



TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An introduction to the ECDC guides

December 2017

ECDC TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

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This report was commissioned by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), coordinated by Teymur Noori, and produced by Terrence Higgins Trust (UK) and SOA AIDS (Netherlands)

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ECDC digital guide

Online and digital/social media are increasingly important communication channels for reaching audiences in a targeted and cost-effective manner. Gay and bisexual men have long been early adopters of technology and the use of the technology by gay and bisexual men, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) has often been the subject of research. However, many HIV organisations lack the experience and knowledge needed to use this online digital/social media effectively for STI/HIV prevention.

This series provides comprehensive guides to the effective use of digital platforms for STI/HIV prevention among MSM in the EU/EEA. The guides, created in collaboration with the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) and STI AIDS Netherlands (SANL), incorporate the expertise of stakeholders from EU/EEA Member States, scientific literature relating to social media and digital platforms, commercial sector best practice and engagement with the platform companies themselves.

The guides will help users to understand:

- the digital platforms available and how to use them for effective HIV prevention;
- the costs associated with a successful advertising campaign and how to distribute budget accordingly;
- how digital platforms have been successfully used by others;
- how to reach MSM populations;
- how to optimise content for maximum impact;
- how to measure the success of outreach and apply the experience to future work.

Choosing your approach and platform

Each module within this guidance can be used on its own or as part of a wider online strategy. Before getting started, it is important to decide on the platforms and approach that best meet your objectives. The tables below outline the differences, and the strengths and weaknesses of each platform.

Facebook

Popularity: Facebook has more active monthly users (1.23 billion) than any other platform.

Multimedia: Fully supports all multimedia content including text, image, and video.

Targeting: Versatile targeting options include age, gender, location, spoken languages and interests.

Affordable: Cost-effective and generally produces cheaper engagements than most other platforms.

Diverse: Facebook has a broader range of active users than any other platform.

Pay-to-play: The algorithmic timeline adopted by Facebook means unpaid content may not be seen widely, but a small amount of money spent on advertising can go a long way.

Audience: People of all ages use Facebook. Teens and millennials use Facebook in high numbers but may prefer other platforms for interactions with their friends and peer group.

Competitive: Facebook's cheap and effective advertising means it is an extremely attractive option.

Twitter

Real time: Although Twitter does use a timeline, tweets are still displayed in real time so you can arrange live interactions, such as question and answer sessions.

Trending: Hashtags and trending topics enable you to join relevant discussions in real time.

Interaction: Provides excellent opportunities to engage with other organisations, influencers and individuals.

Lifespan: Content lifespan is very short compared to the other platforms.

Limited reach: Other platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, have many more users.

Frequency: The fast moving nature of Twitter means an active twitter presence requires a lot of content.

Limitations: Tweets are limited to 140 characters and videos are limited to 140 seconds.

Costly: More expensive than platforms such as YouTube & Facebook.

Instagram

Integrated: Facebook & Instagram are integrated so adverts can use both platforms simultaneously.

Young demographic: Popular with teens and Millennials (demographic cohort from early 1980s to early 2000s), more than 90% of users are under 35.

Growing: Instagram has a user base that is growing rapidly, faster than any other platform.

Engaging: Instagram gets more than ten times the engagement that Facebook does.

Limitations: Instagram is mostly image-based messages, videos are limited to 60 seconds, and text-only posts are not supported.

Adapting: Instagram has undergone many drastic changes and is likely to continue to change and adapt.

YouTube

Searchable: YouTube is not just a social media platform but also the second largest search engine in the world.

Integrated: YouTube and Google are integrated, meaning YouTube content ranks highly in organic searches.

Lifespan: Videos uploaded to YouTube have a huge lifespan and continue to show indefinitely in searches.

Reach: YouTube has 1.3 billion users covering a wide and diverse range of demographics.

Affordable: YouTube ads have a lower starting price than any other social media platform.

Targeting: YouTube has many different targeting options and allows targeting based on what users watch.

Limitations: YouTube currently only supports video content and does not offer text or image-based content.

Other expenses: Video production can be expensive and should be factored into associated costs.

Google AdWords

Largest digital ad platform: Google AdWords is the biggest digital advertising platform in the world.

Search: Google is the leading search engine and ads can appear next to relevant searches.

YouTube Integration: Google and YouTube are integrated, allowing you to create adverts in a different format on YouTube. To advertise on YouTube you need a Google AdWords account.

Flexible budget: It is free to sign up and you can spend as much or as little as you want.

Targeting: Offers a variety of targeting options that can be useful for different goals.

Multi-media: Google AdWords supports different advert formats that include text, image and video, however there may be limitations on some formats in some places.

Real-time monitoring: You can monitor the performance of your advert in real time.

Limitations: While Google AdWords can be used by anyone, time needs to be invested to ensure the best results. Google does provide free support to advertisers to ensure that you use the platform efficiently.

Online advertising (websites and smartphone applications)

Purpose: Online advertising aims to increase awareness and promote services to large groups of people.

Options: There are many different ad options depending on the platform and your budget. These include broadcast or inbox messages, banners, animated images, videos and more.

Attention please: Strong and appealing creatives are needed to catch people's attention. Some dating platforms reward users who watch ads with special features.

Pre-determined: Content creation and ad placement are decided beforehand and require sufficient preparation time, making advertising less flexible.

Standardised reporting: Advertisers report standard metrics for reach, engagement and conversion.

Budget decides scope: Your budget determines how much content can be developed and promoted. Several platforms offer discounts or free ad space for non-profit organisations.

Online outreach

Purpose: Online outreach improves knowledge and promotes services through direct conversations.

Two-way communication: Providers can initiate conversations or wait for users to contact them.

Tailored to needs: Information and services are tailored to individual needs.

Blocked: Online outreach is not always permitted and providers may be blocked from the platform.

Reporting: Providers have to devise their own data collection methods and monitor independently.

Human capital: Lots of staff time and training on professional skills are required.

Interdisciplinary excellence: Online outreach challenges professionals to excel in the use of digital technologies, counselling and health promotion.

Once you have selected the appropriate platform the guides will provide help and information for the successful implementation of HIV prevention interventions.

Each module can stand alone or can be used as part of multi-channel digital strategy. They can also be used as a basis for staff training within organisations.

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2. Facebook

With 1.23 billion active users¹, Facebook is one of the cheapest and most efficient platforms for HIV prevention, but it is also one of the most competitive. This means that having an understanding of how to best optimise content and target key MSM populations is crucial to the success of any organic or monetised Facebook campaign. This module outlines the opportunities Facebook provides for HIV prevention and explores the following areas:

- **Getting started:** how to begin setting up a successful Facebook campaign
- **Creating content:** how to create and optimise content for maximum success
- **Targeting:** how to effectively target key MSM populations
- **Budgeting:** what costs are associated with a campaign and how to distribute budget
- **Reporting:** measuring the success of a campaign and applying the experience to future work
- **Summary:** a brief checklist to consider before making your campaign live.

2a. Getting started

Facebook's Business Manager is the system that will allow you to create and manage your campaigns. This module will take you through each step of the process but it is advised that you familiarise yourself with Business Manager before proceeding. If you're creating your Business Manager account from scratch you can read advice on starting the account [here](#).²

Once your Business Manager account is set up then it is time to create your first campaign, but before you get started it is important to understand exactly what you are trying to achieve. There are three different objective types outlined by Facebook and each requires a different plan of action.

- **Awareness:** designed to encourage engagement, promote key messages and increase knowledge. This can include boosting a post to generate conversations around sexual health or the service you provide, or encouraging users to become a fan of your page for future updates.
- **Consideration:** designed to raise awareness of the services you provide and encourage future action. This can include getting people to watch a promotional video or sending people to your website to view information or consider taking action.
- **Conversion:** designed to promote direct action (e.g. find a testing centre or order a postal test.) By setting up a pixel within your website Facebook will be able to track the number of people engaging with your services and use this to optimise your campaign to increase the number of conversions. You can learn more about creating a pixel [here](#).³

Determining your core objective before beginning your campaign is vital as it will heavily influence the way you design and measure your campaign and the way Facebook distributes and optimises it. If one singular objective is not clear then consider multiple campaigns with their own individual objectives.

2b. Creating content

It is important to remember that any social media campaign you create will be directly competing for space in a person's timeline alongside updates from their family, friends, and other brands and organisations they love. For this reason, advertisements may look out of place and a softer approach is often necessary. The aim is to make your advert fit seamlessly into a person's timeline while simultaneously promoting your message.

The first step in creating an engaging piece of content is to decide what kind of content will best convey your message. There are four different types of content currently available on Facebook:

- **Text:** a simple text update with no embedded links, images, videos or graphics.
- **Image:** an image, usually accompanied by text and a link if applicable.⁴
- **Video:** a video, usually accompanied by text and a link if applicable.⁵
- **Link:** a clickable post, usually including an image and a call to action.⁶

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/feb/04/facebook-in-numbers-statistics>

² <https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1428785834029669>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/business/a/online-sales/conversion-tracking>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/sockeundschiuss/posts/1213424405335866>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/sockeundschiuss/videos/1218437971501176/>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/sockeundschiuss/posts/1201561646522142>

Images are the most versatile type of content and are compatible with all of Facebook's different advert types and placements but it is still recommended that you experiment with video and links to see what your audience engage with most.

Creating engaging content

When creating content, your top priority should be to ensure that it is engaging. Before you send out your first post or advert it is worth considering the following:

- Be consistent: being consistent in the quality and types of posts you create will help to establish your brand voice and message and give your audience a clear understanding of your intentions and objectives and what to expect from you in future.
- Be brief: try to keep your posts between 100 and 250 characters to get more engagement. Shorter, succinct posts with a clear call to action are much better received.⁷
- Be timely: be reactive and create content related to breaking news and current events. Plan ahead to take advantage of relevant 'tent pole' occasions such as World AIDS Day, Sexual Health Week, National HIV Testing Week, and Valentine's Day.
- Utilise links: even if there is no direct call to action, always give your audience the option to get involved and find out more by including a relevant link to your own or a partner's website. Using a link shortener, such as goo.gl⁸ or bit.ly⁹ will keep your links short and tidy.
- Use engaging images and videos: invest the extra time and money into curating and creating high quality photos and videos. Higher quality content means higher engagement (see the case study for an example.)
- Create a two-way dialogue: social media is designed to encourage conversation. Make sure you are engaging your audience in conversation and responding to comments. If relevant, including a question in your content has been proven to massively increase engagement.
- Keep it simple: do not overwhelm your audience with too much information or multiple different calls to action. Keep it clear and make it as easy as possible for your audience to engage.

