Digital Activism Tactics: TweetStorms

In the past month the community of activists on FaceBook and Twitter have been experimenting with a new form of protest, the "TweetStorm".

What is a TweetStorm?

It's a coordinated action by many users to send the same tweet out at the same time, generating a "storm" of tweets

How does it work?

Anyone can call for a TweetStorm, you just need to decide:

1. What will be in the tweet[s] (the text and what hashtags, any special user to target, eg @whitehouse)

2. What time it has to be sent (essential to choose a time you know lots of supporters are usually online)

What next?

You have to tell people about the TweetStorm, and ask them to get involved by supporting it (sending out a tweet or setting up a scheduled tweet - see below) and by spreading the idea to their followers!

Then, you all either keep the TweetStorm text somewhere handy and send it out at the appointed time, or you schedule the tweets to go out at the set time.

How do I schedule a tweet?

TweetDeck includes a schedule tweet feature, and there are several free scheduling services available online. See this article: 15 Free Services to Schedule Tweets on Twitter [http://bit.ly/aWW4kS] for details.

How do I know what time to send the tweet if I am in a different time zone?

Check times in various time zones here: http://www.worldtimeserver.com/ or here: http://www.worldtimezones.com/

And that is all there is to it.

Summary

1. Write the tweet with tags, @username(s)

2. Recruit your friends using DM, email, FaceBook, etc

3. Remember to set up your scheduled tweet!

4. Pass the information along

5. Post increasingly frequent reminders as the time approaches

Are TweetStorms Effective?

Early analysis supports the idea that TweetStorms are highly effective. Whether that is the result of serendipity or serious effort remains to be proven as it is early days. For now we can say:

1. TweetStorms work, only thanks to the coordinated actions of concerned individuals. TweetStorms are not necessarily successful in isolation; they are an important adjunct to the petitions, emails, letters and postcards being sent out under various other campaigns.

2. On Twitter, now activists can no longer target Trending Topics, targeted TweetStorms are the best alternative to trending. They draw attention of other users which can only help strengthen a cause.

3. TweetStorms are NOT spam. Spam is useless or irrelevant information sent to random or unrelated targets.

4. TweetStorms are not entertainment, they are serious activism spreading awareness. They are designed to attract attention from all corners, not only "UN" or "State Dept" for example. TweetStorms show allies the cause remains strong. They also show potential enemies that supporters of the cause are united.

5. TweetStorms are democratic in nature: Anyone can have a say in what is said, who it targets, and when.

Last Word

As activists, it is important to not only take part in TweetStorms, but to actively encourage others to join. Activism doesn't stop at the 'send' button.