Digital Advocacy Toolkit
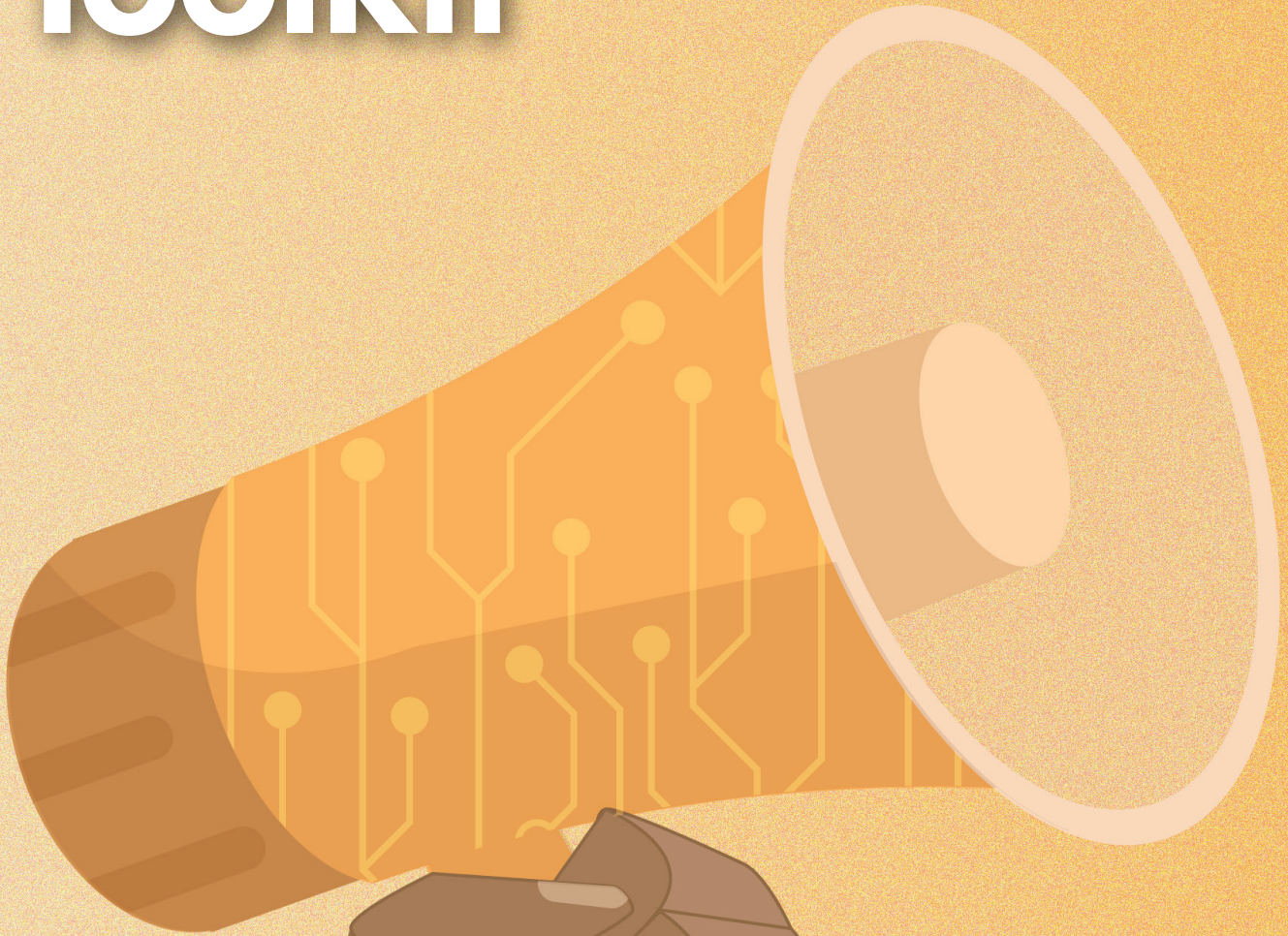
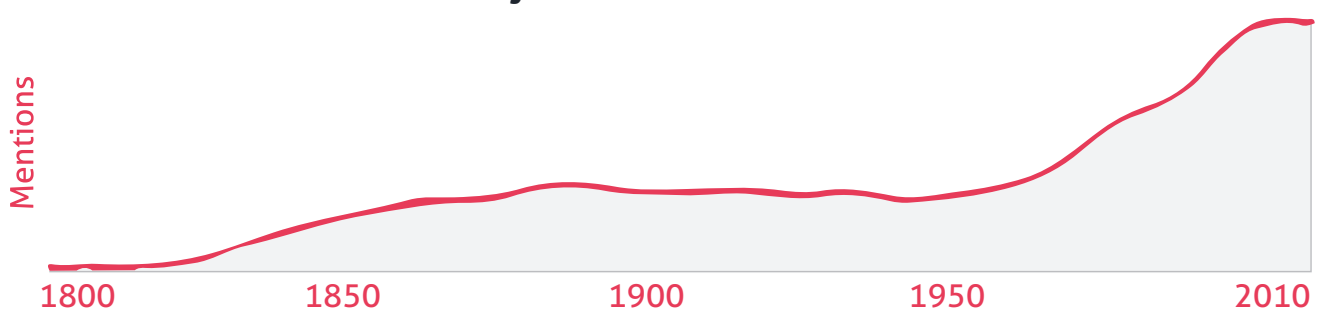# Table
Of Contents

advocacy

/ˈadvekesi/ 🔊

noun
noun: advocacy

1. public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy
   "his outspoken advocacy of the agreement has won no friends"
   synonyms: support for, argument for, arguing for, calling for, pushing for pressing for;

Use over time for: advocacy

What is
Digital Advocacy?