Case study: Socke & Schuss

'Socke Und Schuss' is a German sexual health campaign run by Aidshilfe NRW e.V. that uses two centralised characters to promote HIV prevention and awareness. The strong branding of the campaign is instantly recognisable and reached over 1 000 000 MSM in its first two years. The Facebook page includes a wealth of highly engaging images and [videos](#)¹ and capitalises on tent-pole events such as [Eurovision](#)¹ to draw in their target audience.¹



⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/sockeundschuss/posts/1191277090883931>

⁸ <https://goo.gl>

⁹ <https://bitly.com>

Consider your audience

Identifying the audience you are targeting is also extremely important when creating content. From choosing the models you use in your campaign to establishing a tone of voice, it is important to ensure that the content appeals to your target demographic. Pre-testing different campaign materials before launch is often advised and can help to determine which adverts will perform best.

Advert placements

Adverts placed in Facebook's Business Manager can appear in multiple places including Facebook itself (in the desktop feed, mobile feed, and right column), Instagram, and the Audience Network. Different marketing objectives work best with different placements, and Facebook recommends the following:

Brand awareness: [Facebook](#)¹⁰ and [Instagram](#)¹¹

Engagement: Facebook and Instagram

Video views: Facebook, Instagram and [Audience Network](#)¹²

Website referrals: Facebook and Audience Network

Conversions: Facebook and Audience Network.

Facebook also has a built-in 'Automatic Placements' feature that will optimise your placements in order to get the best results at the cheapest cost. It is recommended that you take advantage of this feature but it is important to ensure first that your content is optimised for each individual placement.

2c. Targeting

Targeted adverts are the key to any successful Facebook campaign. With effective targeting it is possible to make a lasting impact with even the smallest budget. Targeting options include location, age, gender, languages, interests, and connections. Being as specific as possible with the available targeting methods is crucial to the success of your campaign.

Demographic-based targeting

- Age: your call to action should be relevant to the age group you are targeting. Are some age groups more at risk in the areas you are targeting? Are some age groups more likely to engage with your call to action? Effectively narrowing your age group by relevance will increase the success of your campaign and lower your cost per conversion.
- Gender: Facebook's gender-based targeting is binary and does not allow transgender (trans)-based targeting. Using interest-based targeting is currently the only way to specifically target trans individuals.
- Languages: Consider including only those who speak the language your advert is written in.
- Connections: Consider excluding those who like your page if you are seeking a new audience, or target friends of people that like the page already.
- Location: Only include people in locations that can access your service, and consider exclusively targeting areas that are highly populated with MSM or that have the highest prevalence of HIV.

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/>

¹¹ <https://www.instagram.com/>

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/audience-network>

Interest-based targeting

Sexuality-based targeting is not always reliable and is no longer available in many areas. MSM can instead be identified through interest-based targeting. This will never be 100% accurate so some trial and error is always necessary to produce the best possible results. The table below gives some examples of MSM interests and how to target them.

Table 1. Examples of MSM interests and how to target them

Press & Media	Do target press and media in your area that specifically target MSM	Do not target more generic magazines that appeal to non-MSM individuals
Dating & Relationships	Do target pages of dating sites and apps that specifically cater for gay men	Do not target pages of dating sites and apps that appeal to a much wider audience
Gay Scene & Nightlife	Do target gay spaces and events such as Gay Pride, even if they are frequented by some non-MSM individuals	Do not target heterosexual venues even if they are also frequented by MSM
Adult	Do target the pages of adult websites that exclusively create gay porn	Do not target the pages of generic adult websites that also create straight content
Lifestyle	Do remember to include hobbies and activities that fall outside of the traditional gay scene	Do not target generic pages that appeal to both gay and straight people
Clothing & Fashion	Do target the pages of fetish and other brands that are exclusively marketed for MSM	Do not target generic brands that may appeal to both gay and straight men
TV & Film	Do target gay films and TV shows that revolve around gay characters, themes, and storylines	Do not target generic films and TV shows even if they include some gay characters, storylines or themes
Celebrities	Do exercise caution: targeting large celebrity pages may produce unexpected results	Do not target gay icons who also have a large heterosexual following: e.g. Lady Gaga

Interest targeting can also be used to refine your audience even further. For example:

Transgender individuals: consider targeting trans-specific pages such as *Trans Pride*.

Ethnic minorities: consider targeting pages specific to ethnic minorities such as *Black Gay Pride*.

High-risk individuals: consider targeting sex clubs or other high-risk areas, such as *Circuit Festival*.

Different age groups: consider targeting or excluding age-based pages, such as *Gay Mature Dating*.

Affluence: consider targeting or excluding luxury purchases such as *European Gay Ski Week*.

2d. Budgeting and costs

Facebook was once a place where organic content¹³ would thrive but as the marketplace has become more competitive the cost of advertising has increased and organic content has become much less viable as a method of advertising. Although it is possible to run a campaign without an advertising budget, to reach its full potential it is crucial to set aside a realistic budget and determine the best way to spend it.

Before determining your budget it is important to consider the following:

Overall budget: What is the absolute maximum amount you have to spend on Facebook advertising? Use this to determine your overall budget and as your spending benchmark.

¹³ This is content that you do not promote via paid advertising

Advert sets: How many different campaigns are you going to be running and how do you want to distribute your budget among them in order to meet your targets?

Deliverables: What deliverables are you trying to achieve? Whether you are trying to drive conversions or promote engagement and brand awareness, ensure you know your core objectives in advance.

Duration: How long is your campaign going to run for? Is your campaign going to run over an extended period of time or is it intended to produce quick results within a short time frame?

Daily budget: Taking into account the budget you have available for each advert set and the duration of the campaign, how much do you have to spend on a daily basis?

Target: How many people do you want to reach/convert? This will allow you to calculate the maximum amount you want to spend per action achieved – Cost Per Action (CPA).

Table 2. Budget breakdown example

Overall budget: EUR 10 000	
HIV testing postal kits: EUR 7 000	Condom awareness: EUR 3 000
Deliverable: online orders	Deliverable: post engagement
Duration: 1 week	Duration: 8 weeks
Daily budget: EUR 1 000	Daily budget: EUR 50~
Target: 100 conversions per day	Target: 500 people engaged per day
Cost per action: EUR 10	Cost per action: EUR 0.10~

Once you have established your budget you can then use this to optimise your adverts and make sure they are performing and achieving the goals you have outlined. These should be monitored and adjusted on a daily basis to ensure the best results.

It is important to be realistic with your goals and sometimes it may be necessary to re-evaluate your budget and expectations if your adverts continue to underperform.

Performance

In order to understand your adverts and how they are performing, it is important to first understand the following three metrics:

- Impressions: the number of times your ads were displayed.
- Reach: the number of unique users your ads reached.
- Frequency: the average number of times your ad was served to each person.

You can adjust the frequency at which your adverts are presented by adjusting your audience size or your budget. A larger audience or lower budget will produce a lower frequency and a smaller audience or higher budget will produce a higher frequency.

The solution to keeping your adverts running at a low cost is to find the right frequency at which to present them. The more often a user sees your advert, the more likely they are to engage with it, but if you present your advert too often they are likely to become fatigued or annoyed by it. The only real way to determine the frequency that is right for your adverts and your audience is through experimentation, testing, and data analysis.

2e. Reporting

Reporting is an ongoing process when it comes to advertising on Facebook, and although adverts should be optimised and monitored on a daily basis, it is also important to produce more holistic reports to highlight any weaknesses in your strategy.

Some of the elements you should report upon include:

- Page growth: creating a hard-core base of page fans gives you a captive audience of people who will be much easier to convert. Fans should organically discover your page but fan acquisition adverts can also be created to attract new fans to your page.
- Reach: getting an idea of the number of people you are reaching gives you a benchmark for measuring the campaign's success. Comparing this to other marketing methods (i.e. other social media, press, outdoor) will help inform the amount of budget you attribute to Facebook.
- Engagement: monitoring the number of people you are engaging with will help determine the success and effectiveness of your content. Spikes in engagement may indicate examples of more relatable content and dips in engagement may indicate content that is underperforming.
- Engagement rate: this is the percentage of people reached that also engaged with your content. A low engagement rate could indicate a problem with your content or your targeting.
- Referrals and conversions: the number of people clicking through to your website and the number of people taking action on the site.
- Conversion rate: the percentage of those visiting your website who also took action.

Table 3. Simple reporting example

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Growth	1 000 ▲	2 000 ▲	1 500 ▼	1 200 ▼
Reach	1 000 000 ▲	2 000 000 ▲	800 000 ▼	3 000 000 ▲
Engagement	30 000 ▲	50 000 ▲	25 000 ▼	100 000 ▲
Engagement rate	3% ▲	2.5% ▼	3.13% ▲	3.33% ▲
Referrals	5 000 ▲	10 000 ▲	8 000 ▼	15 000 ▲
Conversions	500 ▲	900 ▲	1 000 ▲	2 000 ▲
Conversion rate	10% ▲	9% ▼	12.5% ▲	13.33% ▲

Q1: All figures are positive and the campaign is performing well.

Q2: The massive increase in reach has resulted in lower engagement and conversion rates. Optimising your targeting and content would improve this figure in the next quarter.

Q3: Engagement and conversion rates are up but other elements of the campaign are underperforming. Optimise your targeting and budget to increase your reach in the next quarter.

Q4: The overall campaign is performing well but page growth is down. Consider allocating some additional budget to page fan acquisition to improve these figures in the next quarter.

2f. Summary

Before starting your Facebook campaign, you should do the following:

1. Choose your campaign objective and outline your goals
2. Create a selection of highly engaging content that is suitable for your target audience
3. Select the best places for your adverts to appear
4. Create at least one target group based on both demographic and interest-based targeting
5. Allocate a budget and distribution plan and outline achievable realistic targets
6. Set holistic goals to measure the overall success of your campaign and determine a plan to measure and act upon your ongoing progress, successes and failures.

Once you have completed these tasks you are ready to start your first campaign. The success of any campaign will always depend on a certain degree of trial and error so remember to follow your campaign through every stage and be prepared to optimise and make changes as you go.

