

Online Presence Guide

How to get yourself and your work out there

Part 1 - Communication: what is it and why is it so important?



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1.1. Why is communicating important, also in culture?

In this Guide, we understand communication as the creation of a dialogue with your (known or imagined) audience. This means that communicating and disseminating content are not the same thing. It is important to understand this difference to plan your actions online.

When we disseminate something, we want this content to reach the largest number of people, without necessarily creating a dialogue about it. In any case, we need to be prepared to answer questions or doubts that can appear. One example is the announcement of events such as a show, a performance, an exhibition, a training event, or any other activity related to the artistic and cultural field. In these cases, it is recommended to invest in ads ([see Part 4 - Gaining visibility online](#)).

On the other hand, communicating with your audience requires the creation of engagement with the public, an ongoing conversation, a relationship. For example, we communicate with our public when we share our creative processes, the role models and inspiration of our work or project, when we introduce the people involved in it, etc. The construction of

this dialogue takes time and so it is very important to know your audience and build up the message in the best possible way. Knowing your target public will help you to think about content related to your work that they are potentially interested in.

In the case of social media, this dialogue means the amount and quality of the interactions a post receives. Social media engagement measures the public shares, likes and comments for an online brand's social media efforts. Sharing, liking and commenting is the way the audience engages with the content they see on your post. So, it is important to spend a bit of your time actually reading the comments and messages, answering them, and interacting with your audience.

In both cases (dissemination and communication), it is important to know what you want to say, to whom and through which media. Each social media has its own 'codes' ([see on Part 2 - Social Media](#)) and affordances such as the question box or polls. It is important to know them to choose the most suitable for your public.

1.2. How to communicate an idea, a project, a product, an event

If you have a campaign or a new project that you want to shout out and you need help, it is worth looking around for your field's institutions, organisations, associations, cultural and art centres or even the city hall. Most of them have good online and offline reach, not to mention their relevance and reputation in the field. You can ask for the following things: to include you in their newsletter and/or post on their social media. If your message/campaign is strong enough and convinces them, they can support your project with more/regular posts, newsletters, maybe even mention you in their press releases or in their announcements.

Reach out to these organisations personally, via phone or email. You have to be prompt, brief, relevant and specific. Have all details ready in your mind (or in a notebook), point out why their organisation is relevant, what you have in common. Attach or link something that explains your project. Also offer something in re-

turn: you could post about their projects? You could include their logo on a Facebook cover or a flyer? Use your imagination!

Some examples:

- **You organise a musicians' meetup** – reach out for collective rights societies, management associations, musicians' associations, event promoters' associations, music venues, etc.
- **You do a survey connected to painters** – reach out for national cultural funds, galleries, painters' union, art collectives, etc.
- **You do a presentation on a study about how hard it is to get art films funded** – reach out to film funds, film schools, cinema union, performing arts organisations, collective right societies, creative collectives, etc.

1.2.1. Cross-promotion

Cross-promotion is a brilliant way to reach new target groups or just enlarge your existing audience. In this case you need to be very exact. Your message has to be simple and short. You need to have a number of followers that you can offer to someone who also has a number of followers. You put together what both of you have that equals profitable reach for both of you. This partnership is less formal than the previous one, you are not reaching out for cultural organisations or formal institutions, you will dig into the underground, into the base of culture. Reach out for artists, NGOs, collectives, venues, galleries, small exhibition spaces, clubs, maybe even hipster cafés too. Anything that would suit your message and fits your job. Cross-promotion can be various and all cases are unique, but here are some good instances to start with.

Some examples:

- **You want more streams on Spotify?**

Get another famous singer and do a “featuring” song. Almost all pop stars do it, and both will enjoy each other’s fanbase and listeners. You can do the same on small scale with most kinds of artists.

- **You want to organise an art event with more attendees?**

Think out of the pure genres. For a literary event ask a musician to come and play, and of course, share your event. You want to introduce a painter or an exhibition, so you invite street artists or project a relevant movie after the opening.

