Internet strategy

"ONLINE" STRATEGY BASICS

An "Internet Strategy" consists of defining why and in what form to be present on the Internet from something as simple as a Facebook page to a collection of Web spaces (sites).

◎ Preliminary Step: Conducting an audit of existing visibility and E-reputation

Prior to embarking on developing any type of Internet Strategy, first conduct an audit to assess the existing one. Start by performing a search to identify all the web spaces where the organization is listed, if they exist, e.g., Website, Blog, Facebook, Twitter, other Social Media accounts.

The next step is to audit the organization's Internet visibility and E-reputation (online reputation). This is done simply by typing the name of the organization in the Search Engines to identify: How the organization appears on the Internet, where (media websites as well as those of partners, professionals, social networks, etc.), and what words are used to talk about it (the organization). This will help in defining the strategy objectives, especially if the organization is not very visible or if it has a negative reputation.

◎ The Strategy

Attention: The "*Online Strategy*" must be coherent with the overall communication strategy which is aligned with the overall organizational strategy.
Define the :

▶ Objectives: Sensitization, Advocacy, Fundraising, Image, Visibility, Reputation, Loyalty, etc.
N.B. A "Good Reputation": It's not possible to delete negative search engine comments about oneself (except in the rare legal case). The main way to address this is to create more positive and popular content which will "push down" the negative in the search results. To do this, use social media networks, linking (see below), and rankings.

▶ Message: Our objectives, programs, values, actions, expertise, fundraising needs, etc.

▶ Targets: General Public, Donors, Institutions, Partners, Media. Define the core targets and the providers.

▶ Means:

• Human: Internal: What resources/competencies does the organization possess internally, who does/will do what? External: Does the organization have any existing partners or sub-contractors? Is there a need to do a call for service providers/consultants?

• Financial: What is the current budget/What is the planned budget for implementing the Online Strategy?

• Tools: Which tools from the Web will be used to achieve the objectives and the targets: Examples: Organization website; Blog, Facebook/Google+, Twitter, You Tube, LinkedIn, Viadeo, Wikipedia, Email, etc.

▶ Planning: Indicate the major steps (setting up a corporate Website, creating a Facebook page, etc.), which could be tied to special organization events (conferences, an anniversary, etc.). Establish a plan for each web space, especially the Social Media networks. For those, social media sites, make a plan for systematically providing fresh content (tweets, posts) on a regular basis (once daily, three times a week, etc.) in order to be obliged to produce content. Otherwise the risk is, and this is seen quite often, that there is a lot of content produced at first and then it gradually starts to taper off until no new content is being published at all. It is also useful to designate an Editorial Line (policy) indicating which topics can be addressed and those which cannot (for example, no politics, taboos, legal matters), the tone (serious, informal, humorous), if comments are allowed, can they be posted freely or only after being reviewed, how to handle questions, criticisms, insults, etc.

▶ Indicators: Define those that will make it possible to assess the effectiveness of the strategy, tools used, etc. For example, statistics from the corporate website, statistics from Facebook feedback (Likes, Comments), the number of followers on Twitter, re-Tweets, Emails, etc.

Conducting an evaluation and assessment of the available human resources is very important. It is a waste of time to embark on an ambitious, multiple tools strategy, if one is not sure it can be implemented and if the regular updating of all the web spaces cannot be assured. It is better to plan on doing a major review with the idea to eventually introducing use of these new tools.

◎ The main rules to respect

Regardless of the number of tools used, the following rules should be respected:

▶ Create content, more content, and more content –regularly! Add value where possible. This is the main rule.

▶ Be Active, Reactive, and Proactive. Reactive: Be able to respond to questions, solicitations, crises as well as to technical problems. Proactive: Plan on producing some publications, think ahead about upcoming events.

▶ Create engagement with your stakeholders. It's better to have 100 subscribers among which 20 are interacting with you on a regular basis rather than 10,000 from which only five do. Interactivity is essential.

▶ Be authentic.

▶ Cross-linking: Having cross-links between all the web spaces and ensuring that other websites link to yours.

▶ Establish a Crisis Management procedure to manage any online crises that might arise. This has to be aligned with the organization's overall crises management policies and procedures.

▶ Monitoring: Do regular monitoring to detect negative content. Keep a special watch on certain sites that are known to be "hostile" by manually doing search engine checks or by subscribing to Google News on certain keywords or sites, for example. Monitoring also will make it possible to comment publicly about subjects that concern the organization.

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