



Insights From Verified

Creating Campaigns that Meet Audiences on Their Terms

The most persuasive campaigns speak to and engage communities on their own terms. Work with your audience to communicate in ways that are relevant to them, amplify the voices of influential community members and create opportunities for people in your community to directly engage with each other.

Insights that helped us engage audiences in our COVID campaign in India

Hi, I'm Kritica, a Senior Campaigner in India working the Verified Saathis campaign. Purpose has been working with India's most vulnerable communities in their fight against COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.

During the first and second waves of the pandemic we focused our work in Delhi's informal settlements. As we prepared for the third wave, we knew it was essential to scale our approach to reach broader audiences across India. To do this, we established Verified Saathis, a national network of communicators people trust and recognize, who could speak directly to their communities. In Hindi a Saathi is a friend, supporter or collaborator, and our Verified Saathis include celebrities, scientists, micro-influencers, healthcare professionals, and local leaders from informal settlements and tribal communities.



Our Saathis have shared trusted and accurate information about COVID-safe behavior with communities across India. Through their work we have been able to increase COVID-safe behaviors, including vaccination uptake, and helped limit the spread and harm of COVID-19.

Work with your target audience to create and share your messages.

Messages that speak to your community on their own terms are more persuasive. Consult with audience members, and whenever possible, collaborate with them in the design of your campaign.

- ✓✓ Listen to your audience and embrace unexpected insights.
 - ✓✓ Don't push your audience towards a prescribed response.
- ✓✓ Create clear ways for people to participate.
 - ✓✓ People don't automatically know how to take part in something. Develop touchpoints through your campaign for your audience to give input and feedback.
- ✓✓ Develop a shared vocabulary to align on terms and goals.
 - ✓✓ Speak in clear, simple language and avoid jargon or industry specific terms.

Case Study

Working with on-the-ground partners to create community centered campaigns

We worked closely with our partners to identify influential people who interacted with their community on a daily basis, such as community health workers (ASHA workers). We also ran focus groups to find out what kinds of messaging our audiences needed. This facilitated our recruitment of a diverse group of Saathis who could speak to different communities across India.

To begin, we met with our Saathis on a weekly basis. This ensured we were aware of and responding to the changing needs and the evolving realities of their communities. As our Saathis required less support we switched to monthly meetings, while still maintaining regular contact through social media. For instance, our partners created 88 WhatsApp chat groups to connect our Saathis to each other, as well as to the wider community.

“In small communities local people can have a lot of influence and the power to get out information quickly. We mapped out the places the community went most often, such as the grocery store or community toilets, and recruited people who worked in those places to be messengers. This helped us embed our messages into everyday life, and make them part of the fabric of the community. We also used a cascading communications method for our online communications, with multiple coordinators sharing content with small groups of about five people each, who shared the content with a further five people and so on.” - Kritica



Empower messengers with accurate information and let them speak in their own voice.

Highlight community voices in your communications. Audiences are **more responsive to messages** that come from people who share their values, demographics or other characteristics.

- ✓✓ Empower your messengers with the best information.
 - ✓✓ Give your messengers access to experts and specialists in your issue space who can help increase their knowledge and confidence in sharing your message.
- ✓✓ Let your messengers speak in their own voice.
 - ✓✓ Provide talking points, instead of rigid scripts. Messaging that people find authentic is more engaging and persuasive.

Case Study

Empowering messengers with accurate information and ways to share it



We connected our local community leaders with renowned doctors and scientists. These experts were able to answer questions our Saathis had and help them understand the questions they might face. This was essential to our program, as it helped our Saathis get accurate information directly from the experts. The communities we were working in lacked good access to healthcare and being connected to well known doctors was a motivator for our Saathis. Having access to this specialized information helped them feel empowered with timely and accurate information and more confident in their interactions with the community.

Combining both online and offline activity, we created hyperlocal campaigns at a national scale. We did this by centering real members of our target communities and empowering them to become credible sources of information on limiting the spread and harm of COVID-19.

