



Making sense of social media A practical guide for employers' organizations

With the support of:



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Why this guide?

Social media has changed the way we communicate. We are dealing with a set of new norms; for many it feels like having to learn a new language. There are new opportunities to build communities and trust but the 'democratisation' of communication and the loss of control have created new risks to manage.

Channels are evolving fast and social media is a potential game-changer in the way employers' organizations (EOs) deliver campaigns, engage with their members and implement communications strategies. In the words of author and renowned digital expert Erik Qualman: 'We don't have a choice on whether we do social media; the question is how well we do it.'

Aims of the guide

This is a crucial time to review how EOs are approaching the new communication landscape, to share examples of best practice within the sector and to learn from other fields. The specific aims of this guide are as follows:

- Take stock of where we are – how are EOs currently using social media? What are some of the emerging challenges?
- Identify good practice – based on the input from EOs across the world, we have collated examples of what works into our 'seven steps to social media omnipotence'.
- Build a roadmap for driving continuous improvement – how can EOs use social media to continue ramping up communication and campaigning activities?

Methodology

The following guide is based on the input from over 70 EOs and sectoral bodies from around the world.

Harnessing social media has been a key theme of several capacity-building workshops organized by the Programme for Employers Activities of the ITCILO¹ in these last years. This guide draws on the discussions and insights provided by the participants to these activities, notably the Employers Young Professionals' Academy (EYPA)² which entails specific workshop sessions on lobbying and effective communication.

¹ The ITCILO is the training arm of the International Labour Organization. The ITCILO Programme for Employers Activities offers training, learning and capacity development services for employers' organizations staff and board members around the world. For more information go to: <http://lempnet.itcilo.org>.

² The Employers Young Professionals' Academy (EYPA) is a flagship training programme designed and implemented by the Programme for Employers Activities of the ITCILO in partnership with BUSINESSEUROPE every year since 2012. It aims to enhance skills and knowledge of high potential professionals and hence to contribute to EOs' organizational development in Europe; to promote an understanding of the European dimension of industrial relations and of the business environment among future EOs leaders; and to create a network between European EOs' professionals. It is co-financed by the European Union.

The present Guide also includes feedback from ITCILO capacity-building workshops run in co-operation with Ciett³ – the representative body for the global staffing industry – and features a number of case studies of national federations representing the recruitment sector. Case studies from other fields – such as professional institutes – are also used to flag examples of leading practices from beyond the EOs' world.

Moreover, data on current practices was collected through a detailed survey of 35 EOs within the membership of BUSINESSEUROPE⁴ and the International Organization of Employers (IOE)⁵.

Acknowledgement

The ITCILO is grateful to all employers' organisations' representatives that gave their input to the survey and shared information on their practices. Special thanks go to Tom Hadley, a regular contributor to the Employers Young Professionals' Academy workshops with over fifteen years of experience within business organizations, for drafting this Guide with the active collaboration and guidance of Jeanne Schmitt, from the ITCILO Programme for Employers Activities.

This publication is co-funded by the European Union.

³ As the International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies, Ciett is the authoritative voice of the employment and recruitment industry around the world. Founded in 1967, Ciett consists of 49 national federations and 8 of the largest staffing companies worldwide. More information is at: www.ciett.org

⁴ BusinessEurope is the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at European level, standing up for companies across the continent and campaigning on the issues that most influence their performance. A recognised social partner, BusinessEurope speaks for all-sized enterprises in 34 European countries whose national business federations are direct members. For more information go to: www.busesseurope.eu

⁵ The International Organization of Employers (IOE) is the largest network of the private sector in the world, with more than 155 business and employer organization members. In social and labour policy debate taking place in the International Labour Organization, across the UN and multilateral system, and in the G20 and other emerging processes, the IOE is the recognised voice of business. For more information go to: www.ioe-emp.org

1 How are employers' organizations currently using social media?

Most employers' organizations have now been using social media for a number of years. It is a good time to take stock of what is working well and of what EOs see as the current risks and benefits. It is also a good time to evaluate how social media has been embedded into wider communication and campaign strategies. The data covered in this section is based on a survey of 35 EOs⁶ within membership of the IOE and BUSINESSEUROPE and provides a useful snapshot of how social media is currently being used and the emerging challenges.

Do EOs have specific social media strategies?

Only 37% of the employers' organizations responding to our survey have a formal social media strategy in place, with the majority (60%) saying they don't have one. This is partly due to the fact that many EOs see social media as an element of their broader communication and member engagement strategies rather than as something that 'stands alone'. However, it can also be attributed to the fact that employers' organizations around the world are in different stages of their developments, particularly when it comes to new technology and harnessing social media. This, in turn, underlines the key role that organizations such as the ITCILO can play in facilitating the sharing of experiences and the exchange of good practice between EOs across the globe.

How do these findings fit with other research on how business bodies are approaching social media? A survey in the UK by the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN⁷) showed that while the majority of representative bodies (82% of those surveyed) have some form of social media strategy in place, of these, only 32% have a standalone social media strategy, with 51% reporting that it is incorporated into a more general marketing and communication strategy.

What channels are currently being used?

What social media channels are most used by EOs? Respondents to our survey confirmed that Twitter and Facebook are the most used, with many employers' organizations being 'early adopters' of these new communication channels. Most EOs began using Twitter and Facebook between 2009 and 2011, with many subsequently also using other channels such as Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Soundcloud, YouTube and Slideshare.

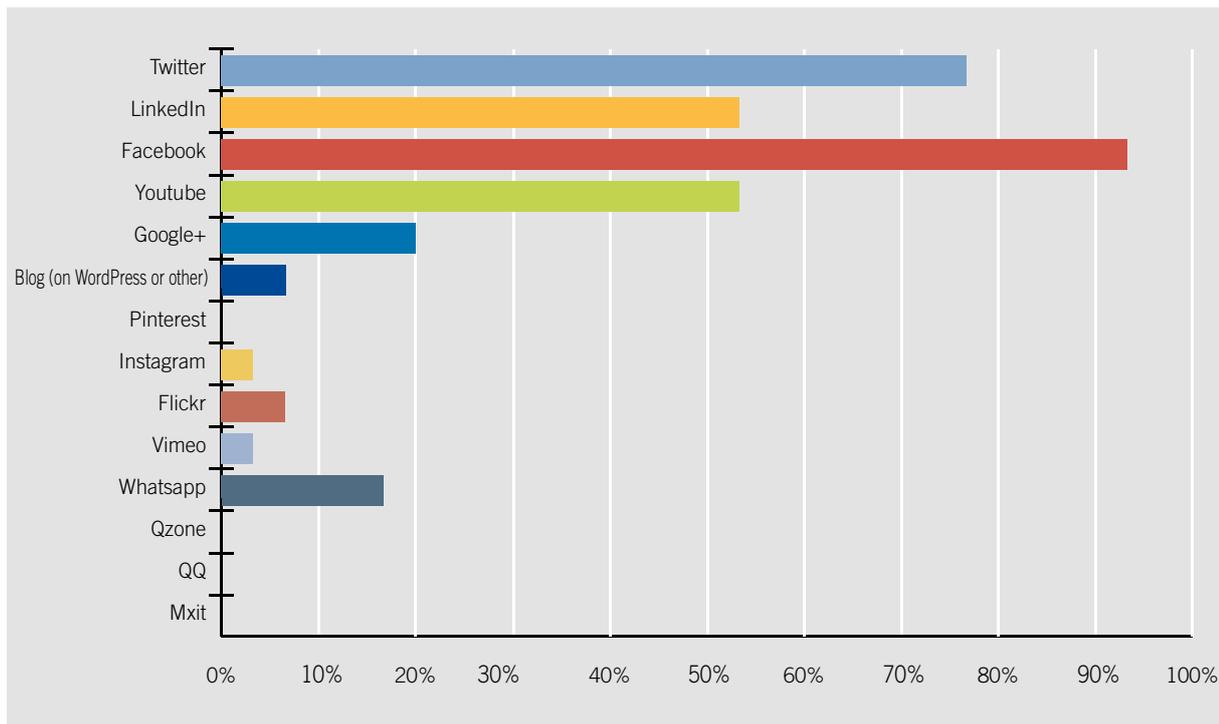
⁶ The respondent organizations are located in Europe (45%), Latin America and the Caribbean (23%), Africa (18%) and Asia-Pacific (14%)

