marriage Equality: #PostYourYES**

In September 2017, more than 16 million people across Australia began receiving surveys in their mailbox asking: "Should the law be changed to allow same-sex couples to marry?" The outcome would determine whether or not the government would legislate for marriage equality. Voting in the postal survey was non-compulsory – unlike federal elections, by-elections and referendums. Coupled with the fact that 18–24-year-olds were the biggest supporters of marriage equality, but less likely to vote, it was going to require a Get Out The Vote campaign unlike any Australia had seen.

One of the campaign's key objectives was to ensure that every Yes voter returned their survey as soon as they arrived, to mitigate any risk of them being misplaced or forgotten about. The campaign team used social media to drive this, showing people that something big was happening and you didn't want to miss your chance to be part of it. Content was created to encourage Yes voters to take a selfie as they returned their surveys and to share it on social media with the hashtag #PostYourYES. The aim was to create a situation where other voters, seeing all their friends posting selfies, would want to take part.

Within hours, #PostYourYES was trending on Twitter, and over the coming days this had a snowball effect: Instagram, Facebook and Twitter flooded with images of Australians posting their Yes votes in mailboxes across the country. These included [88-year-old Pat](#), who was voting Yes because everyone deserves a fair go; [the Lattimore family](#), who voted together for their son,

grandson and brother, Jack; and 89-year-old [Bob Spearritt](#), who voted Yes because “Everybody under the sun deserves the chance to marry the one he or she truly loves.”

Successfully introducing an element of social pressure to your campaign can prompt supporters to create content that can be shared with peers and promotes your central message. In the case of the Australian marriage equality postal survey, people sharing their #PostYourYES selfies and why a Yes vote was important to them was a key factor in the 79.5% voter turnout.



### **Networked Campaigning**

Building successful movements for change, and empowering supporters to become advocates, requires strategic leadership from campaigns. They must frame the cause, develop the narrative, coordinate efforts towards shared goals, then open it up to participation. To connect with people more effectively and increase engagement with your cause, campaigns should use digital platforms and technologies to facilitate grassroots momentum. This enables supporters to become agents of change, creating content or taking action that benefits the wider campaign.

Traditionally, broadcasting messages and hierarchical power structures have been features of NGOs and campaigning organisations operating from the top down. Networked campaigning involves creating the infrastructure, then

relinquishing some control and relying on the network of stakeholder groups and individuals to become the campaign and influence their respective networks. Transferring power or control from the top and spreading it among the campaign network gives stakeholders a heightened sense of responsibility, which is likely to foster greater commitment in their efforts to work towards shared campaign goals.

### **Example: Indivisible**

Starting out as a Google Doc, the Indivisible Guide was designed as a resource for those who “resisted the Trump Agenda”. Written by former congressional staffers, it detailed practical steps people could take to hold their members of Congress to account, such as attending town halls, phoning congressional officials, attending public events and taking actions online. Readers soon began organising locally, and [The Indivisible Project](#) has grown exponentially to a network of over 6,000 groups across the US.



The movement began in December 2016 when the 23-page handbook was published. After Donald Trump was elected president, the authors could see the energy building among people dissatisfied with the outcome, but it wasn't directed. In response, they created the infrastructure which harnessed that energy and directed it towards real, tangible actions. Receiving input from others in the Indivisible network, the guide is continuously updated and is now also available in Spanish and as an audiobook. Local groups are organising actions in their community and sharing their stories through social

media using the #Indivisible and #resist hashtags. The Indivisible website offers resources and practical guides, for example on starting a local group, writing a press release and using social media to communicate with the media.

What Indivisible achieved in such a short time was due to a few key factors. Not only did the authors release the guide at the right moment, they did so in a way that allowed ease of access – the open-source approach enabled supporters to contribute skills and knowledge towards shared goals. Networked campaigning transfers power from the top to the network of supporters involved with your cause. This is summed up perfectly in Indivisible’s tagline: “We’re not the leaders of this movement: you are.”

### **Changing the Narrative**

Achieving the desired outcome for your campaign or cause will usually require winning over hearts and minds. This involves changing the narrative and reframing how people perceive your campaign issue. Digital storytelling lets us amplify our voices, reach more people and make human connections. This in turn can shape public thought on your campaign and influence relevant stakeholders. Digital and social media can be used to identify, collect and curate stories as part of your digital storytelling strategy.

Stories not only empower the storyteller but can also inspire others to share their story. The cumulative effect of these stories, from different messengers to different audiences, will help change the narrative and win hearts and minds.

### **Example: Ana Liffey Drug Project and Humans of Dublin – #SaferFromHarm**

The #SaferFromHarm campaign aimed to raise awareness of the importance of introducing Supervised Injecting Facilities (SIFs) in Ireland, to reduce the harm from injecting drug use. Medically supervised injecting centres are places where intravenous drug users can go to inject in a setting with a health professional. There are currently over 90 such centres around the world. Much of the narrative around introducing SIFs was focused heavily on policies, procedures, and examining SIFs’ effectiveness internationally. #SaferFromHarm set out to change the narrative by putting a human face on

the issue, telling the stories of people who would benefit from introducing SIFs into Irish society.

The idea was that connecting with the issue on an emotional level would address some of the concerns that still remained. To achieve this, the Ana Liffey Drug Project, which had been campaigning for the introduction of SIFs for years, teamed up with Humans of Dublin, whose goal is “to make people more attentive to what is happening to other humans around them and, if possible, make a positive change in their lives.”

The campaign shared the stories of seven people who have been affected by drug use, including Brigid, who lost her daughter to addiction 12 years ago, and Aidan, who was living with an active addiction. One thing they all had in common is that they believed introducing SIFs would ensure that drug users were #SaferFromHarm. As the campaign was being rolled out, a person who had seen these stories and had a similar experience got in touch and asked if she could tell her story as part of the campaign. Others shared their own stories on social media, often using the campaign hashtag. The storytelling approach proved instrumental in achieving the objective of changing the narrative and reaching as many people as possible with key messages highlighting the importance of introducing SIFs.

Weeks after the campaign, when the issue was up for discussion in Parliament, stakeholders tweeted updates from the meeting using #SaferFromHarm. The Ana Liffey Drug Project continues to use the campaign hashtag and narrative in its campaigning on the issue. The first Supervised Injecting Facility is due to open in Dublin in 2018.





# Case Study: Yes Equality

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# Case Study: Yes Equality

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## Using Digital and Social Media to Help Secure a Yes Vote

Yes Equality played the leading role in shaping the narrative that mobilised support and created the campaign which delivered the historic 62% Yes vote in the Irish marriage equality referendum on May 22nd, 2015. Ireland became the first country in the world to introduce marriage equality by popular vote. The role played by digital and social media was seen as groundbreaking, creating a campaign that moved from “clicktivism” to concrete results for the first time.

Yes Equality’s use of digital and social media played a crucial role in implementing the strategy of the referendum campaign. The digital team developed a strategy and approach for using online platforms as an effective tool for organising, mobilising and communicating with target audiences. As a result, online effort, once seen as a distraction from mainstream political activity, became a recruitment and deployment tool for offline activism and ultimately a driver of mobilisation to the polls.

Yes Equality was an independent nationwide civic society campaign working to secure a Yes vote in the marriage equality referendum. It was established by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), Marriage Equality, and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL). The three organisations had been working for equality for LGBT people for many years and came together with one common objective and focus: to pass a constitutional amendment to extend the right to marry to same-sex couples.

Craig Dwyer had been an employee at GLEN since 2013, working on policy and communications, and was appointed Director of Social Media for Yes Equality. Aware of the role that social media played in similar campaigns to mobilise and organise collective action, and with research indicating that support for marriage equality was strongest among younger age groups, Craig knew the potential that social media could yield in the Yes Equality campaign – if used effectively.

Craig was tasked with the design, development and implementation of an innovative and groundbreaking digital and social media strategy required to drive the message and mobilise supporters to achieve a Yes vote.

During the Yes Equality campaign, online initiatives included:



- ➔ Launching YesEquality.ie as a central resource for advocacy, storytelling and fundraising
- ➔ Active social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube
- ➔ Facilitating a network of 60+ Yes Equality groups nationwide, most of which had an active social media presence
- ➔ Creating and distributing social graphics and visual content, including more than 80 web videos
- ➔ A Yes Equality app with Snapchat-style features, voting information and voting reminder push notifications on the day of the referendum
- ➔ Online “Get Out The Vote” campaign, with a dedicated website and supporting graphics.



