Guidelines for sustainable communication and media usage in international youth work

Contents

Hi, we are GBYEN!

The German–Baltic Youth Exchange Network (GBYEN) brings together German and Baltic organizations and institutions that promote youth exchange between their respective countries and within Europe. GBYEN acts as a central knowledge platform and support center that strengthens cooperation between its members and develops their expertise, skills, and societal outreach in international youth work. It achieves this through exchange formats that enable sharing of knowledge, best practices, and policy advice between actors of civil society, politics, administration and education both on a national and transnational level.

During the German–Baltic Conference 2023 in Tartu, 18 European youth organizations from 6 different countries collaborated in smaller groups to explore one of the following issues:

1. How to develop a catch-all image as a youth organization?
2. Media usage as a youth organization

As the future belongs to young people, it is crucial to establish communication methods that benefit them, are long-lasting, and sustainable. By working together, we can build a better world for the next generation.

Presenting the results of the German–Baltic Conference 2023 in Tartu, the German–Baltic Youth Exchange Network is proud to share:

Guidelines for sustainable communication and media usage in international youth work

How to develop a catch-all image as a youth organization?

Guidelines

Steps for understanding image and branding

1. **Internal branding:** Define brand attributes, emotions, and target audience needs.
2. **External branding:** Focus on logos, social media, and brand colors for public perception.
3. **Define your brand** by answering questions about its purpose, emotions it evokes, what it stands for, and what makes it unique. Understand the target audience's needs.
4. **Develop a detailed value proposition** highlighting strengths and audience benefits.
5. **Clearly name core values** and align them with activities and communication.
6. **Define brand intention** and clear, consistent brand promises rooted in core values.
7. **Utilize** analysis for strategic planning and resource allocation.
8. **Vision:** Inspiring dreams for the future.
9. **Mission:** Practical plan defining what, who, and how of your organization.
10. **Share** impactful stories of your members/young people..
11. **Involve** young people in decisions.
12. **Collect and showcase** measurable data for impact demonstration.

Steps for visual implications

1. **Visual Identity:** Design a unique and memorable logo, choose fonts that match your brand's style, and maintain consistency in color choices.
2. **Visual Content:** Use high-quality images that align with your organization's values and maintain a consistent style and tone.
3. **Visual Elements:** Keep icons and shapes simple for better recognition and prioritize uniqueness, adaptability, scalability, and memorability.
4. **Color Choices:** Limit the number of colors to avoid clutter and confusion in your visuals.
5. **Instagram Grid Layout:** Experiment with layouts for variety but avoid rigid grid arrangements.
6. **Color Extraction:** Use tools like coolors.co to extract dominant colors for emotional depth.
7. **Royalty-Free Images:** Utilize royalty-free websites for diverse and appropriate photos, maintaining a balanced approach.
8. **Visuals with Text:** Ensure font readability and avoid text overload, small font sizes, and clashing elements.
9. **Visual Clarity:** Use carousels to prevent text overload and increase engagement.
10. **Text Alignment and Size:** Pay attention to text layout and size for readability and clarity.
11. **Visual Simplicity:** Keep visuals clean and uncomplicated to maintain a clear message.
12. **Color Contrast:** Consider contrast in color combinations for readability and appeal.

Guidelines

Steps for message structure

1. **First Impressions:** Your message is your first impression. Keep it clear and organized.
2. **Clarity is Key:** Guide your audience logically to help them understand.
3. **Trust Building:** Consistency builds trust.
4. **Recognition and Recall:** Well-structured messages are memorable.
5. **Better Engagement:** Structured messages lead to more engagement.
6. **Understand Your Audience:** Tailor your message to their needs.
7. **Define Objectives:** Clearly state your message's purpose.
8. **Address Needs and Objectives:** Make sure your message aligns with both.
9. **Use Emotion:** Connect with your audience through relatable stories.
10. **Keep It Clear:** Ensure your message is easy to understand.
11. **Use AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action)** for compelling messages.
12. **Start strong, ignite interest, create desire, and end with a clear call to action.**