Advocacy is the promotion, recommendation or encouragement of decision-makers to support a cause, policy, product, idea or way of doing things.

Digital advocacy is the use of technology to galvanise people towards a common goal or objective by influencing public perception or policymaking. Digital advocacy can be used for a number of objectives, including behaviour change, policy change, fundraising, raising awareness, changing perceptions or inspiring a particular action.

Decision makers could be interpreted to mean politicians, religious leaders, bureaucrats, or even the general public, depending on your advocacy goals. Digital tools have tremendously increased the reach of advocacy campaigns, while at the same time drastically reducing costs.

Platforms such as social media, blogs, newsletters and instant messages allow organisers to keep their audiences engaged and updated with the latest information, action points and outcomes. We can now measure the impact of our advocacy through simple analytics that are readily available such as Google Analytics for websites or Facebook Insights for Facebook page, scraping online publications for content on policy changes or by using digital and mobile surveys.

An effective digital advocacy strategy utilises a broad range of tools and content to engage more deeply with their audience, and now, more than ever, grassroots organisations are well placed to fully exploit the power of digital.

Case Study 1

Hashtag Advocacy

When enough people get together to share campaign messages on social platforms such as Twitter or Facebook with one hashtag, the message can *"trend"* and receive significant attention from users, media outlets and even decision makers.

A great example of such a social movement is *#BlackLivesMatter* which is an international activist movement, originating in the African-American community of the United States of America, that campaigns against violence and systemic racism towards black people.

Elsewhere, in Zimbabwe, the *#ThisFlag* meme became a growing movement seeking social justice.
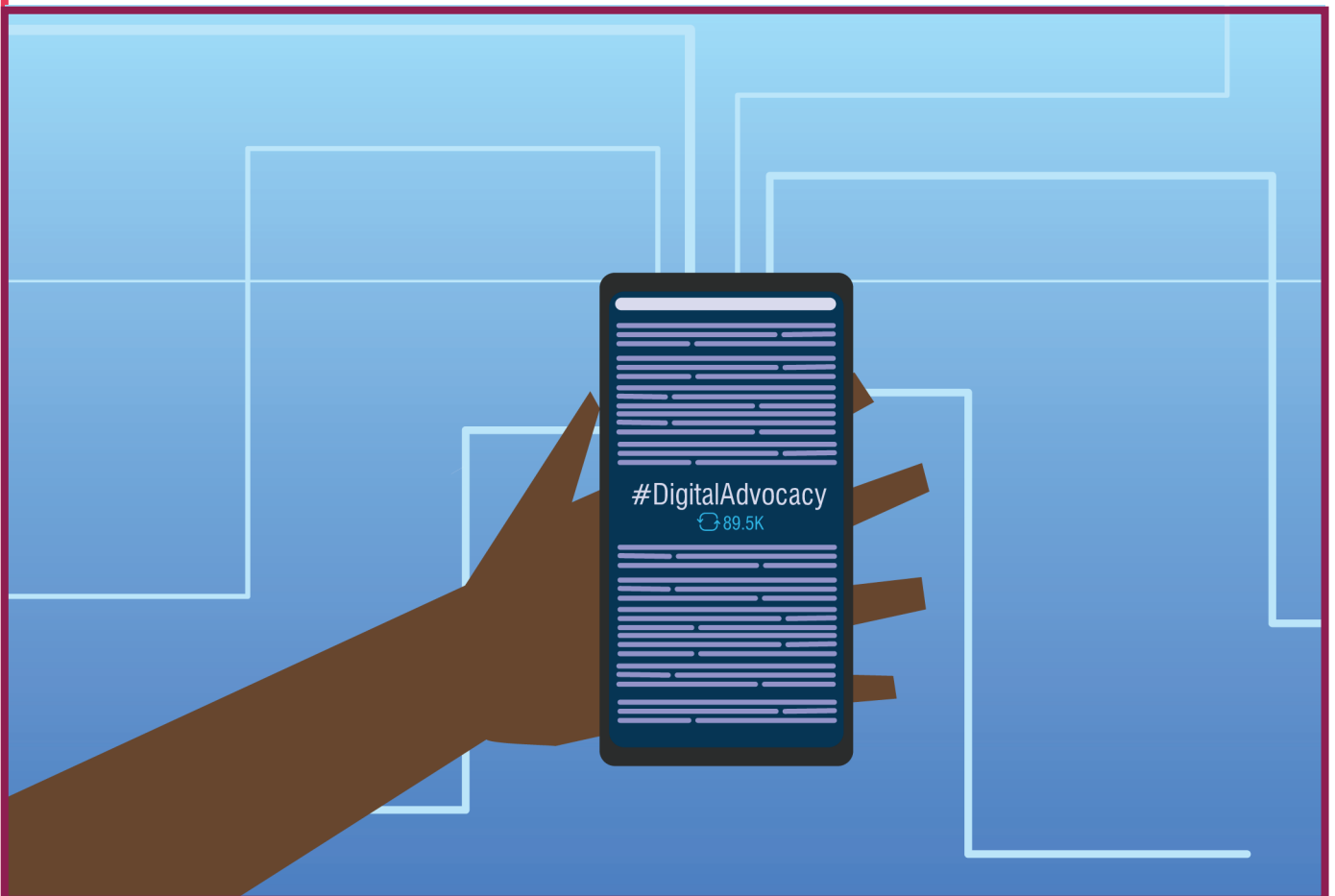
What is a
Digital Advocacy Strategy?

