

GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMIT ON DIGITAL RIGHTS - APRIL 2024

Toolkit

Activism & comms

Strategies for effective communication to
engage broader audiences, address
disinformation and online harassment, taking
care of our well-being.

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**PROTECT
THE PROTEST**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Communication strategies

When we talk about activism, what really matters is raising awareness, mobilizing people, and provoking those positive changes we need in our society. Nowadays, social media is a super powerful tool to achieve precisely those goals. But it's not just about posting content without criteria and waiting for people to react: for our digital activism to be effective and far-reaching, there are certain recommendations we suggest keeping in mind.

- **Think about the main message.** Often, the causes we advocate for intersect with each other. But we must understand that online activism is much more effective when we focus on communicating two or three main messages and explain why they are important. By focusing on a few key ideas, we can convey them more clearly and forcefully, instead of scattering the message.
- **Who is our audience?** The message to choose has a direct link to the audience we seek to reach, which is a priority too. Certain profiles of people will find one message more or less emotional than another, for example. So, we can imagine an "average person" from our audience and create a profile: What interests that person? What are their political ideals? Are they informed about what we are communicating? This will help us adjust our message more effectively, or know when to seek allies to ensure it reaches the audience we seek.
- **Understand the narratives and take advantage of them.** Narratives are the stories, tales, or frameworks that predominate around a certain topic or social issue. Often, these prevailing narratives can reinforce biased views or unjust power structures. Therefore, we must ask ourselves: What is said when this topic is discussed? Can we challenge that narrative with a counter-narrative? Or can we propose an alternative story that offers different and more inclusive perspectives?
- **Emotionality.** We know that social media content that appeals to personal experiences and emotions—as long as it does not reinforce stereotypes or seem "fake"—has a great power of impact and mobilization. Hope-based communication, for example, is a style that focuses on positive outcomes, solutions, and the common values that unite us, understanding that hopeful narratives can inspire more people to join a cause.

- **Use humour.** Humor, satire, or fun can make a serious topic lighter to approach, and thus challenge prevailing narratives or highlight absurd ideas. It can be applied in multiple forms such as memes or cartoons, attracting attention and serving as an excellent tool for questioning power structures. It, however, should be used judiciously, this is, understanding the gravity/context of the topic at hand, and avoiding being "cringe".
- **Pay attention to the news!** Statements or messages from influencers, opinion leaders, or people with power over the topics we want to communicate can be useful to take advantage of the context and make our messages resonate more. We must be prepared to act or respond to any of these statements, especially when they are detrimental to the cause we defend, because, in general, if we do not act in time, we run the risk of losing the opportunity.
- **Be flexible and adaptive.** It's not only important to read the latest news and developments about our activism topics but also be open to experimenting with new formats and communication channels that are becoming popular, to reach wider and more diverse audiences. For example, we can try creating short and dynamic audiovisual content for platforms like TikTok, or explore the use of filters and augmented reality effects on Instagram to make our profile more viral.
- **Care about the design.** The way we design our social media posts - photos or videos - is crucial. We must capture people's attention with a clear and memorable message for our target audience. A well-designed post is easy to read, visually appealing, and accessible to everyone. We also want our posts to stand out from the crowd: for this, we can combine original images or designs, thus creating posts that not only inform and educate but also inspire and engage our followers.



The comms teams from multiple organizations and movements apply these strategies when they use their social media accounts. The following seven examples, compiled together with the team at Amnesty International Argentina, show how human rights activism can be translated into the online world most effectively. When clicking on the images, you can check the examples.



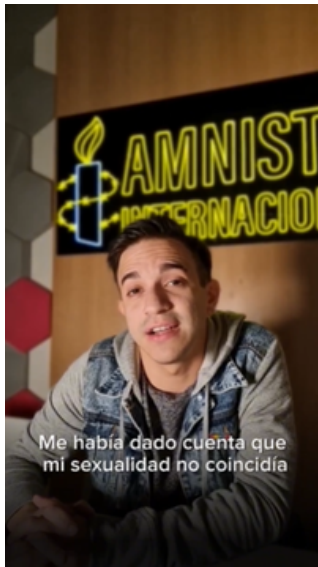
Testimonials on International Pride Day

In this short, emotional video published on Instagram for Pride Day, testimonials from influencers from the country and around the world are highlighted, relating to their experience as members of the LGBTIQ community. This helps reach new audiences and increase engagement on the account.

Coverage During the Senate Debate on Labor Quotas for Transgender People



For certain topics, such as the Labor Quota for Transgender People in Argentina, the communication strategy should take advantage of the current events -in this instance, the debate happening in Congress- to provide coverage of the process and, simultaneously, raise awareness among the general public about the importance of it. To do this, three posts were shared: the first on the day the floor debate began - with the goal of introducing the topic on the day's agenda-; the second while the debate was taking place - to raise awareness and educate about it; and the last when the bill passed the Senate - in order to inform.

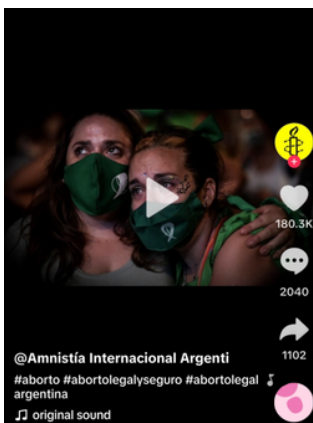


Story About the Importance of Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)

Within the context of an advancing discourse against a topic -in this case, CSE in Argentina-, we can either focus on educating and informing the public, or address those narratives from an emotional perspective. In this instance, the team took the latter approach by creating a brief first-person video on the topic "When did you have your first kiss?". The aim was to emphasize the significance of CSE and promote understanding of diversity.

