

A Guide to Campaigning: Communications and Building Support

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Introduction

Making a change and standing up for what you believe in can be no easy task- so we've put together a small campaigning guide with some tips for inspiration.

Think about how you are connecting with students- both in person and online. Are you using your own networks and personal profiles? Are you creating centralized pages of information on social media platforms? This will all impact the reach you have, and whether you are able to get the people you want to engage with to listen to. There is no set answer!

Look around online for examples of good campaigns- both in terms of physical and digital space. See if there are any successful methodologies you can borrow!

Getting started & organised

Deciding to run and be involved in a campaign is a fantastic step to making the change you want to see across campus and in wider society- but it's hard to know where to start.

Here are some initial steps to think about:

1) Build a core group of people. You don't need to take an issue on all by yourself- collective action is powerful. Do you know anyone else who is passionate and brings different ideas and skillsets to the team?

2) Gathering Evidence and Research.

Are there any facts, statistics or qualitative data which would be useful to keep in mind for finalizing your campaign goal and strategy?

Has anyone else ran a similar campaign that you could learn from?

Note to Reader

Don't be afraid to conduct your own research to learn more about the problem at hand! This could include putting together a survey or polls online.

3) Creating Key Messaging:

This is drawing out the headline of your campaign- in as few words as possible: what is the change you want to bring, and why? What do you want students to do, and what are your top reasons for why they should engage with you in such a way.

4) Organizational Tools: There are a variety of tools available to keep organized and on top of any planning documents: like shared Excel and One Notes. The likes of Facebook groups are great for centralizing documents and keeping campaigner roles clear, whilst group chats are better for more developed chats.

5) Delegating areas of responsibility: The best campaigns do not rely on one person to deliver everything- different people bring different skill-sets, use them! It is not a weakness to not take everything on yourself- coordination is a job in itself.

Building a Campaigns Strategy

Once you have decided your key messaging and content, you have to decide how you want to get that information out there, and how to bring people onto your side.

1. **Break your campaign goal into smaller objectives.** These objectives could be anything from a target number of students to talk to, the delivery of a campaign action, or poster areas around campus. This will allow you more control, oversight and direction.



2. **Stakeholder Analysis:**

Who is involved? Map out the key stakeholders to your campaign—this could be members of clubs and societies, academic reps, certain schools of students, lecturers or even politicians. What are the potential perspectives and

motivations they would bring, and how can you reassure them that your campaign is a positive force?

Then consider, how will you reach them? Can you connect with already existing campaign groups and networks on campus or into relevant communities?

A campaign broken down is often just a communication between groups of people to make a change or decision.

Your communications strategy can be divided into both your Digital strand and Action strand. This creates an online presence that integrates with a physical communication strategy.

Your strategy will only have success when it's relevant, so it's okay to be reactive and change your tactics mid campaign as long as it is thought through and communicated well to the team delivering actions. When establishing a timeline, ensure you are building towards something, and your energy is not exhausted from the first initial launch or push.

Communications Strategy

Digital Strand

The digital strand of your strategy is primarily how you intend to both promote and educate on your position, whilst creating space for building a community around your cause. For example, this can be done on social media or websites.

Thinking about your digital content in terms of milestones, what are the core messages you want to deliver, and when is the best time to push them? Can you find endorsements from influential people or relevant organizations?

Action Strand

The action strand of your strategy refers to both the physical presence of your campaign, and also any additional actions/stunts you may organise to raise awareness of your cause.

In terms of your physical presence think strategically about where your campaigners are placed and where you place any physical materials. Are there areas on campus where there is higher footfall?

Remember when possible to spread your physical presence on campus across different buildings and disciplines- sometimes STEM related buildings are missed completely.

Content & Digital Messaging

When creating content for social media sites, it's important to ensure it is direct, understandable, condensed and consumable. The headline of your goal, getting your message across in as few words as possible with a pivot to where more information can be found.

Top 5 Tools to have in your belt! (that will keep you forward thinking and on top of things!)

Social Media Scheduler Software

Across any campaign, curating digital content can make or break its success. Its potential reach is endless, against the limited number of in-person interactions any campaign team can have on one day. However this endless potential can also feel like a cloud hanging over your head- so plan in advance! Your posts could be in the form of infographics, informing other students of the importance of your campaign, endorsements from your peers, or reminders to vote. **This allows you to keep track of what is planned, this works especially well to centralize your communications if it is more than one person managing your social media output.**

Many platforms now have built in facilities for this- like FB for Business.