An advocacy strategy lays down a concrete plan for achieving your objectives. It describes your goals, your audience, your communication mechanisms and how to evaluate your campaign success. One useful method to develop such a strategy is to answer the nine question strategy survey created by Jim Schultz, founder & executive director of *The Democracy Center.*

Question 1. What do we want?
Question 2. Who can make it happen?
Question 3. What do they need to hear?
Question 4. Who do they need to hear it from?
Question 5. How can we make sure they hear it?
Question 6. What do we have?
Question 7. What do we need?
Question 8. How do we begin to take action?
Question 9. How do we tell if it's working?

Asking yourself these nine questions enables you to think through the core issues of your advocacy campaign.
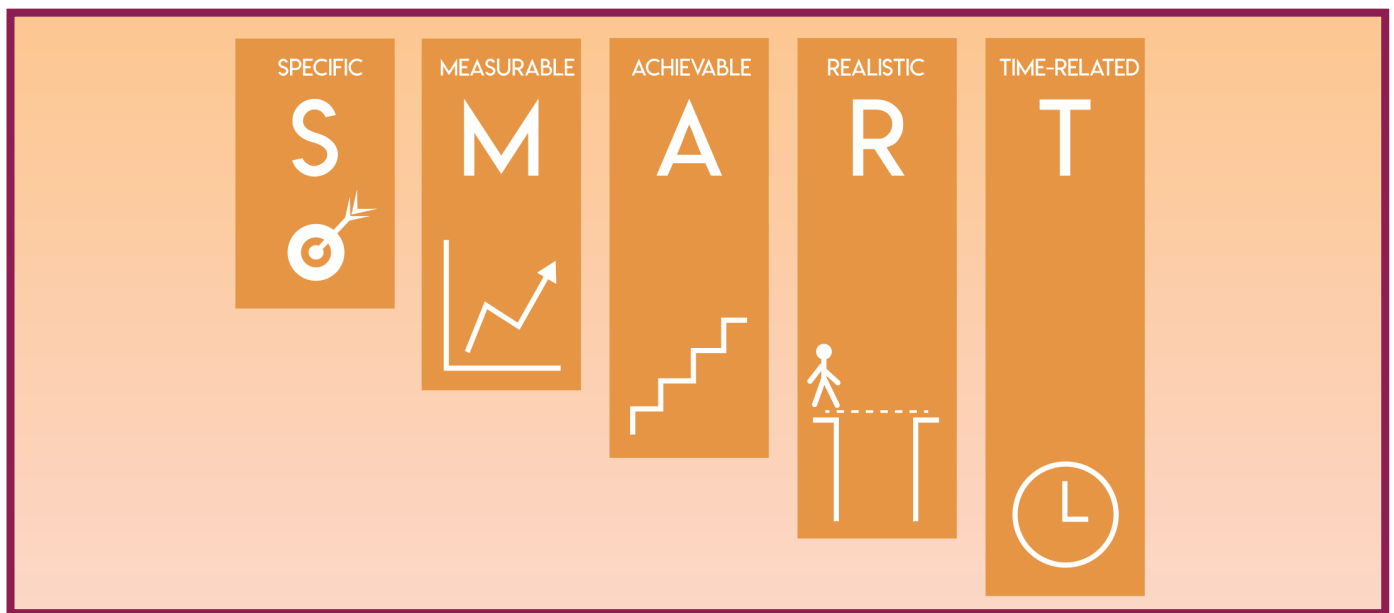
For example;
What is your current context and where would you like to be?
Who are your audience and who are your key stakeholders?
What resources do you have at your disposal and what is currently missing?

Advocacy
Action Planning

First, let's begin with **SMART** goals.

Ideally, any goal or objective you come up with should fit the following criteria:
Specific – target a specific area for improvement.
Measurable – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
Achievable – specify who will do it.
Realistic – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
Time-related – specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

For example, if you want to improve the level of service offered to youth on sexual and reproductive health in Uganda, you could follow these steps:

Specific - provide contraception & counselling services in government-run clinics for youth aged 14-25 in Uganda.
Measureable - youth can access contraception & counselling at 75% of clinics across the country.
Achievable - the awareness campaigns & education outreach will target 1,000 young doctors in educational institutions and public facilities.
Realistic - the campaign can reach 80% of medical students & recent graduates through our partner networks and digital advocacy campaigns to change attitudes and practice.
Time-related - results will be achieved in 24 months from beginning of program.

Here's a quick lesson from Advocacy Assembly on developing smart goals for your strategies.

My intended impact is...(e.g. improve quality of sexual health services offered to Ugandan youth)	
My advocacy goal is... (e.g. changing healthcare policy and practice)	

Activities / Tactics	Interim Outcomes
COMMUNICATION (e.g. social media promotions, coalition building, presentations, one-on-one conversations with doctors and nurses, media partnerships, rallies / marches)	ADVOCACY CAPACITY (e.g. new partnerships or alliances, new supporters, organisational publicity, advocacy capacity building)
Activities / Tactics	Interim Outcomes
POLICY & POLITICS (e.g. policy research analysis, litigation or legal advocacy, lobbying, building relationships with decision makers)	AUDIENCE CHANGES (e.g. awareness, will of doctors, media coverage, political will, attitudes or beliefs, issue framing)

Outlining SMART Objectives

Not SMART	One Reason Why
We will create a video about accountability for environmental issues in Brazil.	Un*specific*
Screenings of our video will result in a more positive response from the public	Difficult to *measure*
The video will make official ratify the Kyoto Protocol immediately	Is this *achievable*?
The video will result in a 500% increase in women landowners in 2 months	Un*realistic*
We aim for the recommendations outlined in the video to be adopted soon	No *time* frame

Make it SMART

SMART	Why
Provide video *documentation training* to *Brazillian activists* to collect filmed evidence of corporate *violations of national environmental laws* in *Southern Brazil* & submit this as evidence to *national & regional courts.*	*Specific* plan of action
Through screenings of the video, we aim to increase community dialogues by *15%* over the next *6 months.*	Is *measurable*
During our advocacy briefing, we will provide a *video report* with *recommendations for interim steps towards* ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.	Is more *achievable*
We aim for a *20% increase* in female landownership in the targeted areas by the end of the campaign.	A *realistic* objective
We aim to have the anti-discrimination law advocated for in our video pass by *August 2012.*	Is *time* bound

How to Launch Your Campaign

Once you've answered these nine questions, you're ready to move on to the next stage of launching and implementing your campaign.

