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A Toolbox for Successful Digital Diplomacy [1]

Over the course of my studies in USC's Master of Public Diplomacy Program, and throughout my work at CPD, I have seen a lot written on Digital Diplomacy and have contributed as a student researcher to some of the reports and publications on this topic including the Digital Diplomacy Bibliography produced jointly by CPD and Clingendael and the CPD workshop report, International Advocacy in the Digital Age. A couple of recent courses on Digital Diplomacy taught by Matthew LeVeque at CPD's Mini-Course in Public Diplomacy and by Vince Gonzales at CPD's 10th annual Summer Institute in Public Diplomacy, prompted us to develop a digital toolkit for public diplomats.

Here are 10 things to consider that can make your online presence more impactful:

1. First and foremost, it's important to remember that digital content must be **goal-driven**. If your strategic goals are not clear enough, your online campaigns won't succeed.

2. Content on social media platforms has to be **shareable**. It has to have a clear call to action. And it needs to create anticipation in the audience. Digital content is more successful in grabbing the attention of the audience when it is engaging and interactive (e.g. includes a poll). Content that triggers emotion (including surprise) also has a higher chance of going viral. The content must also be perceived as **valuable to the audience**. Focus more on what's in it for the audience, and less on mere announcements about you or just pure news. The "take-aways" for the audience has to be clear. Remember, you only have the headline to communicate all of this; choose it wisely!

3. Online campaigns need **offline planning** and **strategic partnership** with various organizations, media outlets, and key influencers. Otherwise, they will go unnoticed.

4. **Presentation** is key in establishing "**digital credibility**." In the online realm, heuristics can substitute for expertise; a source could be perceived as credible online because of certain peripheral elements such as quality of programs, accessibility, associations, consistency, social proof, authority, appearance, layout, features, functionality, and comprehensiveness.

5. **Digital storytelling** is a must-have skill. You can throw a lot of good content at your audience, but if a **cohesive narrative** is missing, the context will be missed, and so will the point. Stories are what gets stuck in the audience's mind. You don't always have to dedicate too much time to creating new original content. You could simply use scattered content that already exists, put it together, and add your own narrative and perspective to it. Existing content could be a number of relevant tweets, photos, or archived documents that can be put together to offer a new perspective and purpose. Storify is one program that helps create such engaging and quick stories. Making GIFs could also

help in this regard. Apps such as Giffer, Cinemagraph, GifX are good and easy to use.

6. **Compelling infographics** can not only help in grabbing the attention of the audience, but also in delivering an important message to them in just a few seconds. DataViz and Piktochart are among some tools you could use to visualize ideas and create engaging explanatory and exploratory infographics. Creating a timeline as a way of **data visualization** can also be useful. Timeline JS is a relatively easy and free tool to use to create a timeline. It's important to remember that even though some of these tools are easy to use, knowing and upholding general graphic **design principals** is the key to success.

7. A little **video content** goes a long way. You don't need to be an expert videographer, but you have to be an adept user of the latest and trendiest mobile apps that allow for engaging and timely video content production. Periscope and Snapchat are two current examples. General video rules apply to mobile videos as well; horizontal is preferred to vertical, sound quality matters, and shaky video is not acceptable (you might want to consider purchasing some mobile accessories). And of course, having a clear and engaging narrative with eloquent sequences is crucial.

8. **Mobile apps** should be embraced as alternatives to traditional methods of gathering, processing, and editing information, as well as publishing, promoting, and delivering content. You can reach more and more people on their smart phones first, then try to redirect them to your website. Additionally, mobile apps can help create and publish fresh content quickly. They also allow for quick and easy aggregation of content for a new purpose. Some useful mobile apps in this regard are Soundcloud, iMovie, Splice, Hyperlapse, Vyclone, CrowdFlik, and Photosynth.

9. Setting up a system to **strategically manage social media** presence is important for keeping the cross-platform activities consistent, well scheduled, and well monitored. Programs such as Hootsuite, bitly, tweriod, and commun.it could be used for such purposes.

10. Impactful social media presence is primarily about "**listening**." There is plenty of data available about the behavior, knowledge, and attitude of key audiences and stakeholders. There are a number of tools available for **data analytics** such as Google Analytics (free), Simplymeasured, Topsy (free), Snap Bird (free), Radian6, Brandwatch, and Sysomos. The best and most successful online strategies are driven by data.

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