

SAGEWEST

Three Experts Share Their Five Best Communication Tips

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Listen

Listening is my go-to tip for any platform. Consuming the content on the platform you want to engage with can provide valuable insights. Be intentional. Set aside time to observe. Follow your favorite accounts and make a list of content creators you respect or think bring value. Don't just stick to your area of interest, but explore other topic areas or celebrities that are entirely new to you. *Listening can make you a better user and identify techniques you like.*

Set Aside Time To Do Outreach

Go down content rabbit holes and find new people through the accounts you respect. When you engage in the platform as a user you can determine who the thought leaders are and get inspiration. Use the content styles you like to inspire you, but always add your twist and unique style. *I try to set aside 15 minutes every day just to engage with and find new accounts.* The beauty of these platforms is that when you nurture the relationships online, you can often take them offline into tangible action.

Be Human

With the ease of scheduling and the abundance of bots, the digital realm can feel incredibly impersonal. Take a few minutes to go off scheduled interactions and add a personal touch or respond in the moment. Interacting in real-time can go a long way. *Think about ways to bring the human being to your interactions while being authentic.* Even sharing a few words of support to someone or reacting to related content can go a long way.

Create Content Specifically for the Platform

As much as we may want to link for more information, *creating content that doesn't send people somewhere else is key in the age of scrolling.* Think about ways to repurpose your web content for online spaces.

Be Memorable

What's really going to get your message to resonate with readers? Sometimes it helps to be clear and concise. Other times it's thinking outside of what we usually do, to wake up audiences. *It's great to weave in expected communications with ones that bring us out of our trance.* A great example of an account that makes memorable content is U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Their twitter is wacky, but those who read the messages are unlikely to forget the safety takeaways because it's so strange.



BEN HAMILTON

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Get to Know Your Audience Online

Understanding your audience is the first and most important step when creating impactful media online.

I start with these quick questions: Who is my audience (age, sex, race, lifestyle, etc)? Where are they consuming media online (what platform, at what times, in what formats? What topics and questions would they find most interesting and what media are they currently consuming? Starting here will give you the roadmap for what type of product you should make and what format / length / style / platform might work best for your given project.

Find Good Characters

This is one of the hardest parts of making films. You need to put in time early on, before you step into the field to get to know people. Find people who are interesting, who are storytellers themselves, who speak passionately about your topics and can help deliver messaging for you without scripts or teleprompters. ***People like stories about people so give them someone interesting to watch.***

Think Like a Storyteller

Before I start any project, I like to ask, if I was sitting around a campfire with friends and told them this story, how would I do it? What moments would I share, what characters, what drama would there be and how would it all come together? People like stories especially about people, they don't like facts, or power-points. ***Give them a beginning, middle, and end, some ups and downs and you will have them on the edge of their seats.*** Lastly, don't try to say too much. Good stories have main themes and hit on them hard. Pick the main thing you want people to come away with and work on shaping a story that will best bring that to life. Try to shove too much into a short film, and people will be lost.

Harness the Visual Medium

Video is a visual medium, so use it! Don't waste time with tons of narration or text when you can show something. You don't need to say wildfires ruin lives if I see a family crying looking at their old house. You don't need to give me the scientific details of a recovery project if you show me the before and after shots. ***Ask first, can I tell this part of the story visually, and if not turn to narration or text, but fight for the strength of the medium.***

The Work Doesn't End When You Click 'Export'

After you finish a video, the real work begins. Now it's time to battle to get views, publicity, and value out of your hard earned product. Don't skimp here on your budget / time. ***I often suggest allocating as much as 30% of a video budget on promotion because that's where you will get results.*** Ad spend, promotional partnerships, press releases, and just hard earned phone calls and emails will help ensure you get the value of your amazing story.





EMILY REED

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- Multi-media science communicator

Quality Over Quantity

On visual platforms such as Instagram, *stunning, high quality photos and videos are the key to getting people to stop scrolling and engage with your content.* But keep in mind that you want to maintain your brand's visual aesthetic and style. Invest in good stock photos, partner with professional photographers and/or learn how to become a photographer yourself. Carousel collages are a new hot style so try to incorporate those when you can!

Post More Stories on Instagram

This type of content does not effect the algorithm but *new market research suggests that more and more people are looking at stories instead of their actual Instagram feed.* There are a lot of options to engage and build relationships with your audience in this format. Use the stickers to your advantage. Quiz your followers, use the heart slider option, and/or incorporate funny and timely gifs.

Up Your Video Game

Research has shown that people are more interested in videos than photos. While not every video needs to be a full on film production, you should strive to create content that fits your brand and has a purpose. *Lead with emotion/connection to a character/animal/concept.*

Simple is Better / Accurate Formatting

If you are creating science graphics like charts and maps, simple is better! Create a very distinct aesthetic or style to follow (ensure your style is color blind friendly). On Instagram, try to post this type of content as a carousel in your feed paired with images that deepen the story of the data. When posting graphics to Instagram stories, animate your map/figure to attract more interest. Whether you are posting a graphic, photo or video, you absolutely need to make sure you have the correct sizing for the platforms you are using. *Format is everything. If something looks off or unprofessional, a user will most likely keep scrolling and not stop and engage with the content.*

Your SciComm Needs to Work for People - Both Visually and Narratively

We know from research that telling people the *facts about science doesn't change their minds.* In order to successfully communicate science *we need to appeal to our target audiences values and emotions* in order to 1) gain their trust and 2) get them to care about the message. Think about how you can utilize your audience's existing language, beliefs, social pressures, and content sources to tailor your message.



The SageWest network is focused on advancing communications and encouraging outreach activities that support collaboration within, and effective conservation efforts happening across the sagebrush ecosystem. SageWest is an apolitical communications platform that brings diverse interests and expertise together—to amplify existing work and strengthen relationships.

To find out more, go to <https://www.partnersinthesage.com/sagewest>