Helpful tools

- A guide to getting started with Facebook's Business Manager can be found [here](#).¹⁴
- For images to be approved by Facebook for advertising purposes they need to contain no more than 20% text. A tool is available to check your images before making them live [here](#).¹⁵
- Accessibility tools such as closed captions for video are available to make your content more inclusive. You can find out more about accessibility options [here](#).¹⁶
- There are certain barriers when talking about gender, sexuality, sex, and sexual health. In order for adverts to be approved they must conform to [Facebook's advert policy](#).¹⁷
- Free tools such as [Survey Monkey](#)¹⁸ can be used to pre-test campaign materials before they go live.
- Information on creating a pixel for conversion tracking can be found [here](#).¹⁹
- Google's URL Builder²⁰, goo.gl²¹ and bit.ly²² can be used to create shortened tracking links.

¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1428785834029669>

¹⁵ https://www.facebook.com/ads/tools/text_overlay

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/help/141636465971794/>

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/policies/ads>

¹⁸ <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/business/a/online-sales/conversion-tracking>

²⁰ <https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1033867?hl=en>

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TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Use of Twitter for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An ECDC guide to effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention

December 2017

ECDC TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

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This report was commissioned by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), coordinated by Teymur Noori and produced by Terrence Higgins Trust (UK) and SOA AIDS (Netherlands)

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3. Twitter

With 313 million monthly active users,¹ [Twitter](#)² is the fourth largest social media platform after [Facebook](#),³ [YouTube](#)⁴ and [Instagram](#).⁵ Both organic⁶ and paid content thrive on Twitter and can be used together or independently as part of a successful social media strategy. This module will look at the opportunities Twitter provides for HIV prevention and explore the following:

- **Getting started:** how to begin setting up a successful Twitter campaign.
- **Creating content:** how to create and optimise content for maximum success.
- **Targeting:** how to effectively target key MSM populations.
- **Budgeting:** what costs are associated with a campaign and how to distribute budget.
- **Reporting:** measuring the success of a campaign and applying this experience to future work.
- **Summary:** a brief checklist to consider before making your campaign live.

3a. Getting started

Before you begin, you are advised to familiarise yourself with Twitter's interface and adverts manager. Twitter's adverts manager gives exclusive access to certain tools and functionalities which are invaluable for both organic and paid campaigns. You can read more about setting up your Twitter account and using Twitter's adverts manager [here](#).⁷

Once you have familiarised yourself with Twitter's interface, you will need to decide which campaign type will best help you to reach your objective. Twitter offers the following campaign types:

- **Website clicks or conversions:** designed to push people towards your website and encourage them to take action. The campaign will optimise for link clicks and you will only be charged for each person who visits your website.
- **Follower growth:** designed to build and grow your audience. If the majority of your campaigns are organic, investing a small amount into building an initial following could be beneficial. You only pay for the followers you gain and can set the parameters for how much you want to pay.
- **Awareness:** designed to spread awareness and increase knowledge. You pay for every impression⁸ but can often reach a higher number of people for a significantly lower price.
- **Tweet engagements:** designed to increase engagement⁹ with your tweets. You only pay for the first engagement a person makes which can be effectively used to encourage people to retweet, reply, or actively engage with your content.
- **Video views:** designed to increase the number of views on a Twitter video. You pay for every video view. This should only be used for videos uploaded directly to Twitter. Opt for an awareness or tweet engagement campaign instead of YouTube or other third-party video views.

Determining your core objective before beginning your campaign is vital as it will heavily influence the way you design and measure your campaign and the way Twitter distributes and optimises it. If one singular objective is not clear then consider multiple campaigns with their own individual objectives.

3b. Creating content

Unlike other social media platforms, Twitter is much more conversational and runs in real time. This means that establishing yourself through frequent conversational content is crucial. Even though there is a limitation of 140 characters, there are many components that make up a tweet, and deciding how to best use them to spark conversation and action is the key to engaging your audience:

- **Text:** what is your message and what kind of language should you use to best convey that? Consider using engaging questions or direct calls to action to encourage your audience to engage with your tools and services.¹⁰
- **Link:** clickable cards with a clear call to action can be used to make your advert stand out, or you can include a link within the body of a regular tweet for a more conversational feel.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>

² <https://twitter.com/>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/>

⁵ <https://www.instagram.com/>

⁶ Organic content is content that you do not promote via paid advertising.

⁷ <https://business.twitter.com/en/help/account-setup/account-login-and-setup.html>

⁸ 'Impressions' on Twitter mean the number of times a user is served a Tweet in their timeline or search results

⁹ An engagement is an interaction that a user has with a Tweet. For example, clicking on a link on a Tweet is an engagement.

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/assoAIDES/status/876815779429322753>

- Video: videos can be directly uploaded to Twitter and will automatically play in a user's timeline. Alternatively, videos can be embedded from YouTube and other third party websites.
- Hashtag: hashtags enable you to start or join a conversation with other Twitter users and have your tweets appear in search.¹¹ This can be incredibly effective for capitalising upon trending events, such as National HIV Testing Week or World AIDS Day.
- Image: using an appropriate image can help grab your audience's attention, but not every tweet will require one. Use images often but only where necessary and frequently rotate creatives to keep your campaign looking fresh and compelling (see case study).
- Tags: does your tweet relate to another organisation or individual? Tags (@ with username) can amplify your reach by encouraging influential people and organisations to share and engage with your content.

Creating engaging content

When creating content, ensuring that it is engaging should be your top priority. Before you send out your first post or advert it is worth considering the following:

- Be consistent: consistency in the quality and types of posts you create will help to establish your brand voice and message and give your audience a clear understanding of your intentions and objectives and what to expect from you in future.
- Be brief: even with Twitter's 140 character count limitation, it is still good practise to keep your content as brief and to the point as possible.¹²
- Be timely: be reactive and create content related to breaking news and current events. Plan ahead to take advantage of relevant 'tent-pole' occasions such as World AIDS Day, Sexual Health Week, National HIV Testing Week and Valentine's Day.
- Use links: for awareness and engagement posts a link may not always be necessary, but always consider your objectives before posting and use links where applicable. Using a link shortener such as goo.gl¹³ or bit.ly¹⁴ to keep your links short and tidy.
- Use engaging images and videos: invest the extra time and money into curating and creating high quality photos and videos. Higher-quality content means higher engagement.
- Create a two way dialogue: social media is designed to encourage conversation. Make sure you are engaging your audience in conversation and responding to their comments. If relevant, including a question in your content is proven to massively increase engagement.
- Keep it simple: do not overwhelm your audience with too much information or multiple calls to action. Keep it clear and make it as easy as possible for your audience to engage.

¹¹ A hashtag is a way to index keywords or topics on Twitter achieved by adding the # symbol before a word or phrase. For example, when sending a Tweet about HIV that you would like others to discover who might be discussing HIV on Twitter, you can add the hashtag #HIV.

¹² <https://twitter.com/assoAIDES/status/878611740585598980>

¹³ <https://goo.gl/>

¹⁴ <https://bitly.com/>

Case study: AIDES France

The association AIDES in France amplified the community engagement and success of their Twitter and wider social media presence by using a series of powerful and provocative videos¹ and images of real MSM from the LGBT+ community in France. They furthered the success of these campaigns by translating the content into different languages and making it accessible throughout Europe and the wider world. Their highly sharable content led to them amassing over 170 000 followers as of March 2017.¹



3c. Targeting

The success of an advertising campaign on Twitter heavily relies on effective targeting. Twitter's targeting approach is unique and, in addition to offering demographic and interest-based targeting, it also offers keyword and behaviour-based targeting.

Demographic-based targeting

- Age: your call to action should be relevant to the age group you are targeting. Are some age groups more at risk in the areas you are targeting? Are some age groups more likely to engage with your call to action? Effectively narrowing your age group by relevance will increase the success of your campaign and lower your cost per conversion.
- Gender: Twitter's gender-based targeting is binary and does not allow trans* based targeting. Using interest-based targeting is currently the only way to reach trans* individuals.
- Languages: consider including only those who speak the language your advert is written in.
- Location: only include people in locations that can access your service and consider exclusively targeting areas that are highly populated with MSM or that have the highest prevalence of HIV.

Interest-based targeting

Sexuality-based targeting is not available but it is still possible to target MSM based on their interests or the people they follow. This will never be 100% accurate so some trial and error is always necessary to produce the best possible results. Some examples include targeting celebrities and influencers; adult websites, entertainers and performers; gay media and gay community groups and organisations.

Examples:

@Huffpostqueer – gay media

@ZurichPride – gay community groups

@RuPaul - LGBT+ celebrities.

Keyword and behaviour targeting

It is also possible to target people based on the keywords they use in their tweets or based on their lifestyle patterns and behaviour. Keywords surrounding high-risk activity can be used to pinpoint higher-risk individuals and certain behaviour categories, such as 'nightlife enthusiasts' and 'alcoholic drink buyers' in order to narrow down and target specific subgroups of MSM.

A combination of the above targeting methods will produce the best results, and experimenting with different subgroups is the key to reaching the most at-risk individuals for the lowest price.

3d. Budgeting and costs

Twitter is a great platform for organic content but setting aside even a small budget will significantly increase your reach. To help you determine your budget you should consider the following:

Overall budget: what is the absolute maximum amount you have to spend on Twitter's advertising platform? Use this to determine your overall budget and as your spending benchmark.

Advert sets: how many different campaigns are you going to be running and how do you want to distribute your budget among them in order to meet your targets?

Deliverables: what deliverables are you trying to achieve? Whether you are trying to drive conversions or promote engagement and brand awareness, ensure you know your core objectives in advance.

Duration: how long is your campaign going to run for? Is your campaign going to run over an extended period of time or is it intended to produce quick results in a short time frame?

Daily budget: taking into account the budget you have available for each advert set and the duration of the campaign, how much do you have to spend on a daily basis?

Target: how many people do you want to reach/convert? This will allow you to calculate the maximum amount you want to spend per action achieved – Cost Per Action (CPA).

Table 1. Budget breakdown example

Overall Twitter budget: EUR 1 000			
Campaign video: EUR 50	Condom campaign: EUR 250	Condom pack orders: EUR 600	Outbreak awareness: EUR 100
Deliverable: views	Deliverable: engagement	Deliverable: conversions	Deliverable: reach
Duration: five days	Duration: five days	Duration: five days	One day
Daily budget: EUR 10	Daily budget: EUR 50	Daily budget: EUR 120	Daily budget: EUR 100
Target: 100 views per day	Target: 100 people engaged per day	Target: 100 orders per day	Target: 10 000 people reached per day
Cost per action: EUR 0.10	Cost per action: EUR 0.50	Cost per action: EUR 1.20	Cost per action: EUR 0.01

Once you have established your budget you can use this to optimise your adverts and make sure they are achieving your goals. These should be monitored and adjusted on a daily basis to ensure the best results. It is important to be realistic about your objectives and sometimes it may be necessary to re-evaluate your budget and expectations if your adverts underperform.