The key steps to a successful digital campaign include 5 main steps:

1. Decide on your goal

Clarify your main goals and objectives. Our digital spaces are becoming increasingly cluttered with information and misinformation, as such, it is very important to remember to stay focused on your advocacy goals and what you are trying to achieve. Keep in mind, it's not about the technology, it's about how it supports your needs.

2. Figure out your target audience

An advocacy campaign must have a clear sense of the audience. It is important to understand who the key stakeholders and what levels of power and influence they wield in helping your organisation to achieve your goals. It is also a good practice to have a target audience because it improves your reach, allows you to better tailor your content and use your resources more effectively.

In this effort, in can be quite useful to develop user or audience personas. This is the practice of defining an audience collectively, as one person or a persona by attaching common attributes and characteristics of a typical member of your audience while at the same time, taking into consideration their local contexts, needs and expectations.

Once you have developed a persona, you will use it to prepare scenarios or situations for them to encounter or problems for them to solve. You and your team need to be able to empathise with and understand the persona, so collect as much knowledge about your existing users are possible. If you're just starting out with a new project, you can still do the user persona exercise based on hypotheses and assumptions, but you should remember to revise and adjust your personas as new information comes to light.

Here's a template to help you build out your persona.

Name	Give your persona a real name. Let's name her **Joan.**
Age	What is your persona's age? Be specific with a number, rather than a range. **Joan is 25 years old.**
Lives in...	Where does your persona live? In a city, a town or a village? Be specific, do not list a fictitious place. Describe their surroundings and their home. **Joan lives in Kampala, Uganda in a 2 bedroom apartment with her best friend from medical school.**
Personality traits	Is your persona an introvert or extrovert? Are they friendly or unfriendly? Are they quick to anger? Are they generous? **Joan is friendly and empathetic. She is quick to help others. She easily cries at sad scenes in movies and has on multiple occasions, tried to adopt stray animals on her street.**
Likes / Dislikes	What does your persona like and dislike? He/she could like reading & watching football, but dislike exercise and attending loud parties. **Joan loves watching American TV series, going out to brunch with her friends, occasionally pampering herself at the salon & enjoys her current job. She does not like watching or participating in sports, patients who do not keep time and shouting street preachers.**
Motivation / Goals	What motivates your persona? What are his/her goals and ambitions in life? What might make this person take an action? **Joan hopes to someday open up her own clinic in her home town, 30 minutes outside of Masaka. She lives frugally to be able save money to do so.**
Frustrations / Pain points	What annoys your persona? What are his/her pain points? Does he/she get really angry having to wait in long lines to access government services? Does it make him/her uncomfortable to hop on an overcrowded bus? Or when he/she watches injustice on the news? Again, get as specific as possible. **Joan often gets frustrated when there are medicine stock-outs at her hospital. She feels bad when she has to turn patients away. She also gets upset when she sees her fellow doctors accepting bribes to deliver services.**
Media consumption	There are many other traits and categories you can add to the persona list. One example to consider is how your persona accesses different forms of media. Does he/she have a smartphone? A laptop? A TV? A radio? This information will help guide your digital campaign and better spend your resources in reaching this target audience. **Joan owns a Samsung smartphone. The screen cracked a few months ago and she hasn't gotten around to fixing it. She also owns a laptop which she received in medical school and shares a TV with her roommate at home.**

PERSONA

NAME: ------------------------------------

AGE: ------------------------------------

LOCATION: ------------------------------------

Education: ------------------------------------

Job Title: ------------------------------------

Languages: ------------------------------------

Biography: ------------------------------------

Influences: ------------------------------------

Personal Goals: ------------------------------------

Personal Values: ------------------------------------

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Type of Phone: ------------------------------------

Type of Computer: ------------------------------------

Media source: ------------------------------------

Internet Connectivity: ------------------------------------

MOTIVATIONS

FRUSTRATIONS

" Personal Quote: ------------------------------------

POLLICY

3. Choose your social channel

Website? Blogs? Newsletters? Twitter? Facebook? Instagram? Snapchat?

Research and evaluate where your campaign supports are most likely to be found online. This is where your personas comes in handy. You've already identified who is most likely to support your advocacy efforts and you know where to find them online. You know what makes them tick, and how to speak to them in a way that they'll understand and be inspired by.

Don't try to get your users to come to a new platform, it's much easier for you to meet them where they already are. For example, in one country, older people might be more prevalent on Facebook whereas younger people are more likely to spend a majority of time on Snapchat or Instagram. This might not be true in the next country where everyone prefers to use Twitter as their main mode of networking.

Here is an interesting report from *HootSuite* giving a global breakdown of internet, social media and mobile data for 239 countries around the world!

At first, pick one major central channel as the hub of your advocacy campaign. This could be your website, your blog or your Facebook page. Once you have built up this platform, only then should you start to use other social media tools to link back to this main content.

Use the information from your personas to guide the way on what platforms you do choose. Remember, maintain a coherent message across your different platforms.

