



ONE BRAVE THING

BUILDING YOUR OWN COUNTER-NARRATIVE CAMPAIGN ON A SHOESTRING



YOUR TASK

So, you have decided that you want to start a campaign to counter extremist narratives. Great! But in doing this you will likely have to compete with many talented, charismatic and resourceful extremist influencers. But don't worry, if you are reading this you have chosen to take them on even if you only have a shoestring budget, and this guide will give you the best tips and tricks to overcome this obstacle. After reading this, with a little practice you should be more talented, charismatic and resourceful than your competitors. Good luck!



YOUR CHOICES

You may already have an idea of which extremist narrative you want to counter, but you may not know where to start building your campaign, or who you will be directing your campaign at, or what success looks like for your campaign. All of these will look different for different campaigns. This guide will equip you with the knowledge and skills to build your campaign your way! Important choices you will have to consider are:

- **Who is your audience?**
- **What is your message?**
- **Where will you campaign?**
- **How will your message spread?**
- **Why should people listen to you?**
- **When has your campaign been successful?**

Having answers to each of these questions will help you build your campaign and have the impact that you want to make.



PICK A NARRATIVE

You might be reading this because you have decided there is a particular narrative you want to counter. If that is the case, great! If not, this section is for you.

You will probably want to counter a narrative that affects you or those you care about, whether that is friends, family or community. This way you may be able to see the effects of your campaign first hand, and this will help keep you motivated.

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

The second and most important question to answer is “who is your audience?”, this will have big consequences for your campaign. You already know the narrative you want to counter, but there is more to knowing your audience than just knowing that. A campaign which seeks to prevent people from joining an extremist group will not be the same as one that tries to get people to leave one. Here are some suggestions:

- **Current extremists**
- **Youth**
- **A particular community, or leaders of certain communities**
- **Parents or authority figures like teachers or youth workers**
- **Followers of a particular influencer**
- **You can have more than one audience, but you will want to keep it focused to have a more successful campaign.**

CAMPAIGN INSPIRATIONS

Extremism comes in many forms, here some examples, some of which you may feel more passionately about countering than others:

- **Ethic nationalism/supremacism**
- **Religious Politicisation**
- **Misogyny/Misandry**
- **Classism**
- **Authoritarianism**

Not all extremist narratives are violent, but they all are against human rights.





JUAN

Barcelona

Gender: Male

Age: 21-18

Location: Barcelona

Languages: Spanish, English

Education: University student.

Biography of one member of the audience:

Juan studies geography. This is his first time living away from his hometown of Seville and he feels quite isolated. He found himself going to play football to find new friends, however through this group he began to spend more time with ultra-nationalist pro-Franco supporters.

Online Behaviour:

Juan only uses the internet to follow celebrities on Twitter, he never posts himself.

He follows various musicians who promote live music nights which promote far right messages.





BUT REALLY, WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE?

Remember, there is more to your audience than simply being extremists, youth or members of a particular community. You will want to research your audience as this will save you time later and make your campaign more effective. Important questions that need to be answered are:

- **Where does your audience spend their time (both online and offline)?**
- **What do they value, or what do they see as morally good?**
- **How do they communicate, or how do they use language?**
- **Who do they respect, or who else influences them?**
- **Which campaigns are they already involved in?**

It can be useful to build a typical profile of your audience to help you understand them.

WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE?

Whatever your message is, it has to be persuasive. There are several key tactics to use when being persuasive in any setting. Most importantly, do not talk **TO** your audience, but talk **WITH** them. You may disagree with the views of your audience, but you will not have them listen, nevermind win them won over, if they feel lectured to, antagonised or belittled.

Next decide what you want the reaction of your audience to be? Do you want them to think, to share the message, to act? All are good, but make sure your message can't be misunderstood, and that call to action are original but realistic. If you want your message to be shared, it is important to remember that your campaign may take on a life of its own, out of your control. Be sure that you are okay with this.



JiLadz are a British comedic duo who created a parody of an ISIS propaganda video called "Falafels and Kafirs".

As part of their message they took away the image of a brave jihadi fighter, and instead replaced this with a look of confusion and idiocy. This message would not change the minds of ISIS recruits, but it would help prevent young Muslims from seeing ISIS as a competent organisation. This video did not lecture its audience, but instead tried to make them laugh. This way the message talked with its audience, rather than at them.



THE RIGHT LANGUAGE/WHY SHOULD PEOPLE LISTEN TO YOU?