3e. Reporting

Reporting is an on-going process when it comes to advertising on Twitter, and although adverts should be optimised and monitored on a daily basis, it is also important to produce more holistic reports to highlight any weaknesses in your strategy.

Some of the elements you should report upon include:

- Follower growth: creating a hard-core base of followers gives you a captive audience of people who will be much easier to convert. Followers should organically discover your page but recruitment adverts can also be created to attract new followers to your page.
- Reach: getting an idea of the number of people you are reaching gives you a benchmark for measuring the success of your campaign. Comparing this to other marketing methods (other social media, press, outdoor) will help inform the amount of budget you attribute to Twitter.
- Engagement: monitoring the number of people you are engaging with will help determine the success and effectiveness of your content. Spikes in engagement may indicate examples of more relatable content and dips in engagement may indicate content that is underperforming.
- Engagement rate: this is the percentage of people reached that also engaged with your content. A low engagement rate could indicate a problem with your content or your targeting.
- Referrals and conversions: the number of people clicking through to your website and the number of people taking action on site.
- Conversion rate: the percentage of people who visited your website and also took action.

Table 2. Simple reporting example

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Growth	1 000 ▲	2 000 ▲	1 500 ▼	1 200 ▼
Reach	1 000 000 ▲	2 000 000 ▲	800 000 ▼	3 000 000 ▲
Engagement	30 000 ▲	50 000 ▲	25 000 ▼	100 000 ▲
Engagement rate	3% ▲	2.5% ▼	3.13% ▲	3.33% ▲
Referrals	5 000 ▲	10 000 ▲	8 000 ▼	15 000 ▲
Conversions	500 ▲	900 ▲	1 000 ▲	2 000 ▲
Conversion rate	10% ▲	9% ▼	12.5% ▲	13.33% ▲

Q1: All figures are positive and the campaign is performing well.

Q2: The massive increase in reach has resulted in lower engagement and conversion rates. Optimising your targeting and content would improve this figure in the next quarter.

Q3: Engagement and conversion rates are up but other elements of the campaign are underperforming. Optimise your targeting and budget to increase your reach in the next quarter.

Q4: The overall campaign is performing well but follower growth is down. Consider allocating some additional budget to recruit new followers and improve these figures in the next quarter.

3f. Summary

Before starting your Twitter campaign, you should do the following:

1. Choose your campaign objective and outline your goals.
2. Create highly engaging content that is suitable for your target audience.
3. Create at least one target group based on a combination of targeting methods.
4. Allocate a budget and distribution plan and outline achievable, realistic targets.
5. Set holistic goals to measure the overall success of your campaign and determine a plan to measure and exploit your progress, successes and failures.

Once you have completed these tasks you are ready to start your first campaign. The success of any campaign will always rely on a certain degree of trial and error so remember to follow your campaign through every stage and be prepared to optimise and make changes as you go.

Helpful tools

- A guide to getting started with advertising on Twitter can be found [here](#).¹⁵
- Free tools such as [Survey Monkey](#)¹⁶ can be used to pre-test campaign materials before they go live.
- Google's [URL Builder](#),¹⁷ [goo.gl](#)¹⁸ and [bit.ly](#)¹⁹ can be used to create shortened tracking links.

¹⁵ <https://business.twitter.com/en/help/account-setup/account-login-and-setup.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/>

¹⁷ <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/>

¹⁸ <https://goo.gl/>

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4. YouTube

With over a billion active users¹, [YouTube](#)² is the second largest search engine in the world, reaching more 18 to 49-year-olds than any cable network in the US. Using YouTube for HIV prevention offers global access to MSM and provides a unique opportunity to reach people who may not be reachable through more traditional social media platforms. This module will look at the opportunities YouTube provides for HIV prevention and explore the following:

- **Getting started:** how to begin setting up a successful YouTube campaign.
- **Creating content:** how to create and optimise content for maximum success.
- **Targeting:** how to effectively target key MSM populations.
- **Budgeting:** what costs are associated with a campaign and how to distribute budget.
- **Reporting:** measuring the success of a campaign and applying this experience to future work.
- **Summary:** a brief checklist to consider before making your campaign live.

4a. Getting started

YouTube is a highly competitive platform with 300 hours of content uploaded every single minute³ so even with a large established following or a highly engaging video, it can still be difficult to get your content seen. To remedy this, you are advised to take advantage of YouTube's advertising platform. You can find out more [here](#)⁴.

Once you have familiarised yourself with YouTube and have an understanding of how you want to advertise on the platform, then you can create your first campaign. Before you get started it is important to understand exactly what objective you are trying to achieve. There are three core objectives when it comes to advertising on YouTube and each has a slightly different plan of action.

Video views: unsurprisingly, getting your content seen is one of the key reasons why people use YouTube. Whether you are trying to build awareness around a campaign or help spread a particular message, this is most likely the objective you will be trying to achieve on YouTube.

Clicks: the number of times a user clicks your advert or clicks through to your website. Due to the nature of YouTube as a video streaming service, a lower click-through rate (CTR) can be expected than with other platforms such as Facebook⁵ and Twitter⁶.

Conversions: the number of times a user takes action on your website by engaging with one of your tools or services. Google Analytics and Google AdWords must be linked and connected to your website in order for conversions to track correctly. You can find out more about this [here](#).⁷

It is vital to determine your core objective before beginning your campaign as it will heavily influence the way you design and measure your campaign. Most YouTube campaigns will optimise for video views and awareness – so consider using an alternative platform if clicks and conversions are your core objectives.

4b. Creating content

On YouTube, video is king, so deciding how best to convey your message through this medium is the key to campaign success. Before creating your content, consider who is going to be watching it, and how your video is going to be displayed. Audiences respond differently to various content types, so it is recommended that alternate videos are created for a wide range of audiences.

Examples of different types of video from the 'It Starts With Me' campaign:

[George's Story](#):⁸ George speaks about being HIV positive and how he is playing a part in stopping HIV.

[Do I Need An HIV Test](#):⁹ a light hearted video showing how technology can be used for HIV prevention.

[It Starts With Me](#):¹⁰ an animated video about the campaign and how people can get involved.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/yt/press/en-GB/statistics.html>

² <https://www.youtube.com/>

³ <http://www.statisticbrain.com/youtube-statistics/>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/yt/advertise/en-GB/>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/>

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⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDjC1DPpWm0>

⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sti6MH_ML6U

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGf372SCQis&t=7s>

Before creating your content it is also worth considering how it will be displayed on the platform. There are two ways your adverts can be seen, and they may both influence the type of content you create.

- In-stream adverts: video adverts that play before – or during – a YouTube video of the advertiser’s choice. It is worth considering the types of videos your adverts will be displayed on before deciding the type of content you are going to create. These adverts are skippable after just a few seconds, so it is important to either hook your audience’s attention early on, or incorporate your key messaging into the first few seconds of the advert. Learn more about in stream adverts [here](#).¹¹
- Video discovery: these adverts will appear in search and as recommended videos in the side-bar of selected videos. In order for these videos to be seen, the user will have to actively click on them, so highly clickable content is a must. It is important to think about both the title and thumbnail of these videos to entice people into watching them. Learn more about discovery adverts [here](#).¹²

Creating engaging content

When creating content, ensuring that it is engaging should be your top priority. Before you publish your first video it is worth considering the following:

- Be brief: try to keep your videos short and to the point. Looking at your video analytics can show the watch time of your videos and where your audience are dropping off. Experiment with different video lengths to see what works best for them. The ‘It Starts With Me’ campaign often creates [10](#)¹³, [30](#)¹⁴, and [60](#)¹⁵ second versions of each video.
- Be timely: be reactive and create content related to breaking news and current events. Plan ahead to take advantage of relevant ‘tent pole’ occasions such as [World AIDS Day](#)¹⁶, [National HIV Testing Week](#)¹⁷ and [Valentine’s Day](#)¹⁸.
- Utilise links: even though link clicks may not be your core objective, always give your audience the option to get involved and find out more by including a link to a relevant website. Overlaying video annotations can be beneficial but these are not always compatible with mobile.
- Create quality content: invest the extra time and money into curating and creating high quality material. Higher quality content means higher engagement.
- Create a two-way dialogue: YouTube may be a video search engine but it is also a social media platform. Encourage your audience to share your content and engage in conversation.
- Keep it simple: do not overwhelm your audience with too much information or multiple calls to action. Keep it clear and make it as easy as possible for your audience to engage. For example, the call to action at the end of [this video](#).¹⁹ is clear and to the point.

¹¹ https://support.google.com/displayspecs/answer/6055025?hl=en&ref_topic=4588474

¹² https://support.google.com/displayspecs/answer/6227733?hl=en&ref_topic=4588474

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¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfoKvZM2Mto>

¹⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ln_8eqmzHo0

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivBGi9zY73Q>

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ON-zyML8mZc>

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rhib255EzTM>

Case study: It Starts with Me

The 'It Starts With Me'¹ campaign identifies YouTube creators who are incredibly popular among young MSM and invites them to support National HIV Testing Week each year. Inviting them to events and making them feel that they are an important part of the process builds a relationship with them and makes them more inclined to support the campaign. These influencers create video content around the theme of HIV testing and share this with their audiences organically. The 'It Starts With Me' campaign supports this further by promoting these videos as discovery adverts across the platform. The videos have now been viewed over 1 000 000 times since 2014.



4c. Targeting

The success of an advertising campaign on YouTube heavily relies on effective targeting. YouTube offers multiple targeting options including demographic, interest and placement-based targeting.

Demographic-based targeting

Demographic based targeting allows you to target your audience based on gender, age, parental status and household income. YouTube determines this information based on a user's Google account or behaviour inferred from their browser activity. This will not always be 100% accurate so it is important to narrow down your target audience further with other targeting methods.

Interest-based targeting

Sexuality based targeting is not available but it is still possible to target MSM based on their interests. It is also possible to narrow this down further into subgroups of MSM who may be at higher risk. By using the interests, keywords, and topics targeting options you are able to create a clear picture of the people you are trying to reach and tailor individual adverts to them.