Steps for storytelling and engagement

1. **Clearly define marketing goals** for direction and success.
2. **Include objectives** like brand awareness, membership growth, or fundraising.
3. **Maintain regular content** to engage, build loyalty, and increase brand recognition.
4. **Use various formats,** including posts, stories, blogs, etc.
5. **Adjust frequency** based on platform, audience, goals, and content type.
6. **Categorize audiences** as Cold, Warm, or Hot based on engagement.
7. **Address audience questions,** pains, fears, and goals with appropriate content types.
8. **Create** Educational, Inspirational, Conversational, and Connection/Trust content.
9. **Apply AIDA** (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) model for effective content.
10. **Maintain consistency** for brand identity, trust, and message reinforcement.
11. **Use impactful storytelling** aligned with brand message and audience.
12. **Use personal stories** and analogies to simplify complex ideas.
13. **Highlight uniqueness and be honest.**
14. **Simplify messaging** for better understanding.
15. **Follow the three rules: grab attention, evoke emotions, and encourage action**.

Guidelines

Steps for tone of communication

1. **Impact on Relationships:** Use kind and respectful tones to build positive relationships. Avoid harsh tones to prevent conflicts.
2. **Influence on Perception:** Employ positive and enthusiastic tones to appear likable. Avoid negative tones to prevent negative perceptions.
3. **Connection to Communication:** Maintain a calm and respectful tone for open communication. Avoid aggressive tones that hinder problem-solving. Consider Industry, Mission, and Audience.
4. **Mission:** Reflect your mission in your tone; be motivating or informative.
5. **Target Audience:** Adapt your tone to your audience, using informality or professionalism.
6. **Consistency is Key:** Ensure a consistent tone across all materials and platforms for effective communication.
7. **Tone Examples:** SIMPLE: Emphasize simplicity. PROFESSIONAL: Convey credibility. TECHNICAL: Highlight educational value. INFORMATIVE: Share data transparently. INSPIRING: Motivate and inspire. ASKING FOR A DIALOGUE: Foster inclusivity. LEADING BY THE HAND: Provide structured support.
8. **Written Communication:** Tailor the tone to the context.
9. **Verbal Communication:** Use a warm and engaging tone.
10. **Emojis and Emoticons:** Use punctuation and capitalization effectively.
11. **Digital Communication:** Maintain consistent tone to establish your brand.
12. **Inclusive Language Matters:** Respectful and welcoming tone.
13. **Avoiding Stereotypes:** Steer clear of stereotypes.
14. **Acknowledging Diversity:** Celebrate diversity.
15. **Effective Communication:** Use inclusive language for effective communication.
16. **Fostering Inclusivity:** Encourage inclusivity and open dialogue

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR EXPERTS: Agne Jaraminaite AND Mintaute Paliakaite!

AND TO ALL THE YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WORKSHOP "How to develop a catch–all image as a youth organization?"

Media usage as a youth organization

Guidelines for effective marketing channel use for organizations

INTRODUCTION

Analyzing these three groupings of marketing channels, which encompass "Digital marketing," "Stakeholders & PR" and "Offline marketing and events", is very important. These categories collectively represent a comprehensive spectrum of marketing activities. "Digital marketing" encompasses the ever-evolving online strategies and platforms, "stakeholders & PR" highlights the vital role of communication and relationships, and "offline marketing and events" bring a tangible dimension to outreach efforts.

During the workshop we identified 4 types of activities:
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Misguidance.

Strengths are the areas where organizations excel or have a competitive advantage.
Weaknesses are the areas where organizations face challenges or areas in need of improvement.
Opportunities refer to areas where organizations can further enhance their performance or explore new strategies.
Misguidance points out potential pitfalls or misguided approaches that organizations should be cautious about.

By scrutinizing each of these groupings, organizations can gain a holistic understanding of their marketing landscape, allowing them to formulate well-informed strategies that effectively engage their audience and stakeholders across both digital and physical realms.

That is exactly what we did...

DIGITAL MARKETING CHANNELS

Organizations excel in various aspects of marketing and engagement:

- **Effective Social Media Content Creation:** Social media creators produce engaging content for Instagram, and businesses use Instagram and Facebook to reach a wider audience. While websites are essential, they can be costly to create.
- **Engaging with a Diverse Audience:** They use various platforms to reach different demographics, such as TikTok for young people, Instagram for building community, META, and LinkedIn for promoting events, and monthly newsletters with youth-friendly language and eye-catching designs.
- **Effective Communication through Newsletters:** They are proficient at sending out newsletters not only to their existing members but also to past members or participants. These newsletters provide brief yet informative and catchy information, further enhancing their engagement efforts.
- **Strategic Use of WhatsApp Groups:** Organizations make effective use of WhatsApp groups actively engaging a LOT of people.
- **Leveraging Facebook and Instagram ads.** Some of organisations effectively run these ads to reach and engage with a broader audience.

