Best practices for social media engagement during a crisis

1. **Watch your scheduled content** – As news continues to break, be sure to be cognizant of any pre-scheduled content you have on social media. Take down any scheduled content that would be considered "tone deaf" to the breaking news or conflict with other messages your organization is trying to convey. This may seem like a low priority action but evaluating your content as news breaks may save you a headache of being portrayed as "out of touch" later.

2. **Hate Speech** – Very little hate speech has been noted on individual organizations' Facebook pages. However, the online conversation can escalate to a more hateful or violent place quickly. In this scenario, we suggest groups block hateful or violent comments left on Facebook pages in addition to setting the Moderation filters on Facebook. Facebook also gives users the choice to message the person who left that comment. We would draft a template message for offenders to the effect of: "We ask that conversations on our Facebook page remain hate and violence free. Please do not advocate for violence/write hateful or racially driven comments on this Facebook wall." Finally, consider flagging or reporting the post as hate speech to the platform for them to take action.

3. News stories that provide fodder for those who advocate profiling or racist or anti-Muslim policies are usually quickly accompanied by an increase in vitriolic, racist language on mainstream websites. **We strongly suggest NOT engaging directly with hate speech** (in blogs' comments, on Twitter, or on Facebook), but highlighting them later as evidence of more rampant racism.

4. **Provide consistent, specific contact information** – If your organization has decided to respond to media requests, include a wall post or a tweet with the best point of contact for journalists. A good example would be:

   "For journalists covering the Paris attacks: please contact Joe Smith at Joe@ReThinkMedia.org or 202-555-1212 for interviews or resources."

5. **Avoid directing journalists to blanket email addresses like "info@" or "media@."** Instead, whenever possible, direct journalists to an actual person. We suggest sharing this message across all social media platforms.

6. **Engage *where* the conversation is happening** – This will vary by organization and by event, but breaking news is likely to start on Twitter, with more general updates through Facebook. (Ex. A play-by-play of what's happening on the ground is likely to be on Twitter, whereas a compelling graphic urging solidarity with X community would play better on Facebook.)

7. **Provide regular updates on positive responses to the crisis, including links to donation pages/vigils** – These types of messages are among the most likely to be retweeted or shared over Facebook. They're also an effective way to make your organization a reliable source for additional information on the bombing. Provide

information and updates whenever possible, including media outlets that have quoted your organization or allies. Use first-person eyewitness accounts and official sources such as a Police department's Twitter account or official press conferences and always cite these sources directly. Also look to local sources.

8. **Accuracy is critical and errors in the digital space can come back to haunt you.** Because of the nature of breaking news, factual mistakes will be made by all, but stay away from speculation in your posts as much as possible.

9. **Correct or offer additional information to reporters, bloggers, or news outlets** – Jump in with additional details, explanations of nuances that are being missed by traditional media outlets.

10. **Share information when and where appropriate** – If you're working with authorities on the ground, be sure to follow their rule of command for information sharing. Additionally, be sure to only put information online if it is okay to be reported on. Journalists and bloggers crowd-source information during breaking news events, and Facebook and Twitter posts are fair game. Whenever possible, consider retweeting or sharing posts from official sources, such as the FBI or the Red Cross, rather than sharing unproven information.

11. **Engage influencers** – Follow what content is being retweeted or shared and what messages or ideas are resonating. Reach out to those breaking through the noise. These can be traditional influencers, such as public officials or the media, or lay influencers, who have a unique perspective or idea that people are sharing or echoing online.

12. **Maintain your organization's unique voice** – Keep your organization's mission in mind when engaging online audiences – your perspective adds a unique dimension to the online conversation. Stay true to the priorities of your organization. Your messaging needs to be consistent across all channels, online and off. Remember to be cognizant of your tone during this time. Avoid snark and "cheery" content during a serious time.

13. **Event promotion –** Consider how you are promoting offline events that are not related to this issue on social media. Listing event details online may open the event to potential press inquiries (or drop –bys). If continuing with event, it would be wise to prepare for the possibility of press coming to the event with questions about the crises at hand.

14. **Key hashtags and building the echo chamber –** Hashtags serve to create smaller conversations about the same topic over Twitter. Strategically use hashtags to build an echo chamber for messages that will target people engaged in addressing the crises. Cater your messages to the community you see engaged in these online conversations.

15. **Cross-promote audiences** – When space allows, include an existing campaign hashtag in addition to the breaking news hashtag (the breaking news one being

more important). Including an existing campaign hashtag, such as #TakeOnHate, ties the new conversation to an ongoing conversation, providing more background/context for those interested.

16. **Create or share dynamic content** – With social platforms placing so much value on strong visuals, sharing dynamic content can help you break through the noise. You can either circulate something already created or work quickly to create something new. When sharing these images on Facebook or Twitter, make sure to include some context within the tweet or share text so the platform can include your posts with the trending topic.