Canva

Creating colour consistent and recognizable graphics allows your campaign to increase its visibility online. You do not need to be a pro or spend a long time figuring out the best layout of promotional materials- platforms have provided already made templates for you to both be creative, take inspiration or just input your information! Canva has a free version which still has extensive options- you can also add multiple people to a design to allow for collaborative work.

UnSplash

When creating infographics or content for your campaign, you may struggle to find related photography (particularly coming out of a year of lockdown with actions taking place primarily online). Unsplash provides an extensive catalogue of trademark free stock images that may provide a use for developing engaging campaign material.

Kapwing

Video Content can provide a personable access point for other students to learn about your cause- this could be on tiktok or instagram stories for example. In order to make this content as engaging as possible, we recommend keeping them short, to the point, and direct. Kapwing is a free software platform which auto-captions your videos (and allows for edits if there are inaccuracies), keeping your content as accessible as possible.

Analytics Software

Monitoring your content on social media sites to find out what is getting engagement and what is not is an easy way to monitor the success of your digital communications. By keeping an eye on your analytics, you can adapt your strategy to what is performing well. This includes the content itself, how it is delivered, and when it is delivered.

There are a lot of other tools you can use aside from this- for example you could use google calendars to send campaigners reminders of when to share content or where to be at what time.

Different Digital Media Platforms and how to use them!

When thinking about what digital media platforms to use, it's important to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of each, so they can be operated to their fullest potential.

Social Media sites are generally used for two reasons, either to educate and promote, or to build communities of people through conversations and dialogue. Knowing the difference will help you plan the best way to communicate your objective. Below we've broken down some of the most popular platforms and their different strengths:

Promotion

Community Building

Facebook

Facebook has a built in base of students and networks, with a large and dedicated user-ship.

Facebook is great for finding a wider audience due to the amount of shared spaces determined by common interests. The platform lends itself to informational content and signposting to other resources.

- **Create an event page for any key activities or milestones.** This can both centralise information and send reminders.
- **Utilise common spaces.** Post into related facebook groups, invite your friend lists to interact with pages and content.
- **Educational Infographics.** Inform your followers what your key messages are. Posting with images boots your content in the algoirthm and sustains attention of users.

- **Facebook groups allow for community organisation.** If you have multiple streams to your strategy, utilise the tabs function to filter out via interest or topic.
- **Direct Messenger and group chats are better for concentrated conversation.** Messenger is also the most direct way to talk to someone directly and ensure they will see your objectvies.
- **Facilitating Activity on Groups or Pages.** Create conversation by engaging in challenges or sharing relevant articles for discussion.

Instagram

Instagram's focus as a platform is to share information, and due to its photographic nature, can feel very transactional in terms of resource sharing. This is useful in getting the headline of your campaign seen and read.

- **Instagram Posts.** Presentation driven and shareable content to both draw attention and inform.
- **Instagram Stories.** Content that must be understood in a 3 second swipe.
- **Your Bio.** Include the core message of your campaign and a next step for those interested.
- **Reels.** Video content that can be brought over from Tiktok and other platforms.
- **Repetitive Hashtags.** Attention grabbing when used multiple times across a users timeline.

- **Pivoting Users Elsewhere.** Using the platform as a drop in point for a user to put in further commitment and access to resources.
- **Utilise the Q&A function** on Instagram Stories. This is a great tool for interactivity and myth busting.
- **Live Video.** Building real time Interaction and response with your followers. This could be talking about your campaign, a demo or answering questions. Get creative!

Tiktok

Tiktok is unique in the sense that all users expect both visually and sound-based stimulating content- this gives more space to communicate a more nuanced message.

- **Popular Sounds and Trends.** Tiktok curates a personal algorithm or "For You Pages" feed for each user, so using trending content as a foundation for your message will help you reach a wider audience.

You could also create your own sound and get your followers to use that!

- **Hashtags.** Whilst hashtags are outdated across some social algorithms, on tiktok they feed into the personalised algorithm. This includes by geographic location!

- **Duets.** This is both a great way to boost your original content, but also gain an addition to it. You could ask a question or get a reaction to a story, think creatively!

- **Comments Section.** Utilisation of the comments section to create conversation.

- **Tiktok Live.** (only after a certain number of followers). Building real time Interaction and response with your followers. This could be talking about your campaign, a demo or answering questions. Get creative!

Twitter

- **Retweets, Responses and Quote Tweets.** Create interactive content which asks something of your followers. For example "Share a time when..."

- **"Going Viral".** Following and using trending hashtags

Conversations are what twitter is all about across different areas of interest, campaigns and movements.

Tap into those with mutual interest. Is there a way you can contact organisations who may share your aims and look at the followers they interact with regularly?