In 2014, Yes Equality launched a comprehensive digital platform and began building a strong, engaging social media presence. Craig worked closely with the central team, ensuring that digital and social media were fully integrated into all aspects of the campaign, including mobilisation, fundraising and message development.



### **The importance of tone**

For the referendum campaign to succeed, it was critical to establish and maintain a positive tone throughout and to manage control of the message, particularly online. Creating a campaign that people wanted to be a part of was vital in reaching the “movable middle”, those who had yet to make up their mind – a key target audience. Social media would be central to this and would mean using strategies and tactics not seen before in Irish politics.

Events in the years preceding the referendum had resulted in an emotionally charged and activated support base. Many people felt aggrieved that the rights of gay and lesbian people had been denied for too long. Disrespectful language was commonplace on both sides of the argument, with much of this debate taking place on social media. Opponents were using examples of such language to claim that supporters of marriage equality were refusing to engage in open, respectful debate.

Those leading the Yes Equality campaign feared that the existing tone and language would work against achieving a positive result. While they empathised with vocal supporters, they were concerned that the lack of strategic oversight and the intolerance shown by some would undermine the prospects of constitutional change.

Yes Equality played a part in moderating the tone of the debate and coverage on social media, encouraging its supporters towards positive messaging. By creating content and responding to online developments, Yes Equality set the upbeat and respectful tone of the debate. This gave the campaign a head start in the conversation. Key influencers online were proactively contacted to help share the campaign’s central message and content, and most importantly to ensure the positive tone was maintained.



### **The power of personal stories**

Telling powerful, authentic personal stories in compelling ways was a key tactic that helped secure the 1,201,607 Yes votes in the referendum. These stories resonated with people and helped start conversations, change hearts and minds, build bases of support, generate donations, and inspire action. Central to the campaign strategy was to provide a space for people to tell these stories. Throughout the campaign, politicians, journalists, celebrities and citizens used social media to tell people why they were voting Yes. The messengers were as important as the message; videos of grandparents talking about why they were voting Yes went viral.

Similarly, memes featuring quotes and images of high-profile Yes supporters performed extremely well on social media. The Yes Equality team responded to this emerging trend and created more and more as the campaign progressed. These memes became a staple of the positive and shareable content of the campaign. Memes featuring Irish singer Daniel O'Donnell and former President of Ireland Mary McAleese were among the best-performing content on Yes Equality social media channels over the course of the campaign.



### **Building momentum on social media**

Between September 2014 and May 22nd, 2015, Yes Equality built a strong social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, amassing more than 100,000 followers across the platforms. Its social media campaign aimed at achieving two key objectives: to engage, educate and inform undecided voters, and to mobilise, motivate and empower supporters so they could become agents of change. Yes Equality was committed to supporting honest, transparent and knowledgeable dialogue on the Internet through social media. It encouraged providing an open and respectful space where people could engage in a positive debate.

During referendum campaigns in Ireland, regulations require broadcast media to give balanced coverage to both sides of the debate. Despite the divisive nature of the referendum, and the “us versus them” debates which played out on traditional media, the strong leadership of the Yes campaign and its use of social media created an open and respectful space. The campaign was able to promote key messages, set its own agenda and control the narrative on online platforms.

Facebook was the most effective platform for engaging and reaching the undecided voters and potential supporters. Its visual nature was ideal for supporting and amplifying engaging and informative content created by Yes Equality – including images, video, graphics and infographics. People with genuine questions or concerns were invited to get in touch. This resulted in many private messages to the Yes Equality Facebook page, all of which were answered. It was important for the campaign to hold up their end of the bargain. If you are inviting questions, it is important that you make the effort and respond.

Twitter was extremely effective for real-time campaign communications, sharing breaking news and engaging with journalists and influencers in the debate. It was also an important tool for mobilising, motivating and empowering supporters.

Twitter and related apps like TweetDeck were also used to monitor campaign activity – for example, breaking news, local media coverage and communications from Yes Equality local groups, opposition groups and other stakeholders. By setting alerts for certain users, keywords, and so on, the conversation online was monitored closely and used proactively. This also allowed for early warning, should a crisis occur. If a crisis on social media was identified, the campaign was ready to respond appropriately, addressing any inappropriate messages or misuse.

Instagram was used to engage the support base with empowering and creative imagery. Content from campaign-related hashtags was harvested and reposted on the Yes Equality Instagram feed.

YouTube was a key distribution channel for the various video content created, such as the daily campaign update vlogs from campaign co-director Grainne Healy.

The approach to social media sought to make it as easy as possible for people to show their support, leading to increased momentum. This included social media avatars, uploading videos on why you are voting Yes, donating to the campaign, joining local canvassing group, etc. These efforts were underpinned by clear calls to action (CTAs) that facilitated different campaign objectives. Each CTA was supported by material explaining clearly how and why to do it. For example, when encouraging people to join local canvassing groups, the invitation was accompanied by videos of Yes Equality canvassers, interactive maps of local groups, timetables and guidelines.

By anticipating and addressing the obstacles people may have faced in taking action, Yes Equality made it easier for them to take the next step to get involved.



## **The local campaign**

Many groups had been advocating for marriage equality for years, but now, faced with a referendum, a shift in focus was needed. Yes Equality strategists believed that the people of Mayo knew how to run the best campaign in Mayo, not from the headquarters in Dublin. They set out to build a grassroots network across the country in just a matter of months.

Local Yes Equality groups began emerging across the country, and in many cases social media provided the platform for these groups to form and organise. These sub-groups often began as Facebook Pages, started by active supporters. A grassroots network of over 60 Yes Equality sub-groups developed during the campaign, with most being active on social media throughout.

Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp were instrumental in providing the tools required to guide supporters and activists towards action and to facilitate local campaigns. Twitter was used to recruit new volunteers, WhatsApp groups were created to keep members updated on canvassing activity, and Facebook helped in promoting fundraising efforts around the country.

While the campaign nerve centre was in Dublin, and a central team provided strategic leadership and oversight, Yes Equality was keen from the outset not to seek or maintain control. Instead it focussed on building capacity and resourcing groups and individuals to run their own campaign. That said, it was paramount that the Yes Equality content and messaging be consistent, compelling and relevant across all platforms and sub-groups. Sub-group coordinators signed a protocol document agreeing to what was expected when using the Yes Equality name and brand.

The central team provided resources, branding, content and social media guidelines. Groups also received daily emails with suggested tweets, key messaging and media alerts. Ongoing communication was maintained through a centrally operated closed Facebook group, providing a forum to keep the Yes Equality HQ team abreast of any issues or developments. The dialogue between the networked community on social media was crucial to ensure that all communications were in line with core messaging and that the positive tone that had been established was maintained.

Yes Equality had a strict policy of not engaging with trolls or opposing campaigners on social media. The personal nature of the debate frustrated many people – especially when tweets from those opposed to the referendum were deliberately provocative. But it was essential for Yes Equality that they encourage their own activists towards positive messaging.



donation  
will fill this  
poster on  
lamp posts  
throughout  
Ireland.

### **Turning the negative into a positive**

Social media also gave Yes Equality a platform to respond to news stories, issues and online developments as they arose. The emotive nature of the referendum campaign created much media debate and occasional controversy. Yes Equality often needed to respond swiftly and adapt appropriately. For example, when the opposing side erected their posters there was frustration and anger among Yes supporters, with a few tearing them down and posting photos of the results on social media. Yes Equality responded immediately on its social media platforms to condemn the removing of posters by supporters on either side. It harnessed the frustration by sharing links on social media encouraging people to help fund the Yes poster campaign. This resulted in a surge in donations.

Similarly, TV debates were used as an opportunity to send messages aimed at increasing participation in local canvassing groups, leading to a large increase in volunteers signing up. Messages with clear calls to action, such as “Don’t get angry, don’t get frustrated – join your local canvassing group”, were promoted on social media in times of heightened media activity.

Integrating online activity into the wider efforts was the cornerstone of the successful digital campaign. An example was the crowdfunding campaigns that were promoted mainly through social media to help fund campaign posters and a nationwide bus tour. This three-week campaign aimed to raise €50,000. By the end it had reached almost €110,000, with over 1,400 people donating. Yes Equality engaged with influencers on social media to promote and share the campaign beyond Yes Equality social circles. Altogether, crowdfunding efforts driven by social media raised €158,560 for the campaign.