- **You raise awareness for a cause or a social issue?**

Ask relevant, hopefully famous artists to tell you their thoughts on the question and use their words. They are reliable and have followers, they can look nice in front of the public by supporting your cause. Win-win, right?

1.2.2. *Partnering up with media*

This is the hardest of all. You need a really good story/cause for this to break through the stimulus-threshold of journalists and editors. Or have the money for it.

Start in person and talk to the journalist/editor directly, tell them why it is important, try to get the attention for the story/message. The best way is a phone call or personal email. Usually this is a continuous partnership for one occasion, a series of events or a certain timeframe. It can be a partnership for a long period of time or for one season, depending on the opportunities and options that it opens up.

Always offer something in return. Depending on the media and your project you can offer things like you'll put the logo onto the flyers, posters, online visuals, Facebook event cover, logo printed ticket, or even complimentary tickets for them. It can even be exclusive content, like an exclusive interview with one of the professionals or artists, premiere the videos you shoot, etc. What you offer needs to be valuable for the media.

1.2.3 How to get more press and media coverage

There is new information buzzing around us so loudly we hardly can follow the world. The same happens to journalists. Plus, they receive hundreds of emails a day. Here are some basic ideas on how to get their attention:

How to write a good press release

Root: Try to summarise what you want to say in one short, simple sentence and use it as the base of your release/publication/communiqué. It has to be 'naked', but further on, when you write the release, you'll expand this base. The shorter the better. Your root sentence is your core message.

Build: The whole release has to be subordinated to your root sentence AKA your core message. All the facts, all the information that you want to get through to the public has to serve the root-sentence. Then start to **colour** it: everyday examples, simple emotions, unexpected questions-answers will be your colours on this picture, and the picture is your story. Keep in mind: **simple is better**. Do not attempt to say everything, say only things that serve the root sentence.

Be short: One page (average A4) is the ideal length, maximum. *Tip:* most journalists will just copy-paste your press release, so write it the way you want to read it in their news outlet.

Lead and title: These are the last things that you usually write. Read your text and try to summarise it for the lead. Be catchy but don't be clickbait. Ideal length of the lead: 150-200 characters with spaces.

Attachment: Send the press release as a Word doc. This is the most common format and can be opened on all devices.

1.3. Marketing: getting yourself out there

Talking about communication and strategies to reach a certain audience with the aim to get them interested in your product, is to talk about marketing. Marketing does not deal only with tactics used by big corporations to increase their sales on Christmas or Valentine's Day. Marketing is public relations and positioning. It is also about the audience, thinking about the best way to make these people get to know what you made for them and how it could be useful to them - this could be a product, a project, a brand, a show, an album, a coaching session, an exhibition, a training event... anything!

Marketing means thinking of tools that help with an effective approach to the public, in a way that maximises the time, the energy and the resources available to you for this aim. One key aspect in marketing is communication, which establishes connections, and makes it possible to create a relationship with your potential 'buyers'.

You can plan communication; it is like creating a road-map. So, we have to know the routes, the possibilities, the best vehicles - the most efficient, the most powerful. We have to know where to go, where our public is and how to reach them.

Today this means communicating online: the audience is not only used to the internet but now bases its habits and consumption on it. Smartphones are used for searching information, establishing relations, knowing more about the world and of course buying products, services, culture and entertainment.

1.4 Stay in the loop

Keep yourself updated about communication strategies! Everything changes very fast, so follow the updates, inform yourself, subscribe to influencers' profiles.

The person responsible for the communication of an artistic project or cultural space has to be up to date about the digital world and how social media works, since everything changes very fastly. One recent example is the changes on Instagram, which now focuses its content on videos rather than on photos, in an attempt to compete with TikTok.

One way to keep yourself updated is to follow accounts of people that work in the field and can explain the trends and changes in digital spaces and tools. Moreover, it is important to observe what other professionals in your field are doing on social media. Save the contents that interest you and analyze what you like about it: the format, the language, the duration. Try to use it in your own content in your own way. We can always learn something from others.

- YouTube: www.blog.youtube
- Instagram: business.instagram.com
- TikTok: www.tiktok.com/business
- Twitter: www.business.twitter.com
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