Web2LLP

Handbook

#3

Tools for self-assessment

Action plan ❯

Digital communication strategy checklist ✓

Implementation monitoring 🎥

Contents

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Improving web strategies and maximizing
the social media presence of LLP projects

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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that we present "the tools for self-assessment" as part of the training materials developed for LLP project managers within the framework of the EC-funded project Web2LLP "Improving web strategies and maximizing the social media presence of LLP projects".

We are grateful to all who have contributed to this study, its preparation and production. Our thanks go particularly to Susan Pasco for her careful proofreading and to Stefanos Xenakis, the graphic designer.

What is the purpose of this handbook?

Designed as a tool for autonomous learning, this guide completes the series of Web2LLP handbooks "Maximizing the social media presence of LLP projects" and "Improving web strategies of LLP projects" offered to anyone interested in using digital networks as enablers of sustainable interaction with target audiences.

The guide was created in response to our needs analysis conducted in two stages: desktop research on Internet and social media practices among 150 randomly selected LLP projects funded in 2010 (Song & Zourou, 2012[1]) and an online survey of practices and attitudes in LLP projects. In both cases low uptake of social media was identified, revealing a need to upgrade skills and improve practices in this target group.

Who should use this material?

The self-assessment tools are mainly intended for project managers and members of current projects, as well as submitters of proposals for funding. They may also be useful to leaders of work package communication/dissemination, managers and members of projects not funded by the European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme, and learning/training professionals needing to embed communication tools for target groups. Readers can of course adapt this material to their requirements.

We welcome feedback on practices that have emerged through our collaborative efforts!

How to use the materials

These guidelines, tips and tools are designed for self-assessment by people unable to attend the face-to-face and online courses organised by the Web2LLP team[2]. The aim is to give a basic understanding of mechanisms for establishment of a coherent digital communication strategy on which more elaborate processes and tools can be built (further reading suggestions are given on the last page).

There is no one-fits-all method to develop and monitor a communication strategy. Here we present just some of the methodological tools. Partnerships can adjust tools to their needs and develop a flexible framework in line with project reality.

Methodological tools can be mixed and matched to suit the project. A single tool might not be suitable to all project phases, while a variety of tools is useful to cope with needs emerging at different times in the project. A possible general management approach to the communication strategy is as follows:

1. Define your action plan, using the grid on page 4 or the GRASPS[3] framework.

2. Schedule the implementation phase, based on the checklist on page 6.

3. Monitor implementation of the strategy through a SWOT analysis on page 7.

4. Update/redefine the action plan in light of step 3.

Action Plan
Planning the digital communication strategy of your LLP project

Establishing a coherent and sustainable communication plan is essential for preparation of a project proposal and also for the sustainability of the plan throughout the project lifetime. Just as with face-to-face communication, you need to have goals and a plan for what you want to achieve with Internet and social media technologies.

The grid below will help you to reflect on and create an action plan, through the definition of goals, audiences, communication channels and resources for implementing your digital communication strategy effectively.

Establishing an action plan

1. Specify the target audience(s)
2. Identify the main goals you want to achieve with Internet and social media tools.
3. Specify the task in relation to the audience and the goal.
4. Identify the resources needed, in terms of both people who will engage with the activity (human resources) and material resources, i.e. the best channel based on your audience and your goal.
5. Determine how much time the partnership will invest and how frequently it will engage in the task.
6. Set the monitoring mechanisms upfront.

The grid below is designed to help you to brainstorm with your team as well as to visualise the different components of the digital communication strategy in one place. An example is given to illustrate the use of the grid.

Target audience	Goal	Task	Resources		Timeline and frequency	Monitoring mechnisms
			Human: partner(s)	Material: channels		
Teachers	Interact with target audience/ Receive feedback on a recently finished study	Enhance conversation on the project's Facebook Page fuelled by Facebook posts and tweets	All partners (or partner X)	Facebook wall and Twitter	Two months starting from (yyyy.mm.dd) Once a week	Activity of the FB wall documented from the inbuilt Facebook Insights

Some **tips !**

for **completing** the **grid**

> The grid functions well as a dynamic tool that follows the project partnership in the project proposal stages and throughout the lifetime of the project

○ Specify your target group as well as you can: the better you target your activities to a specific audience, the greater will be the engagement with the target group.

○ Identifying both the goal and the activity helps to analyse the planned action. A goal may consist of more than one activity and may involve additional human resources.