## Key Yes Equality digital campaigns

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### **Register To Vote**

Research by Yes Equality before the campaign found that most 18–35-year-olds supported a Yes vote for civil marriage equality, but were also less likely to vote. Voter turnout in this age group was traditionally lower: only 19% of those aged under 25 voted in the previous referendum in Ireland in 2013. Faced with this dilemma, Yes Equality ran a “Register to Vote” drive, and it was here that social media began to show its potential. As this was the first initiative under the newly formed Yes Equality campaign, it was also an opportunity to build the brand name and identity. In preparation, Yes Equality reached out to LGBT organisations, political parties, student unions, civil society organisations and trade unions for support in building a mass campaign. Versions of Yes Equality–branded social media content were created for stakeholders who supported the drive, which included their respective logos.

Infographics on how to register to vote were shared widely on social media platforms. [BeLonG To Youth Services](#), the Irish LGBT youth organisation, created a video called [“It’s in Your Hands”](#) encouraging young people to register; it garnered almost 45,000 views.

The power of Twitter became apparent early in the campaign. Those associated with Yes Equality used their contacts to recruit high-profile celebrities such as Colin Farrell, Hozier, Angelica Huston and Dara Ó Briain, who posed with Register to Vote signs and tweeted their support. This was covered by the national media. By the end of the three-week drive, the #RegisterToVote hashtag was used 1,881 times by 1,025 users, generating 6 million impressions, while the Yes Equality Facebook community grew from

conception to more than 20,000 likes. 3,500 people gave their contact details, seeking to become involved in the campaign.

These online tactics helped Yes Equality to achieve penetration in the early stages of the campaign, building strong brand recognition, increasing share of voice online and reaching target audiences. The Register to Vote efforts throughout the campaign resulted in almost 66,000 people being added to the electoral register.

### ***Pledge to Vote***

Following “Register to Vote”, efforts were made to continue engagement with activated supporters through a “Pledge to Vote” campaign. Its aim was to increase awareness, to mobilise and motivate early supporters and to provide pathways for people to join the campaign. By getting people to pledge to vote, we hoped to increase their likelihood of voting, increase their engagement with the Yes Equality campaign, and build their capacity to go from being supporters to persuaders.

Supporters were encouraged to pledge their vote through a dedicated Facebook app. This posted a message to their timelines that they had pledged to vote Yes in the referendum on May 22nd and encouraged their friends to do the same. The Facebook app also allowed us to capture data such as names and email addresses of supporters, who then received regular news and updates and were invited to become more involved in the campaign – by volunteering, joining their local Yes Equality group, donating, and so on.

### ***#MarRef***

The issue of marriage equality for same-sex couples and the prospect of a referendum had been discussed on social media for some time before the official campaign was launched. Much of these conversations were happening under the hashtag #MarRef, which was first used in November 2013. When the campaign was officially launched on 9 March 2015, Yes Equality promoted the use of #MarRef, resulting in 2,860 mentions. It thus became the *de facto* hashtag around which social media discussion of the referendum would revolve.

Over 890,000 tweets would be posted using #MarRef during the campaign. In the final week, nearly 1 billion global impressions were generated from 467,233 Twitter mentions by 384,002 users across the globe – equivalent to the number of impressions during a football World Cup final!

Out of [197,186 analysed tweets](#) containing #MarRef, only 9,171 are accompanied by #voteno; 93,747 have #voteyes or #yesequality hashtags. This makes it 91% Yes and 9% No hashtagged tweets out of total #voteno, #voteyes and #yesequality in Twitter conversations.

On voting day alone, the conversation generated 415 million impressions globally from 111,421 mentions by 67,710 users. This included participation from Hillary Clinton, Richard Branson, Ellen DeGeneres, Tom Daley, Alan Cumming, Sir Ian McKellen and J.K. Rowling.

### ***I'm Voting Yes, Ask Me Why***

A key objective for Yes Equality was to create a safe space where audiences could ask questions or voice any concerns. This was achieved online through our social media channels and website. Our social media policy set out guidelines to respond to all enquiries. The “I’m voting yes. Ask me why” campaign was designed to support storytelling and aimed to start a nationwide conversation on marriage equality, to change hearts and minds and build momentum for Yes. This initiative was complemented with offline activity: several open mic “I’m voting yes. Ask me why” events took place around the country, attracting local media coverage. The experiences and stories shared at these events were harvested for social media content and repackaged and promoted through online platforms.

### ***Get Out the Vote***

In the final weeks of the campaign, the focus shifted from “informing and educating” to a *Get Out the Vote* (GOTV) operation. Research had suggested that a higher turnout would increase the chances of a Yes victory, and that people who made a plan to vote were more likely to get to a polling station. Digital and social media became the main driver. A campaign-specific website was created, [getmetothevoteontime.ie](#), where voters were invited to register their mobile number and indicate the time when they were most likely to vote. Users received text reminders 24 hours and one hour before their selected voting time. Some 2,900 people signed up for the reminders, with social media creatives and activity promoting the key message of planning your vote.

To prevent complacency among supporters about voting, Yes Equality created social media content that conveyed the urgency of the issue. For voting day, campaign alerts were created according to reports of voter turnout.

For example, if we heard good reports on turnout we pushed out the green alert, amber for mixed reports, and red if a low turnout was reported. Despite indications of high turnout, the campaign decided to push out the red alert with the message “Turnout has slowed” – just in case. This plan worked: the post reached 25,000 people on Facebook, and many took action such as calling friends and family to ensure they had voted.

On voting day, Yes Equality changed its social media avatars to a graphic with the slogan “I’ve Voted. Have You?” This was soon adopted by waves of supporters. To encourage turnout, Facebook launched an “I’m a Voter” button on its newsfeed in the days leading up to the referendum, allowing users to both communicate that message and encourage others to follow suit. Similarly, Twitter introduced a “hashflag” on voting day, with a tick appearing in tweets containing the #IVoted hashtag. In a tweet, Twitter asked people to play their part and to encourage others to do the same.

### **#HomeToVote**

With over 72,000 tweets in 24 hours, generating around 400 million global impressions, the #HomeToVote hashtag used on voting day in the marriage equality referendum in Ireland illustrated the influential and sophisticated digital and social media campaign that captured the country’s imagination. The outpouring of images, videos and stories from the thousands of recent Irish emigrants travelling home to vote showed the passion that fuelled the Yes campaign. They included images of train carriages filled with balloons, and large queues arriving in Dublin airport. People posted images from check-in desks at airports all over the world, and selfies from the boats, trains and planes that were taking them home. The impact of the phenomenon was summed up by comedian Colm O’Regan, who tweeted: “The #hometovote is like when you are watching The Hobbit and the army of elves you’ve forgotten from earlier in the film arrive over the hill.” This was retweeted more than 4,100 times.

#HomeToVote reflected the type of campaign that Yes Equality set out to achieve, one that was positive and affirming and that people wanted to be a part of. The Yes campaign facilitated emotional engagement, which in turn encouraged action. The viral effect of #HomeToVote, which saw supporters travel from Europe, America, Canada, Africa and Australia, showed the emotional investment so many had in the outcome.

The influence of social media was clear. As the directors of the Yes Equality campaign noted, “If the #hometovote phenomenon had happened in another era, it would have given rise to no more than rumours or sporadic anecdotes, but in the age of social media everyone could watch it happen in real time online.” Its significance was also apparent when #HomeToVote took pride of place on the wall of Twitter HQ in San Francisco.



## Key lessons learned

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### **Integrate into the fabric of the campaign**

Because digital and social media are a tool for communicating, mobilising and organising, they must form a core part of a campaign strategy. Ensure that digital staff are involved in campaign planning and decision-making. For example, how a message is communicated on social media will differ from traditional media, and will require specific expertise.

### **Don't just create content – harvest it**

A digital strategy is incomplete without a supporting content strategy that consists of engaging, relevant, informative and shareable content that promotes key campaign messages and activities. But more than this, campaigns must create a space that encourages and helps supporters to create their own content. Authentic campaign messages from supporters to their networks can reach more people and incentivise more action. Supporting content created by individuals, stakeholders and other campaigning groups can also be harvested and leveraged on your channels, where appropriate and with permission.

### **Encourage supporter participation**

A digital campaign should make it as easy as possible for people to show their support online. If you provide a spectrum of participation, with different levels of engagement or points of entry, then supporters – whether active or passive – can identify ways they could get involved. Some people may want to show support by simply changing their social media avatars; others may want to donate online or even make a video. However supporters want to participate, it is important to ensure they can easily do so.

### **Respond to campaign developments in real time**

In a media landscape increasingly influenced by social media, the ability to respond in real time to campaign developments will allow you to get your message out quickly and take control of the situation. Acknowledging and responding early will allow you to own the narrative and claim the online space, while providing a message for advocates and supporters to get behind.