Here is a short guide on choosing the best channel for your advocacy campaign.

	Example	Stakeholder 1	Stakeholder 2
Identify who is most likely to support your advocacy efforts	Young doctors in urban areas in Uganda		
Research what level of knowledge do they have on the issue and how much influence do they have over the issue? Where are they most likely to go to for information on this issue?	Moderate levels of knowledge on the issue. Moderate levels of influence. Most likely to seek information on the internet.		
Find where do they spend the most time online?	They spend most of their time online browsing Twitter, Facebook and medical forums as well as messaging family, friends & patients on Whatsapp.		
Explore what access do these people have to technology (e.g. feature phone, smartphone, computers)	They often own multiple smartphones and a laptop, with access to a desktop computer in the office.		
Listen what kind of messages are they most likely to respond to?	They are most likely to respond to well-researched and scientifically sound messaging. They might require more evidence to support an issue than an average person. They are also short on time, so messages must be brief.		
Understand what action do you need them to take after viewing your campaign?	They need to provide more youth-friendly sexual health services within their clinics & hospitals by better understanding the needs of young people in today's world.		

Case Study 2

The internet has allowed people from distant areas to come together for common causes to get tasks done, collaborate on decision making & even fundraise together.

Crowdsourcing, & more specifically, crowd funding has been raising in popularity with platforms such as *Kickstarter, GoFundMe, Indiegogo.*

Some of the most successful online fundraising campaigns in Uganda are run by *40 days over 40 smiles*, a Kampala based independent, youth-led, charity organisation. Through social media, events and networks, the organisation has raised over Ushs 100 Million and invested it in the lives of over 500 children.

Here is a handy list of resources to help you set up your digital campaign.

| Resource Type	Resource Name	Helpful Links	Skill Level Required	Free vs Paid
Website Development	Wix	Wix is a free and easy web-design tool that allows you to build elegant websites with any coding skills. For tutorials on the different functionalities of Wix, click here.	Low	Free (with paid add-ons)
	Weebly	On Weebly, you can create a free website or blog in minutes by using a simple drag and drop interface. You can find a list of different tutorials & step-by-step guides on how to set up your own website here.	Low	Free (with paid add-ons)
	Squarespace	Squarespace is the all-in-one solution for anyone looking to create a beautiful website & comes with in-built analytics. They have a collection of written guides as well as videos for visual learners on their website.	Medium	Paid
	Shorthand	Shorthand is a visual storytelling platform to engage audiences & move them to action, often used by journalists. The platform comes with beautiful visualisation tools that require minimal or no coding experience.	Medium / High	Paid
Blogging	Medium	Medium is an online publishing platform which is an example of social journalism, having a hybrid collection of amateur and professional people and publications, or exclusive blogs or publishers. Youcan set up your blog in minutes or find inspiring writing from like-minded people.	Low	Free
	Wordpress	Wordpress is one of the most used platforms for building websites & blogs. On Wordpress.com, you can create websites by choosing from hundreds of free, customisable, mobile-ready designs and themes, with free hosting and support. On Wordpress.org, you will need a host account or web server. Wordpress.org gives you immense flexibility in building your website, but does often require some basic coding skills or knowledge. There are many tutorial out there but here's our top pick.	Medium / High	Free (with paid add-ons)

Resource Type	Resource Name	Helpful Links	Skill Level Required	Free vs Paid
	Blogger	Blogger is a blog-publishing service that allows multi-user blogs with time-stamped entries. It's free and easy to set up.	Low	Free
	Typepad	Typepad is another hosted, blog-publishing service with personal support and many beautiful themes to choose from.	Low	Free (with paid add-ons)
Social Media Platforms	Twitter	Twitter is an online news & social networking service where users post and interact with messages, known as *"tweets".* These messages were originally restricted to 140 characters, but the limit has now doubled to 280 characters. Here are some basic instructions on how to set up your account.	Low	Free
	Facebook	Facebook is one of the biggest social media platforms of our time, enabling users to post and share messages, videos and live streams. Pages are for businesses, brands, organisations and public figures to share their stories and connect with people. To set up your own page, follow these instructions.	Low	Free
	Instagram	Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social networking service with over 1 billion users. It is a great platform to use for advocacy as pictures and short videos can help to capture a feeling and in turn, show the impact of your work by bridging the gap between your audience and the issues you are trying to solve. Furthermore, there is no character limit on Instagram, and you can use as many hashtags or tag as many people as you would like to get your message across.	Low	Free

4. Create engaging content

This is what it finally comes down to. The success of your campaign ultimately depends on how effectively you explain your objectives and needs. In order to achieve your digital advocacy objectives, develop a content plan or calendar of topics to post, including the timeline and key dates for your desired outcomes. Keep some room for flexibility to take into account current or unexpected events or outcomes.

Do not spam your users with stale or repeated content. Ensure that your content is in some way, useful to your audience. Whether it's spreading awareness, creating a dialogue or providing support and solidarity. Maximise your online efforts with offline efforts by distributing printed material and holding in-person meetings.

