

5 TIPS TO HANDLE

MISINFORMATION



Community engagement often involves contentious issues that evoke emotional responses from the community.

Unfortunately, these responses can lead to 'scare campaigns' that promote misinformation, completely derailing the engagement process by raising unrelated issues.

These misunderstandings can spread quickly and lead to the community losing trust in the organisation, often before the engagement campaign has even begun! Problems like this can lead to project delays or angry, misinformed objectors who divert attention from the real issues.

In order to manage and minimise the spread of misinformation, the following methods can be employed:

1 | Continuously monitor social media

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This should provide early warnings of emerging issues and enable you to gauge public sentiment about the project



Actively address the misinformation before it overtakes the project - if possible, pick up the phone and have a real conversation with the person/group spreading the information and foster a relationship with them.



Unfortunately, this is not always possible when the misinformation is via social media. In this case, address the misinformation by providing facts about the project.



Offer to meet with them and discuss the project and answer their questions; set the record straight.



DISTRIBUTING EASILY ACCESSIBLE

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factual information about the project at key project milestones.

Providing factual information will not only help manage misinformation but also will create transparency in the process and help build trust in the community.

Ensuring that the key issues are the target of your engagement campaign so that the community knows what it is that you want feedback about.



This will prevent the campaign being overrun by off-topic issues - **you want constructive comments**, not just random/unrelated comments.



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BRINGING THEM ALONG FOR THE JOURNEY

As mentioned above, provide information at key project milestones, including at project conception.



Provide information about the process so they know when you will be seeking formal comments.



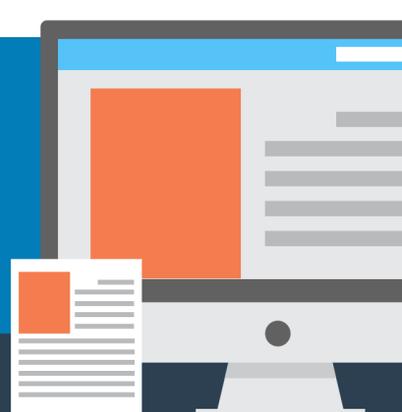
Ensure that they understand the key project outcomes and how they are able to contribute to the decision making.

If some aspects of the project are not negotiable, you need to be upfront about them.

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USING A LARGE RANGE OF ENGAGEMENT TOOLS

Online and offline, social media and purpose built engagement platforms.



And don't forget the value of face-to-face engagement and real conversations.

This helps build relationships and shows the community that you are not just a faceless bureaucrat.