### **Put a plan in place**

Effective planning will help you execute a digital strategy. To help meet campaign objectives, Create and populate content calendars. Spend two hours at the start of the week developing and planning content for the week. Proactive content can be scheduled for peak times, freeing up time during the week for listening, engaging, and monitoring performance on social media.

### **Beyond the echo chamber**

Social media is often criticised as an echo chamber or filter bubble that reinforces one's beliefs. A digital strategy using informative and compelling content that inspires people to take action will ensure that your campaign moves from "clicktivism" to meaningful engagement. You should aim to achieve a balance between motivating and mobilising your support base to act as agents for change, and attracting new audiences and bringing them into the campaign.



## Spotlight: Telling stories online

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A key tactic of the Yes Equality campaign was to make the case for marriage equality through the telling of personal stories. This was supported by research which showed that when you talk to family or friends about why the right of lesbians or gay men to marry is important to you, it helps persuade them to vote Yes. With stories from same-sex couples seeking full equality, parents of gay and lesbian people speaking out for their children's equality, and many others who supported civil marriage for gay and lesbian couples, Yes Equality made a compelling case for voting Yes. The thousands of conversations taking place online and in homes across the country showed the diversity of support that existed, and ultimately helped change hearts and minds and build momentum and a critical mass of support.

A central message of the Yes Equality campaign was that a Yes vote was informed by Irish values of inclusivity, fairness and equality – values important to all of us. As co-director Grainne Healy said, “We are the family values campaign” – deliberately reframing the opposition's argument of protecting the traditional family. To this end, Yes Equality created the “Marriage and Family Matter” series. This featured profiles of Yes supporters such as 90-year-old [Madeline Connolly](#), who had 14 children, 25 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren, and believes that God made us all equal and that everyone should have the opportunity to get married. Stories such as Madeline's attracted high levels of reach and engagement on social media channels.

The power of these personal stories was immense and did not go unnoticed. By courageously speaking up, these advocates became leaders in the campaign and in their community. The diversity of stories helped to

reach potential supporters who could connect to those stories. Stories such as Madeline Connolly's helped win the hearts and minds of parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

As more and more stories were featured, countless others began sharing their own. The Yes campaign did not orchestrate the flood of personal stories that shaped the referendum, nor could it. But what it could do was help create a safe space for those who wished to tell others why a Yes vote was important to them. It was also the task of the campaign to leverage support and amplify these stories to showcase the faces of people from all across the country who were saying "Vote Yes", connecting the individual elements to the central narrative campaign message. Quotes from media interviews and town hall events were repackaged into content to be shared on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Social media was also used to reach out to and encourage others to share their stories.

Opinion polls indicated that support for a Yes vote was much lower among older demographics, but these were more likely to vote. Alert to the impact this could have on the outcome, third-level students at Trinity College Dublin's Student Union posted a video online which showed them calling their elderly relatives to ask them to vote Yes in the referendum. Titled "[Ring Your Granny](#)", it was an excellent example of efforts by younger generations to actively mobilise and persuade others. The video went viral, was reported on in mainstream media, and inspired others to record and publish videos of similar phone calls being made to their grannies. In total, "Ring Your Granny" videos amassed more than 250,000 YouTube views.

It was widely believed by the campaign, and supported by research, that one of the best ways to influence a person's decision to vote Yes was through conversations with those who would be affected by a No vote, or with family members or friends of those who would be affected. By telling these stories online, the campaign was able to reach people in their newsfeeds, so that even if they didn't have any personal connections who were gay or lesbian, they could see authentic, real people speaking about why it was important to them.

These stories provided consistent, engaging content for our online campaign that generated shares to reach new audiences and potential voters. But more than that, it gave supporters a way to connect with the campaign on a personal level and become more invested in the cause. It demonstrated the

diversity of support – young and old, urban and rural, male and female – from people who believed that a Yes vote was the right thing to do for Irish society and all of its citizens.

## Spotlight: Using Online Video for Yes Equality

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Video is one of the most effective ways of telling stories in the digital age. This was certainly true of the online effort during the marriage equality referendum campaign.

Short-form, shareable, engaging video is fast becoming the primary means of communicating with digital native audiences. Yes Equality aimed to reach this audience with compelling content that they would share with their friends and families. Social media was a crucial platform for distributing Yes Equality video content. Not only did the campaign create videos that promoted key messages and inspired supporters to share, it also created content that encouraged supporters to take action and get involved in the campaign, such as “Canvassing with Yes Equality”. Audiences were kept up to date on campaign information with daily vlogs from co-director Grainne Healy, who also described how people could do their part in the final weeks of the campaign.

Targeted Facebook ad campaigns ensured that video content was placed before key audiences, which helped amplify wider narratives that Yes Equality was promoting. Videos were targeted to audiences based on demographics such as age, location and interests. The campaign also aimed for cross-media coverage of video content. Videos which had a strong narrative and promoted key messages were pitched to mainstream media to achieve maximum exposure.

For Yes Equality, message delivery was as important as the message, so distribution of video content was crucial. When new content was being released, aimed at meeting strategic objectives, the campaign asked key influencers in advance for support in the online debate. When this worked best, it helped create a buzz, achieve maximum share of voice and reach wider audiences. The influencers were given briefings and updates from Yes Equality leaders, along with resources to support the campaign and remain on-message.

Yes Equality also benefited from other campaigns and organisations who were producing and promoting online video content advocating for a Yes vote on May 22nd. One such group was [Vote With Us](#), an online video campaign started by three friends from Dublin who wanted to create a format and platform where people could share why they were voting Yes and ask others to do the same. Vote With Us believed that “sharing hopeful, honest, and personal perspectives is the best way to engage Irish voters in the run-up to the referendum on marriage equality being held on Friday, May 22nd”. Their hope was to give voters many more reasons to vote in favour of equal marriage, and that each video would offer a unique reason to vote Yes.

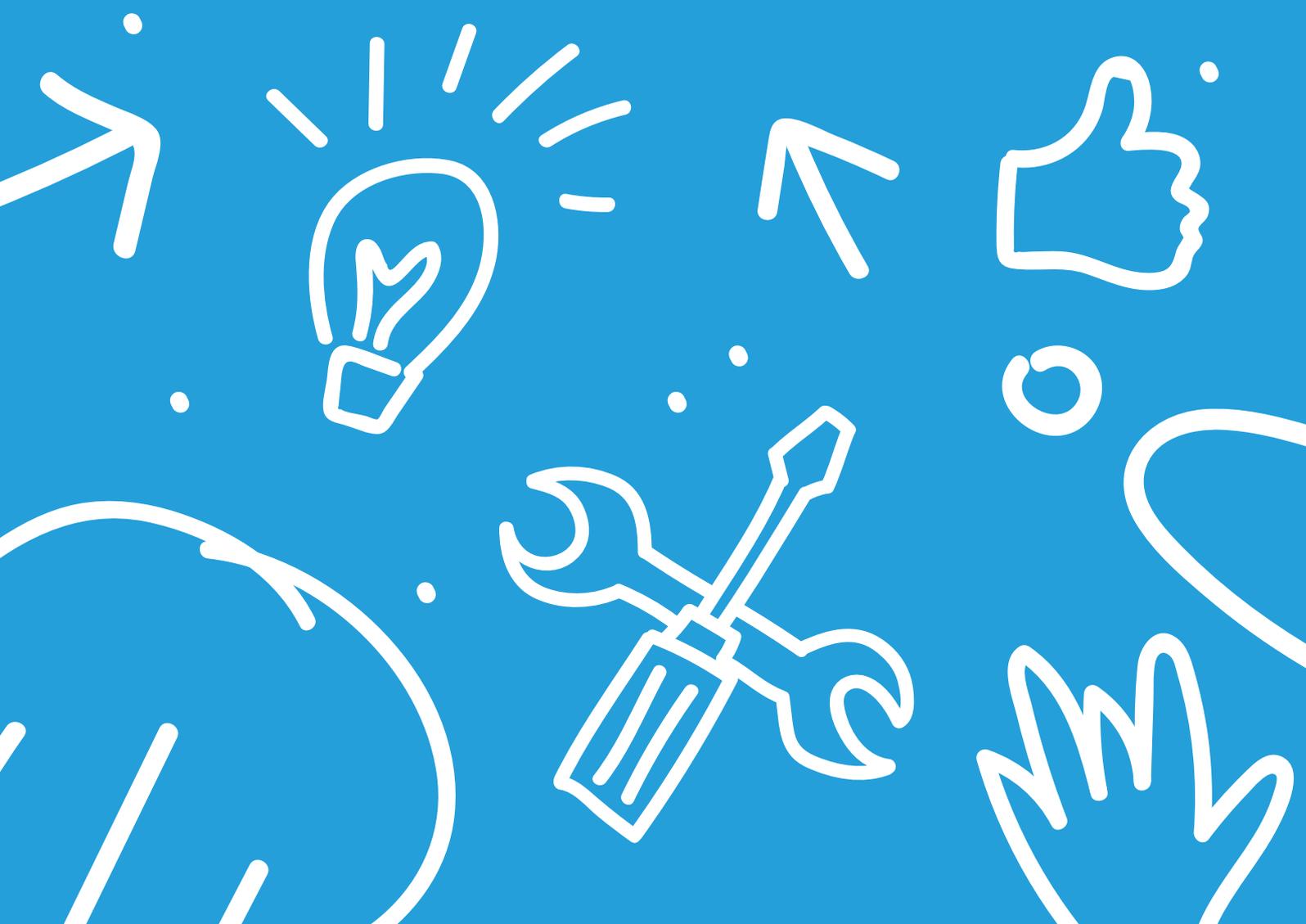
As well as inviting audiences to watch these videos, Vote With Us encouraged viewers to contribute their own video outlining their reasons to vote Yes in the referendum. They provided help and advice with making videos, which users then submitted for Vote With Us to promote. The Vote With Us campaign was an excellent example of using online effort to encourage others to take action.

