Radicalisation Awareness Network

RAN

TARGET AUDIENCE

HOW TO
identify
THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO REACH

INTRODUCTION

You will already have a pretty good idea who you want to reach with your messages when you consider launching a campaign. But **how much do you really know about the people you want to reach out to**, have a discussion with or even help change their mind? Having a **detailed understanding of your target audience** will be the key to your success. Why? Imagine being a great and skilful football player in an important match but not really knowing where the goal is. How likely is it that you are going to score? We therefore recommend that you take some time to reflect upon the following guiding questions:

Can you define **key characteristics** of your audience?

Can you narrow down their age range, gender, cultural background, their group*specific "group-language", in which cities or districts they live?

Are you clear about:

- ✓ What they care about?
- ✓ Why they would listen?
- ✓ Why they would care about your message?
- ✓ Why they would share your message with others?
- ✓ Why they would interact with you?
- ✓ Why they would change their thinking and behaviour?
- ✓ Where they get their information from, where their "echo chambers" are, into which you want to get your message?

Before you start: Make sure you DO NO HARM

Studies have shown that making people, youths in particular, aware of something that authorities consider bad for them, might make them interested in an issue that they hadn't previously been interested in. While this is less of a concern for alternative messages, highlighting how bad and dangerous specific extremist or terrorist groups are could have a counter-productive effect. Counter narratives should therefore be much more targeted and should aim at people who are curious about extremist content or sympathise with it already.

Follow the **THREE STEPS** to identify your right target audience:

//01 ⬊ CONDUCT YOUR BASIC RESEARCH

Find out what information is available online, what studies, reports, articles, videos of relevant events might give you deeper insights into your target audience. Also, identify and then look into the social media your audience uses. Which Facebook groups are popular with them? Which Twitter hashtags are popular? Are they discussing using Reddit? Read up on the latest discussions and events they care about and study the words and language used. How does your message relate to this? If you can answer this question, you should proceed to the next step.

How to do this? Understanding *where* your audience spends time online is essential. While Facebook (FB) is the most used social media today, check if it is popular with your audience. Search Facebook, Google, DuckDuckGo etc. for keywords your audience might use. This will lead you to relevant groups or users on Facebook.

☐ Tip: Create a Facebook profile for research purposes.

Twitter hashtags allow you to track current debates within the extremist community you are targeting. Use the identified keywords and map the actors or debates relevant to you. Use Google, DuckDuckGo etc. and search for relevant Twitter accounts.

☐ Security tip: Create a research Twitter account and monitor accounts using e.g. the Google Chrome 'Incognito' mode.

Check if your audience is on Reddit. A search on this site will lead you to certain subreddits (niche forums). You can trace the content and the users without creating an account yourself.

☐ Tip: Use guides on YouTube to help you navigate the platform.

//02 ⬊ ACTIVATE AND WIDEN YOUR NETWORK

Reach out! Ask colleagues, academics, experts and practitioners who work on similar issues and with similar audiences to help you with the answers to open questions. Don't be shy, you might find not only the information you were looking for, but also new opportunities for partnerships and cooperation. If your research shows that your audience likes specific sports, consider approaching sports clubs in relevant neighbourhoods to learn from their perspective and to maybe form a partnership.

How to do this? Start by approaching colleagues you already know and share your concept with them. They might be able to recommend other colleagues working on similar issues. In addition, you could reach out to the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), join Hedayah´s narrative library, approach the Quilliam Foundation, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, the European Foundation for Democracy, Ufuq, EXIT Sweden or EXIT Germany and other actors on this field you identify during your research.

//03 ⬊ FOCUS GROUPS: VALIDATE YOUR FINDINGS

You should have someone representing the target audience in your network by now. If that is not the case, please go back to steps 1 and 2. A campaign without direct access to members of the target audience is very unlikely to be successful. If you have a good understanding of what drives your target audience and how to reach them, you should validate your findings.

How to do this? Try to reach out to additional members of your audience directly and invite them to participate in or contribute to your campaign. Ask them for their feedback on what you are planning to do. This could take the form of workshops or a series of phone/skype calls where you discuss your findings, aiming at answering the key questions raised above. In addition, contact local NGOs who work with your audiences or similar ones (e.g. youth workers/youth centres/sports and martial arts clubs) for input on how to reach out to potentially interested individuals for the focus groups. Create a questionnaire and meet up with a group of 5-10 people to validate or adjust your campaign. Once you are sure you are on the right track, you are ready to go!

Additional useful info on target audiences can be found here:

✓ **The Counter Narrative Handbook**, Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), 2016, United Kingdom, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf

✓ **The Impact of Counter Narratives,** Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), 2016, London, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Impact-of-Counter-Narratives_ONLINE_1.pdf

✓ **The Counter Narrative Monitoring & Evaluation Handbook,** Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), 2016, United Kingdom, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/CN-Monitoring-and-Evaluation-Handbook.pdf

✓ **Using Social Media to Communicate Against Violent Extremism,** Australian Government, NA, Australia, https://www.ag.gov.au/NationalSecurity/Counteringviolentextremism/CVE-Summit/Documents/Workshop-1-Working-with-social-media-We-Are-Social.PDF

✓ **Promoting Online Voices for Countering Violent Extremism,** RAND Corporation, NA, United States, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR130/RAND_RR130.pdf

✓ **Stopping Hate**: **How to Counter Hate Speech on Twitter?**, Media Diversity Institute, 2016, United Kingdom , http://stoppinghate.getthetrollsout.org/

✓ **Counter Narrative Tool Kit,** Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), United Kingdom, http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf

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