

BEST PRACTICES FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS BY PARLIAMENTARIANS



UNDERSTAND THE REACH AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks are an instantaneous means of communication used by millions of people around the world, including public authorities and governmental organisations. These platforms facilitate communication between representatives and citizens, where parliamentarians share ideas and inputs on legislative work, and establish spaces for citizens' questions and concerns to be addressed.



GENERATE A PARTICIPATORY POLITICAL DEBATE

The different platforms available online have created spaces for debate and sharing information on topics in the news. Anyone can participate by raising an issue or intervening in conversations started by other users. These online conversations allow parliamentarians to learn about the different perspectives and points of view of citizens, inputs that can be important for legislative work. Joining in these discussions is considered a best practice that can serve as a strategy for positioning and gaining followers.



ENGAGE IN REAL-TIME DIALOGUE AND GENERATE CONTENT

Dialogue and the exchange of ideas have become much faster, more relevant, and more pertinent in real-time. Parliamentarians can take advantage of social networks to generate quality content that is both timely and attractive. Each comment or publication should be made in plain and direct language, based on parliamentarians' position and values. This guarantees the fluency of the conversation, avoids redundancy, and keeps actions and ideas coherent, always keeping in mind that each comment made can affect followers' opinions.



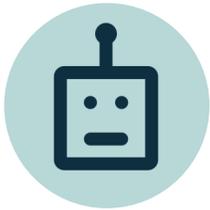
BUILD TRUST

Sharing personal experiences, photos, feelings, past events, daily activities, and even musical tastes are strategies that can build trust and forge closer connections with citizens. The possibility of being in permanent contact allows users to know and be in synch with the work their parliamentarian is doing, and learn about their preferences or personal tastes. It can be useful to find a profile photo matching the perception parliamentarians want others to have. For transparency reasons, it is also recommended to indicate who is managing the legislator's account on these platforms.



FOLLOW THE ACTIVITIES OR NEWS OF OPPONENTS ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

Knowing the issues, priorities, and news of other parliamentarians and public authorities can be useful. This information is a strategic resource that can be used to anticipate a position and commitment of a parliamentarian on a specific issue. This can help in designing a political plan or strategy to promote the inclusion of new issues as priorities in the legislative agenda.

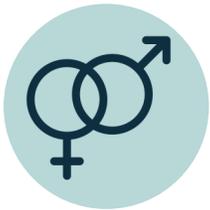


MAINTAIN A NETWORK OF FOLLOWERS FREE FROM TROLLS, SETTING LIMITS, AND BEING A FRIENDLY AND ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY

Blocking social network accounts is not always recommended. However, in the case of systematic attacks directed to the account of a public figure by trolls or bots, it can be important to establish certain limits to online interaction and conversation, and to try to avoid potential crisis scenarios. Identifying a specific audience of followers is also recommended to achieve more active involvement in your own community.

TROLLS: individuals or fake accounts that hide behind the anonymity offered by the internet to post negative comments with the aim of causing crises.

BOTS: programs used to produce programmed comments online with the aim of bringing negative attention to public figures.



SPEAK OUT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ONLINE

It is estimated that 73% of women have experienced some kind of gender-based violence online (according to the final report of the Broadband Commission's Working Group on Gender). This phenomenon, which is usually based on negative gender stereotypes and on the sexualisation of violence, disproportionately affects women and has real consequences on their personal and professional lives. In this context, female politicians, who are particularly exposed due to their work, can be harassed, abused, or threatened. Legislators can use their voices to speak out against gender-based violence on the internet and to show solidarity with those who experience it.



NEGATIVE COMMENTS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONALISM

In the face of negative comments and attacks, usually from trolls or bots, it is suggested to resist the urge to respond immediately and first confirm whether the account or accounts generating the negative content are real. Reviewing the profile information and recent activities of these accounts is a way to check their authenticity; and if they are fake, it is recommended to ignore or delete the comments. If the negative comments are from citizens, in general, it is recommended to respond in a diplomatic way. This not only allows parliamentarians to address and understand users who are against their position or a measure taken, but it also offers the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of the issue in question and turn negative comments into possible new followers.