

Erasmus+

2014 - 2016

Outcomes and Resources

The following is a summary of four workshops that the staff of the Vegan Society of Austria attended in the years 2014 - 2016, in the framework of an Erasmus+ project.

A lot of knowledge was gained, and the Vegan Society of Austria is more than happy to share more details with everybody that is interested. Here you will find an overview of the contents, and contact details in order to request information in greater depth.

The four topics that were covered were

1. Nonviolent Communication
2. Social Media and Campaigning
3. Business Development
4. Psychology of Engagement

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1. Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

Communication is at the very core of successful organisations and fruitful social action. However, we all know how challenging effective, authentic communication can be. Nonviolent Communication is a communication and conflict-resolution process developed by the psychologist Marshall Rosenberg. It is an accessible, transformational method to create authentic connection between people and fulfil diverse needs by focussing on how to express ourselves in a way that inspires empathy in others, and how to listen to them empathically in turn. It is useful for resolving conflicts, connecting with others, and living in a way that is conscious, present, and attuned to the genuine, living needs of yourself and others.

In summary, the crucial steps are:

1. State the observations that are leading up to a certain feeling. These should be as factual as possible, with no component of judgment or evaluation. Avoid interpretations. People often disagree about evaluations but directly observable facts provide a common ground for communication.
2. State the feeling that the observation triggers in you. Naming the emotion, without moral judgment, enables you to connect in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation. Do this with the aim of identifying the feeling that you are experiencing in that moment and to communicate it, not with the aim of shaming them or accusing or blaming them. Feelings are sometimes hard to put into words
3. Express the need that is underlying that feeling. When our needs are met, we have happy, pleasant feelings; when they are not met, we have unpleasant feelings. By tuning into the feeling, you can often find the underlying need. Stating the need, without morally judging it, gives you both clarity about what is alive in you in that moment.
4. Make a concrete request for action to meet the need just identified. Ask clearly and specifically for what you want right now, rather than hinting or stating only what you don't want. For the request to really be a request—and not a demand—allow the other person to say no or propose an alternative. You take responsibility for getting your own needs met, and you let them take responsibility for theirs.

Other things that are characteristic for NVC are

- to understand that no one is responsible for your feelings, and that no one can make you feel anything. You are not required to change your actions just because someone else doesn't like them. If someone is asking you to bend over backwards or ignore your own wants and needs, you are allowed to say no.
- to listen closely to what the other person says. Don't assume that you know how they feel or what is best for them. Instead, let them express their thoughts and feelings. Validate their feelings, slow down to ensure they feel heard, and make it clear that you care.

Further resources:

Videos: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5DL-9wti_Q

Books: https://www.amazon.com/Nonviolent-Communication-Language-Marshall-Rosenberg/dp/1892005034?ie=UTF8&ref_=asap_bc/

Websites: <https://www.cnvc.org/>

2. Social Media and Campaigning

With social and digital media becoming more powerful, it is no wonder that many NGOs are looking to use these tools for raising profile, engagement and campaigning. Alone the wealth of tools can be overwhelming (Twitter, Facebook, Google +, WordPress, Google Adwords, Newsletters...).

- The first piece of advice is to first determine WHO you want to target, and with WHAT message, and only then choose your tools, based on careful considerations.
- The second piece of advice is to get to know your audience, and to understand that YANYA (you are not your audience). Try to find out what your audience wants, and not what you would like to communicate.
- Set a strategy, define goals, and adapt your communications and marketing plan.
- Allocate a realistic budget. The worst thing that can happen is when you have a good plan, but run out of money after the initial steps.
- Evaluate and measure every step. Use tools for evaluation (Google Trends, Google Analytics, Facebook Insights...)
- Start to think 'in social media'. Other activities can be integrated as well, and a multichannel approach can benefit the campaign a lot.
- Ensure that your content is mobile friendly. A big share of online activity is done via mobile devices. It has different standards and needs different approaches (e.g., responsive web design, faster loading times,...)
- Generate new ideas. You need to collaborate with every department in your organisation. Good social media campaigns are not necessarily created by the social media department. Sit down with fundraising, management, editors etc. and brainstorm possible ideas together.
- Make your campaign as engaging as possible. 'Likes' and 'comments' are often the first step, but try to push them to activities that require a higher engagement (like subscribing to a newsletter, sharing your content in order to win something,...).
- Don't only look at other NGOs for inspiration. You can copy big corporate ideas and fit them to your content (see below for the campaign of the Braincancer Foundation that transformed a shampoo ad).
- Online campaigns don't always have to be expensive. A lot can be done with a good image or video editing software and an engaging slogan (see UNHCR - The search for Syria below).

