**Hubs for Good Seed Funding Grant Project:**
**New Naratif's journey to understanding social media for creative hubs**

Social media has reshaped the ways in which we connect with our communities. Each platform has now evolved into vehicles in driving engagement and ways of making one's organisation known. If you're not on social media, do you even exist at all?

In an oversaturated market, how do we begin to stand out from the crowd? How do we maintain one's attention when there are a million things going on simultaneously? Once we have their attention, how do we form a meaningful and engaging relationship with our community?

As a relatively young organisation, we're still figuring out strategies that work for us. A major stumbling block for us was that we had acquired large social media followings organically. In the first quarter of 2020, our Twitter, the social media platform of choice for journalists, had 10,000 followers! We had about the same number of followers on Facebook. However, these large follower counts were not translating into high engagements. Our likes and retweets were often in the single digits. This is bad news when you're a media organisation trying to get more eyes on your content.

The British Council's Hubs for Good programme seed funding grant, supported by Yayasan Sime Darby, gave us an opportunity to refine our social media strategy. The grant allowed us to hire a social media consultant who spent two weeks auditing our social media accounts. He then came back to us with a training designed specifically for our organisation.

Four team members attended a one-day training where we learned about emerging trends in social media, how we could improve engagement with our accounts and a concrete strategy going forward.

A key takeaway from this exercise was to increase our interactive strategies across platforms. For example, we could use Twitter polls and Instagram Q&A's to encourage our followers to engage with us.

Previously, we had a vague idea we needed to increase our interaction on social media, but we had no idea how much we should be doing this. The consultant gave us a one-year calendar of the different interactive activities we could be doing on our different platforms. This was really helpful in reimagining how we would use social media.

Each social media platform serves a distinct audience, hence the strategies discussed below will be broken up into strategies specifically for Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. What may work successfully on one platform may not necessarily work on the other. As you will see below, we have incorporated different interactive strategies across our platforms.

**Twitter**

One of our main challenges was the low engagement rate despite having a large Twitter following. A low engagement rate signaled that we were not interacting with our audience in any significant way, thus they were not responding to our posts. Hence, we decided to apply these strategies to ramp up the engagement rate

Strategy 1: Facilitating Twitter Takeovers

Twitter takeovers help break the lull of the day-to-day updates. At New Naratif, we plan on establishing a consistent schedule of Twitter takeovers, in which our team members will come on the platform and talk about issues that they're passionate about. However, we have ad-hoc takeovers where our editor-in-chief or a journalist would step in to raise awareness about an issue that corresponds with breaking news. Based on past Twitter takeovers, we at New Naratif found that we received significantly high engagement and reach. For instance, our Comics Editor, Charis Loke, took over our Twitter feed to showcase the amazing artists we have in Southeast Asia with the hashtag #ArtistsofSEA. The artists retweeted and so did their audience, creating a snowball effect of retweets, which increased our reach and engagement.

With your audience interests' in mind, think about topics that would be of interest to them. Invite team members to cover topics that they're passionate about or are well-versed in that aligns with your audience and organisation. Not sure where to start? Perhaps your organisation could host a Q&A and invite the audience to ask questions as well as engage with the person of choice. That would give you an idea of what your audience is interested in.

According to Brand Watch, tweets with images get 150% more retweets. We highly recommend incorporating videos and photos to create more engaging and eye-catching posts.

Strategy 2: Getting to Know The Team

This strategy can be complemented with Twitter takeovers. Use Twitter as a tool to humanise your organisation by showcasing the people behind it. People are looking for someone to relate to and showcasing members of the team will help them form a better understanding of your organisation.

During our third anniversary, we asked every team member to share their reflections of the past year as well as their wishes for the upcoming year. It gave an opportunity for our audience to engage with our team and see that we are not just a single entity, but an organisation that is shaped by multiple individuals from all across Southeast Asia.

With this, you can be as informal as you like. The key is to be personable and relatable.

Strategy 3: Highlighting Noteworthy Days

[Omnicore Agency](#) found that 71% of Twitter users say they use the network to get their news. With this in mind, we think there is value in highlighting noteworthy days that align with your organisation's vision and mission. Once your team has identified these days, you can start creating content that would serve to educate and/or engage with your audience.

For example, Pride Month is a significant time for New Naratif as we hope to amplify the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community. Hence, we asked our team to share their favorite journalism or comic pieces about the LGBTQIA+ community on Twitter to encourage our audience to learn more about the realities that the community faces on a daily basis.

