E-Toolkit for Understanding Public Trust

Intent

This toolkit is intended to act as a guide to understanding public trust in the media and nonprofit sectors, and provide suggestions for ways that GLOCAL can build and maintain the trust of the people it seeks to serve.

Glossary

Trust: Individuals' confidence that they will not be exploited by another

Political Partisanship: One's tendency to support a certain political party over another

Alternative Media: media characterized by its status as "outside the mainstream," and employs a variety of news-gathering and journalistic practices

Autonomous Media: covers issues neglected by the mainstream media and usually pertain to a certain niche or minority group

Reactive Media: responds to issues already dealt with by the mainstream media, but often with a certain partisan slant

Transparency: the widespread availability of reliable information about the performance, finances, and governance of an organization

We can't win everybody's trust

There are many factors that influence trust in informational sources, such as:

- Ideological extremity
- Cynicism
- Demographics (though research has found inconsistent results)

However, one of the most important elements is partisanship: if a media outlet publishes information that contradicts someone's prior political alignment, they are less likely to believe that information and are more likely to find other sources that do align with their party's ideology.

This is why, no matter how accurate or objective the information that GLOCAL publishes is, there will always be people who reject it because it goes against their political ideology.

Consequences of Partisanship

High levels of partisanship are correlated with low levels of media trust. Those with low trust in the media are more likely to engage with alternative sources of information. While alternative media is not inherently bad, certain types of media exist to promote partisan views.

Understanding Alternative Media

Alternative media is characterized by its status as "outside the mainstream," and employs a variety of news-gathering and journalistic practices.
- *Autonomous Media:* covers issues neglected by the mainstream media and usually pertain to a certain niche or minority group
- *Reactive Media:* responds to issues already dealt with by the mainstream media, but often with a certain partisan slant

There are generally three different types of people who use alternative media:
- System Skeptics: people whose political beliefs drive them towards right-wing, populist media;
- Agenda Critics: people who are driven by an aversion to mainstream media
- Casually Discontent: those who use alternative media in addition to other sources

GLOCAL should seek to avoid embodying reactive media outlets, which commonly reframe issues according to their ideology. It can do so by adopting tactics from autonomous media, such as covering issues relevant to marginalized groups, and listening to sources otherwise neglected by the mainstream media.

What can GLOCAL do to achieve and maintain trust?

Transparency

In 2020, 64% of donors considered trust as a highly important factor before contributing. Transparency provides audiences with the information they need to make informed judgements about our organization's mission, content, and goals. This includes displaying who is profiting from our work. As an organization, there are several main areas where we can seek to improve our transparency.

There are also benefits for GLOCAL when we increase transparency: transparent organizations are associated with stronger governance, more donations, and better performance.

Financial Transparency

In addition to legal requirements set by the Canadian government for financial transparency, there are also steps GLOCAL can take to improve:

Communication: Donors want to know that their money is going towards a good cause. Communicate clearly with donors exactly what their money is being used for, dollar by dollar.

Record and publish financial statements: Make documents such as audits and tax returns accessible on GLOCAL's website, and ensure that they are updated regularly. Disclose relationships with donors and articulate fundraising costs.

Website Design

Young donors in particular attribute importance to the ways that digital news sources present themselves. Studies have reported higher trust in organizations that:
- Do not have pop-up ads, automatic sounds, or heavy advertising
- Have web pages that easily transfer to mobile devices
- Post content using various forms of multimedia (ie. videos, photos, embedded links)
- Keep a regular posting schedule for more consistent engagement
- Invest in websites that look well-made

Creating an Organization that Reflects Canada

Canada is a diverse society composed of a variety of different ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups. GLOCAL should seek to reflect our country in its organizational structure and mission. Just like transparency, having a diverse organization has benefits for GLOCAL: diversity can "boost the quality of decision-making [and] enhance innovation." GLOCAL can do this by:

- Reaching out to diverse groups and advertising **paid** positions through their networks
    - Promote diverse employees to high positions
- Be flexible: recognize that many celebrate different holidays and have diverse needs
- Hire a professional to conduct unconscious bias training
- Recruit using diverse job boards

Mistakes to Avoid

Fallacy of Balance: Two experts with opposing views are treated with the same amount of legitimacy, despite the fact that one perspective is objectively more valid than the other.

For example, news outlets will quote a climate science denier alongside a climate scientist discussing global warming in the pursuit of appearing objective, thereby generating the perception that the two sides are both equally valid (when one is not)

Instead: provide consumers with sources used and describe thought process used when making decisions

E-toolkits Researchers

The research and presentation of this e-toolkit was conducted by researcher Nina Russell, with the guidance of research director Dr. Carla Caruana.

Additional Resources

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Additional Resources

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Together we can.

Go local. Go global.

https://glocalfoundation.ca/