⁷ PARN is a not-for-profit membership organization for professional bodies, set up in 1998 and offering expertise on key issues through research, networking and training. The data mentioned is from PARN's 'Under Control: Social Media at Professional Bodies' publication. Information on the organization is available at: www.parnglobal.com

The use of videos through channels such as YouTube and Vimeo was flagged as an increasing trend by representatives of European employers' organizations taking part in the ITCILO's Employers Young Professionals' Academy (EYPA). One of the key benefits is as a means of engaging members and of ensuring that information is disseminated throughout member organizations. The feedback from the EYPA workshops is that individuals are more likely to assimilate information from short and impactful videos than written briefings and reports.

A separate poll by the International Organization of Employers (IOE) showed that 41% of employers' organizations use Facebook, 41% use Twitter, 40% are active on LinkedIn and 17% use YouTube. This highlights the diversity of channels being used but also underlines that, on the global level, a significant number of EOs are currently not using channels that could potentially help amplify their advocacy and lobbying activities and enhance their member offering. This is an area where training institutions such as the ITCILO as well representative organizations such as the IOE or BUSINESSEUROPE can continue to play a pivotal role by raising awareness of the opportunities and by disseminating guidance and good practice.

What social media channels does your employers' organization currently use?



What are the main benefits?

Respondents to our survey flagged three main benefits that the effective use of social media can bring to EOs: raising profile within the media (85.3% of EOs see this as a key benefit), communicating with members (67.6%) and influencing politicians and external stakeholders (61.8%). This underlines the fact that for EOs across Europe and the rest of the world, social media channels are providing a tool for taking forward both external messages (aimed at policymakers and the media) and internal communication (aimed at the EO's own members).

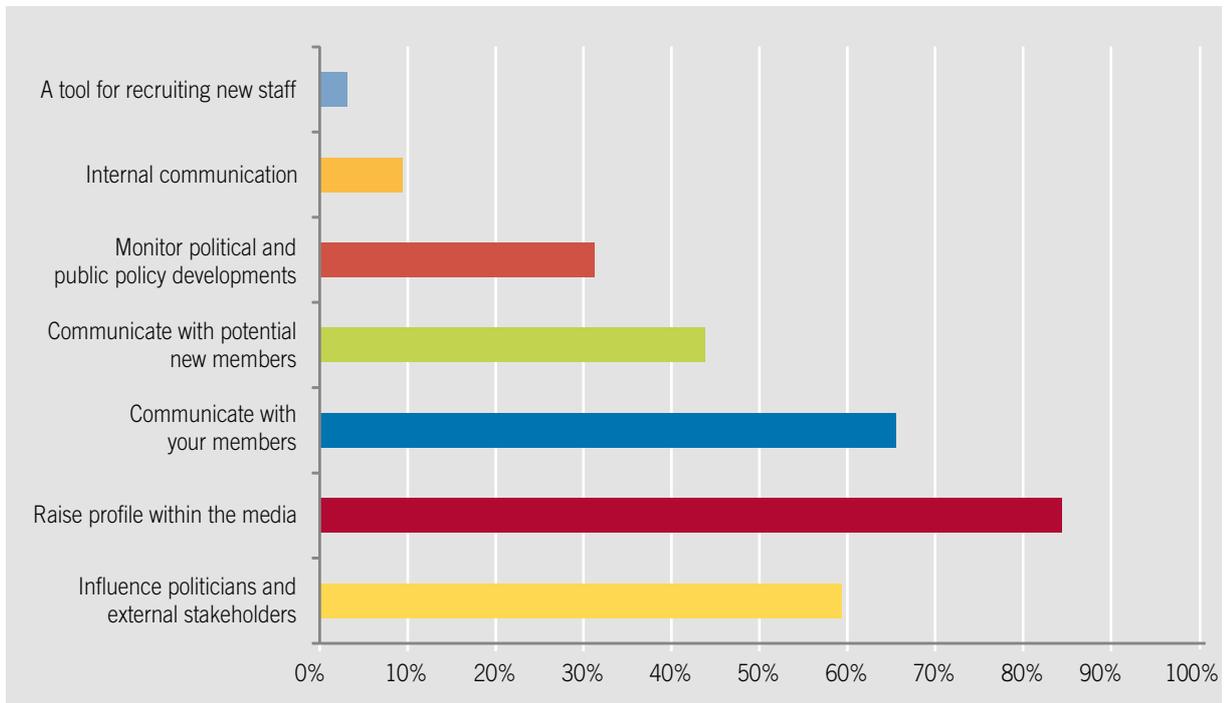
It is interesting to note that a high proportion of respondents (44.1%) flagged the ability to communicate with potential new members as a core benefit. Most EOs need to continue building up their membership base to increase revenue (which can then be reinvested in services) and to boost legitimacy (by representing as many member businesses as possible). As a result, we can expect EOs to continue using social media as part of their member acquisition strategy and as a marketing tool to showcase activities, campaigns, member services and engagement opportunities.

A number of EOs (29.4%) flagged social media as a key tool for monitoring policy developments. The feedback from those taking part in the EYPA programme in Turin was that EOs should not see social media simply as a means of broadcasting messages; it should also be seen as a tool for listening and for engaging in genuine dialogue. This is especially important for EOs engaging on wide-ranging campaigns around the overall reputation of business, as really understanding the nature and causes of people's mistrust and negative perception of the business community is a crucial first step in addressing some of these preconceptions.

Only 9% of respondents cited internal communication (that is, within the EO itself) as an important benefit, which is largely due to the fact that most EOs are relatively small in terms of staff numbers and can communicate effectively without the use of social media platforms. However, as EO campaigns and services become more complex and multifaceted – often involving close co-operation between different departments – social media channels could provide useful project management tools and facilitate cross-functional work. Some respondents to our survey are already using instant messaging tools such as WhatsApp to this end.