Organizations are facing weaknesses in four key areas:

- **Brand Identity and Visual Consistency:** These organizations lack a stylish branding approach, including a specific design concept and up-to-date logo, and struggle to produce high-quality designs. They also grapple with the absence of a clear visual guide connecting events and defining their organizational identity.
- **Team and Talent Challenges:** Finding experienced marketing professionals is difficult due to unprofessional digital marketing teams, leading to constant personnel changes.
- **Social Media Professionalism and Efficiency:** Organizations overspend on ineffective ads and underutilize Facebook. Analyzing performance metrics is crucial for a professional social media approach beyond content creation.
- **Strategic Vision and Guidance:** A crucial area for growth is the development of a strategic vision and guidance for social media. Organizations need a clear direction and purpose to enhance their online presence and impact.
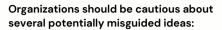
DIGITAL MARKETING CHANNELS

We've identified promising avenues for organizational improvement:

- **Community Building and Collaboration**: Exploring community development on Discord and Slack to foster collaboration.
- **Broadening Audience Reach:** Enhancing engagement by promoting cross-organizational content that reaches new audiences.
- **Innovative Marketing Channels:** Using unconventional channels, such as Tinder, and personalized email signatures in target-oriented email marketing can improve outreach efforts.
- **Cost–Effective Social Media:** Adopting cost-effective social media strategies, including allocating funds to enhance the impact of Facebook and other ads.
- **High–Quality TikTok Content:** Elevating engagement and visibility by creating high-quality and valuable TikTok content.

Organizations should be cautious about several potentially misguided ideas:

- **Setting Clear Goals:** Working without a clear goal and lacking clarity in defining the target audience can lead to resource misallocation.
- **Podcasts and Their Audience:** Organizations should evaluate the return on investment for podcasts and consider collaborating with established podcasters. It's essential to recognize that podcasts, especially those created by inexperienced individuals, may have a limited audience.
- **Channel Selection:** Not all possible channels need to be used; organizations should consider the workload associated with opening new social media channels and should be cautious about managing too many channels simultaneously.
- **Trend Awareness:** Organizations should be careful with trends. Avoid overusing them, invest in niche social media platforms, and stay away from outdated humor. Identifying and following trends early on can yield the desired results.

OFFLINE CHANNELS AND EVENTS

Organisations are currently good at:

- **Creating Attractive Merchandise:** They excel at designing and producing high-quality, creative merchandise, such as pens and other appealing items. They also offer unique and trendy merchandise options and are committed to providing environmentally friendly choices.
- **Diverse Event Engagement:** They actively engage in a wide variety of events, including those organized by others. They participate in events funded by others, as it reduces costs. They show a strong presence in events like the German-Baltic Conference and other workshops and fairs.
- **Effective Visual Identity:** They often have a strong and appealing visual identity that stands out in real-life settings, contributing to their recognition and brand consistency.
- **Engaging Members:** They engage their members effectively. Especially efficient, if they provide grants for member-organized events. They ensure clear follow-up and training for their members, which engages them.
- **Effective Networking:** Organisations excel in engaging and networking with their audience. Their charming members create memorable engagements by charming others with their personality, leaving a lasting impression, and distributing promotional materials to remind people about the organization. They also effectively promote their brand to stakeholders and attract a high participation rate at events.

Organisations are currently weak in:

- **Not Paying Enough Attention to Offline Marketing:** Weaknesses in offline marketing efforts include ineffective event planning, missed networking opportunities, outdated flyers, and a lack of traditional marketing materials.
- **Spending Too Many Resources on Unnecessary Events:** Overcommitting resources to events with declining value - irrelevant topics, resource-intensive activities with limited returns, checkbox events with few participants, and difficulties building/maintaining a community due to resource constraints.
- **Making Events That Are Beyond Their Existing Member Base:** There's a need for better alignment with the organization's existing member base when planning events. This includes addressing the insufficiency of open events organized with external partners due to resource and time constraints and enhancing expansion opportunities through more effective international events.
- **Identifying the Right Topics for Events to Reach the Best Audience:** To effectively engage the desired audience, it's crucial to enhance the selection of event topics. This involves not only ensuring that content is consistently audience-friendly but also addressing the overall relevance of the chosen topics to attract and connect with the target audience.