Perhaps the most powerful contribution came from Brigid and Paddy, a couple from Dundalk, Co. Louth, who were married for 50 years, are practising Catholics, and wanted to spread the message that the most Christian thing to do was to vote Yes. They said everyone should “have the opportunity to experience the love, protection and companionship we have experienced”. In making their appeal, the couple explained how they fought hard for civil rights in Northern Ireland in the 1960s, and now they believed it was the time to support civil rights in the South. Brigid and Paddy instantly became viral stars, their story being covered in national and [international](#) media. They were invited to a marriage equality rally hosted by Amnesty International Ireland, where they appeared on stage.

Watch [Brigid and Paddy's video](#) and view the full [Vote With Us archive here](#).



# Social Media FAQs



# Social Media FAQs

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## ***Is social media really that important?***

Yes! But don't just take our word for it. [95% of global NGOs](#) say social media is effective for online brand awareness, and 80% find it an effective tool for recruiting volunteers.

## ***Which social media platforms should my campaign be using?***

That depends on your aims and objectives. For instance, if you are trying to reach and recruit people under 25, you probably should be active on Instagram. If you are trying to reach and engage policy-makers and decision-makers, then Twitter is likely to be more appropriate.

## ***How often should I post?***

There are no set criteria, but some platforms lend themselves to more posting than others. What is important is that your posts are consistent and relevant. Sending numerous tweets a day is fine, but you should probably be more selective on Facebook. For example, if you are organising a campaign event, you might "live-tweet" and engage with audience members on Twitter, then post images, video or media coverage to Facebook after the event.

The [2018 Global NGO Tech Report](#) found the following, based on 4,908 NGOs:



### **Facebook**

- 18%** post twice or more a day
- 25%** post once a day
- 23%** post every other day
- 19%** post once a week
- 15%** post less than once a week

### **Instagram**

- 8%** post twice or more a day
- 17%** post once a day
- 21%** post every other day
- 24%** post once a week
- 30%** post less than once a week

### **Twitter**

- 7%** tweet five or more times a day
- 24%** tweet 2–5 times a day
- 18%** tweet once a day
- 18%** tweet every other day
- 12%** tweet once a week
- 21%** tweet less than once a week

### ***How do we grow our followers?***

With a well-thought-out digital strategy, proper engagement, and the attention it needs. Frequent posts asking people to follow you is not a good strategy. Link to your social media accounts on your website, mailouts and email signature. Put your usernames on any literature or campaign materials that are produced. Get in on the conversation – use keywords and hashtags, and follow relevant users, to identify when your issue is being discussed, then join in. Be proactive! If you are starting out, consider using social media advertising to attract new followers.

### ***Is it OK to post the same content to each platform?***

Not exactly. While the message or call to action might be the same, the content should be designed and executed specific to each platform. For example, how images appear in social feeds differs between platforms, so they should be adapted accordingly. Use [Canva](#) templates that are already sized for each platform, or resize an image using [Landscape](#).

The style and tone of your posts may also differ between platforms. How you communicate the launch of a new report on Twitter will be different from how you present key findings on Facebook. This will be informed by understanding your audiences and what platforms they are most active on.

### ***My boss doesn't buy into social media. What should I do?***

Show, don't tell. One of the best things about social media is that you can easily measure everything you do. By setting yourself SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic and Timely), you can demonstrate successes with confidence and clarity. Show your boss how many people engaged with your social media posts that month, or the number of click-throughs to the volunteer or donate pages on your website, or how many views and shares your latest video got. Unlike traditional media, with social media you can report on performance in real time. Just make sure you articulate your success in a way they will understand and be able to recognise its true value.

### ***How should I respond to negative comments on social media?***

It is best to have an agreed policy on this from the outset, especially if you anticipate negative targeting from vocal opponents online. Consider what people post, then respond calmly and constructively. Don't respond or engage in heated debate when it is best to just ignore. On Twitter, it's helpful to create

a list of the main opposition accounts – then avoid engaging with these accounts.

Instead, your social media presence should aim to create a “safe space”, engaging and responding where people have legitimate questions or concerns.

### ***Should we have a hashtag? What should it be?***

Hashtags have become a staple of campaigns on social media, helping to organise, amplify and enrich conversations on your cause. The right hashtag may also help people discover you, serve as a call to action, and make your campaign go viral. Selecting it can be difficult, especially if other hashtags related to your cause have gained prominence. When searching for a campaign hashtag, ensure it is relevant, easy to understand, and synonymous with your campaign or cause. Use [HASHATIT](#) to see if your chosen hashtag is already being used elsewhere.

### ***What's the difference between a mention and a hashtag?***

A hashtag (#) is a way to denote a topic of conversation or participate in a larger linked discussion. When someone clicks on a hashtag, they see a feed of all the people and posts about that subject. If you're using hashtags in a post, ensure they are relevant or being used by others in the conversation. Avoid using too many hashtags in a single post.

A mention (@) links to a user's social media profile. When mentioned in a post, that account will generally receive a notification that they have been tagged. Mentions can be used to ask questions of users, to invite them to engage, or to bring a post to their attention. You can mention more than one user in a post using their @names. When sharing an image on Twitter, you can tag up to 10 users without using their @names in the tweet, by clicking on “Who's in this photo”, thereby saving characters.

### ***How much should we spend on social media advertising?***

It is increasingly difficult to attract high engagement on organic content on social media. Paid advertising ensures that you reach clearly defined audiences with your campaign message. Whatever your budget for social media advertising, use it wisely. Look at your overall digital strategy and prioritise your aims and objectives: Is there a message or action that you definitely want supporters to take? Once you've identified those, budget accordingly. The important thing is to be selective and strategic: When is it

likely to add most value to your campaign? Don't rely on this approach every time you post an update, as too much advertising can discourage people from supporting your campaign.

### ***How can I find content more specific to my audience?***

Keeping your social media calendar full of great content can be hard! But there are steps you can take to make it easier.

- Start with planning. What is the priority for the week? Fundraising? Create and schedule posts with a fundraising call to action at the start of the week.
- Use social listening tools such as [Tweetdeck](#) and [Hootsuite](#) to search for content using keywords and hashtags relevant to your cause or campaign.
- Identify and develop content series. These may run across a week or become a regular feature, e.g. once a week.
- Harvest social media channels to find content made by your supporters. Ask them for permission to re-share it on your campaign's social feeds.
- Invite supporters to send or share content relevant to a topic, conversation or event which you can use for campaign purposes. It can be submitted by email, messenger or WhatsApp, or via a dedicated hashtag.
- Re-share content. If a video performs particularly well, share it again. Don't be afraid to share the same post a few times on Twitter to reach different audiences. The average lifetime of a tweet is estimated at 12–18 minutes, which means that if you post a tweet now, anyone who opens Twitter 20 minutes later is much less likely to see it. So re-share!

### ***How do I get people to engage with our social media posts?***

Success on social media is generally measured by the number of likes, comments, shares, retweets and clicks on your content. So how do you ensure that you are getting the most value? Consider the following:

- Pose a question
- Host a Q&A
- Respond to user comments
- Show personality
- Run polls.