Very few respondents to our survey considered a key benefit of social media to be as a recruitment tool for their own staff. Again, this reflects the fact that most EOs are relatively small and will not be hiring new staff very frequently. However, the picture will be very different for individual businesses within membership of the EO. As the challenge of attracting new staff with the right skills (particularly in areas where there are global skills shortages such as engineering and technology), individual businesses who are members of their national employer body are likely to see social media as an increasingly important talent acquisition tool. As EOs increasingly review and ramp up their own use of social media, it is important to remain aware of how their members are using new channels to address new challenges – especially as this is an area where the EO can facilitate exchanges of good practice and conduct useful research.

What do you see as the three main benefits of social media for your organization?



What are the main challenges and risks for EOs?

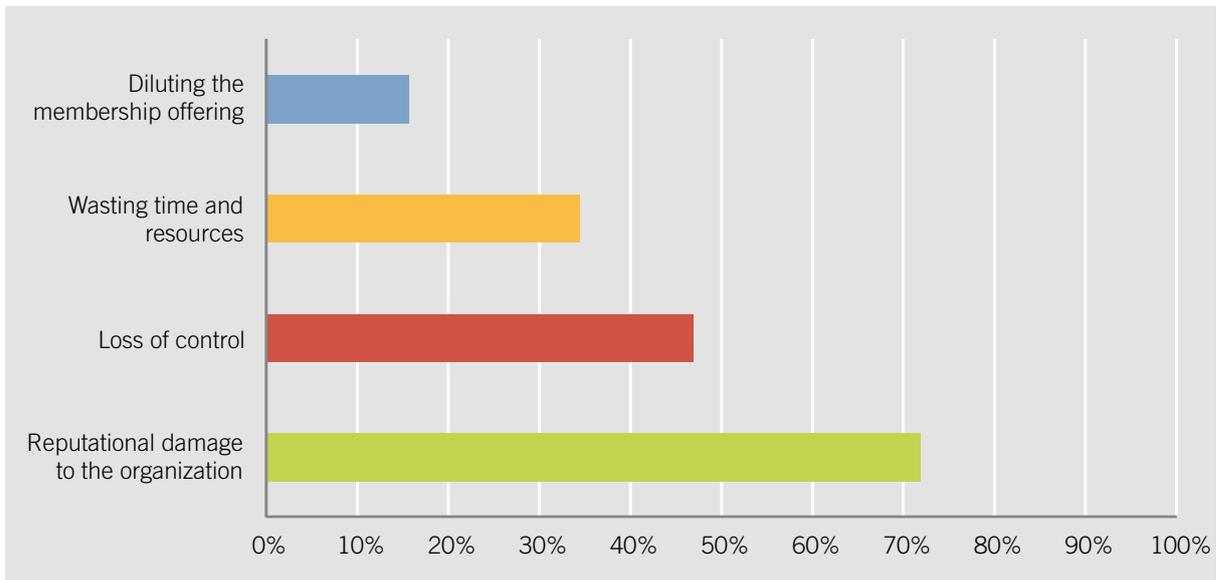
Employers' organizations responding to our survey identified a number of specific risks that social media can create for their organization. The main ones cited are reputational damage (68%), the loss of control (50%), wasting time and resources (32%) and diluting the membership offering (16.7%).

Reputational concerns for EOs can take many forms, ranging from poorly judged tweets on sensitive issues to being systematically targeted by individuals or organizations with an anti-business agenda. The concern over the loss of control overlaps with reputational challenges but also refers to one of the central issues for EOs: who has the responsibility for social media within the organizations and how do we put in place effective processes to limit risks?

The impact on time and resources is something that EOs are increasingly monitoring. Are social media activities delivering real benefits? Is the time and resources being spent justified? Effective measurement is a major topic (see section 2) and is an area where EOs can really learn from each other. One practical example flagged at a recent EYPA workshop is the development of a bespoke member platform for members of a leading EO to exchange views and to stimulate engagement. The initiative didn't work as members preferred to use the platforms that they were already using. Time and resources may have been wasted but lessons have been learned.

On the last risk (diluting the membership offering) the feedback from EOs responding to our survey and from EYPA participants confirmed that this could become a growing issue. The concern here is that the more information is made available on Twitter and other public forums, the less necessary it may become to actually join the employer organization to gain access to this information. In addition, one of the 'competitive threats' for all EOs is the fact that businesses can use social media to build their own networks to exchange views on common challenges. These have traditionally been seen as one of the drivers for individual businesses to join an employer organization.

What do you see as the two main risks of social media for your organization? (Please choose only TWO)

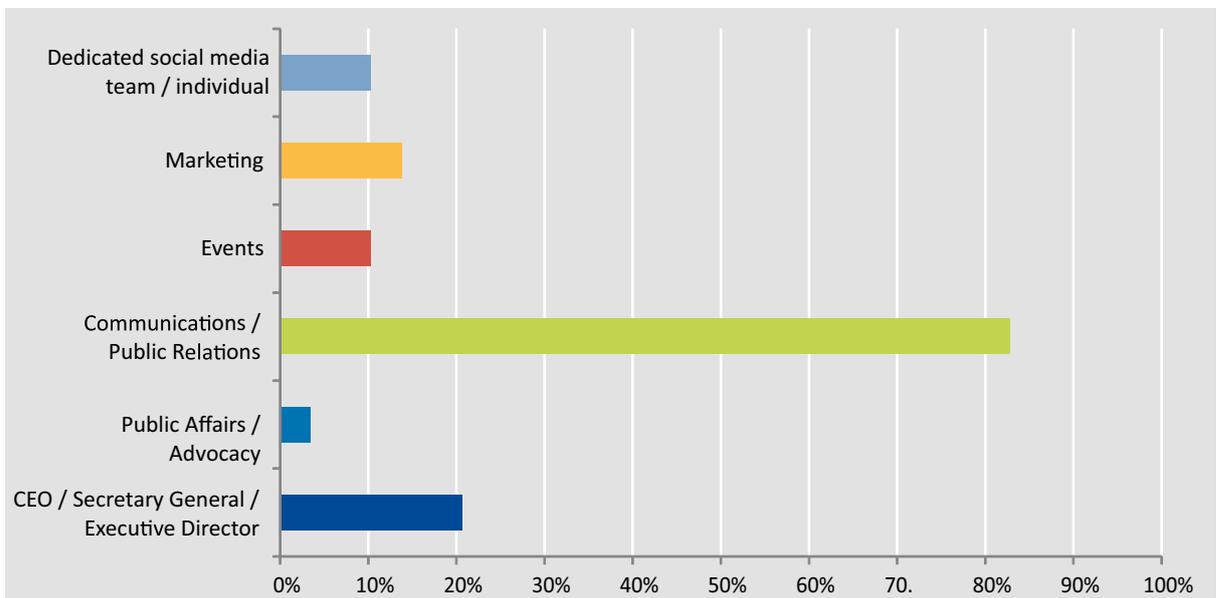


Who 'owns' social media?