Email

Emails are often a one way communication mechanism- this has proved particularly successful in reaching out to the Postgraduate and International Community. Could you contact clubs and societies with your ideas and get their members on board?

Emails can facilitate a connection point to other forms of communication- ensure you have signposted your other digital forms of media which have more opportunity for conversation.

Discord

- **Posting on related Discord Channels and Servers.** Connect to already existing networks and promote your message.

- **Create your own discord channels for students to drop in and talk to you about different topics.** With the facilities for both voice and chat rooms, this creates space for developed and focused conversation.

Recommended Sizes for Social Media Graphics

Facebook Event Cover Photo: 1200 x 628 Pixels

Facebook Post: 940 x 788 Pixels

Instagram Square: 1080 x 1080 Pixels

Instagram Story: 1080 x 1920 Pixels

Twitter Post: 1600 x 900 Pixels

The when's and what's to posting online content

When should you be posting online?

There is no wrong time to post online, but your audiences will have more common times to be using social media and digital communication platforms. By keeping an eye on your analytics to see what days and times posts are more successful, will help keep your content up the algorithm. Think about the time of the day students are on their phones or other devices the most.

Can you tie into any trending hashtags or sounds and capitalise off the momentum building elsewhere? Creative and innovative content often is the most memorable.

What should you be posting online?

- **Content Curated to each platform.** That can sound like a daunting task, but by that we mean content that fits the format of each platform you may be using. This could simply be adapting the size of your graphic, or shortening the text you use to make it more accessible and consumable.
- **Posts which create space for conversation.** Campaigning isn't just about signposting and informing- it's about listening and creating space for discussion. A communications strategy is a two way process- this allows you to be reactive and flexible in your messaging. Ask questions and make content which encourages other students to get involved in your messaging. It is useful to have some members of your campaign team ready to engage so the post is boosted through the algorithm and doesn't flop.
- **Testimonies, Stories and Takeovers.** Personalizing your message and bringing in real life experiences humanizes your content. This brings a deeper connection and understanding between both your audience and your message.
- **Related Media and Press Stories.** Can you share media coverage or press stories?
- **Pinned posts.** This function is usable across multiple platforms- this both ensures you can control the first thing a stakeholder sees when they click onto your content, and also centralizes where they can learn more information with minimal effort.
- **Shareable content.** Keep your posts with minimal text and consistent branding with on point messaging.

Campaigning: Creative Actions

A massive part of running a campaign is reaching stakeholders that are beyond your initial circles, creating conversation, and convincing them to bring about change with you. A fantastic way to do this is to create a buzz and physical presence on campus to build a community around your cause and/or position.

(Remember for some of the ideas below you need to get permission from the Returning Officer, read over the election rules to ensure you are following all protocols (COVID-19 regulations and otherwise. You can contact the Returning Officer at studentvoice@qub.ac.uk)

Here are some ideas to get you started, but think as innovatively as possible!

Lecture Shout-Outs. Contact Lecturers and ask permission to come speak to their cohort on your position. You can find a full list of contacts on the Staff Directory.

Printed QR Codes. Creating easy access points to both your digital promotion sites and voting pages.

Bed Sheet Banners. Creating larger and eye catching displays of support around campus. Remember to get Porters Permission!

Chatting to Students on the ground. scheduling your campaigners at key points and times across campus.

Hosting public meetings. Bringing people together in a constructive and open space to discuss issues, it could also bring

Live Videos from Campaigning. Combine your physical campaigning with the digital space so more people can see what you're doing.

Interactive Polls on questions to do with your topic. Gather more information and make stakeholders feel like you value their opinion and thoughts on the topic.

And so many more! Get creative and stand out!

Keeping Engagement Up in Online

Meetings

Aside from physical meetings, social media promotion and physical campaigning, you may want to hold some online meetings!

However, we all know that Zoom fatigue over the last year has been real, and it is hard to maintain engagement throughout meetings. It's important to make them as interactive as possible.

Digital Whiteboards. Send a link, share your screen and quickly turn your meeting into a collaboration space. This includes use of text, post-it notes and the draw tool.

Tool suggestions: Open Microsoft Whiteboard or Google Jamboard

Mentimeter. This engagement tool allows live polling of the participants on your calls to sustain attention and interaction.

ON THE DAY CHECKLIST



Campaigner Schedule. Remember to build in breaks and check-in meetings to share updates!



If you are out and about- bring your campaign essentials! This could include a a bottle of water, hand sanitizer, disposable masks, a portable charger etc



Weather appropriate clothing!



QR Codes to make your content or voting page more accessible- create a linktree with multiple links if that is useful.