### ***How do we convert social media followers into active supporters?***

To convert people from observers to advocates, you need to enable and empower supporters to create content and share it with their peers, promoting your key message. Authentic campaign messages from supporters to their networks can reach more people and incentivise more action. You can achieve this by opening up your campaign to participation, allowing others to get involved and use their skills. Encourage participation by providing a spectrum with different levels of engagement and points of entry. Some people may want to show support by simply changing their social media avatars; others may want to donate online or even make a video. However supporters want to participate, it's important that they can.

### ***What are the top 5 benefits of using social media for campaigns?***

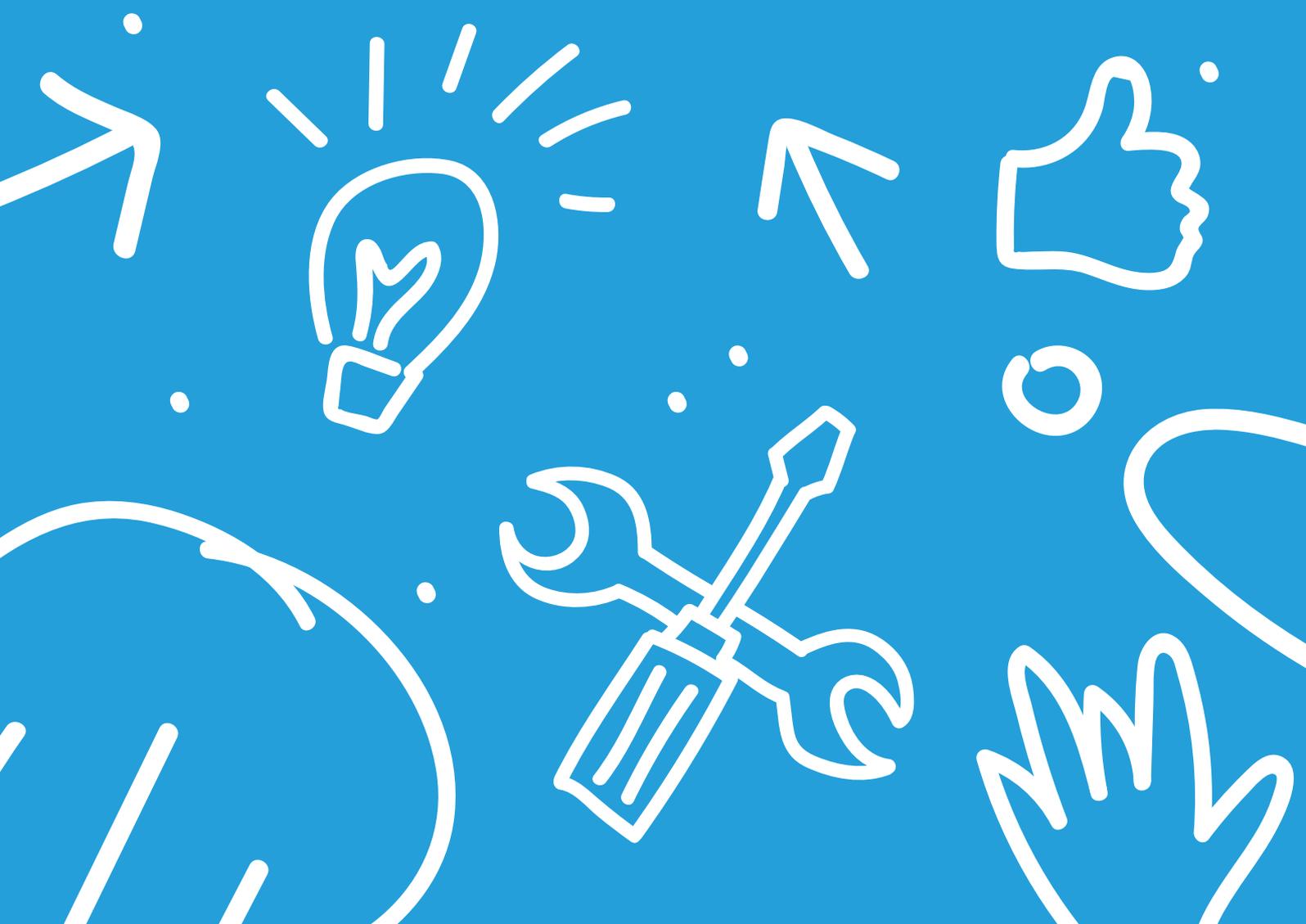
1. Tell powerful stories
2. Facilitate meaningful conversations
3. Organise locally
4. Engage and empower supporters
5. Measure performance and adapt accordingly.

Do you have a question we haven't answered? Send us an email:

[info@forachange.org](mailto:info@forachange.org)



# Resources



# Resources

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## **ForaChange Downloads**

[Designing Your Digital Strategy: Workbook](#)

[Content Calendar Template](#)

## **Other resources we like**

[MobLab](#) is a global learning and collaboration network powering the future of social change campaigns.

[NEON Toolkit](#) is for campaigners, activists and organisers.

[ActBuildChange](#) is a free online training resource for community organising.

[Beautiful Trouble](#), “a toolbox for revolution”, brings together dozens of seasoned artists and activists from around the world to distil their best practices into a toolbox for creative action.

[Nonprofit Tech for Good](#) provides valuable, easy-to-understand information, news and resources on nonprofit technology, online communications and social fundraising.

[350.org Training](#) aims to help you share knowledge, build relationships and lead effective workshops.

[Framing Equality: Communication Toolkit for Equality Bodies](#) explains the importance of framing – how stories are told interacts with our thinking – and explains how to craft our communication to create sustainable social change.

## **Content creation**

[Canva](#) is a free, easy-to-use graphic-design tool, which provides templates already sized for different social media platforms. Also see [Canva for Nonprofits](#).

[BeFunky](#) is an online photo editor and is also the easiest collage maker on the web.

[Recite](#) allows you to turn quotes into beautiful visuals with its vast range of templates.

[Infogram](#) offers an easy way to make infographics and charts to visualise your data.

[Piktochart](#) allows you to easily create professional-grade infographics using themed templates.

[Adobe Spark](#) is a suite of applications that allow you to create images, video and web pages.

[Biteable](#) creates animated videos easily – choose from hundreds of scenes and templates.

[Moovly](#) is an easy online tool that lets you create animated videos like a pro.

[Giphy](#) is an online database and search engine that allows you to search for and share animated GIF files. Or create your own!

[Twibbon](#) is a way to promote your campaign on social media, allowing people to overlay an image on their profile picture to show their support.

[Landscape](#) from Sprout Social is a handy tool to resize images for social media.

[Sprout Social](#) has created [this cheat sheet](#) to make it easy for you to reference the latest image sizes for social media.

Canva has compiled a list of sites offering high-quality [free stock photos](#).

### **Social media management tools (planning, monitoring, analytics)**

[TweetDeck](#) is a dashboard application for managing Twitter accounts.

Features include scheduling, effective search and filtering, configurable alerts and real-time updating.

[Hootsuite](#) is a social media management platform for Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and many more. Features include social media monitoring and listening, scheduling, analytics reporting and collaboration.

[Buffer](#) is designed to manage social media accounts by giving users the means to schedule posts.