OFFLINE CHANNELS AND EVENTS

We identified new opportunities for organisation improvement in these areas:

- **Be Resourceful. Use Existing Assets:** To improve an organization, be resourceful. Use existing assets and resources from other organizations or events. Target crowded locations and create engaging TikTok content. Cross-promote events and inform participants about related events. Highlight engagement opportunities and showcase your organization's potential during events.

- **Increase Targeted Offline Advertising:** To drive improvement, it's worth exploring opportunities for an enhanced offline advertising strategy. Implement unconventional and bold guerrilla marketing tactics that break away from the ordinary. Place ads strategically in physically targeted group-oriented locations, ensuring your message reaches the right audience.

- **Bold Event Concepts:** The path to improvement involves creating event concepts that are bold, unique, and attention-grabbing. This not only sets your organization apart but also fosters engagement. Consider conducting live Instagram sessions with other organizations for collaborative efforts that expand your reach and impact.

- **Transparency and Authenticity:** A core aspect of organizational enhancement is emphasizing transparency and authenticity. Make it a priority to showcase the genuine faces of your organization, letting the true essence of your team and mission shine through in all your endeavors. This authenticity fosters trust and connection with your audience.

Some Potentially Misguided Ideas That Organizations Should Be Cautious About:

- **Don't make "checkbox" events:** Prioritize relevance over quantity in event topics. Keep a manageable count of offline events and be mindful of speaker selections, avoiding extreme positions.

- **Don't make "checkbox" Merchandise** It's advisable not to fall into the checkbox merchandise trap. Organizations don't always need a constant influx of new merchandise. It's often wiser to invest in a more limited but high-quality range. Avoid overemphasizing merchandise to the detriment of your budget.

- **Going with the "default" event format:** Organizations should carefully assess the suitability of online events compared to in-person ones, taking budget considerations into account. Avoid the participation overload in online conferences that consume valuable workdays but yield limited productivity.

- **Social Aspect Balance:** Finding the right balance in the social aspects of events is crucial. Organizations should resist the temptation to overplan or make everything overly formal. Remember that people attend events to relax and enjoy themselves, so maintaining a social and approachable atmosphere is essential.

PR & STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

Organizations excel in the following areas:

- **Proactive Engagement:** Organizations are adept at demonstrating a strong willingness to get involved and remain active. This commitment engenders the support and trust of our stakeholders.
- **Effective Internal Communication:** They maintain clear and effective communication channels with their members, ensuring that internal stakeholders are well-informed.
- **Collaboration and Networking:** Organizations collaborate with NGOs and youth organizations, leveraging their network—active engagement with other youth organizations via Erasmus programs and GBYEN membership.
- **Leveraging Government Ties:** They leverage their connections with government entities to enhance their reputation, even when the government's active support may be limited.
- **School Outreach:** Organizations effectively engage in visiting schools to attract new participants, expanding their reach to a younger demographic.
- **Engaging Past Participants:** They successfully attract past participants through targeted email campaigns and word-of-mouth referrals, utilizing their extensive network connections to extend their reach and impact.

Organizations are weak in the following areas:

- **PR Communication and Media Engagement:** Our PR communication and media engagement could be more robust. We need to improve communication about PR and enhance our strategies. We also require a memorable slogan and media partnerships.
- **Limited Collaboration with Non-Youth Organizations**: Organizations need to collaborate better with external stakeholders, especially non-youth organizations. However, they need more time and resources, working in collaboration, leading to stronger partnerships.
- **Challenges in Knowledge Retention and Networking:** Organizations need help to retain PR knowledge and stakeholder contacts when key experts depart. Frequent board changes make it challenging to establish intimate connections with essential stakeholders, complicating the retention of PR knowledge and contacts.
- **Effective Utilization of Network Resources:** A common challenge faced by organizations is effectively leveraging the networks they are part of. This encompasses difficulties in keeping track of the numerous networks in which they are involved and the need to engage with them more effectively.

