DIGITAL DIPLOMACY 101

CAMPAIGN LOBBYING ONLINE

CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

The Covid-19 pandemic has made in-person meetings difficult and more of our interactions have been forced online. This resource provides guidance for campaigners on how to effectively advocate for our strategic goals in an increasingly digital environment.

Planning

What is the issue?

Planning begins by correctly identifying the issue. Getting states to develop and join an international treaty means shaping national policies and attitudes. **What changes are needed in your context to bring people closer to our goal?** Are these changes of policy orientation or political ambition? Is there a lack of activity in parliament, or insufficient action being taken by Ministers following a parliamentary motion? The lobbying activity you take will depend on what specific issue you are trying to solve.

What is the solution?

Consider the outcome that you seek in your lobbying activity to **determine what success would look like**. Are you aiming for awareness to be raised, if so then where and among who? Are you seeking for a statement to be made? If so, when should it be made and what should the content be? Having a clear vision of the goal you are working towards helps plan and executing your activity and monitor success.

What are the methods?

There may be different methods of solving the problem, and various individual steps that needs to be taken to succeed. Determine the best route to success by considering the amount of time and energy required and the potential risks and benefits for each method. Is the method consistent with the **Campaign's Vision and Values** and does it enhance our **Strategic Objectives**? It is useful to compare the overall impact each different method would have for the campaign prior to selecting which route is best.

Research

Who to speak to?

Determine the relevant individuals or institutions that you will need to connect with in order to achieve your outcome. **Who has the necessary agency or influence to effect the change you are seeking?** The answer may not be obvious and diligent research is necessary. It may be helpful to map a plan of to connect with several people, including secondary individuals who have the capacity to connect you with your primary target.

What is their background?

It is often possible to conduct background research on the individual or institution that you seek to connect with. It is helpful to **discover what actions, publications or statements they have made on autonomous weapons**. Understanding their profile and position will be useful to determine what their attitude may be on relevant topics when you connect with them and will help you to establish rapport when speaking with them.

What can they do?

Having a firm and realistic understanding of what the individual or institution can do is essential to **evaluating how they can assist in solving the issue.** It is important to recognise their pressures and limitations and avoid making excessive demands but remain ambitious in seeking an outcome within the individual's scope of power.

What will influence them?

Evaluate what type of motivation you may need to provide **to positively influence your connection** to assist you in working towards your solution. Some may be more inclined to assist than others and it necessary to understand what factors are likely to produce an outcome with the individual concerned.

Establishing Contact

Upon identifying the relevant individual or institution to speak with you will need to establish contact. If you have not already connected with them, you will need to **figure out the best way to introduce yourself**. Although a public-facing email address may be available, there are alternatives that may prove a better way to establish a connection:

The campaign benefits from a diverse international coalition of members around the world. **Consider whether someone in the campaign could help facilitate an introduction.** If you know who to ask you can email directly or try emailing either a regional or the international coalition email list-serv for a lead.

Being introduced by someone already connected with the individual or institution is often more effective than an unsolicited email. If no one in the campaign has a connection, **consider whether someone else in your own network can introduce you.**

Explore whether there are any **online events or conferences which your contact is attending**. Such events may provide a useful way to establish a connection, learn more about them, ask questions and can make a positive impression in demonstrating your interest in connecting.

If a public facing email address is unavailable and you are unable to secure an introduction, it may be possible to **connect via social media.** Explore whether your contact has an account with Twitter or LinkedIn. Remember that social media accounts can be personal spaces and unsolicited contact may be unwanted.

Communication

Without being able to meet in-person the main methods of communication are limited to either **written correspondence or a video or voice call.** Each method has advantages and disadvantages and a combination of both may be necessary to achieve a solution to the issue you have identified. Here is some guidance relating to each method:

Written Communication

Written communications vary in style and formality and it is important to customise your writing depending on the context, but generally:

- **Introduce:** If it is a first communication, make sure to state who you are and the context of your writing. Don't write too much, a sentence is often enough.

- **Get to the point:** Explain the purpose of your email / letter and what you are seeking at the outset.

- **Succinct**: Use precise language and do not waste words. Assume that your reader is busy.

- **Courteous:** Use polite expressions and be respectful. The reader cannot 'hear' the tone of your voice, so word choice can be important.