Be sure to use visuals and pictures. Some user-friendly and free platforms to create visuals are Canva and Pablo. Create a catchy hashtag to accompany your campaign. Most importantly, remember to include your call to action.
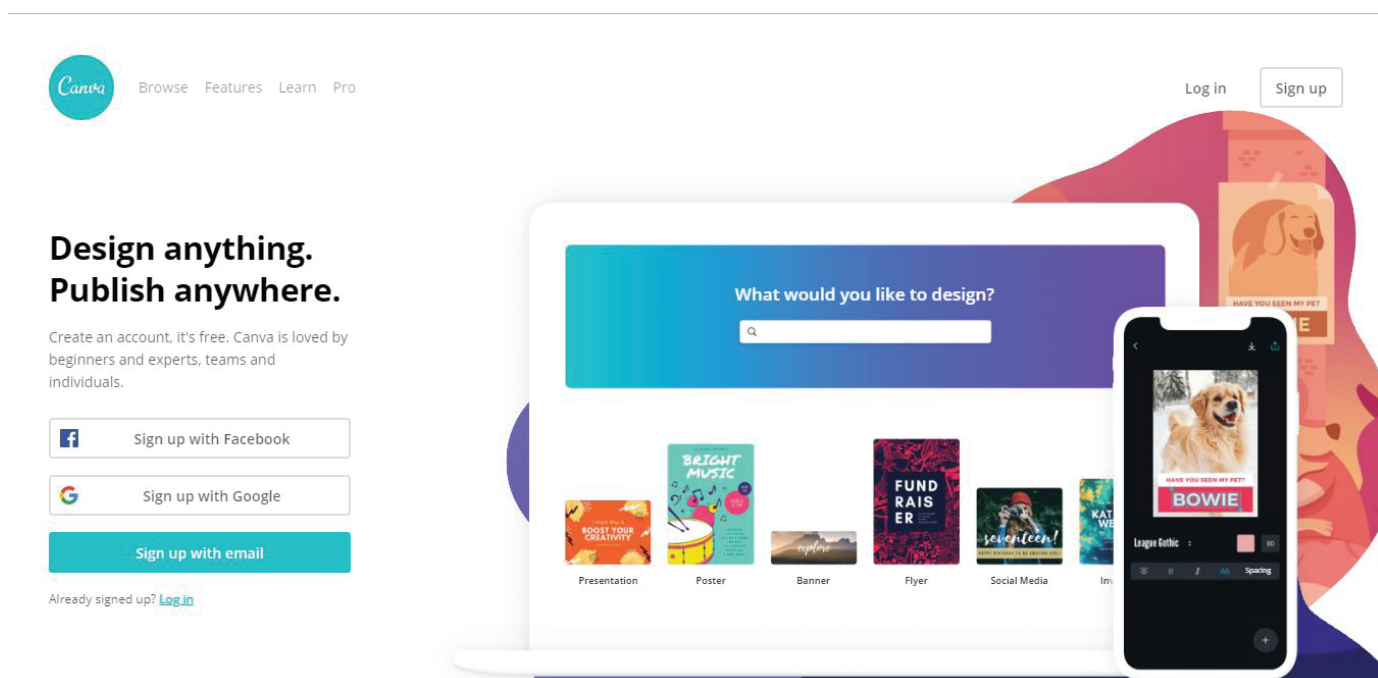

Data visualisations are also very effective in breaking down complex statistics into bite-sized information for your audience, with the added bonus that the data strengthens your key message. There are now a number of free tools available online to help you visualise your data such as *RawGraphs* & *Infogram*. If you would like to brush up on your data visualisation skills, there are a number of courses offered for free on *Advocacy Assembly* such as *"Visualise your data with the best charts and graphs"* or *"Data for Change: Data Visualisation for Human Rights".* A number of free tutorials are also available on Youtube or any learning platform such as Audacity or Coursera.

5. Measure and Iterate

Measure your reach and adjust your strategy based on the results.

Google Analytics provides information on websites and each social media platform has in-built analytics such as *Medium statistics*, *Facebook Ads* or third-party tools such as *Tweetbinder*, *Keyhole* etc.
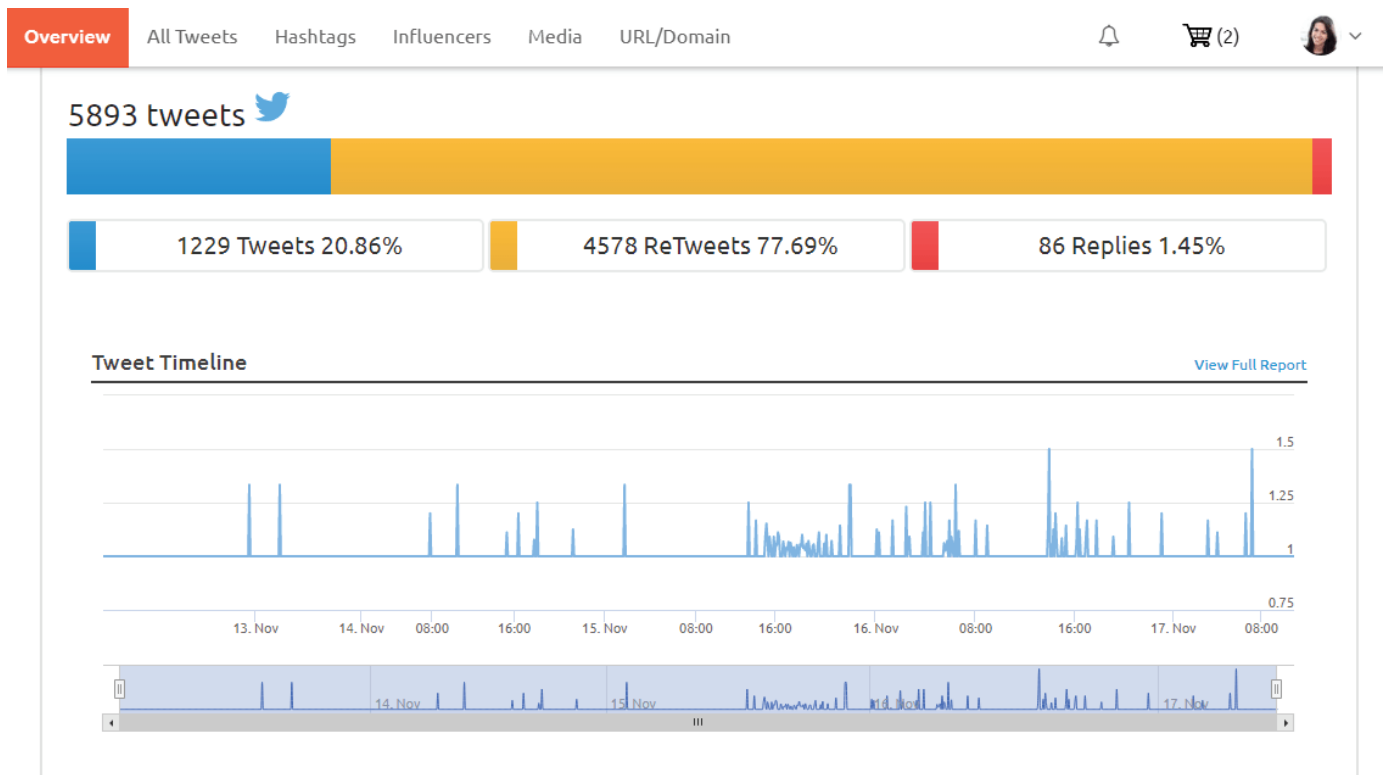
How to Monitor & Evaluate Your Campaign