The majority of respondents to our survey (over 80%) indicated that the primary responsibility for social media activities sits within the communications/public relations function of the EO. Other EOs said that primary responsibility is with the CEO/secretary general's office or within other departments such as marketing, public affairs or events.

Whoever ultimately 'owns' social media, the priority is to ensure strong cross-functional working – that is, internal departments such as marketing, member communications and public affairs working closely together and breaking down any latent silos. The aim is also to ensure that there is clear accountability and direction without creating a bureaucratic 'sign-off' process which curtails responsiveness and 'flow' of social media activities.

Where does the primary responsibility for social media sit?



2 Thinking about your social media strategy? Seven steps to social media omnipotence

Based on the feedback from EOs from around the world, we have identified a number of key elements to an effective social media strategy. The following 'seven steps' include practical case studies from within the EO 'family' as well as examples and innovative practices from other spheres that we can learn from.

2.1 Be clear on your aims: What does good look like?

Developing and implementing effective social media strategies and procedures requires absolute clarity in terms of what the EO is looking to achieve. 'Beginning with the end in mind' may be one of the seven habits of highly successful people⁸ – it is also the hallmark of an effective EO! One of the benefits of social media is that clear targets can be set – whether it be number of downloads, retweets, views or likes. One of the questions for EOs engaging in any campaign (whether driven through social media or not) is this: what does success look like?

What are some of the specific objectives that EOs have set themselves when engaging in social-media-driven campaigns? Not all of the aims will be based on numbers, and one of the hardest things to achieve is the right tone. A good example of this is the Confederation of British Industry's (CBI) 'Great Business Debate'. While the core aim is to improve the reputation of business, the tone is not defensive; it is not about systematically pushing back on any criticism of the business community. Instead the aim is to stimulate a frank and open debate between the business community and the wider population. Open dialogue is one of the best ways of building trust and, over time, addressing latent preconceptions.

Beginning with the end in mind is not just about setting specific targets – for example, with regards to number of downloads or followers. Social media is about dialogue, not monologue – finding the right tone and ensuring that social media is used to listen as well as to broadcast key messages is essential. A good example of these multifaceted objectives is provided by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), which used a digital agency to build their social media strategy around five key pillars: Listen, Talk, Engage, Energise, Evangelise. The ACCA strategy is directly linked to the organization's strategic objectives around member retention and acquisition as well as boosting reputation.

⁸ Stephen R. Covey's book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was first published in 1990 and has now sold over 15 million print copies.

Clarity of purpose also drives clarity of message. An important step in achieving this is getting internal 'buy-in' from different parts of the EO so that the message is consistent. The feedback from EYPA workshops and from our survey of EOs confirms that social media campaigns will cut across many different departments, including PR, marketing, public affairs and the CEO's office. Sometimes the biggest lobbying challenges are internal, and creating cross-functional project teams with common goals and a common understanding is key to ensuring that any EO is aligned and clear on what the 'end' looks like.



Case study – The Business Continuity Institute (BCI)

The Business Continuity Institute (BCI) is the world's leading institute for business continuity. Established in 1994, the BCI has established itself as the leading membership and certifying organization for business continuity professionals worldwide.

BCI uses social media platforms to engage with stakeholders, members and prospective new members. The specific aims are to increase engagement with its membership, and to improve the reputation and public understanding of the Institute's work by driving traffic to their website. Social media is a key way of promoting research, industry news and regular blogs.

In line with the core underlying aim of boosting reputation and awareness, the BCI strategy hones in on two set pieces during the course of the year: an annual awareness week in March and an education month in September.



Case study – The Confederation of Danish Enterprise

The Confederation of Danish Enterprise is the network for trade, IT, industry and service in Denmark. It represents 17,000 Danish companies and 100 trade associations covering a wide range of areas, including trade, tourism, business services, IT, welfare services and transportation. An ongoing priority is to find ways of creating a collective voice and a sense of unity amongst businesses and trade associations in very different sectors.

Social media provides a means of driving campaigns in a way that involves and engages members from these disparate sectors. The Confederation is proactive in providing development opportunities for its members and boosting competitiveness – for example through overseas business delegations. Social media provides an important means of driving member interest in specific activities and in providing feedback to the wider membership.



Be clear on your aims – key points

- 'Beginning with the end in mind' is the hallmark of an effective EO social media strategy. Clear targets can be set (for example number of downloads or followers) but not all of the aims will be based on numbers.
- Getting the tone right and ensuring that social media is used to listen and stimulate debate as well as broadcast key messages is essential. Open dialogue is one of the best ways of building trust and addressing preconceptions.
- Clarity of purpose drives clarity of message. Being clear on overall aims means being clear on the target audience and on what specific channels will deliver the best results. Go to the place where your target audience is.
- Being clear on overall aims means getting internal 'buy-in'. Creating cross-functional project teams with common goals and a common understanding is key to ensuring that any EO is aligned and clear on what the 'end' looks like.

2.2 Go where your target audience is

Being clear on the target audience and tailoring messages accordingly is a key building block of any campaigning work and is at the heart of any effective communication strategy. When it comes to social media, the central question is: 'What specific channels will deliver the best results and enable us to reach the right audience?'

Our survey showed that a multitude of different platforms are now being used, but the feedback from respondents and from the EYPA workshops confirmed that EOs are becoming increasingly astute at using different channels for different ends. LinkedIn is more likely to be used for reaching out to business leaders or potentially journalists, whereas campaigns aimed at the wider public (for example, ones aimed at promoting careers in a particular sector) will be more likely to use Facebook as the primary channel. As with any effective campaigning (whether driven by social media or not), being clear on the target audience is key. As one EO put it, 'we need to go to the place [that is, the social media platform] where our target audience is.'

Social media is an ever-evolving arena. As well as regularly re-evaluating their own use of different channels, EOs need to take stock of who – amongst the myriad stakeholders – is using what and why. For example, one of the major changes in recent years has been the fact that more politicians have embraced tools such as Twitter. EOs taking part in recent EYPA workshops have entered into dialogue and build constructive relationships with civil servants, members of parliament and even ministers purely through interaction on Twitter and other social media channels. This would have been unheard of a few years ago.

The same is true of engaging with journalists. Traditional media has changed for good, with social media one of the key drivers of this change. There are fewer journalists and editorial staff looking to provide

a 24/7 news services through an increasingly varied array of channels. The key for EOs is to make the most of this new media landscape and to seize the new opportunities it presents. For example, with fewer staff and a 24-hour news cycle to feed, media outlets are always on the look-out for a good story – especially one that is ‘ready-made’ with some robust data, insightful case studies and interesting spokespeople at the ready. Of course, it is not quite as easy as it sounds, as the new challenge is to make our own ‘stories’ stand out from the millions of press releases, reports, tweets, blogs, postings and pitches clamouring for attention. This brings us back to the core challenge facing EOs: how do we make sure our messages resonate and make a difference in an age of massive over-communication and rapidly evolving channels?