Illustrations with Information about Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)

While this post also addresses the topic of CSE, it does so from an educational perspective, with simple and clear information using professional and attractive illustrations. The objective of the photo carousel is to take advantage of the back to school period to emphasize why it is necessary to defend sex education in schools and thus keep the topic on the public agenda.



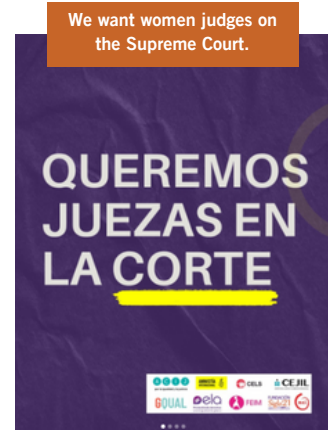
TikTok and Trending Sounds to Discuss a Specific Topic

TikTok is a platform where trends can sometimes change within a matter of days. It's important to recognize these viral trends and evaluate whether the topic we want to communicate can adapt to them, in order to take advantage of the reach outside of conventional social media channels and reach new people. With this in mind, a photo carousel was created around the question "What were you doing the night abortion became law [in Argentina]?", using a sound that was trending at that time.



Inclusion of a Female Judge on the Supreme Court: Working with Other Organizations

On other occasions, the support and voice of other allied organizations is effective when advocating for a cause. In this post, a plural verb was used in a short and simple phrase (“we want women judges on the Supreme Court”), and the logos of allied organizations were shown so that the request, female representation on the Argentinian Supreme Court of Justice, has a plural dimension, and thus greater backing.



Abortion and Misinformation: Data Combined with Humor



As we mentioned previously, humor can be an excellent tool to attract the public's attention and encourage them to share the content. This photo carousel begins with a meme as a “hook”, which then introduces the public to data from the report prepared by Amnesty International Argentina on the implementation of the abortion law, three years after its approval in the country. The post was also made in conjunction with an allied influencer, who was specifically designated as a co-author of the post so that it could be shared across both Instagram accounts.



Protecting ourselves from disinformation

Nowadays, unfortunately, objective facts have less influence in shaping public opinion than content that appeals to personal emotions and beliefs. In this context, we have seen a rise of "fake news", which are intentionally false news with the objective of misinforming. An even more dangerous variant of this phenomena are "deep fakes", content created synthetically and manipulated to appear real thanks to advances in artificial intelligence.

The first thing to understand when we discuss disinformation is that all people are vulnerable to fake news. However, there are tools we can use to protect ourselves and exercise more effectively our digital citizenship, that is, the rights and responsibilities we have as citizens in the digital world.

First and foremost, it is essential to **VERIFY** the information we read. This can be achieved in various ways, such as consulting "fact-checkers", entities specialized in analyzing and verifying the truthfulness of media content, public statements, and social media posts (a list of fact-checker signatories to the International Fact Checking Network Code of Principles can be found at <https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/signatories>). It is also recommended to review open information sources, both official and non-governmental, that publish data and research. It is also useful to visit news agencies, organizations that gather news reports and transmit them to subscribing news organizations. Finally, there are tools that allow you to verify the authenticity of online images, such as TinEye or Google reverse image search.

Secondly, it is important to **QUESTION** the content we see, especially on social media, by asking ourselves basic questions such as "who is the author of this?", "is this news or an opinion?", "what sources is it based on?" and "is it mentioned in any other media?". This critical exercise will help us evaluate the reliability of the information.

Finally, we can **USE THE TOOLS** provided by the social media platforms themselves to report fake news and find information from sources we trust. For example, on Twitter, we can add "(from:user)" to our search to find posts only written from a particular account..

Adopting these practices will allow us to navigate the current complex information environment more safely and critically, avoiding becoming victims of disinformation and exercising our digital citizenship more responsibly.





Dealing with online harassment

Being a young activist is a fantastic way to fight for the causes we believe in. However, our activism can expose us to situations of harassment. This includes harmful comments, threats or rumors being posted, the spread of humiliating photos or videos, the impersonation of others to share false information, or people posting comments that incite racial hatred or content based on religion, ethnicity or other personal characteristics. Doxing is also considered harassment, which is the unauthorized publication of your personal information with the intention of intimidating or harming your privacy.

While it is very important to educate and raise awareness about online violence, advocate for laws and policies that protect young activists from online harassment, and work alongside key stakeholders to implement effective measures, it is equally important to not forget about ourselves. We know that online activism can be exhausting and even toxic at times, with all the harassment and negativity. So what tools should we remember to take care of ourselves?

- **Let's talk about self-care.** We all know that social media is a big part of our lives, but it's key to take breaks from time to time and do things that help us relax. Remember, your well-being comes first!
- **Establish strong support systems.** As young activists, we should have a support network that supports us and provides us with support when we need it. To build these networks, it can be very beneficial to share our experiences with other activists, or to connect with organizations and groups that work in the defense of human rights and mental health.
- **Use the resources offered by the platforms.** All social networks, such as Twitter/X, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, among others, offer tools that allow us to limit the content we see. This includes not only blocking/reporting accounts and/or marking content as abusive, but also muting certain terms, words or topics that may be sensitive to you at any given time. Use them to your advantage to make your social media experience more positive!



- **Never underestimate the need for professional help.** If the harassment becomes too overwhelming or starts to seriously affect your mental health, don't hesitate to consult with therapists or counselors. They can be a great support in those difficult times. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

Above all, remember that online harassment is never your fault. In addition to these tools, using humor or using negative experiences to raise awareness or introduce positive narratives can help you. But you have the power to control your own online experience: adapt it as best suits you!

