



Creating Effective Campaigns **20th October 2016**

Speakers: Dave Worsell (Managing Director at GovDelivery Europe, UK), Eddie Coates-Madden (Head of Communications at Sheffield City Council, UK), Nina Hotti (Deputy Press and Media Officer at the European Commission Representation in Helsinki, Finland), Milko Van Gool (European Commission, DG International Cooperation and Development)

Moderator: Melanie Kitchener (Senior Consultant at Coffey International Limited, UK)

How to generate interest, bottom-up engagement, and action at a grassroots level? How should Europe engage its citizens online? How can we generate interest in local and global issues? How can we communicate effectively at grassroots level? This workshop sought to answer these questions, focusing on everyday dilemmas faced by public communicators and shared examples of best practice from practitioners.

The first speaker, **Dave Worsell**, shared the insight he has gained from working on a wide range of government communication projects. A common mistake is to create lots of communication tools and platforms that nobody then uses. This is because the most important part, building engagement among the target audience, is often overlooked. It can be helpful to look at the desired end result, and work backwards from this point. Thinking like a business can also be useful, as businesses are often experts at maximising reach.

Governments often think they are different because they are not selling a product, but in fact they are 'selling' behaviour change, which means they can learn from the example of successful businesses. Mr Worsell gave the example of Amazon, which uses email newsletters to reach consumers and also invests in 'cross-selling' (suggesting similar products). A government version of this strategy might suggest that citizens researching local weather conditions could also follow real-time road and traffic updates from the local council. Targeting the message to a particular segment of the audience is also important, as people respond better to personalised or personally relevant content.

The second speaker, **Eddie Coates-Madden**, started from the premise that modern communication means that there is no longer a univocal type of message for every type of publication. He explained the planning guide he uses to run a clear and purposeful campaign at a very local level, based on five key principles: be relevant, effective, creative, empowered, and valued. The starting point in a campaign is audience segmentation. There are different groups of audiences, none of whom are very interested in the Sheffield Council as an institution, but who want to know about more practical issues – things that actually affect their lives. The Council thus takes a diversified approach to raising engagement, with a range of campaigns on different social media channels.

Furthermore, Mr Coates-Madden emphasised the importance of having a clear outcome to aim at, outlining the fundamental steps of an effective communication campaign from his experience: creating compelling content, prioritising calls to actions, personalising content, streamlining the user experience and engaging on the audience's level using relevant imagery.

Nina Hotti was the next speaker, and she presented the #Digisaatio campaign, which was launched in February 2016 in order to spread Commission priorities such as the Digital Single Market among young urban citizens aged 18 to 34. Their aim was to spread good news in challenging times. The campaign was conducted in five one-week cycles and had Basso Media, a radio station focused on urban culture and contemporary dance music, as a media partner and multiplier. Social media was the key platform for generating hype before, after and around the final #Digisaatio event.

As previous speakers, she also outlined a number of key principles for an effective campaign based on her experience: good planning makes the execution quicker, easier and cheaper; choose local partners who know the target group, identify the target group and use their language; have a clear message so that it can be easily spread by opinion leaders; do the unexpected – social media is a place to be adventurous; analyse platforms so that with good content you can engage a new target group on each one.

The final speaker was **Milko Van Gool**, who presented the European Year for Development 2015 campaign, which was dedicated to raising awareness of the EU's cooperation policies. The campaign was large in scale: across all EU Member States, there were a total of 3,828 events reaching close to two million participants. The EYD campaign also included coordinated EYD2015 Days in 19 Member States, EU Open Days in Brussels, a youth event with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, 28 Kapuscinski development lectures and 114 conferences.

The initiative was a success thanks to a thematic approach that addressed youth and put people at the centre, focusing on story-telling. A large amount of content was gathered, and each month focused on a particular theme such as gender, health or education. This approach worked well on all platforms, and the EYD2015 website offered a campaign toolkit with videos, radio spots, stories, monthly newsletters, thematic factsheets, infographics and visuals. The toolkit was accessed more than 14 thousand times. Mr Van Gool highlighted the importance of prioritising and planning the content and campaign as such in good time.

Melanie Kitchener then opened the floor to discussion. This focused in particular around the question of grass-roots engagement, with all speakers agreeing that communication should always have a national perspective, even if it comes from the EU, and that it has to be meaningful for people in a local way.