Placement-based targeting

The third, and often most successful, method of targeting is placement-based targeting. This option allows you to place your adverts on specific videos and channels. Identifying channels and videos with a large MSM viewership is relatively easy through search. Searching for relevant keywords frequently used by MSM can quickly identify which channels and videos are trending and most popular among MSM. YouTube will prioritise new content so it is important to update this at least once per campaign cycle.

Examples of frequently viewed YouTube videos that are likely to be popular among MSM:

- The Hottest Gay Sex²⁰ – 49 million views
- How To Have Gay Sex²¹ – 7.3 million views
- Gay Guy Shows Lesbian His Penis²² – 5.1 million views
- Our Best Gay Sex Tips²³ – 2.2 million views
- Gay Guys React To Gay Porn²⁴ – 1.3 million views
- 10 Reasons Gay Sex is better²⁵ – 934 000 views
- Gay Couple Tries Sex Toys²⁶ – 600 000 views
- Reacting To Gay Porn²⁷ – 5500 000 views.

Examples of popular YouTube channels that are likely to be viewed by MSM:

- [Tyler Oakley](#)²⁸ - World's most popular gay male YouTuber with over 8 000 000 subscribers.
- [William Belli](#)²⁹ - One of YouTube's most successful drag queen channels with over 700 000 subscribers.
- [Mark & Ethan](#)³⁰ - One of YouTube's most successful gay couples with over 600 000 subscribers.
- [Tom Daley](#)³¹ - LGBT+ sports person with over 350 000 subscribers.

A combination of the above targeting methods will produce the best results, and experimenting with different subgroups is the key to reaching the most at-risk individuals for the lowest price.

²⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOYBq_sIHb0

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGetcv4YVMI&t=1s>

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfdJ938EY2U&t=2s>

²³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yU4cJUXGkZE>

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JP7IX8-mwts&t=132s>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ciezNcoxCOc&t=1s>

²⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cC7tppIT_EM

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h821iBbyPvk&t=20s>

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/user/tyleroakley>

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/user/noextrai>

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/user/mmabutternut>

³¹ <https://www.youtube.com/user/tvtomdaley>

4d. Budgeting and costs

YouTube is a highly competitive platform so it is recommended that you set aside a small budget to get your target audience viewing your content. When determining your budget you should consider:

Overall budget: what is the absolute maximum amount you have to spend on YouTube? Use this to determine your overall budget and use this as your spending benchmark.

Advert sets: how many different campaigns are you going to be running and how do you want to distribute your budget among them in order to meet your targets?

Deliverables: what deliverables are you trying to achieve? Whether you are trying to drive conversions or promote engagement and brand awareness, ensure you know your core objectives in advance.

Duration: how long is your campaign going to run for? Is your campaign going to run over an extended period of time or is it intended to produce quick results in a short time frame?

Daily budget: taking into account the budget you have available for each advert set and the duration of the campaign, how much do you have to spend on a daily basis?

Target: how many people do you want to reach/convert? This will allow you to calculate the maximum amount you want to spend per action achieved – Cost Per Action (CPA).

Table 1. Budget breakdown example

Overall YouTube Budget: EUR 500	
HIV testing video: EUR 400	Condom video: EUR 100
Deliverable: views	Deliverable: views
Duration: 2 weeks	Duration: 5 days
Daily budget: EUR 30~	Daily budget: EUR 20
Target: 300 views per day	Target: 400 views per day
Cost per action: EUR 0.10	Cost per action: EUR 0.05

Once you have established your budget you can then use this to optimise your adverts and make sure they are achieving the goals you have outlined. These should be monitored and adjusted on a daily basis to ensure the best results. It is important to be realistic about your objectives and sometimes it may be necessary to re-evaluate your budget and expectations if your adverts underperform.

4e. Reporting

Reporting is an on-going process when it comes to advertising on YouTube, and although adverts should be optimised and monitored on a daily basis, it is also important to produce more holistic reports to highlight any weaknesses in your strategy.

Some of the elements you should report upon include:

- Impressions: how many times your advert has been displayed to your target audience.
- Views: the number of times a person watched through at least 30 seconds of your video advert, directly clicked on it, or interacted/engaged with it.
- View rate: the percentage of people the advert was displayed to who watched at least 30 seconds of the video or interacted/engaged with it.
- Cost per view (CPV): the average amount you pay each time someone views your video.
- Referrals and conversions: the number of people clicking through to your website and the number of people taking action on site.
- Conversion rate: the percentage of those who visited your website and also took action.

Table 2. Simple reporting example

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Impressions	500 000 ▲	200 000 ▼	600 000 ▲	700 000 ▲
Views	50 000 ▲	16 000 ▼	30 000 ▲	70 000 ▲
View rate	10% ▲	8% ▼	5% ▼	10% ▲
CPV	EUR 0.10 ▼	EUR 0.05 ▼	EUR 0.08 ▲	EUR 0.08 ▼
Referrals	100 ▲	50 ▼	100 ▲	150 ▲
Conversions	5 ▲	2 ▼	5 ▲	15 ▲
Conversion rate	5% ▲	4% ▼	5% ▲	10% ▲

Q1: All figures are positive and the campaign is performing well.

Q2: A bid adjustment has lowered the cost per view but the campaign is now underperforming. Increasing the budget and optimising your targeting will improve campaign success next quarter.

Q3: The campaign is delivering more impressions but conversions and view rates are dropping. Consider refreshing the campaign content to increase views and conversions next quarter.

Q4: All figures are positive and the campaign is performing well. Consider adjusting the bid and further optimising the targeting and content to further lower the CPV next quarter.

4f. Summary

Before starting your YouTube campaign, you should do the following:

1. Choose your campaign objective and outline your goals.
2. Create at least one engaging video that is optimised and suitable for your target audience.
3. Create at least one target group based on a combination of targeting methods.
4. Allocate a budget and distribution plan and outline achievable realistic targets.
5. Set holistic goals to measure the overall success of your campaign and determine a plan to measure and act upon your on-going progress, successes, and failures.

Once you have completed these tasks you are ready to start your first campaign. The success of any campaign will always rely on a certain degree of trial and error so remember to follow your campaign through every stage and be prepared to optimise and make changes as you go.

Helpful tools

- A guide to getting started with YouTube's adverts manager can be found [here](#).³²
- A guide to linking Google Analytics and Google AdWords can be found [here](#).³³

³² <https://www.youtube.com/yt/advertise/en-GB/>

³³ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/1704341?hl=en-GB>

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TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Use of Google AdWords for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An ECDC guide to effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention

December 2017

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This report was commissioned by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), coordinated by Teymur Noori and produced by Terrence Higgins Trust (UK) and SOA AIDS (Netherlands)

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5. Google AdWords

[Google AdWords](https://adwords.google.com/)¹ is one of the most established digital advertising platforms in the world, and is used by organisations of many different sizes to achieve their marketing goals. The platform is popular due to the support [Google](https://www.google.com)² provides and the fact that it can be adapted to budgets of any size and is suitable for people with varying experience of digital advertising. This module will outline the opportunities that Google AdWords provides for HIV prevention and will explore the following:

- **Getting started:** how to begin setting up a successful [Google AdWords](https://adwords.google.com/) campaign.
- **Creating a campaign:** how to create and optimise your campaign for maximum success.
- **Targeting:** how to effectively target key MSM populations.
- **Budgeting:** what costs are associated with a campaign and how to distribute budget.
- **Reporting:** measuring the success of a campaign and applying this experience to future work.
- **Summary:** a brief checklist to consider before making your campaign live.

5a. Getting started

It is important to understand how Google AdWords is structured before you begin advertising on the platform. Google AdWords has a three-layer design:

Account	This is the top level of the structure. The account contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a unique email • password billing information.
Campaign	You will need to set up at least one campaign before you can create ads in your account. A campaign is a set of related ad groups that is often used to organise the categories of services that you offer. Your account can have many campaigns. For example, you could have 'PreP Awareness' and 'HIV Testing' campaigns.
Ad Group	An ad group lets you organise and target your ads in a campaign. For example, it is possible to have different target groups for the 'HIV testing' campaign. You can therefore create an ad group for each target group in the campaign.

Creating an account

Setting up a Google AdWords account is free and Google frequently offers free credit for new sign-ups. When setting up a new account, be on the look out for offers of ad credit from Google to help you get started with your advertising.

If you already have a Google account for your organisation you will be able to create a Google AdWords account using the same sign-in details. If you do not have a Google account you will require an email address or you can set up a Gmail email account.

Payment method

You will be required to set up a payment method, which is usually either a debit or credit card. The options on this can vary in different countries so please check what the payment options are for your country and organisation.

Manager account

If your organisation uses multiple Google AdWords accounts you might want to consider setting up a manager account. This is a Google AdWords account that lets you easily view and manage multiple Google AdWords accounts from a single location. This is only useful if you intend to manage multiple Google AdWords accounts as it will help you save time by using a single sign-in to access all the Google AdWords accounts you manage.

Granting access to your account

It is possible to grant other people access to your Google AdWords account via their Google accounts. This means they can access your account without you having to give them your sign in details. This is something you might

¹ <https://adwords.google.com/>

² <https://www.google.com>

consider if you want to work with an advertising agency using your Google AdWords account. Google recommends that you learn about how Google AdWords works before hiring agencies as this will make it easier for you to discuss well-defined advertising goals for Google AdWords with any agency. When granting access you will be able to control the access levels.

5b. Creating a campaign

The first step to creating a campaign is to be clear on what you want to achieve. Your advertising goals will determine the type of campaign you choose to create.

Your campaign goals could be:

- to generate traffic to your website - for example, getting people to visit your website to access information on how to prevent HIV.
- to increase brand awareness – to build awareness and positive associations with your organisation or a specific sexual health campaign. For example, you might have a new service that you want people to know about and you create adverts that tell people about the service.
- to take direct action on your site- for example you might have an offer of condoms packs and you want people to order them from your website.

Each campaign can have a start and end date so you can set targets for your campaign within clear timelines.

Where your adverts can appear

Having clarified your goals you need to think about where your adverts might be shown by Google AdWords. There are two main platforms: the Search Network or the Display Network.

Google AdWords Search Network³

The Google Search Network is a group of search-related websites and apps where your ads can appear close to search results when people are searching for specific goods or services.

For example, when someone searches for 'HIV test', your advert can appear next to the search results. In the example below, you can see that the top list of results for a search on HIV test are adverts from different providers of HIV testing services.