- **Format:** Be willing to use formatting tools including bold, italics and underline to emphasise key points, but do not go overboard!

- **Timeframe:** If you require a response by a certain time, make sure to specify that but avoid sounding pushy.

Video / Voice Call

Video calls have become the norm since the pandemic began and are a vital way to maintain a sense of remaining connected. Although we are all now familiar with them, it's important to remember:

- **Prepare:** Take time to prepare the key points of what you want to discuss and research relevant facts and documents to demonstrate your interest.

- **Listen:** Ensure that you give time and space to others on the call to speak and listen attentively. Be responsive to both the content and the mood of the people you are speaking with.

- **Minimise distractions:** Working from a home-office can be challenging. Take time to clear the time and space available to reduce potential audio-visual distractions.

- **Engage:** Engage positively during your call by responding to the conversation. Have a structure but be willing to change it depending on how the dialogue flows.

- **Ask Questions:** Video calls give an opportunity to get a direct response, prepare your questions in advance.

Internet Connection

Having a **strong and stable internet connection** is vital to ensure a smooth and successful video call. If possible, ensure proximity to a steady Wi-Fi signal and minimise and large downloads taking bandwidth. If your Wi-Fi signal is weak, consider alternatives such as using your mobile phone to provide a data hotspot.

Webcam and Microphone

If possible, invest in a good quality web camera and microphone to **optimise the quality of the audio-visual experience**. It is always worth testing that your equipment is working properly prior to entering a video call.

Lighting and Background

Try to position your set-up in a space with **plenty of light** to ensure that your audience can see you clearly. Natural sunlight is often best, but face-lighting lamps are available if natural light is not an option. Try **to avoid an excessively busy background** that could distract your audience.
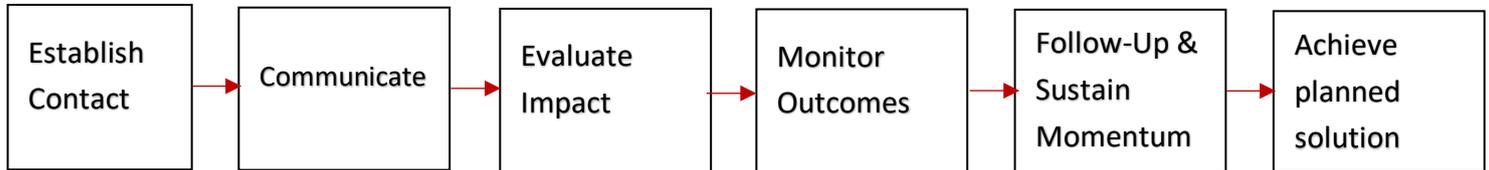
Video Hosting

There are a range of different video hosting options including Zoom, Google Meets, Web-Ex, Microsoft Teams and others. Although they perform similar functions, each have their advantages. **Determine which is best for your context** and consider the ease of use and access for your audience.

Monitor & Follow-Up

After establishing contact and engaging in communication with relevant individuals or institutions it is useful to assess whether you have achieved the impact that was planned. **Recall what solution you are seeking and monitor whether it has been achieved.** If not, consider what follow-up steps may be needed to sustain pressure to achieve the solution. Remember that results may take time and patience is necessary, but persistent activism helps maintain momentum.

Establish Contact → Communicate → Evaluate Impact → Monitor Outcomes → Follow-Up & Sustain Momentum → Achieve planned solution

Remember to question:

- Has your campaigning activity helped solve the issue that you originally identified?
- Does the activity work towards the campaign's overall strategic objectives?
- How will you monitor whether the solution has been achieved, and what follow-up steps may be necessary?

Social Media

Social media provides powerful opportunities for campaigning activity. The range of platforms from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn can all provide ways of **raising awareness** of issues among the public and can also be used to **target and influence relevant individuals**. Staying active on social media through posting updates, photographs and video feeds can help engage a wide audience and demonstrate demand for a ban on killer robots. **Stay alert** to social media activity from other campaigners and **post original content** to maintain international pressure.

Connect with the Campaign

Share your campaigning activity with others in the campaign including with national campaigners, or via the regional or international coalition list-servs. The campaign hosts monthly regional meet-ups by video conference connect and deliver updates. Each of us will play a role in achieving a ban on killer robots. Collaboration, support and sharing of knowledge, resources and outcomes is crucial to our success.