

### USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

There is a growing need to be part of an often public but essential conversation on EU politics and policy through social media. Using social media creates the potential to join that conversation, thereby complementing (but not replacing) face-to-face contact.

Decision-making procedures in EU affairs are more complex and are no longer uniform- they require their own appropriate targeted and tailor-made lobbying strategy. This fragmented nature of the policy environment and larger set of players involved in policy making means that campaigns increasingly need to incorporate other elements beyond traditional public affairs. Social media can help increase communications capacity through being used for **legislation monitoring, economic intelligence, keeping up to date with industry news, strategy, networking and coalitions building.**



#### Where:

- ▶ twitter, blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube, Flickr, Tumblr

#### Who to target:

- ▶ policy makers, policy influencers (corporations, trade associations, NGOs, think tanks etc.), media

#### What social media can be used for:

Social media is another platform on which to communicate. It is now a major tool for carrying out all types of research and engagement for both lobbyists and policy makers. If only for visibility purposes it can be beneficial to embrace some of the channels available, but the benefits can go beyond that as you are able to:

- ▶ **Shape online policy environment** and public debate;
- ▶ **Raise awareness and engagement** on a policy topic in a timely and interactive manner;
- ▶ **Monitor** positions, conversations and reputation of stakeholders;
- ▶ **Shape your reputation** to a wider audience creating more trustworthiness. With the focus recently on transparency among the institutional processes and lobbyists, social media presence validates your identity as you have third party endorsement, which can result in more credibility for your organisation;
- ▶ **Gain instantaneous feedback.** You can easily track what multiple stakeholders are asking for;
- ▶ **Grow a list of advocates** by identifying and building relationships with people who support your position;
- ▶ **Learn** from industry experts and **provide your own expertise;**
- ▶ **Amplify messages** as you are able to mobilise a larger number of people.



For information on social media platforms and how best to use them as well as how to create a social media strategy, please see our social media guide.

### BEST PRACTICES

Once social media has been incorporated into an overall organisational strategy, the following advice sets out how to use social media as effectively and productively as possible for the purposes of public affairs:

## CONTENT TO PROVIDE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- ▶ The more conscious an organisation is in defining its interests, the more effective it is at communicating its goals and positions online and off. So make sure you **have clear organisational goals and objectives to which you can align your social media activity**.
- ▶ **Be proactive and present solutions online** to set the agenda of your policy issues. Integrate what you say with long term plans.
- ▶ Many traditional resources that are available to policy makers and stakeholders can be generic so it is necessary to develop new ones that **grab the attention of stakeholders and EU officials**. Take advantage of interactive opportunities such as **infographics, video presentations, and graphical explanations** of a topic- social media is a key conduit of this form of content presentation.
- ▶ When writing your content **use a newsworthy angle**. By tying it in to a wider story/policy issue more people would be made aware of what you want to say.
- ▶ **Publish interesting or important industry facts using your expertise**. By creating something interesting or compelling people will naturally want to talk about it, share it with their friends or colleagues, or even write about it. Good content has the ability to showcase your company as an industry opinion leader meaning you are able to lead the debate on relevant topics.
- ▶ Two types of content are needed in general-**technical issues** that could be examined by specialised civil servants, and **something that can be summed up in ten seconds by politicians**. **Provide access to both on social media**, but make sure the content is framed so that people understand what type of content it is. For many issues you will have to provide the same information in both formats.
- ▶ **Know the details of what you're talking about**. Make sure what you say is valid, as any misinformation affects reputation.



No presence on social media or websites that are not up to date can seem unprofessional and therefore lower your reputation among stakeholders who are already active online. The quality of your content influences your reputation, as illustrated above, but you must also **think creatively about the presentation and the channels you use for your content**- online channels offer the greatest scope for creativity and diversity.



**Repetition is key**- if policy-makers hear message a number of times through various different channels then they are more likely to take note. Social media is especially useful in that it easier to repeat messages (in a variety of ways) in a non-intrusive manner.



It is essential to communicate via a number of means and channels. You must target policy-makers from multiple approaches and **make sure that your social media correlates to your offline lobbying efforts**.



A compelling story which resonated with its audience works better, especially if presented in a simple and digestible manner. To communicate on EU legislation you must **extract the most understandable part of it and focus on the impact that it could have for stakeholders**.



Be helpful in your messages and **make sure you are not creating useless, automated information that does not resonate with people**.



**Make your content focused and to-the-point**. Try to find the most effective 'key words' while eliminating jargon, clichés, and over-used words that no longer mean anything.



Overall, any effort to influence a policy maker requires one comprehensive approach that integrates strategy, tactics and techniques. All your resources should be interdependent and to lobby effectively you must find an optimal mix of resources for the task at hand. Social media is increasingly becoming a useful lobbying resource when integrated into a wider communications strategy.

## REPUTATION

## PERSISTANCE

## INTEGRATION

## CREATE A STORY

## BE HUMAN

## BE DIRECT AND CONCISE