○ The activity may include a reflection on the type of content that is to be promoted (i.e. content directly or indirectly linked to your project)

○ Elements of the grid may change over time - this is a sign of the evolutionary nature of a project. It is advisable to face change, keep track of any variation from the initial plan and discuss with the partners concerned. It is useful to have a flexible and transparent approach to change, discuss openly with partners, and adjust the plan accordingly. Reporting changes to the partnership and/or the funding body as signs of the evolution of your project is useful too.

○ It is very important to make an accurate estimate of the time to be allocated to the activity consisting of overall planning of the communication strategy.

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Looking for definitions and guidelines on how to plan dissemination and communication activities and exploitation of results? Check this website http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/valorisation/why_en.htm

Digital communication strategy checklist before implementation of the strategy

The checklist below should preferably be used before launching the digital communication strategy including social media tools. Although very useful, it is not necessary to have accomplished all stages. This checklist can also be used as a tool to track progress and to identify steps to be completed at a later stage.

"We" refers to the project partnership or the people responsible for the communication and/or dissemination work packages.

The action plan (p.4) can help in this direction

☐ We have defined our digital communication goals.

☐ The digital communication action plan has been discussed and approved by partners involved.

☐ We have researched similar projects to find out the ways in which they engage with their target groups online.

☐ We have found social media applications that match the scope and audience of our project.

☐ Partners are familiar with the social media and web monitoring tools we plan to use.

☐ We have created a username for our social media presence that is short and will be easy to find, follow and connect with.

☐ We have customised the social media tool(s) by including our contact information and URL, plus other possible social media tools that we use.

☐ We have invited peers, project group members and associates to follow us.

☐ On the project website we have added applications (i.e. AddThis) inviting users to join us on the social media where we are active.

☐ We have found solutions for optimising time (e.g. scheduling updates through a social media editor).

☐ We have created a basic structure to track our social media activity and we have set indicators for our digital presence.

Monitoring implementation

Changes implemented throughout the project lifetime reflect the dynamic nature of a project and are vital to project success. The same applies to implementation of the digital communication strategy. Changes simply need to be monitored and embedded in the overall project management activity.

Keeping track of changes to the initial action plan (p. 4) is a good mechanism for implementation monitoring. Reviewing the GRASPS framework (p. 3) is also useful to avoid losing sight of early decisions.

A tool often used to assess outcomes of a project activity is the **SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)**. It can be used during the project and can also figure as a component of a formative evaluation process, allowing partners to keep better sight of the reality of action undertaken and if necessary to proceed with changes and improvements.

SWOT analysis

S strengths	What do you do well? What unique resources can you draw on? What do others see as your strengths?

W weaknesses	What could you improve? Where do you have fewer resources than others? What are others likely to see as weaknesses?

O opportunities	What opportunities are open to you? What trends could you take advantage of? How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?

T threats	What threats could harm you? What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?

Another suggestion for monitoring implementation is to check whether all items of the checklist (p. 6) have been taken into account, and if not, what kind of action has been engaged in this direction.

Finally, implementing a digital communication strategy is a collective process that requires some flexibility and adaptability to deal with the results of an implementation monitoring exercise. For those interested in more elaborate tools, we offer a list of useful resources on the next page.

Sources of...
inspiration

The list below is indicative.

For the whole collection of resources check our public diigo social bookmarking space:

http://groups.diigo.com/group/web2llp ›

Digital resources

Dissemination and exploitation of results of LLP programmes
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/valorisation/why_en.htm

DIVA project: Good Practice for Dissemination and Valorization of Educational Projects
http://www.diva-project.eu/

The spitfire strategies smart chart 3.0
http://www.smartchart.org/

Social Media: marketing planning guide (by Tai Goodwin)
http://www.launchwhileworking.com/

Survival kit: managing multilateral projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme
http://www.european-project-management.eu/

Social media strategy handbook (by the Marketing Savant Group)
http://www.marketingsavant.com/docs/ebooks/
Social%20Media%20Strategy%20Workbook.pdf

Book

Safko, L. 2010. *The Social Media Bible. Tactics, Tools, and Strategies for Business Success.* 2nd edition. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

2+ handbooks

Two extra handbooks for LLP project managers and members freely available on our website:

#1
Improving web strategies of LLP projects

#2
Maximizing the social media presence of LLP projects

Do you find this handbook useful?

Did you try any tips on your project?

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