Figure 1. Example of results for a search on 'HIV test'

The screenshot shows a Google search for 'hiv test'. The search bar contains 'hiv test' and the search results page displays several paid advertisements. The first ad is for 'HIV Test in 60 Secs £60 - Clinics Across London. Walk In - citydoc' with a link to www.citydoc.org.uk/FastestScreen. The second ad is for 'Discreet STD / STI Test Kits - 5th Generation HIV Available - testd' with a link to www.testd.com/. The third ad is for 'HIV Testing today-Walk in' with a link to www.samedaydoctor.org/. The fourth ad is for 'London HIV Test Clinic' with a link to www.doctortoday.co.uk/hiv.htm. The search results also show the Google logo, search filters (All, Shopping, News, Images, Videos, More, Settings), and the number of results (About 8,230,000 results (0.76 seconds)).

³ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/1722047?co=ADWORDS.IsAWNCustomer%3Dfalse&hl=en>

It is important to note that in the Search Network it can be harder to target gay and bisexual men with certain keywords such as 'HIV test' as they could be used by anyone. You can use demographic targeting to target men only and specific age groups. You can also refine your target audience using remarketing lists but these do not usually work very well for exclusively targeting gay and bisexual men.

Google Display Network⁴

The Display Network comprises over two million sites, videos and mobile apps that partner with Google to show ads. Unlike the Search Network, these ads are shown in places where people are not necessarily already searching for specific goods or services. You can choose where your adverts can be shown so that you reach the relevant people and you can also exclude places where you do not want them to be shown.

Choosing a campaign type

Google has a set number of campaign types that you can choose from and each campaign type also determines where customers will be able to see your ads. It is therefore important to think which platform (Search or Display Network) will work best for your goals. When you create each campaign you can set the geographical area in which you would like your advert to be seen. The table below shows the campaign types you can choose from.

Table 1. Google campaign types

Campaign type	Description
Search Network with Display Select opt-in	This campaign type allows you to reach people via the Search Network as well as the Display Network based on the keywords you select for your adverts.
Search Network only	Ads in a Search Network only campaign will appear near Google search results and other Google sites when people search for terms that are relevant to the keywords in your advert.
Display Network only	Your ads appear on websites or mobile apps that include content that matches targeting you choose based on topics, placements, interests and remarketing, demographics and more.
Shopping	This is used by retailers to promote products. Ads are seen in results of searches for specific products.
Video	Video campaigns let you show video ads on their own or within other streaming video content on YouTube and across the Google Display Network.
Universal app	Promotes your app across all of Google's advertising platforms with ads that make it easy for people to install your app.

Getting more information on how to create a campaign [here](#).⁵

Creating ad groups and ads

Ad groups

After you have created your campaign you can proceed to create ad groups for your ads.

Ad groups allow you to organise your campaign into sets of ads and different targeting.

Using the '[It Starts With Me](#)'⁶ campaign from England as an example, you could have an HIV testing campaign arranged to promote four aspects of HIV testing:

- 'When to test' tool – a risk assessment for determining when people should get tested for HIV.
- 'Where to test' tool – a clinic finder.
- 'Which test' tool – a tool helping people find out more information about the HIV test options available to them.
- Order a free postal test – promoting the national home sampling testing.

⁴ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2404190?hl=en>

⁵ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/6324971?hl=en&co=ADWORDS.IsAWNCustomer%3Dtrue&oco=0>

⁶ <https://www.startswithme.org.uk/>

With an HIV testing campaign you could therefore create an ad group for each of the four elements.

Campaign: HIV Testing- It Starts With Me

Ad group 1:
When to test

Ad group 2:
Where to test

Ad group 3:
Which HIV
test

Ad group 4:
Home
sampling

More information is available on creating ad groups [here](#).⁷

Creating ads

When creating ads there are two very important considerations: quality score and ad rank, as they both can impact how your adverts perform and how much you pay.

Quality score

This is an estimate of the quality of your ads, relevance and landing pages. According to Google, higher-quality ads can lead to lower prices and better ad positions. It is therefore important to think of how easy it will be to understand the ad, how you make it relevant to your target audience and the experience that people will have on the website you send them to. People should find it easy to locate what you advertised when they get to the website. You might have a very good advert but if the experience on your website is terrible this might affect the position your advert obtains.

Find out how you can check your quality score [here](#).⁸

⁷ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2375452?hl=en&co=ADWORDS.IsAWNCustomer%3Dtrue&oco=0>

⁸ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2454010?hl=en&co=ADWORDS.IsAWNCustomer%3Dfalse&oco=0>

Ad formats

Google AdWords allows you to use many different advert formats for both the Search and Display Networks. The ad format you are able to use may depend on the campaign types. The table below shows some of the most basic adverts you can use, although there are other formats that are usually used by more advanced Google AdWords advertisers.

Table 2. Basic advert formats in Google Adwords

Format	Description	Main benefits
Text	Text ads on the Search Network show above and below Google search results. A text ad on Google search is the simplest online ad offered by Google AdWords. It has three parts: headline text, a display URL and description text. Text ads on the Display Network will look different to those from the Search Network.	These are quick to create and maintain. They can be used with ad extensions. You can find out how to create text ads here . ⁹ http://bit.ly/2tk37ch For tips on creating successful text ads please see the guide from Google AdWords here ¹⁰ (http://bit.ly/2s1h00B)
Responsive	Responsive ads automatically adjust their size, appearance and format to fit available ad spaces. They can transform into text or image ads. They are available on the Display Network	Responsive ads solve a big problem for display advertisers: the sheer number of ad sizes and types across the web. With responsive ads, you can create one ad that fits almost any ad space. You can find out how to create responsive ads here ¹¹ (http://bit.ly/2shp3FZ)
Image	Static or interactive graphics. Animated ads in .gif and Flash format can be used.	This allows you to visually showcase your campaigns or services You can find out how to create image ads here ¹² (http://bit.ly/2smzvqx)
App promotion ads	Drive app downloads and engagement with app promotion ads.	If you have an app, this is the best way to promote it as it can send people directly to an app store on compatible devices. You can find out how to create app promotion ads here ¹³ (http://bit.ly/2toNEbK)
Video ad	Video ads that display online. Run standalone video ads or insert them into streaming video content.	You can find out more about video ad formats here ¹⁴ (http://bit.ly/2sRdxQc).
Shopping ads	Text ads that contain product features and pricing information. Goes to a product purchase page on your website.	These are useful if you have products to sell and you want people to see them before they go to your website. You can find out how to create shopping ads here ¹⁵ (http://bit.ly/2tkpRZN)
Call-only ads	Ads encouraging people to make a phone call. The advert contains a call function.	If you have a helpline number this option could be good for promoting it. The adverts only appear on devices that can make a phone call. You can find out more about call-only ads here . ¹⁶

Always try to make ads that are relevant to what people will find on the website page where they will arrive after clicking on your advert. Although tempting, creating adverts that are not a true reflection of what you are advertising just in order to get people to click on them is not advised. Your adverts might be disapproved of by Google. They might even cost you more as they will have a bad quality score. Relevant adverts mean that the people who click on them will not be annoyed when they get to the website as they will not feel tricked into clicking on something which did not turn out to be the main focus of the advert. Increase the chances of people clicking on your ads by creating

⁹ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/1722117?hl=en&co=ADWORDS.IsAWNCustomer%3Dtrue&oco=0>

¹⁰ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/1704392?hl=en-GB>

¹¹ https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/7005917?hl=en-GB&ref_topic=3121943

¹² <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/1722096>

¹³ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/6309967?hl=en-GB>

¹⁴ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2375464?hl=en-GB>

¹⁵ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2454022?hl=en-GB&co=ADWORDS.IsAWNCustomer=false>

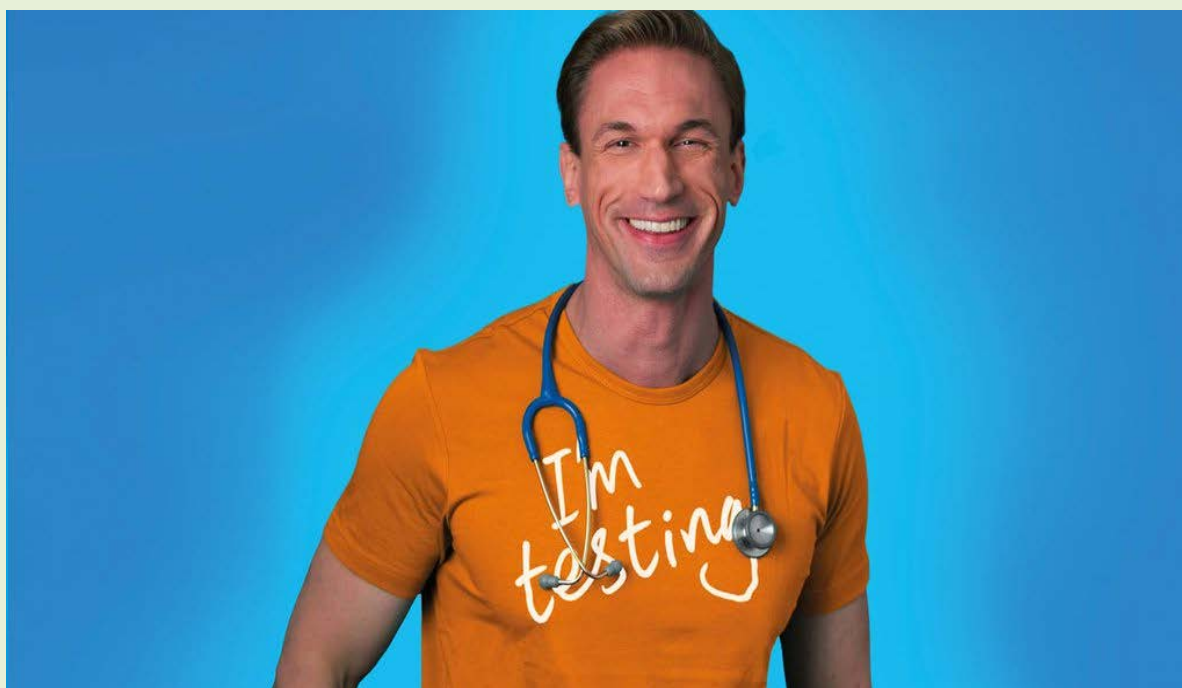
¹⁶ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/7159344>

visually compelling and relevant adverts. You can also increase the chance of people clicking on your adverts by using [ad extensions](#)¹⁷ such as a phone number or site links and these are free to add.