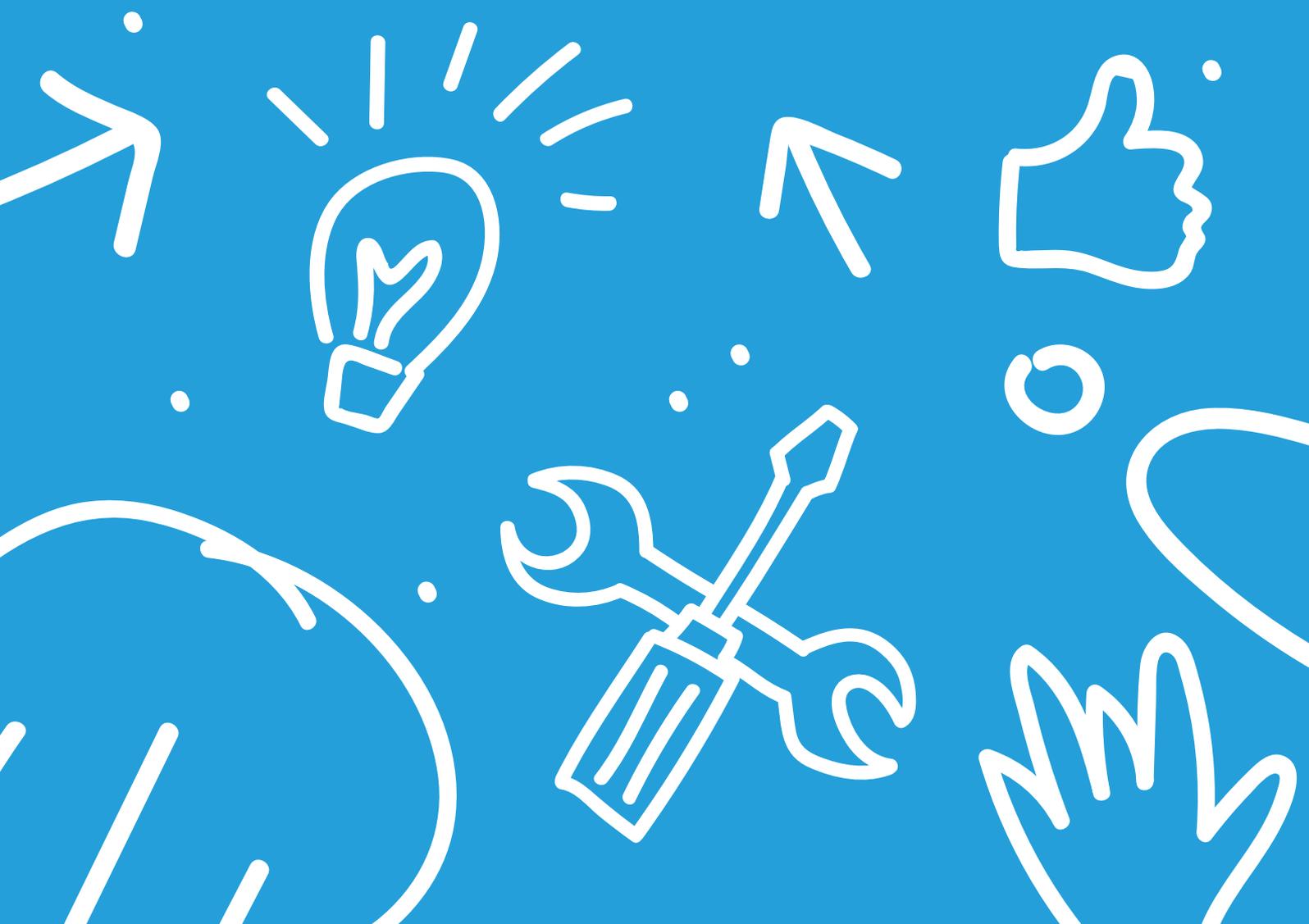
[Keyhole](#) allows you to track hashtags, accounts, keywords and URLs and provides useful analytics and insights.

[TweetReach](#) uses powerful analytics to show you how far your tweets have travelled.

[FollowTheHashtag](#) provides Twitter intelligence and analytics, such as reach, impressions, top tweets, top users and much more. You can export PDF and Excel reports.



# Further Reading



# Appendix 1. Instagram Activism: How campaigns and organisations mobilise the masses through powerful visuals and storytelling

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Doubling its user base in just two years, Instagram is the fastest-growing social media network out there. It now has more than 800 million monthly active users, and its posts attract a staggering 4.2 billion daily likes. Yet only around 39% of global NGOs say they have an Instagram profile. Of those, 42% say it is very or somewhat effective in meeting their aims and objectives, compared to 58% who say it isn't.

With an emphasis on all things visual, Instagram can help you cultivate and organise users with compelling storytelling through video and imagery to inspire people to get involved with your cause. Powered by online communities, the app provides ample opportunities for your cause to be discovered and for you to engage with new and existing audiences.

Instagram and social media more generally have been the subject of much discussion and debate about their impact on people's mental health and wellbeing. What the campaigns and organisations listed below highlight is that, in an era when social media use shows no signs of slowing down, we must embrace the platforms and use them to challenge, inform and educate.

Below are some of the ways that activists, NGOs and grassroots movements are using Instagram effectively, to achieve their advocacy goals and bring about real, meaningful change.

## **UN Foundation**

One of the many benefits of using Instagram for your campaign is the ability to build communities around your cause and encourage supporters to take action by sharing images, stories and videos to raise awareness and facilitate discussion. That's exactly what the UN Foundation set out to do ahead of the COP 23 conference in November 2017, where world leaders met to discuss pressing environmental issues. According to the UN Foundation, 2017 was an unprecedented year for climate change, with extreme storms, droughts, flooding and wildfires signalling the need to accelerate climate action. To

bring the issue to the fore, the UN Foundation partnered with [Climasphere](#) in a campaign to show how we all witness climate change.

[#EyeOnClimate](#) asked users to fill Instagram feeds around the world with powerful messages about our climate. User-generated content posted on Instagram with the campaign hashtag was featured on the UN Foundation's and Climasphere's Instagram profiles. The campaign produced hundreds of unique perspectives on climate change from across the globe, including this time-lapse video of wildfires in California. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BbNGDsSnvr7/?taken-by=unfoundation>

### **#CookForSyria**

#CookForSyria, “the supper club that became a global movement”, is an international fundraising initiative that encourages everyone from top chefs to people at home to cook using Syrian ingredients and [raise money](#) to support victims of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and those dispersed throughout Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and beyond. #CookForSyria was started by award-winning Instagrammer Clerkenwell Boy, journalist Serena Guen and others as a one-off charity gala dinner to raise money, through food, for Unicef UK's Children of Syria fund. With growing involvement from leading chefs, it expanded into a 100-restaurant campaign and a number of pop-up cafés. The volunteer-led movement has gone from strength to strength, with supper clubs being hosted in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Dubai, Edinburgh, Hong Kong, London, Melbourne, Paris, San Francisco, Sydney and elsewhere. Aiming to preserve and celebrate Syrian culture amid one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time, the campaign has also produced a not-for-profit cookbook with over 100 donated Syrian-inspired recipes.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BVXHwYDjgy9/?hl=en&taken-by=cookforsyria>

For Clerkenwell Boy, the mission is simple: “Through cooking, sharing recipes and the power of social media, we invite everyone to help make a difference and positive contribution towards this important initiative.” So the next time you hear someone criticise Instagram as “just people sharing photos of their lunch”, remind them that doing just that has raised more than £350,000 for Unicef's Children of Syria fund and increased awareness of the plight of children in the war-torn country.

### **Louise Delage**

Recent years have seen the swift rise of Instagram “influencers”, people successfully building massive communities of followers as they share insights

into their daily life and tips on topics such as health, beauty, fitness and lifestyle. Their ability to engage and influence large groups of people served as inspiration for Louise Delage. Louise was the archetypal #instafamous “influencer”, amassing more than 100,000 followers in mere months with images and short videos of her supposed “beautiful life” of never-ending parties and vacations.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BKoooQ8Bz3z/?taken-by=louise.delage>

What her followers failed to notice was that “Louise” was accompanied by an alcoholic drink in each post. She wasn’t a real person at all but rather the brainchild of the [Addict Aide](#) and [BETC “Like My Addiction”](#) campaign to raise awareness of alcoholism among young people.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=ecRhesITlwE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=ecRhesITlwE)

Not only did the “Like My Addiction” campaign attract global media coverage, there was also a significant increase in clicks to the Addict Aide website. The campaign succeeded largely because it tapped into how people use Instagram and consume content on the app. Who the target audience were, and what social media platform they were most active on, were given careful consideration and no doubt informed the campaign concept and execution.

### **The Worldwide Tribe**

The Worldwide Tribe is an organisation and online community founded by Jaz O’Hara which aims to help and raise awareness for refugees across Europe and the Middle East. After she visited the Calais Jungle, a notorious makeshift migrants’ camp, Jaz’s social media post about it went viral. She has continued to visit and work in camps in France, Greece, Turkey and Jordan, supporting people as they travel to safety. Starting as a fundraising effort, the online community raised more than £150,000 for the Calais camp. Now Jaz and her team use creative storytelling to give voice to the voiceless, while also running and supporting tangible grassroots projects on the ground.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BcKuT96lrTA/?taken-by=theworldwidetribe>

The Worldwide Tribe is successfully using online efforts to facilitate offline action, and vice versa, in the refugee camps, telling the stories of those they met along the way to the active online community on Instagram and other social media platforms. Speaking to [Red Magazine](#), Jaz is clear on why she harnesses the power of social media to bring about change: “social media isn’t going anywhere, we either embrace it and use it to its maximum potential, or don’t. I choose option one.”