There are three ways of making an argument, and picking the right one will make a huge difference. The first is arguing from reason. This will involve using logic to show that the extremist narrative you are countering does not make sense. The second is arguing from authority. This involves using a respected person to provide an example to follow. The third is arguing from emotion. This should provoke a reaction from your audience, whether that is inspiration or shock. After your research on your audience you should be able to see what they respond well to - maybe they respect the opinion of a particular person, or they pride themselves on being empathetic.

THE RIGHT MESSENGER

If you chose to use a respected individual to promote your message, you do not have to pick just one person. But keep your messengers appropriate to your audience. Here are some examples of messengers:

- **Celebrities**
- **Community, religious or political leaders**
- **Activists**
- **Former extremist (current extremists may view 'formers' with suspicion however)**
- **Survivors of extremism**
- **Charities or organisations with a message similar to yours**
- **News media**



WHERE WILL YOU CAMPAIGN?

To ensure engagement from your audience, you need to make sure that you are making it easy for them to see your campaign. Your audience won't come to you, which means you will have to reach out to them. From your research you should know where your audience spends their time online and offline. The medium you reach out to them with will depend on this. Build your campaign to suit the habits of your audience. If they read blogs a lot, use the written word, if they use youtube, create videos, if they meet at one place, create posters. Here are some ideas:

- **Videos**
- **Images, photos, posters or the purest form of art: memes**
- **Slogans, hashtags**
- **Open letters, petitions**
- **Music or podcasts**
- **Articles, opinion pieces or brochures**

"HERO FACTOR"

Suleiman Bahkit is the creator of "Hero Factor", a graphic novel about fighting terrorism. It competes with terrorist propaganda for its young audience's attention. Terrorists often emphasise adventure, heroism, identity and history as tools of indoctrination, as they know these are important to many young people. Suleiman Bahkit is also using these, but instead to fight extremism. Graphic novels like this are a great example of using a niche medium to reach a very specific target audience.



SPREAD YOUR MESSAGE

To build your campaign more effectively you can spread it to multiple places... Videos you create can be uploaded to multiple websites like YouTube, Vimeo or Dailymotion. Or images can be shared on Instagram, Pinterest or Twitter.

The most complicated part of building your campaign will be designing the content. Once you have done this it isn't very difficult to spread your message. Even if your research shows that your audience only uses certain websites, it isn't very difficult or time consuming to upload your content to similar platforms. This small effort will help your campaign spread wider, even if only a little.

QUALITY ON A SHOESTRING

You don't need to be the next Mozart or Da Vinci for your productions to be high-quality. Instead you can try to find someone else who is an artistic genius that will work for free. Art, music or film students for example will be keen to build their CV. You can also get free help from people interested in your mission such as former extremists or the victims of extremism.

If you really need funding you can use crowdfunding websites, charities or private companies seeking good PR. You will have better luck if you can persuade the charity or company that your campaign relates to them in some way.



CREATING CONTENT

Whatever your content is, it needs to be attention grabbing. Your first sentence, photo or few seconds of video need to make your audience curious. Emotive language and music do this well. Also, you'll want to post content frequently to maintain your audience's interest in your campaign. Keep this content varied though, if you post too much, your audience will be put off by your campaign taking up their whole news feed. If you post too many big things, your audience won't be able to engage with all of it. But maintaining contact with your audience is important. You can always get feedback on the regularity of your content or any other aspect of your campaign.



WHEN HAS YOUR CAMPAIGN BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

Not every campaign will go viral, and nor should they - you only need to reach your audience. Before you start your campaign you should know what your objective is - this could be getting your content seen by a certain number of people, or having a community regularly do something or whatever else. Knowing your objective will keep your message focused throughout your campaign and it will let you know when you have done enough. Having sub-goals will also help keep you motivated and focused.

You can use website analytics to find how your message is spreading. You can also use surveys or audience feedback to know what content they want or how they have responded to your campaign. This way you can keep adapting your campaign while keeping working towards your real objective.



THE PARTNERSHIP



Coordinator:

Peace Action Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR) – Romania

patrir.ro



ActiveWatch – Romania

www.activewatch.ro



CESIE – Italy

cesie.org



Instytutu Bezpieczeństwa Społecznego (IBS) – Poland

www.fundacjaibs.pl



Political Capital Policy Research and Consulting Institute – Hungary

www.politicalcapital.hu



ZA CLOUD SRL (Zetta Cloud) – Romania

www.zettacloud.ro



Budapest Centre for Mass Atrocities Prevention (BCMAP) – Hungary

www.genocideprevention.eu



WWW.ONEBRAVETHING.EU



This publication was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund – Police under Grant Agreement No. 812631.
The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors, and in no way represents the view
of the European Commission or its services.