Your adverts will undergo an ad approval process where Google checks whether your advert is safe and appropriate and whether it violates any of the Google [AdWords advertising policies](#).¹⁸ Please do familiarise yourself with the advertising policies. This is especially important when thinking of advertising around sexual health as how you talk about sex on adverts can lead to them getting banned. Healthcare advert policies are also stricter in terms of what can be advertised. This is to protect people against receiving potentially harmful healthcare adverts. In some cases you might have to apply for pre-authorisation with Google to advertise healthcare-related content.

Case study: HIV Prevention England

HIV Prevention England used a selection of models, including celebrity doctor Christian Jessen, to promote National HIV Testing Week to gay men in 2015. By using Google AdWords to target websites and pages with content relevant to MSM, the adverts successfully promoted a home sampling service, a self-assessment tool and a tool for finding the best way to test.



5c. Targeting

Ensuring that your adverts reach the right people is essential in order to run effective and cost efficient advertising campaigns. There are various ways to target people and some of these are outlined below.

Search Network targeting

Keyword targeting: you choose words or phrases relevant to what you are advertising so that your ads appear when people use those terms to search on Google or search partner sites. By creating a highly relevant keyword list, you increase the chances that your ads will be shown to the most interested customers.

Location and language targeting: Google allows you to also choose the language and geographic locations – such as a country, region or city – in which the people you want to target are located. It is always important to ensure that you set your location so that you do not spend money on people in locations that are not relevant to your work.

Device targeting: show your ads to the right people across all devices, based on their specific location, time of day and device type. For example if you have something that you know would work best on a mobile phone you might want to target only mobile phones.

¹⁷ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2375499>

¹⁸ <https://support.google.com/adwordspolicy/answer/6008942>

Audience targeting: show your ads to people who have previously visited your website by using remarketing lists for search ads.

Keyword planner

Choosing the relevant keywords is important for delivering a cost-effective and successful advertising campaign. Google provides a useful tool, the Keyword Planner, to help you choose the best and most relevant keywords. It also helps you plan your budget and get forecasts of possible results from your campaign. This can be accessed via the tools tab in your Google AdWords account.

Display Network targeting

Keyword targeting: choose words or phrases related to your product or service to target relevant websites, apps and videos on the Display Network by using 'Content' keywords.

Topic targeting: target your ad to multiple pages on certain topics simultaneously. Topic targeting lets you reach a broad range of pages on the Display Network. Google AdWords analyses web content, considering factors such as text, language, link structure and page structure. It then determines the central themes of each web page and targets ads based on your topic selections. This is different from keyword targeting in that you choose your topic from a list provided by Google. Two examples of the topics you could choose are the 'Same-sex marriage' and 'Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual-Transgender'. For MSM, you might want to refine your targeting on these by adding demographic targeting where you exclude females.

Placement targeting: this option allows you to choose websites on the Display Network visited by the people you would like to target where you would like to see your ads. This will only work if the website you are targeting runs Google adverts. A placement might be an entire website or a subset of a website so sometimes you might get a website which has a section that has content targeted at MSM. You could then choose to target that particular section of the website rather than the entire website.

Audience targeting: this option allows you to reach different audiences: people who have visited your site before, affinity audiences, in-market audiences or similar.

Location and language targeting: choose the language and geographical locations – such as a country, region or city – in which your customers are located.

Device targeting: choose to show ads to your customer when they visit Display Network websites only on desktop and laptop computers, only on iPhones and Android devices, or on all of these.

Display Planner

To help you plan for your campaigns on the display network, you can use the Display Planner. This tool will help with ideas for ad groups by showing the potential reach and costs of targeting ideas. It will help you decide on how much to bid and give performance forecasts. The tool can be accessed via the tools tab in your Google AdWords account.

5d. Budgeting

Setting a budget on Google AdWords involves setting a daily budget. This is the maximum amount you would like to pay per day based on what you want to achieve and the average amount you are comfortable spending each day. This can easily be changed at any time and as often as you want.

Tip

To set a budget, decide on how much you want to spend in total for a campaign and how long you want the campaign to run for. You can then divide the total amount by the number of days you will run the campaign for in order to get your daily budget.

For example, a total budget of EUR 800 for an eight-week long campaign can be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Daily Budget} = \frac{\text{€}800}{(7 \times 8)}$$

This will give you a daily budget of EUR 14.29 for your campaign. If you work with monthly budgets you can always divide your monthly budget by 30.4 (the average number of days per month).

It is useful to start with a smaller daily budget to learn where you can get the best value for your money. For example, a Search Network campaign for HIV testing with a total budget of EUR 800 running over eight weeks could have a daily budget limited to EUR 5 in the first two weeks instead of setting it at EUR 14.29. After the first

two weeks you could look at the results and decide what keywords you might want to prioritise and increase your bids for the remaining budget period.

Bidding

For your adverts to be shown on Google AdWords, they have to go through an ad auction. The Google AdWords advert auction is different from a standard auction in that when deciding whether your advert is shown and at what position it is shown the quality score of your advert is also considered. This is important as it emphasises the need to create adverts that will get a high-quality score and making a high bid does not mean your adverts will get priority. An advert with a lower bid and a higher quality score can get priority over one that has a higher bid and a lower quality score.

You will be prompted to make a bid when you are setting up your adverts. You can make your bid using either automated or manual bidding

With manual bidding you set the maximum amount you are willing to pay per click on your advert. You may pay less than your maximum bid, depending on the auction. Manual bidding works well for small advertising budgets as it gives you more control. This is usually a good starting point if you are a beginner on Google AdWords. If you choose to use manual bidding, you can use [bid simulators](#)¹⁹ to help decide how much to bid.

When using automated bidding you give Google AdWords permission to adjust your bid so that you stay competitive in the auction and get the best results. You will still be able to cap the daily amount for your campaign. To use automated bidding effectively it is advisable that you have some experience of Google AdWords. Being automated does not mean you can activate your bid, forget about it and let Google AdWords do all the work. While Google AdWords will be using data to improve the performance of your campaigns, you should still be actively engaged in monitoring your campaigns and making adjustments where necessary.

Both automated and manual bidding provide various bidding strategies which help you achieve your goals. Each bidding strategy enables you to focus on any of the following:

- Clicks
- Impressions
- Conversions
- Views and interactions (video only).

Bid adjustments

Google AdWords offers bid adjustments to enable you to compete more or less for keywords, devices, ad scheduling or targeting methods. For example, you could use an ad scheduling bid adjustment to increase your bid for specific times of the day when you know your target audience might be more active online. More information on the different bid adjustments available and how they work is available [here](#).²⁰

5e. Reporting

Google AdWords provides reports that enable you to measure how your adverts are performing, including the following key issues:

- Clicks: the number of times people click on your advert.
- Click-through rate (CTR): a ratio showing how often people who see your ad end up clicking it.
- Average Cost-per-Click (Avg. CPC): will tell you how much you are paying on average per advert.
- Keyword performance: you can assess which keywords are working well for your goals.
- Search terms report: this gives you a list of search terms that lead to people seeing your ad and clicking it.
- Impressions: each time your ad appears on Google or the Google Network, it is counted as one impression.
- Ad reach: an estimate of the number of people within a location target, based on people who are signed in to their Google accounts.
- Frequency: the average number of times that a unique user sees your ad in a top position over a given period.
- Conversions: specific customer action that you have defined as valuable to your business. For Google AdWords to measure conversions you need to set up conversion tracking. This is a free tool showing when a person completes an action that you have defined as valuable after clicking your ads. You can find out more about conversion tracking [here](#).²¹
- Average Cost-Per-Acquisition (CPA): The average cost for each acquisition (conversion) from your ads.

¹⁹ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2470105?hl=en>

²⁰ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2732132?hl=en>

²¹ <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/1722022>

You can link your Google AdWords account to your Google Analytics account. By doing this you can analyse a visitor's activity on your website after they have clicked an ad, potentially providing insights which can help improve your ads and website. Linking also allows you to import your Google Analytics goals. Find out more about Google Analytics goals and linking your Google AdWords account [here](#).²²

You are best placed to understand the results that matter most to the overall goals you want to achieve with your campaigns. However, it is important to ensure you ask the right questions, depending on the goals. The table below may be useful when considering what to focus on.

Goal	What to focus on
Generating website traffic	Clicks, click-through rate, keyword performance, search terms
Creating awareness	Impressions, customer engagement, reach and frequency
Conversions	Conversion data, landing pages.

The cost-related reports will help you understand the results to expect and give you insights into where you might want to spend more or less money.

Google Ad Grants

Google runs a scheme where they provide non-profit organisations with free advertising of up to USD 10 000 per month on Google search result pages. This is only available to organisations in a number of eligible countries. You can find out more about Google Ad Grants and eligibility [here](#).²³

5f. Summary

- Setting up a Google AdWords account is free.
- You can grant access to your Google AdWords account without having to share your password.
- Always be clear on your goals before you create a campaign.
- Google AdWords has two main advertising networks - the Search and Display Networks.
- In each campaign you can create many ad groups focused on different aspects of your campaign.
- There are many types of advert to choose from. Select the ones that are most appropriate for your goals.
- You can spend as little or as much as you want and you have control of when to start and stop spending.
- To measure results you need to start with clear goals and ask the right ad performance questions for those goals.

Helpful information

[Set-up and basics](#)

[Personalised advertising policy](#)

[Google AdWords overview](#)

[Google AdWords benefits](#)

[Google AdWords - how it works](#)

[Google AdWords costs](#)

[Manage ads](#)

[Measure results](#)

[Billing](#)

²² <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/1704341?hl=en-GB>

²³ <https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en/grants/>

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TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

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An ECDC guide to effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention

December 2017

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Use of smartphone application advertising for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An ECDC guide to the effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention



This report was commissioned by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), coordinated by Teymur Noori, and produced by Terrence Higgins Trust (UK) and SOA AIDS (Netherlands)

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6. Smartphone application advertising

Smartphones have revolutionised many aspects of our lives, and the way men who have sex with men (MSM) arrange sexual encounters has drastically changed. MSM have been early adopters of location-based dating apps and MSM applications such as Grindr, Hornet and Planetromeo predate most dating applications by years. The increasing popularity of smartphone apps among MSM provides an enormous opportunity for HIV prevention. This module will explore:

- **Getting started:** how to decide which app and promotion method to use.
- **Creating content:** how to create and optimise content for maximum impact.
- **Targeting:** how to effectively target key MSM populations.
- **Budgeting:** what costs are associated with a campaign and how to distribute budget.
- **Reporting:** measuring the success of a campaign and applying this experience to future work.
- **Summary:** a brief checklist to consider before making your campaign live.