Measuring the impact of your digital campaign can be tricky for a number of reasons such as unpredictable timeframes as policy change can take years to come into effect. Oftentimes, local contexts change and this means shifting milestones. It is important to think more of your contribution towards your goals, rather attributing the success of advocacy strategy to your work. As part of this, we should think of the journey, rather than just the destination. Be sure to measure progress along the way to make sure you can see the impact of your work over time.

Why we need M&E?

Monitoring and evaluation is important for your digital advocacy campaign to ensure that your campaign is always evolving to its best form and ensure that results have the maximum impact possible. You must start a plan for evaluation at the very start of your work. Do not scramble after 6 months to retroactively measure metrics for which the data might not be available.

Monitoring measures progress in achieving specific results in relation to a strategy's implementation plan. Evaluation attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible a strategy's impact.

Before starting any M&E activities, be sure to your establish your baseline. This means understanding the current context in which you're working, so that you have an idea of where you need to be to claim success and impact.

To begin, ask yourself these five questions:

Question	Information Needed
Who are the monitoring & evaluation users?	Think about who will benefit from the information generated through your M&E activities and how will they use the data. Will the data be used internally, or shared externally with donors, partners and the general public?
How will monitoring & evaluation be used?	Next, figure out how this information is going to beneficial for the users. It could be used for improving and re-iterating the program design, for future fundraising, for accountability and impact measurement, or general learning purposes etc.
What evaluation design should be used?	At this point, things might get a bit technical. There are three main categories of an evaluation design which can be termed as experimental, quasi experimental and non-experimental which basically determine the rigor of your research.
What should be measured?	As we mentioned before, it is important measure incremental progress over the course of your digital advocacy campaign. You can choose to measure the results of your activities, also known as outputs or measures of effort. You can also measure interim outcomes, your actual goals or even better, the impact of your digital advocacy strategy.
What data collection tools should be used??	The last step determines what kind of data will be collected & how that data will be collected. There are a number of different tools & methodologies out there such as network mapping, media tracking, interviews, crowdsourcing, snapshot surveys, research panels, and policy analysis and so on. You can analyse the reach of your hashtag or pour over policy documents to analyse the change in language used over time. In the end, this is totally up to your abilities and resources. Sending out an online survey will cost you nothing, but hiring enumerators to do field research with a representative sample could quickly deplete your financial resources.

Here are a few examples of measurement indicators for your online campaign:

Online Metrics:
If you are using social media to reach a wide audience, you can measure the global reach of your Twitter hashtag, number of visitors to your Facebook page, number of repeat visitors to your Facebook page, demographic reach of visitors interest in your Facebook Ads, number of followers, number of likes, number of retweets etc.

Digital Surveys:
A more active way of understanding your audience's response to your
campaign is to directly ask them what they think. You can use free tools such as Google Forms to develop short surveys that you can either email, link to or embed into your website. The data is collected in real time with basic analytics.

In-person Interviews:
In some of our local contexts, it can be difficult to reach a representative sample by using online surveys. Many people might not have access to smartphones or computers, or even basic phones. One way to get around this is to hire enumerators to go out into the street and talk to people. You can use free data collection software such as KoboToolbox or ODK on a mobile phone or tablet to electronically collect the data in real-time. You can collect information such as GPS location, photographs, timestamps etc.

Policy sentiment analysis:
Now with methodologies such as text mining, textual analysis of policy documents / strategies & speeches from both online and offline documents, reports and articles can be used see whether language and advocacy that you advocated for were included. This is a good way to see how opinions amongst politicians or other decision makers are changing. Here is a quick introduction to pulling data off of websites from Advocacy Assembly: A Gentle Introduction to Scraping Data. You can also keep a record of comments, anecdotes & feedback received from external actors in an ongoing database. These comments and reactions can be gathered at meetings with decision-makers, from their speeches or statements online or at public events.

Movimiento Cosecha, a non-violent movement fighting for permanent protection, dignity, and respect for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, used Facebook Live to bring viewers into direct action.