Further resources:

Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=064ipuBiWDg> or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0ndziagqtQ>

Books: <https://www.amazon.com/Social-Media-Good-How-Nonprofits/dp/007177081X>

Websites: <https://www.fundsformgos.org/featured-articles/using-social-media-enhance-ngo-visibility/>

3. Business Development

Why cooperations with companies?

- It's the aim to influence and change the market to make it more veggie friendly for the customers
- Through business cooperations the topic vegetarian and especially vegan should be transferred to the heart of the society and become more mainstream
- Vegetarian/vegan should be standard in food retailing, gastronomy and hotel sector

With cooperations we can change the market:

- Together we create new veggie products
- We reach multipliers and work together
- Every cooperation increases our range, the topic vegetarian/vegan will be more present in media&press
- In this way the customers get to know and try plant based alternatives much easier

How do company cooperations work?

- Every cooperation with a company will be individually examined, discussed and decided within the team
- We use our Code of Conduct as the foundation of this process
- Transparency and authenticity have 1st priority
- We should not support any „Greenwashing“ within our business cooperations
- In advance every company will be thoroughly checked about it's motives, because: with every cooperation our image must be taken into consideration

How do company cooperations work?

- We support companies as a competent partner with consulting services
- To approach as many as possible and at various levels, we don't bind to no one, no exclusivity
- the Veggie-NGO sector has a „luxury problem“: most companies approach us for further cooperation, we don't have to do acquisition.

Further resources:

Books: <https://www.amazon.com/Nonprofit-Business-Plan-Creating-Successful/dp/161858006X>

4. Psychology of Engagement

The aim of this workshop was to empower the vegan movement by empowering vegan advocates and organisations and therefore to increase the impact of the vegan movement as a whole. The whole vegan movement - as most social justice movements - largely depends on the work of volunteers (often referred to as activists or advocates), and so has much less economic, social and political power than the system we are working to transform.

The main point of the workshop was that

- Strategy increases our power tremendously

Many who work in a social justice movement and are concerned about a better world, are often so overwhelmed by the enormity of suffering that we work so hard that we never stop to ponder our effectiveness, our own health, or the bigger picture. But if we want to have the greatest impact possible, I believe that we have a moral obligation to stop, step back, and think strategically about the most effective ways to lessen suffering.

The most important lessons learned from the workshop are:

- Movements can easiest be killed from the inside. Practice nonviolent communication and put the goals, not the methods in the center.
- Find burn-out preventing activities early on in your advocacy.
- Try to win over allies. There are more of them than you think (consumers, PR agencies, supermarkets / retailers, meat product manufacturer, farmers,...)
- Steal from the corporate playbook. We need to work as hard—and, more importantly, as smart—as the people on Wall Street work to sell stocks and advertisers work to sell the latest SUV. Although our goals are different, the mechanisms of reaching other people and selling the message are well established.
- Practice the art of convincing people through dialogue. Try not to make your vegan advocacy a monologue—and especially not a ranting one.

Further resources:

Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oe5Yhoh7zOo>

Books: https://www.amazon.com/Change-Heart-Psychology-Spreading-Social/dp/159056233X?ie=UTF8&*Version*=1&*entries*=0

<https://lanternbooks.presswarehouse.com/books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=61874>

Websites: <http://www.veganadvocacy.org/>