As we will look at in more detail under Step 5, clear targeting also applies when using social media for internal purposes – that is, to engage and retain members. For example, members in specific sectors are more likely to use social media for their own purposes and are therefore more likely to welcome this as an effective channel for engaging with the employer organization of which they are members. Also, larger employers within membership of the EO are probably more likely to have an established social media presence. EOs cannot presume that all members are fully social media savvy and must continue to use other established communication channels to communicate and engage.



Case study – Voice of the Researchers (VoR)

Voice of the Researchers (VoR) acts as a bridge between researchers and policymakers, bringing together researchers into a network and enabling them to take an active role in shaping the EU research agenda.

Although EU policymakers regularly involved stakeholder organizations and individual experts in their work, no communication channel existed to directly engage with individual researchers on a systematic basis. VoR aims to fill this gap by acting as a direct communication channel between researchers, decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders, allowing researchers themselves to determine the most important issues to be addressed.

Social media (in particular Twitter) has provided the platform for driving traffic to the VoR website, giving a voice to European researchers and galvanising the research community into providing regular suggestions and input.



Go where your target audience is – key points

- Being clear on overall aims also means being clear on the target audience and on what specific channels will deliver the best results. Go to the place where your target audience is.
- Social media is an ever-evolving arena. As well as regularly re-evaluating their own use of different channels, EOs need to take stock of how target audiences – including politicians – are using different channels.
- As politicians and journalists increasingly use social media in their own work and activities, new opportunities will continue to emerge.

2.3 Pre-empt pitfalls, manage the risks

EOs with effective social media platforms have learned from mistakes (their own and those of others!) and have become adept at pre-empting potential risks. Our survey of EOs flagged reputational damage and wasting time and resources as the key risks. So how are leading EOs managing these risks?

Any proactive action from an EO is likely to create a reaction. As with any campaigning activities, thorough scenario planning is one of the best insurance policies. In practice, this means testing the lobbying and advocacy campaign's key messages (how could they be misinterpreted, where are we likely to be attacked?) and considering possible external developments that could derail the campaign. EOs also need to put in place processes and build internal capability for dealing with negative comments. This can involve having to block access to an online forum if criticism becomes excessive and personal, which underlines the need for clear 'rules of engagement'.

Scenarios raised during recent EYPA workshops included an EO driving a wide-ranging campaign on the positive role of business that could easily be side-tracked by isolated examples of bad practice (especially if these alleged breaches are perpetrated by businesses within membership of the EO itself). Being proactive means putting your head above the parapet, which inevitably creates a risk of being targeted and of an adverse reaction. Some of the practical tips put forward by EOs looking to manage reputational risks included 'devil's advocate' sessions, where colleagues play the role of detractors to attack the campaign and its core messages.

How are EOs countering ongoing operational risks? Effective training of staff is one safety valve; proper resource planning is another. The more successful an EO becomes in its use of social media, the more resource may be needed to meet increased demand and member expectations. One of the key messages from the recent EYPA workshops was that most EOs are not planning to radically increase their headcount, which means that internal resources will need to be recalibrated. If we are going to be doing more on social media, what are we going to be doing less of? The shifting of resources flagged by EOs included fewer press releases, more blogs or fewer seminars, and more online forums.

Human error is always possible; mistakes will happen. Having clear internal policies and protocols in place will help, as will effective training and briefing sessions for staff. EOs and the members they represent also face broader threats such as hacking. Cyber-security for EOs is an area for future work and is also an area where EOs can show real leadership – that is, by helping member organizations to limit risks and disseminating regular reminders and examples of good practice in what is set to remain a hugely sensitive area.

Potential legal issues range from adherence with privacy laws to content ownership and human resources issues such as unauthorised activities. Although there are many risks associated with using social media, EOs also flagged the fact that there is a risk of *not* using social media and of being left behind at a time of rapidly evolving communication channels and changing expectations.



Case study – Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC)

The REC is the professional body for the UK recruitment industry, representing around 3,500 corporate members and 8,000 individual members of the Institute of Recruitment Professionals (IRP). The REC has embedded risk management within its approach to social media, including clear internal policies. This includes protocols covering potential risks such as the organization's Twitter account being 'hacked'.

The risk management strategy includes scenario planning ahead of any new messaging campaign or research being launched. Staff have undergone 'crisis management' training and are prepared to execute 'recovery plans' where necessary. The REC also helps its members with their own risk management – for example, by developing template internal social media policies for staff that can be used as part of member organizations' own HR policies.



Pre-empt potential risks and pitfalls – key points

- EOs with effective social media platforms have learned from mistakes (their own and those of others!) and have become adept at pre-empting potential risks.
- Any proactive action from an EO is likely to create a reaction. Thorough scenario planning is one of the best insurance policies (rip it to pieces and see if it's still standing!).
- Effective training of staff is one safety valve; proper resource planning is another. If we are going to be doing more on social media, what are we going to be doing less of?
- Effective crisis management is an important tool. EOs can learn from each other and from how organizations around the world have coped with challenging situations.
- Cyber-security for EOs is an area for future work and is also an area where EOs can show real leadership – that is, by helping member organizations to limit risks.
- Although there are many risks associated with using social media, EOs also flagged the fact that there is a risk of *not* using social media and of being left behind.

2.4 Scale it up: Invest in capability and infrastructure

EOs with effective social media offerings have invested in the necessary infrastructure and capability (whether internal or external). This is often incremental but building solid foundations is crucial. This should include not spreading yourself too thinly by attempting to use too many available channels. A good example of this is Ciett – the representative body for the global staffing industry – which made the conscious decision to not use Facebook at all but rather to invest time in using Twitter and LinkedIn as effectively as possible. The fact that our survey results covered in section 1 flagged Facebook as one of

the most popular channels underlines the fact that different EOs will have different priorities and aims when it comes to their social media strategy.

Staff training was identified by EOs as one of the most important ways forward. As well as the need to enhance technical knowledge amongst staff (for example, how to upload blogs and latest updates), some of the development needs are less technological – for example how to write blogs. Regular briefings are also important as a means of identifying existing or potential problems and ensuring a consistency of message. Social media needs ‘feeding’. One of the challenges flagged at the EYPA workshop was the need to constantly generate new content to fuel blogs and Twitter feeds. The investment here could involve developing links with external organizations or individuals who can provide third-party content.

One of the priorities for EOs is ensuring that internal procedures are in place to ‘join up’ functions such as marketing, PR and communications, research and public affairs around social media activities. Some EOs have sought to reinstate additional levels of control by limiting the number of official social media users within the organization and by creating new roles with a clear responsibility for co-ordinating and planning social media output. There is no single solution here; the approach taken will depend on the organization’s culture, mission and values.



Case study – Svenskt Näringsliv (Swedish Enterprise)

The focus is on building long-term solutions and capability, but with a mindset that promotes innovation and ‘daring to be uncomfortable’. Boosting the overall reputation of business is a core priority and the mantra is that every generation must be won over with regard to the benefit of free enterprise. This means that the target audience for much of the organization’s work is the wider population. Social media is the means to reaching this broad group.