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BacSe0VBInC/?taken-by=theworldwidetribе>

### **#MyUnfilteredLife**

[See Me](#), a Scottish programme to end mental health discrimination, launched a campaign in September 2016 which encourages people to ditch the Instagram filters and be candid about their day-to-day lives in a bid to banish stigma surrounding mental health issues. People used Instagram to share both the highs and the lows with #MyUnfilteredLife. For See Me, “seeing that it is okay to share how you really feel and that speaking about your mental health is a good thing, could make a huge difference to someone struggling alone.”

[https://www.instagram.com/p/BaqpAY\\_hMtK/?taken-by=seemescotland](https://www.instagram.com/p/BaqpAY_hMtK/?taken-by=seemescotland)

With #MyUnfilteredLife, See Me’s organisational aims and objectives were to build their Instagram community, show more personality, and engage younger audiences ahead of a children and young people’s campaign they were planning. The response was beyond all of their expectations. #MyUnfilteredLife attracted more than 1,000 posts, See Me’s Instagram following grew organically by 3,000, and their best post received 185 engagements, up 925% on their previous top post. But the biggest mark of success? The campaign continues to this day, with daily posts from users navigating the complexities of life. As young people continue to post, share and like, the See Me campaign shows how we can use social media to challenge how we use it to address the stigma over mental health.

### **DoSomething.org – #GunsOut**

DoSomething.org is a digital platform powering offline action, mobilising young people to sign up for a volunteer, social change or civic action campaign to make a real-world impact on causes they care about. In response to mass shootings and gun violence in the US, DoSomething.org asked its members for their views on guns on college campuses. They found that 7 out of 10 would feel less safe if concealed-carry handguns were allowed on college campuses, and 85% don’t feel that young people’s voices are represented well in national conversations about gun violence.

In response, DoSomething.org partnered with leaders in the gun violence and prevention movement, including the [Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence](#) and [The Campaign To Keep Guns Off Campus](#), to give young people a tangible way to take meaningful action on the issue. Supporters were encouraged to share a picture of themselves flexing their “guns” (i.e., biceps) on social media,

tagging their college president, saying that the only guns they want on campus are the ones they can flex. The objective is to urge colleges to sign an official letter against concealed-carry on campus.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BC8DpdVyd0e/>

The campaign saw new colleges and universities across the US join the coalition, bringing to 44,000 the number of students who now had support from their college presidents to keep guns off campus. While the #GunsOut social media campaign [might be over](#), the movement is still going strong – DoSomething.org continues to enlist advocates to rally support against guns in their college.

Watch the #GunsOut campaign video below, and [check out some other DoSomething.org campaigns](#) that have brought about real change.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=95&v=CVFqCxQZJyY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=95&v=CVFqCxQZJyY)

### **Andy's Man Club – #ItsOkayToTalk**

[Luke Ambler](#) founded the mental health support network Andy's Man Club in 2016 after his brother-in-law Andy died by suicide. With male suicide rates three times higher than female rates in the UK, Luke wanted to make a difference. He started the #ItsOkayToTalk campaign to provide a safe and open space for men to talk about their mental health. To get involved, people take a selfie while making the okay sign, share it on social media and tag friends to encourage them to do the same, spreading the message that it's okay to talk.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BT4PCyyDKb3/>

Attracting local, national and international media attention, Andy's Man Club has gone from strength to strength, extending the campaign offline and growing to a network of fourteen community clubs, two college clubs, and seven prisons with up to ten clubs in each. Andy's Man Club plans to continue its mission, encouraging people to talk and providing a platform to do so.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Bdr1CVun7AR/?taken-by=andysmanclubuk>

Whether challenging mental health stigma, telling the stories of displaced refugees, or mobilising grassroots support for women's rights, these campaigns are successfully showing how social media is a perfect campaigning tool and how Instagram's youthful users are more active than most.

## Appendix 2. The Changing Nature of Changemaking

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New-era campaigning – using online platforms to work in an organised and active way towards a shared goal – gained prominence through movements such as the [Arab Spring](#), the democratic uprisings that originated in Tunisia and spread across Arab countries in 2011. Many lauded the role that social media played in facilitating large-scale mobilisations, with like-minded revolutionaries using digital platforms to build extensive social networks and organise political action in the process. Others, however, were more [sceptical of its true impact](#).

Inspired by the new possibilities, other forms of new-era campaigning emerged, such as “hashtag activism”, where groups began to organise conversations on social media under a common hashtagged word, phrase or sentence with social and political significance. For example, in 2014 more than one million people – including high-profile celebrities, influential leaders and politicians – tweeted #BringBackOurGirls, raising global awareness of the approximately 250 schoolgirls kidnapped in Nigeria.

With the rise of social media, it was suddenly easier than ever for supporters to take action. By signing an online petition, sending an email to elected representatives, or making a donation, people could show their support from the comfort of their home or office using nothing more than a handheld device. But for some, herein lies the problem. Modern collective action such as the Arab Spring uprisings was being reduced to a “flash in the pan”, and the #BringBackOurGirls campaign was accused of “clicktivism”. Both were perceived as being incapable of creating the meaningful engagement that is required to achieve real change.

In 2016, the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the US saw the landscape change once again. His rise to prominence during the presidential campaign was touted by many as being, at least in part, a symptom of foreign interference and the spread of fake news on social media. Facebook, Twitter and Google executives are still grappling with the fallout, with pressure mounting for the tech giants to take real action to ensure that the platforms are not a threat to democracy. As the push for transparency and accountability continues, it's important that we keep using social media

as a force for good. The Resistance, for example, is a political and cultural movement led by Americans who oppose the politics and policies of President Trump. It is being fuelled online.

Whether used to facilitate large mobilisations, inspire group conversations or serve as President Trump's primary means of public communication, social media is here to stay. Of course it needs to be regulated, and we should keep a critical eye, but it is futile to dismiss the potential it can yield, through awareness-raising or otherwise. In an article titled ["#Bringbackourgirls hasn't brought back Chibok's girls, but it has changed Nigeria's politics"](#), Chitra Nagarajan claims that the Bring Back Our Girls movement "was instrumental in mobilising the country in protests and conversations about the abductions and, in doing so, helped remove a Nigerian president from power in what will be the first democratic transition in the country's history". The influence of social media should not be predicated on a rigid result, but rather on how it can be used to build movements for change. As we move forward, how can we ensure that digital organising efforts are sustained, or that we empower those who engage online to become more involved in a campaign?

Much of the future of changemaking will be shaped by the millennial generation, those born between 1980 and 2000. [The Millennial Impact Project](#), published annually since 2010, is the most comprehensive and trusted study of the millennial generation and their involvement in causes. Based on surveys conducted between 2011 and 2016, *Cause, Influence & the Workplace: The Millennial Impact Report Retrospective: Five Years of Trends* found that millennials learn about and donate to causes digitally, that their peers are a critical influence on their decision to take action, and that they are motivated by opportunities to use and develop their skills. Increasingly, millennials are motivated to support causes rather than the organisations working to address them. Therefore, campaigns that can use digital and social media to enable and empower supporters to create content that they share with their peers, and that promotes their central message, will be at an advantage in their quest to achieve systemic change.

So what does this look like? First and foremost, campaigns must draw supporters in with a compelling cause that appeals to their intrinsic desire to do good. Excellent storytelling and issue framing is crucial to converting observers to ardent supporters. It must be authentic and demonstrate how things can improve and what role a person can play in making that happen. Once you've hooked them, how do you compel supporters to take

real action? While proactive social media activity will enable supporters to stay informed, new-era campaigns move them to deeper engagement by inspiring offline action and providing opportunities for collaboration. This type of engagement can also play a vital role in how supporters influence their peers to become involved. What would make you stand up and take notice – your friend sharing content from a campaigning organisation, or content created by your friend about why that issue is important to them? Authentic campaign messages by supporters to their networks can reach more people and incentivise more action. Supporting content created by individuals, stakeholders and other campaigning groups can also be harvested and leveraged on your channels, where appropriate and with permission.

Empowering supporters to become advocates requires strategic leadership from campaigns to frame the cause and develop the narrative, then to open it up to participation. Having a bank of engaging, relevant, informative and shareable content that promotes key campaign messages and activities sets the tone of the campaign, inspires others to get involved and ensures that they can remain “on-message”. Remember, people want to participate, so your campaign should make it as easy as possible for them to do so.

As the symbiotic relationship between digital activity and campaigning continues to flourish, we must be nimble in our response, embrace new opportunities and invite others to join us.