This means that your advocacy campaign can become a live news source by broadcasting actions, protests, debates, policy analysis etc. to all your followers in real time without any significant additional costs.
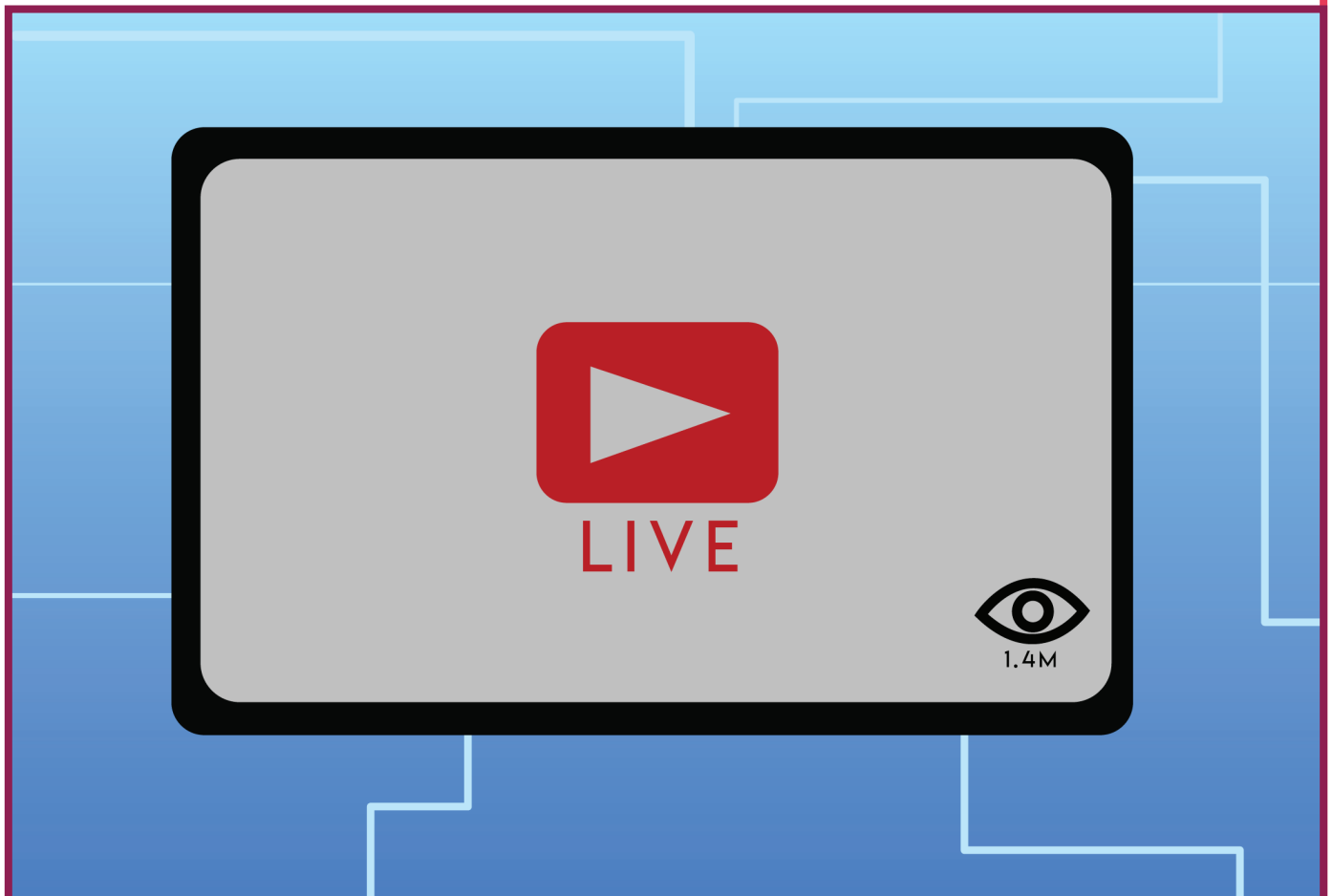
Identifying, Analysing & Mitigating Risks

One of the biggest risks in running a digital campaign is security. Digital campaigns are often on public, social media platforms which means that all the content as well as information on the entire community are available publicly. This can be risky for organisations working on sensitive matters, such as those with opposing political views.

Secondly, it can be difficult to measure effectiveness of an online campaign. It can be tricky to attribute political change to a digital campaign, especially when there are many players, online and offline, contributing towards the same issues.

Lastly, there can be issues around data integrity. For example, if you create a hashtag, this hashtag can easily be hijacked by another person or organisation and spun around to create an alternate narrative, drastically different from what you set out to do. There is little editorial control on social media platforms. You could moderate the comments on your social media page, but you cannot stop people from posting on their own profiles.

Here is a sample risk management strategy. Be sure to analyse and assess the level of risk in your context and create a plan accordingly before setting out on your campaign. There are lots of organisations that will help you to do this or give you advice pro bono, so don't be afraid to reach out.

Risk to...	Nature of Risk...	Contingency Plan
Staff or partners	Staff or partners may become victims of violence due to the content of your campaign, for example someone might get assaulted on their way to work.	Security measures in place for physical and digital protection such as locks on office doors, 2 factor-authentication on digital devices, encryption etc.
Relationship with government or partners	Alliances may become constrained due to policy stance of your campaign, for example government might shut down your offices.	Ensure research is of high quality & transparency is at the forefront of your work. Involve partners and government officials in your work and co-creation of the campaign.
Beneficiaries	Your beneficiaries may come under attack as a result of your advocacy strategy, for example an innocent beneficiary may be verbally abused for a post on your Twitter account.	Do not post any content that might be deemed incendiary against others or might be viewed negatively. Be sure to co-create your campaign with your beneficiaries .

Conclusion

Digital advocacy is a strong tool in today's world where funds are being scarce and distractions are growing. The success of your campaign ultimately depends on how much work you put into it beginning from the quality of your research, your monitoring and evaluation plan and the creativity of your content.