Social media drives immediate responses and everyday interaction with opinion leaders and enables Svenskt Näringsliv to tap into other organizations’ social media events and online forums. It also facilitates another core objective: to mobilise other advocates and to create a ‘movement of entrepreneurs’.



Case study – BUSINESSEUROPE

BUSINESSEUROPE is the leading advocate for growth and competitiveness at European level, standing up for companies across the continent and representing 34 national business federations. A significant step-change in the organization’s social media presence came through the investment in a dedicated YouTube channel.

The channel enables BUSINESSEUROPE to broadcast some of the key campaigning messages and its regular economic analysis. It also provides a platform for showcasing the views of senior leaders within the 34 national federations within membership. Regular video interviews are a way of reinforcing core messages (in particular, the ‘Reform to Perform’ agenda, which promotes the key actions that need to be taken to improve Europe’s productivity and economic performance) as well as other business priorities across Europe such as skills and vocational training, innovation and entrepreneurship, and regulations.



Invest in capability and infrastructure – key points

- EOs with effective social media offerings have invested in the necessary infrastructure and capability. Building solid foundations and regularly reviewing the offering is crucial.
- Staff training is an important way forward. As well as enhancing technical knowledge, this will help develop the right tone and boost consistency.
- Social media needs 'feeding'. Finding different ways of generating content is key.
- One of the priorities for EOs is ensuring that internal procedures are in place to 'join up' functions such as marketing, PR and communications, research and public affairs around social media activities.
- Some EOs have sought to reinstate additional levels of control by limiting the number of official social media users by creating new roles with clear accountability

2.5 Reach in: use social media to engage and retain members

Social media can be used to help meet one of the biggest challenges facing most EOs: how to engage, retain and attract members. Without a strong and active membership base, EOs lose legitimacy, impact and financial stability.

Social media is changing the way EOs communicate with members. It is a way of moving from one-way communication to active engagement in campaigns and lobbying activities. It also provides a cost-effective means of capturing data and feedback. EOs are using channels such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to drive traffic to the website and to promote events, reports and member services.

Members are often unaware of the breadth of activities and services that the EO is taking forward on their behalf which can ultimately impact on the decision to renew membership. An interesting development here is EOs developing their own apps to consolidate their services/activities and make them easier to access. An example of this is the MEDEF, the French employers' body, with their app ('L' AppliMEDEF') which brings together all the latest news, campaign updates, economic analysis, member surveys, an events calendar and links to download publications, infographics and videos.

Rather than developing a separate app, other EOs have invested in their website to ensure that it is 'mobile-friendly' and provides an effective window into the organization's services and activities. As well as regularly reviewing the channels that can best be used to engage with members, it is important to recognise that an increasing number of people access information 'on the go', which is why apps and mobile-friendly websites have been an important step forward for many EOs. As well as embedding social media into membership renewal strategies, EOs are using channels such as Twitter and LinkedIn to identify and build a dialogue with potential new members.

Future generations of entrepreneurs and business leaders are likely to be increasingly comfortable and up to speed with social media channels. This generational effect makes it increasingly important for EOs to fully harness the power of social media in order to remain relevant and effective within an ever-changing business landscape.



Case Study – IBEC

IBEC is the national voice of business and employers and is the umbrella body for Ireland's leading sector groups and associations, providing services to its 7,000 members (representing over 70% of the private sector workforce in Ireland).

One of the key member services is to provide updates on regulatory developments as well as opportunities to contribute to ongoing IBEC campaigns. Social media provides key channels for delivering this service – in particular through a specific app that enables IBEC members to receive up-to-the-minute updates on changes to legislation that could impact on their business. Social media also provides a way of getting actively involved in IBEC activities (particularly through the organization's LinkedIn forum), with members urged to 'join the conversation' and feed into high-profile initiatives such as the 'Ireland that Works' campaign.



Case study – Federgon

Federgon is the Belgian federation of HR and staffing service providers, representing almost 500 members who are active in recruitment, search and selection, outplacement, agency work, training, project sourcing, interim management and household services. Federgon's #jobfie initiative actively engages members by asking recruitment consultants to take a selfie of themselves with the workers they are placing into jobs and uploading the pictures onto a dedicated micro-site. Participants are then encouraged to use Facebook and Twitter to share the picture.

The underlying aim of the #jobfie initiative is to showcase the crucial role that recruitment professionals play in getting people into work. The scheme is also a great example of galvanising the membership base around some collective action that is relatively easy to deliver and also provides some tangible profile-raising benefit for the participating businesses. As an added bonus, there is also a chance for participants to win a €1,000 prize.



Reach in – key points

- Social media is changing the way EOs communicate with members. It is a way of moving from one-way communication to active engagement in campaigns and lobbying activities.
- EOs are increasingly using channels such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook to drive traffic to the website and to promote events, reports and member services.
- Some EOs are developing their own apps to consolidate their services/activities and make them easier to access. Other EOs have invested in their website to ensure that it is 'mobile-friendly'.
- As well as embedding social media into membership renewal strategies, EOs are using channels such as Twitter and LinkedIn to identify and build a dialogue with potential new members.

2.6 Reach out: Use social media to boost external profile and campaigning activities

Social media is increasingly embedded in campaigning activities – as one EO put it, 'social media is just part of the lobbying toolkit.' The multiplicity of channels provides new ways of engaging with stakeholders, policymakers and journalists. The conclusion of the recent EYPA workshops was that social media is changing the way EOs drive proactive advocacy and lobbying campaigns.

As we saw above, EOs are using social media to actively engage members in campaigning activities. LinkedIn forums, Google Hangouts, webinars and Twitter (using specific hashtags for different campaigns) are some of the channels being used to galvanise the membership base and amplify external voice. This is a good example of how external and internal benefits of social media can overlap.

As well as ensuring that specific campaigning messages can be amplified and achieve the critical mass necessary to make a difference, social media provides a relatively cost-effective means of repositioning what the EO is all about in terms of its scope and mission. It also facilitates the development of new networks and new entities (for example, national sectoral bodies coming together to form a regional coalition). The Ciett and EFIP case studies below are good examples of this.

As part of these external-facing activities, one priority for EOs is to monitor how their key audiences and stakeholders are using social media – including trade unions and government departments. According to an OECD Working Paper,⁹ presence and activity on social media is no longer a question of choice for most governments as new platforms empower individuals and non-traditional interest groups. Government institutions are slowly catching up and increasingly experimenting with social media – although there is still a way to go in areas such as measurement, as an OECD survey¹⁰ shows that only 20% of governments use metrics to monitor social media impact.

⁹ OECD Working Papers on Public Governance – Social Media Use by Governments: A Policy Primer to Discuss Trends, Identify Policy Opportunities and Guide Decision Makers (www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/social-media-use-by-governments_5jxrcmgmk0s-en).

¹⁰ OECD survey on government use of social media (2013).



Case study – MEDEF 'Beau Travail' campaign

The aim of the 'Beau Travail' ('Good Work') initiative is to raise awareness of different types of job roles and career opportunities in different sectors. The initiative was driven by MEDEF, the French business federation, with support from other organizations such as Prism' Emploi – the professional body for the recruitment sector in France.