“Amplifying voices from the community is the most important part of our campaign. The language doctors use is very different from the language the community speaks. Each Saathi controls the way they share our content, based on talking points we provided. These very personal testimonials from community elders, religious leaders and other key people who had taken the vaccine were incredibly impactful.” - Kritica

Prioritize conversation, engagement and feedback.

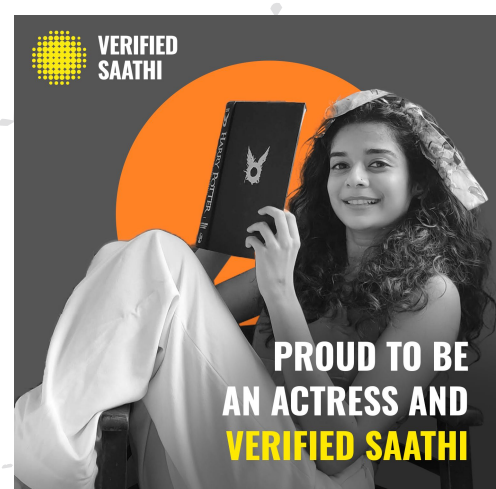
- ✓✓ Ask both your audience and your messengers what's relevant to them.
- ✓✓ Work with your target audience to find out their needs, and listen to them about what's worked so far *and* what hasn't.
- ✓✓ Solicit feedback *throughout* your campaign (not just at the beginning or the end).
- ✓✓ Test the content you are creating and adjust course as needed based on the feedback you receive.
- ✓✓ Establish ways for your messengers to speak directly with your target audience (through in person town halls or online forums, for example).

Case Study

Creating spaces for dialogue online and offline

Each Saathi had a different target audience based on their specific community. This allowed us to reach a variety of audiences with information tailored to them. Because literacy levels in our target communities were low, we kept messaging simple and focused on spoken communication in a variety of languages. This included audio-visual content that could be distributed through online channels and shown at in person events and small community gatherings. In addition to in-person events when possible, we also connected our Saathis and experts through WhatsApp groups, so they could communicate with each other directly.

“We were conveners for our group of trusted voices. Early in the process we learned that our Saathis had questions and wanted to speak more with doctors and experts. We brought them together, and created spaces where they could speak to each other directly. The doctors were also happy about this as this gave them a chance to respond and engage to misinformation and discrimination” - Kritica



Impact

So far we have recruited over 800 messengers to participate in Verified Saathis. Due to their efforts, hundreds of people in their communities have gotten, or agreed to get, vaccinated. We also made an impact on the Saathis themselves, who felt empowered to share information with their communities, and pride in taking part in the effort. This is how we created “The “Proud to Be” slogan. In feedback sessions with our Saathis they told us how proud to take part in the campaign and serve as leaders in their community, contributing to efforts to combat COVID-19.

“You could feel the sense of pride and excitement our Saathis experienced through their work in the community. They could see they were participating in something on both a community and national level. Many have said that they feel better prepared for future challenges that will arise.” - Kritica



Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

- ✓✓ **Consulting your audience as a box to be ticked, rather than a way to engage or collaborate.**
 - ✓✓ Work closely with your target audience, and pay attention to the work they are already doing. Consider how you can add value to their existing efforts and amplify authentic community voices.
- ✓✓ **Rigidly sticking to a communications strategy, regardless of the feedback you are getting.**
 - ✓✓ What we learn during a campaign often requires us to change course. Be flexible, listen to your audience's feedback and change your strategy when necessary.
- ✓✓ **Not preparing for unexpected or antisocial responses to your calls to participate.**
 - ✓✓ There is always a chance people won't participate with your communications in the way you hoped. When planning for participation, think about how people might sabotage, disrupt or ironically engage with your campaign. Look for learnings in these responses, be prepared to intervene or adjust if needed, but do not overreact.