PR & STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

We've identified new opportunities for organizations to improve in these areas:

- **Brand Ambassador Empowerment:** Organizations can empower brand ambassadors by engaging them and investing in paid partnerships. Create a mentoring system to train new representatives and maintain a comprehensive list of affiliated organizations with annual check-ins for better insights.

- **Effective Media and Advertising Communication:** Organizations can strengthen their media presence by sending press releases to the media, securing discounts on traditional marketing channels, and leveraging social content for free media coverage.

- **Engagement with New Stakeholder Groups, Particularly Corporates:** Engaging with diverse stakeholders, including corporations, can help organizations discover new opportunities. Meeting informally with stakeholders who appreciate the organization's work can lead to valuable collaborations. Additionally, exploring sponsorship opportunities in the Baltic states can improve an organization's visibility. Collaborating with corporations interested in CSR or government agencies can also provide avenues for growth.

- **Strategic Email Marketing and Youth Engagement:** Organizations can maximize the potential of email marketing for promotional purposes and implement referral systems targeting the youth. This approach offers a more effective and direct way of reaching the desired audience.

Some potentially misguided ideas that organizations should be careful with:

- **Stakeholder Selection:** Be cautious when approaching stakeholders. Adopt a strategic approach and select partners that align with your objectives and provide genuine value. Be discerning when maintaining stakeholder relationships.

- **Email Clarity:** Be mindful of email communication. Keep messages concise and straightforward to ensure the key message is clear and accessible.

- **AI and Trend Considerations:** Be cautious with AI and trends. AI-generated art may seem tacky and infringe on artists' rights. Avoid creating controversial or sexist content with ChatGPT, especially in commercials.

20 specific ideas to improve your channel use

1. **Add analytics to your website** and measure approximately how much your marketing costs.
2. **Research different potential target groups** and create other mailing lists and strategies.
3. **Make side-events (and side-TikToks)** to already existing events. Use the crowd if it is there.
4. **Look for mutually beneficial collaborations** and seek visibility in the news, on the internet, and the radio.
5. **Host hackathons** as effective ways to unite young people and develop their skills, but be prepared for the demands and need for a substantial team.
6. **Involve schools** within big projects to ensure a minimum attendance of 30+ people.
7. **Organize festivals or two-day events** focused on specific topics, aiming to stand out from other festivals and develop your brand.
8. **Merchandising** can be effective but requires a well-thought-out corporate design that conveys the organization's values and vision.
9. **Research current TikTok trends** and adapt them to promote your organization in a funny, catchy, and entertaining way.
10. **Maintain your social media community** by engaging with your online followers, prioritizing engagement over the number of followers.
11. **If you make TikToks,** provide value and prioritize quality over quantity for extraordinary results.
12. **Feel free to change concepts and strategies**, collaborate with people from different backgrounds, and hold brainstorming sessions to gain new perspectives.
13. **Create short movies from past events** and present them when inviting members to new ones.
14. **Offer trips to relevant organizations**, such as government institutions, or collaboration journeys with other organizations to bind people to your organization.
15. **Host a seminar titled "Raising the Next Generation of Delegates"** to encourage young people to connect with essential individuals.
16. **Get the audience where they stand** (e.g., more significant events, other organization channels), making your outreach more effective.
17. **Ask for free advertisement** spots, such as radio and TV ads, public transport ads, and outdoor ads.
18. **Be ready to try out new ideas** and analyze their effectiveness, avoiding excessive discussion without action.
19. **Seek opportunities to get featured** in existing podcasts without the need for technical expertise.
20. **Be bold and authentic**, and showcase what sets your organization apart to create a distinct identity and attract engagement.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR EXPERT: Gustavs Upmanis!

AND TO ALL THE YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WORKSHOP "Media usage as a youth organization"

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE GERMAN–BALTIC YOUTH EXCHANGE NETWORK WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL PARTICIPANTS WITHOUT WHOM IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NOT POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH SUCH GREAT RESULTS FOR INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WORK. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK ALL KEYNOTE SPEAKERS WHO PUT US ON THE RIGHT TRACK FOR DISCUSSING COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA USAGE!

THANK YOU! AITÄH! PALDIES! DĖKOJU! ДЯКУЮ! DANKE!