A number of short clips were initially aired on national television channels and involved workers discussing their current jobs, the skills needed to succeed and the career prospects in their sector. The strap-line was: 'discover professions that are hiring : Everyday a new story, a career path, a profession'. The initiative also involved its own dedicated web-site and social media channels were used to circulate the various testimonials from workers and to build awareness.

The 'Beau Travail' campaign performed an important function – highlighting shortage occupations and the skills needed to succeed in them – but also reinforced MEDEF's core message around employment and the aspiration of creating a million jobs in five years. The fact that the one minute testimonials were delivered by workers themselves gave the campaign a fresh and authentic feel and has helped to attract people to sectors and job roles struggling to find candidates.



Case study – Ciett

Ciett is the International Confederation of Private Employment Services, the voice representing the interests of the employment and recruitment industry around the world. A key strategic play for Ciett has been to position itself on a broader and ambitious platform: leading in a changing world of work. Social media has provided one of the key platforms for driving this repositioning and for building a strong voice on one of the most challenging and topical issues facing national governments, businesses, workers, trade unions around the world as well as international institutions such as the OECD and the ILO.

Ciett's underlying message is that the employment and recruitment industry can play a prominent role in facilitating adaptation to this new world of work. Social media has enabled a regular 'drumbeat' and a channel for showcasing the industry's role as a change enabler, providing access to work, adaptability, security and prosperity. A recent outcome has been the selection of Eurociett – the European arm of Ciett – to join the newly established European Centre of Expertise in the field of labour market policies (which will serve as a comprehensive advisory body to the European Commission) as a key employment and labour market expert.



Case study – European Forum of Independent Professionals (EFIP)

EFIP is a collaboration of national associations which represent freelancers, or independent professionals, at EU level through targeted research and advocacy. Its mission is to promote the value of independents to the European and national economies and to ensure that independent working is respected as a legitimate alternative to employment.

Social media has provided the means of building a collective voice and of bringing together national federations across Europe, including Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, Ireland and the UK. EFIP produced a ground-breaking report into independent working across Europe. Launched at the European Parliament, the report shows the number of freelancers has risen by 82% since 2000. Again, social media was a key vehicle for disseminating these findings and for 'announcing' EFIP on the European stage.

Social media also provides the opportunity for co-ordinated campaigns with like-minded organizations such as the European Small Business Alliance (ESBA) aimed at raising awareness amongst policymakers of the contribution that freelancers and micro businesses make to the EU and to individual member states.



Case study – Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) – 'Too Big to Ignore' campaign

The core aim of ACCI's 'Too Big to Ignore' campaign is to help small businesses engage directly in the national policy agenda. There are more than 2 million small businesses in Australia, employing more than 7 million people – over 60% of Australia's workforce. The campaign is an attempt to help small businesses make their views and voices heard on key issues such as government regulation, taxation and job creation.

The campaign centred around using social media among other platforms to deliver four key messages: cut down red tape, simplify the tax system, make it easier to employ people and build better infrastructure. The campaign has a dedicated website and Facebook page and a Twitter hashtag (#2big2ignore). The initiative is a good example of using social media to galvanise the business community and bringing different strands of activity together under a clear, unifying and rallying call.

2.7 Measure success

This is perhaps the biggest challenge for many EOs: how to evaluate what is working and what isn't. Quantifying the return on investment in social media is not easy, but is a crucial part of the process.

What performance indicators are EOs currently using? Google Analytics, Hootsuite, Klout, Crowdfire and other tools are increasingly being used to monitor 'reach' and influence. Overall success can also be measured against a range of measures including specific lobbying wins (where social media has played a role in influencing external audiences), influence metrics (where a record is kept of endorsements and recognitions for the EO's work), awareness surveys of politicians and key stakeholders, and member satisfaction surveys. Instigating a culture of regular reviews and continuous improvement is also a key way forward.

The feedback from EOs taking part in the EYPA initiative confirmed that one of the key benefits of effective analysis and measurement is to discard initiatives and activities that are not delivering any real benefits. One effective success measure flagged by a number of EOs was galvanising members into playing an active role in social media campaigns. As well as amplifying the core messages that the EO is looking to take forward, this also ticks the member engagement box that was highlighted in Step 5.



Case study – CBI Great Business Debate

The Great Business Debate is a Confederation of British Industry (CBI)-led campaign to help build public confidence in business. Specific aims include combatting myths about what business does and the contribution it makes, encouraging people to give us their views on business and where it needs to do more, and providing an opportunity for business to take part in a constructive conversation about what it does and how it does it.

The campaign includes a specific website and uses other channels such as Twitter to raise awareness and promote open dialogue. In terms of measurement, the key starting point was a survey conducted by the respected research company MORI on behalf of the CBI which showed that only 32% of individuals think that businesses behave ethically and only 52% of people believe business makes a positive contribution to society. Having this data as a starting point will enable the CBI to measure the success of its campaign by repeating the survey and (hopefully!) showing that perceptions have evolved.



Case study – Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT)

CAOT has a number of very specific aims, including using social media to engage with a younger demographic in order to promote occupational therapy as a career. Social media is also seen as a means of engaging with a global community of professionals in the sector and of creating an international network.

CAOT also provides a good example of setting clear success measures. For example, one specific objective is to achieve a 5% increase in followers per month. The organization's Communications Officer plays a key co-ordinating role which includes reviewing the analytics, identifying the right channels, setting measurable objectives and driving the overall social media strategy.



Measure success – key points

- Quantifying the return on investment in social media is not easy but is a crucial part of the process.
- Google Analytics and other tools are increasingly being used to monitor 'reach' and influence.
- Overall success can also be against a range of measures, including specific lobbying wins and awareness surveys of politicians and key stakeholders.
- Instigating a culture of regular reviews and continuous improvement is also a key way forward.

3 Next steps: building a roadmap for continuous improvement

What's coming next in the fast-moving world of social media and how can EOs go from playing catch-up to being ahead of the game? Ongoing exchanges of views and best practice will be crucial to this process, which is why capacity-building programmes for EO's staff such as EYPA will remain pivotal.

Areas for continuous improvement

What are some of the specific areas of continuous improvement over the coming years? These can be broken down into difference capability areas as follows:

- **Make the most of the strategic benefits** – this includes driving deeper member engagement, creating a step-change in external voice and embedding social media into branding and reputation management policies.
- **Improve technical skills within the EO** – for example, harness automation services such as Tweetdeck and Hootsuite, manage multiple channels and make the most of hashtags and trends to ensure your content reaches the right people.
- **Develop effective measurement and benchmarks** – measurement tools will evolve and become increasingly sophisticated. EOs will need to keep up to date with these developments. This will drive continuous improvement.
- **Seize commercial opportunities** – EO social media platforms can provide commercial business-to-business opportunities as many service companies will be interested in promoting their services to the membership base. EOs may also look at running paid social advertising campaigns that might deliver a return on investment in terms of membership growth.

