

Toolbox for your communication strategy

CRITERIA TO CHOOSE THE 'GOOD QUESTION'

Let us consider the tools that can help your group achieve the above objectives. Each tool has different targets, different goals and can be used by different actors, hence they should be carefully chosen and often combined. In other words, not all of these instruments are suitable for both people and institutions, and not all of them achieve all the objectives or targets we have identified. These tools can be used either when the institutions respond or when they do not, according to the messages your community wants to communicate.

MAILBOMBING

Effort: low

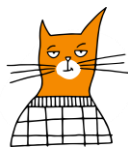
Effectiveness: depends on the level of commitment

Accessibility: medium-high

Risks: none

This tool is accessible to everyone who has an internet connection, and it is easily usable. Mailbombing consists of many different people sending the same email to certain addresses. To achieve such an action, it is necessary to:

- Collect the institutional addresses of the decision-makers on the topic you are interested in. Stay focused on the topic of your request.
- Write a short text explaining what you are asking for and why you are asking for it, making it clear that this action will end only when there is a response from the relevant stakeholders.



- Through a Call2action, invite the community to send the text to the mailing list created with a certain frequency (e.g., every day for a certain period of time)

PETITION

Effort: high

Effectiveness: depends on the level of commitment

Accessibility: medium-high

Risks: some

The petition is a request, often addressed to a member of the government or a public institution, usually based on a document addressed to the decision-makers and signed by many people. There can be formal petitions (such as popular law initiatives, which also require a complex system of validation of every signature collected in the presence of a local state representative) or informal petitions (such as those conducted through platforms such as *Avaaz.it*, *Change.org* and *WeMove.eu* etc).

To prepare a good petition:

- Prepare a motivational text that contains all the necessary details about the request, but is also emotionally engaging
- Get evocative photos of your battle
- Create an effective slogan that is easy to remember, clear and respectful
- Have a small network of supporters ready to sign at the launch of the petition (the ones that get a big initial push are noticeable, especially in small communities)
- Generate a small communication campaign that sponsors it, both through social media and traditional media

Once you have prepared these elements, subscribe to the most appropriate platform, follow the instructions to upload all the required contents and launch it.

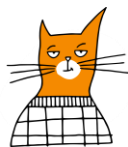
SOCIAL NETWORK

Effort: high

Effectiveness: medium-high

Accessibility: medium-high

Risks: medium



Evaluate which social network to use depending on the target you are trying to reach. For example, if you want to reach a more adult population (over 30) Facebook or Twitter can be a more effective channel; on the other hand, if your target is a younger audience, Instagram or TikTok can be better. If you want to communicate to adult and young people with short and comprehensive contents, Telegram can be the right one, even though it is still not frequently used, while if you intend to use mostly long videos YouTube is globally known and it reaches those who do not have any other social network etc.

Once you decide which social network is better for your campaign, adapt the contents to the social network. For example, Facebook allows a more extensive use of words, but it always needs visual content to be noticed (hence, photos, graphic and infographic are useful), on the contrary, Twitter does not necessarily need visual references and it allows just a short number of words, but it is very much used by a politically engaged public. Instagram, instead, values visual communication more than written, so you can use stories differently, transmitting small pills of information story by story, or create synthetic infographics; Tik Tok is even more visual; it does not allow any sort of written content and is very engaging towards young people if you follow the existing trends. Telegram, as mentioned, works well as a distributor of information, with short but complete text and significant graphics; and it allows users to easily forward the contents to friends and relatives.

N.B.: for every social network, keep stylistic and graphic coherence (colours, logo, symbol, name, fonts) always reminding people who you are and how to reach you online and offline. Every single post is an opportunity to expand your community.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

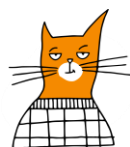
Effort: medium

Effectiveness: medium-high

Accessibility: high

Risks: medium-low

Local media can be a valuable tool for disseminating your contents, since they speak to the local community and can be a widely used information tools, especially by adults and elderly people. They can present initiatives and positive results or denounce policy inaction on their offline and online channels, as well as, in some cases, hosting articles or broadcasting interviews of community members. How to approach them? At the beginning it may be useful to get help from the teachers or director of the school; their intermediation could help to gain legitimacy in the eyes of local editors and directors. Otherwise, you can prepare an email with information about your initiative. In



the email request prominence and dissemination of the news. After the first approach, it could be useful to check which journalist performed the journalistic services and try to obtain their contacts; the journalist is likely to be interested in following the development of the story. Therefore, to enable the local media to relaunch the news, you can copy this person's email in future updates for requests related to your action.



DEMONSTRATIONS/SIT IN/FLASH MOB

Effort: high

Effectiveness: depends on the objective

Accessibility: high

Risks: high

This is a highly symbolic tool. Demonstrating in the streets can certainly attract the attention of local community, public administrations and politicians, but it does not always help you get the answers you are looking for. Be careful; if you organise a demonstration, sit-in or flash mobs without receiving attention, you may have low participation. Expending so much energy for minimal results may be frustrating for the group and could delegitimize the cause. Think carefully about the pros and cons of this tool, which can expose your group to public judgement. Public administration could consider it conflictive action and become less collaborative. On the other hand, a well-planned and creative action can create a sense of solidarity and strengthen the community, also gathering interest and new members.

Nowadays, it is sometimes more effective to send a request for civic access with your computer, or to commit to reading the budget of your municipality and organise a meeting with the institutions to discuss it, than organising a sit in front of the municipal gate.

N.B.: Try to imagine an original, ironic, casual action. It will be easier to attract the attention of the public and decision makers and will certainly be more fun for your group.

EVENTS OR WORKSHOPS

Effort: high

Effectiveness: medium

Accessibility: high

Risks: medium



A public event or workshop is always a good way to introduce ourselves to the local community for several reasons. First, it permits you to be visible in the political debate about the topic you care about. Second, it gives you the chance to expand your network and to engage new participants or have new social media followers. Moreover, this tool favours exchange among people and institutions, and will help collect information from them, since it creates a new room for dialogue. Such an event can take place in different ways. It can be a formal and institutional event, an informal event in attendance in which everyone can feel free to express themselves, an interactive and informal event in which, through non-formal educational methodologies, you get close to the participants' emotions and opinions, etc. Each type of event can be effective for your purpose; it is up to you to decide which one fits your goal and target the best.

N.B.: 'Informal' does not mean 'not serious;' sometimes using an informal and interactive approach achieves better results than a formal and frontal one. Try to surprise the public (young and adult) with non-conventional and smart ways to conduct an event. It can produce a doubly positive effect on your audience with satisfaction for the content and for the form.