**Instagram**

Strategy 1: Posting at the Right Time

Before reading, please make sure that your organisation's Instagram account is a business account in order to access analytics. Ready?

We all know that timing is everything. There is no magic number when it comes to the question, when is the right time? However, with Instagram analytics, you can get as close to the right answer as possible.

Instagram analytics breaks down the time that your followers are the most active on the platform by day. Identify when your audience is the most active and opt to schedule posts for that specific time and day. You may start seeing a significant increase in reach and engagement once you start paying attention to the details.

Strategy 2: Interacting via Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories is a great way to interact with your audience, especially with the use of the available stickers, such as questions, poll, quiz, and the emoji slider. According to [Hootsuite](#), 60% of businesses on Instagram Stories use an interactive element every month.

When using the stickers available, try reposting your audience's response or sharing the results of a poll conducted. By doing so, it keeps the conversation flowing, especially when you add on to their responses. When we posed a question about climate change, the initial engagement was low, but when we started reposting people's responses, we noticed a spike in people engaging with the question sticker. This showed that people wanted to engage and have a dialogue on the topic. Test out different stickers to see what works best for your audience.

Strategy 3: Establishing a Visual Identity

A distinct and consistent visual identity is important to stand out in a severely saturated crowd on Instagram. Think about your organisation as a brand. What is your brand identity and how can that be conveyed visually? If you were a can in the grocery store, what would your packaging look like?

Start off by creating a mood board to identify your organisation's visual identity and how to best portray the organisation on social media. Identify specific details that fit your brand's identity and stick with it. No detail is too small, from the color palette of choice to the font, everything matters. Once that is done, you can start building templates to streamline the visual content.

New Naratif has a Photoshop template for Instagram Stories, Twitter, and Instagram/Facebook feeds. If you don't have access to Photoshop, try using photo-editing apps, such as Canva, which provides free templates to customise your visual content.

**Facebook**

Strategy 1: Utilising Multimedia Content

Facebook is designed to boost original content on the platform, which means that if you were to post a link to a video on YouTube as opposed to posting the actual video on Facebook, you will receive less reach and engagement. The idea is that they want users to stay on the platform for as long as possible. Hence, to increase your reach and engagement, upload photos and videos on the platform itself.

Omnicore Agency reported that images account for 75-90% of Facebook advertising effectivity/performance and Facebook gets over 8 billion average daily video views. With that in mind, think of ways in which you can include multimedia content into your Facebook posts.

Strategy 2: Facebook Ads

Step 1: Set a monthly budget

Establishing a monthly budget is helpful to assess the number of posts to boost every week. How frequently would you like to boost a post? How long would you like the post to be boosted? All of these are factors to consider when setting a budget.

Step 2: Choose a goal

When boosting a post, Facebook will offer a few options. Would you like your audience to learn more about your organisation? Are you looking to gain more page likes? Determine your goal and Facebook will do the work.

Step 3: Determine optimal posting time

Try boosting on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Typically, that's when people are most active on Facebook.

Step 4: Identify your target audience

From geography to age groups to interests, you can specify your target audience. Who are you looking to reach?

With all of these elements in mind, it's important to have a concrete set of goals. Determine a few key goals that your team would like to accomplish, which would help to form a clear direction in order to best implement strategies to achieve those goals. Are you looking to gain more awareness of your organisation? Do you want to increase engagement, if so, on what platform and who is your target audience?

Once your team has a clear set of goals along with a descriptive idea of your target audience, it would make it easier to roll out social media strategies and analyse them to gauge its success.

At the end of our training with the consultant, we set the following goals: 1) gain 10,000 followers on Instagram, 2) increase the engagement rate on our Twitter account; and 3) increase the click through rate on our Facebook posts. We adopted the strategies mentioned in this post to achieve these goals. Since then, we have achieved 10,000 followers on Instagram, which enabled the swipe up feature on our Instagram stories. This allows us to share links to our stories more easily and helps to increase our click through rate.

Since the training, we shared what we learned with 10 other Malaysian creative hubs through a British Council organised sharing session. We tried to keep this session as interactive as possible. It was a great session that generated lots of discussion, so much so that we were in danger of running over time! The hubs shared their own challenges with us. For example, trying to create social media in multiple languages, a challenge New Naratif shares too. We brainstormed possible solutions and approaches to create as well as build community engagement on digital spaces. Overall, it was a great experience and we gained fresh perspectives on how we can best use social media through the session. While our journey with the grant has come to an end, our social media strategies will constantly evolve.

To complement this think piece, do download our social media toolkit deck.