Social media support as part of the membership offering?

According to the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), 'the essence of a business association is to help business owners overcome the challenges and obstacles they are unable to address alone.' Helping members with their own social media strategies can become an important additional service for EOs that see part of their remit as being to provide practical support to their members.

In practical terms, making social media support part of the membership offering might model policies, legal advice, good practice guidance and training courses on areas as diverse as using social media to market products and services to using social media to attract talent and recruit staff. Providing support in this area can help businesses to grow and could be seen as a key 'pull factor' for businesses to join the EO. Some of these services (such as training) would probably be paid-for and could provide a means of driving additional revenue for the EO.

What are the implications for skills and capabilities within EOs?

Discussions at recent EYPA workshops focused on the key question of what skills would be needed in future to succeed within campaigning and communication functions in an EO. The feedback from participants flagged a number of attributes, including strong communication skills, the ability to build relationships, innovation, project management, subject matter expertise, sound judgement, resilience and the ability handle high-pressure situations to learn from failure. It is noticeable that these are all areas where there is a link back to social media – both as a means of building the necessary knowledge and connections to make an impact and as core attributes (that is, innovation, judgement, resilience) that will help individuals succeed within a fast-moving communication landscape.

A related topic for EOs moving forward is the extent to which social media will impact on job descriptions and on the selection criteria used to bring new staff into the organization. Will it be the norm that anyone working in a campaigning or communication role within an EO is expected to be fully up to speed with social media? Quite possibly. It is also fair to say that forward-thinking EOs with a desire to innovate will find it easier to hire the best talent from future generations of technology-aware and social media savvy job-seekers!

The roadmap for continuous improvement

The EO family has come a long way in terms of its adoption of social media as a driver for both external and internal communication and campaigning activities. Based on the latest discussions and feedback from EOs around the world, here are some of the pit-stops along the way to social media nirvana:

- Develop new skills – develop training and regular briefing sessions for existing staff.
- Hire new skills – create dedicated roles or make social media awareness part of the job description for new recruits in roles such as PR and lobbying.
- Ask the experts – accessing the latest social media expertise from specialist consultancies can be worth the investment if it creates a step-change and results in tangible benefits for the EO and its members.
- Learn from failure – instigating a regular review process and a culture where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities is key to continuous improvement.
- Learn from success – look outwards to learn from other areas (individual businesses, trade unions, governments, NGOs) and look inwards to learn from good practice within other EOs.

Exchanges of views and best practice between EOs is crucial to the continuous improvement process. Organisations such as the ITCILO and networks such as the IOE or BUSINESSEUROPE have a key role to play here. Moreover, tailor-made capacity-building programmes for such as the Employers Young Professionals Academy (EYPA) will remain pivotal in helping EOs to learn from each other and build lasting networks. Social media is a never-ending journey into the unknown – it's good to know that you are not travelling alone.



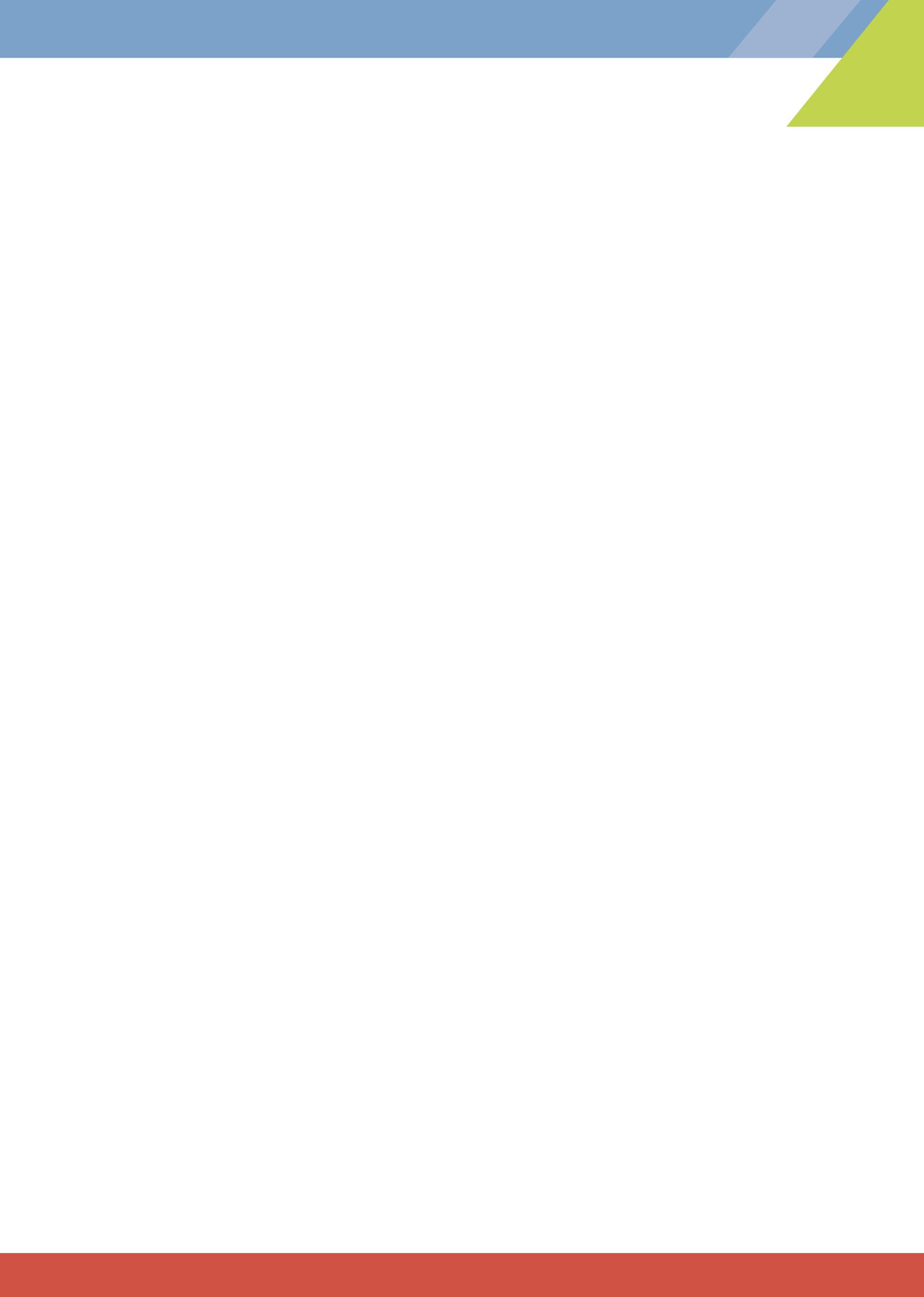
International **Training** Centre

The Programme for Employers' Activities of the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITCILO) responds to the training needs of employers' organizations (EOs) by holding advanced training courses in areas which are strategic for economic growth, good governance, development and poverty alleviation.

The Programme offers a wide range of training programmes, tailored to EO managers, professional staff and board members from Africa, the Americas, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia.

For more information, please visit our website:

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