6a. Getting started

Before starting your first campaign, it is important to choose the best platform for your outreach. In order to do this you should assess the following:

- Which platforms are most popular in your region?
- Does the platform's user base match your target demographic?
- What are the opportunities, benefits and limitations of the platform?

In order to find out which platform is most frequently used in your area you can either conduct a local community assessment or contact the platform and ask for user data for your region. Platforms may vary in size but that does not mean smaller localised platforms should be dismissed. They may have quite a strong user base in your country, even though their brand may be less well known worldwide.

Table 1. A breakdown of three popular MSM smartphone apps within Europe

Dating App	Grindr	Hornet	Planetromeo
Active users	10 million+	10 million+	1.8 million
Daily users	1.8 million	No data	950 000
Filtering options	Age, lifestyle	Age	Age, ethnicity, sexual behaviour, location
Advertising options	Mobile banner ads and broadcast messages ¹	Mobile banner ads and broadcast messages ²	Mobile and web banner ads ³
Additional services	Testing location finder on website	Know your status	Health support
Corporate responsibility programmes	Grindr for Equality ⁴	Broadcast campaigns and discount for non-profit organisations	Planetromeo Care ⁵

Whatever your message, the way you deliver it to your target audience will make a significant difference to the way they respond. Although the advertising options on smartphone apps may be limited, working directly with the platforms will help ensure you receive the best possible results.

Local or niche dating platforms have different options and limitations when it comes to advertising. Everybody sells banners but they are not always the most effective means of campaigning. Contact your local or niche platform to discuss what options they have and which options would suit your campaign plans best.

¹ https://s3.amazonaws.com/grindr_marketing/US+Media+Kit+05.2014.pdf

² https://s3.amazonaws.com/grindr_marketing/US+Media+Kit+05.2014.pdf

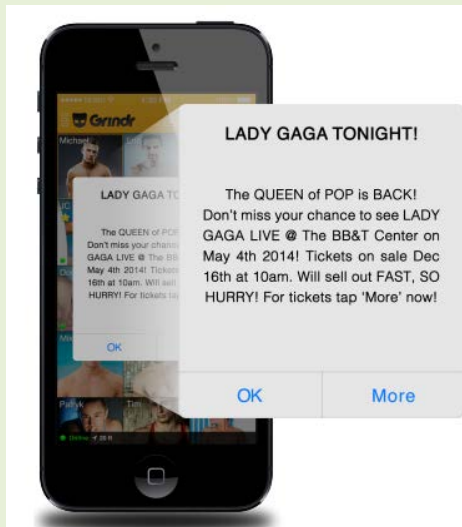
³ <https://www.planetromeo.com/en/advertise/>

⁴ <https://www.grindr.com/g4e/>

⁵ <https://www.planetromeo.com/en/care/>

Advertising options currently available:

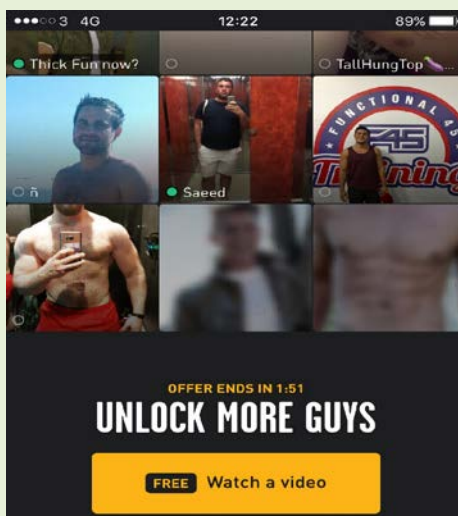
1. Text-based broadcast messages. These messages are presented to the user when they first open the app. These messages can be extremely effective but they can also be easily dismissed. It is important to ensure that your message is direct and to the point and includes a strong call to action so that it cannot easily be ignored.



2. Traditional and rich banner adverts. These adverts can contain animations or still images and can appear when launching the app or during an active session.



3. Video adverts: a user can be rewarded with extra features within the app in exchange for watching a video placement ad.



4. Inbox messages, email blasts and newsletters: the platform will include your adverts within their correspondence with the user or they will send your advert directly to the user.

These options vary significantly according to the platform so it is worth researching each platform to find out which is the best option for you.

6b. Creating content

No matter what your message is, it could be considered intrusive for the user. For this reason it is important to consider the user's motivation for using the app and understand that their priority is probably not to read about their sexual health. However, the sense of intrusion can be minimised by improving the effectiveness of the intervention.

Optimising your message

Not everyone will click on your advert so it is important to ensure that there is a take-away health message for those who do not click. Try to be clear in your message and be careful that any jokes are not susceptible to harmful misinterpretation. Any creative wordplay should be understandable by everyone.

Testing your message

Try different approaches for the same goal and experiment with A/B testing. This means making multiple similar but different messages and comparing the results. The message that works best is usually the one you should continue working with. If both approaches obtain lacklustre results, you should consider a different approach. In this way you can optimise your campaign to get the best results.

Optimising your landing page and links

Make sure your landing page is always up-to-date and that it fits the message of your ad. Your audience expects to get what it is promised in the ad and will probably leave if they do not get this immediately. For example, if you are advertising free condoms, you should link directly to the webpage where the free condoms can be ordered, not to the homepage of your website. In some cases it will be best to create a temporary landing page just for this campaign. This will also come in handy for measuring your results. To measure your results as accurately as possible, you can make your own traceable links which will make it easier to view results in [Google Analytics](#)⁶. You can easily do this with the Google Analytics URL Builder extension in the Google Chrome browser. Companies will provide a report with the click-through statistics, but you can analyse more thoroughly if you have your own traceable links.

Surveys

Surveys can work both as a research tool and a marketing mechanism or even just to make respondents think about certain issues. If you want to use gay dating apps to promote your survey make sure that the app company allows direct links to sites such as [SurveyMonkey](#)⁷ or other websites that are not your own – in many cases they will not allow this. In order to counter this, you can host the survey on a page on your own website and link directly to that page instead.

How to make a great banner

Banners on gay dating apps are usually small, so using the available space as effectively as possible is paramount to the success of your campaign. However, the banner space limitations can help you by forcing you to make radical choices:

- Choose a simple message: the limited space demands a simplification of your message. Usually, you want to end up with a smart slogan to brand your message and a call to action that will make people click on your banner. An example of a good call to action would be 'get free condoms here.'
- Simplicity is also the key to a good design: your message or call to action should be the focus in your banner. Use a supporting image for branding purposes or to help with overall recognition of the campaign. The logo of your organisation can create trust with your audience and make them feel safe and secure when clicking on your banner.
- Choose colours that fit your brand and contrast with their surroundings, and choose a modern, clear and easily readable font.
- Create hierarchy between different text elements by varying font sizes.
- You have the option to use animation in your banner by creating a .gif-file. This will draw more attention because of the movement, but may irritate the user. Only use animation if it really adds to your message. For example: if you have a 'before and after' effect, it might be interesting to present this in an animated .gif.

⁶ <https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web/provision/?authuser=0#provision/SignUp/>

⁷ <https://sv.surveymonkey.com/>

Tips on how to make a great text message

Without any visual aids, it can be challenging to spark the interest of your target audience. However, text messages as advertisements have the advantage of providing more information in your message. Therefore, in a text message, it is possible to reach your target audience with your message even if they do not click on the 'read more' button. However, you cannot really measure this effect so it is best to write something that will push traffic to your website.

Keeping your text short and succinct will increase the chance that your audience will click to read more:

- Write a catchy headline: your headline does not have to be factual, it is mainly there to grab people's attention. You can use a joke or perhaps ask a daring question.
- Keep your main text short and simple: short messages lead to a higher click-through rate.
- Be clear on what you are offering: if you are unclear about what your audience will find after they have clicked, they may leave your website immediately. If you are clear on what you are offering, those that click through are more likely to be interested, so this type of traffic has more value.

Example of a headline: 'Want better sex?'

Main text: 'Then try a better condom. Take our quiz to find the best condom for you.'

Choosing the right timing and frequency

Every platform has its peak hours for different reasons, and app-using MSM appear to be most active in the late evenings and on Fridays and Saturdays. The weekend is usually a busy time, however, it might not get the best results as people are more likely to be preoccupied. On a more boring week day, MSM may be more easily tempted into reading messages from health organisations.

It is best to discuss planning your messages with the sales advisor of the dating platform. Based on their advice, you can plan your first campaign. Evaluating your campaign results can help you optimise further.

Feasibility of online intervention on sexual networking platforms

Case study: Croatia

'During European HIV Testing Week we paid for advertising. We reached all users in our capital, Zagreb. It was rather expensive for our budget but 12% of all people who tested during European HIV Testing Week heard about it on an app.

Other channels were more effective, such as a local dating website where we have much more space to publish articles and communicate with people on forums. Advertising on apps gives reasonable results but is expensive. Invest in a good budget for promotion and creative materials (banners, images and text in ads) that will have impact. But more free advertising or discounts would help. If budget is limited, be creative and think outside the box.'

Source: ECDC (2015). 'Understanding the impact of smartphone applications on STI/HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the EU/EEA'.

6c. Targeting

When targeting a specific community, it is worth considering that bigger is not necessarily always better. Some platforms have their own niche focus that may help you to target MSM subgroups (age, ethnicity, lifestyle etc.) Growl⁸, for example, focuses on the 'bear' community, and Squirr⁹ focuses on casual sex rather than romance or friendship.

Some apps allow specific demographic based targeting whereas others do not. Some apps allow you to target based on age, geographical location, tribe, platform, or device. Speak with your account manager to find out what is available on the app you are working with.

⁸ <http://growl.info/>

⁹ <https://www.squirr.org/>

Examples of specific communities you may wish to target:

Grindr¹⁰ - Grindr has a demographic of 'gay, affluent, tech-savvy men.' According to their sales kit 75% have a university degree or higher. Grindr currently has a few options to target a specific niche audience, such as age or ethnicity, and you can target a specific region (e.g. all users in the capital city of your country, or areas densely populated with MSM).

Planetromeo¹¹ - Planetromeo has been around since 2002 and a large segment of their audience consists of men who are slightly older and may be slightly less tech-savvy. Planetromeo currently offers its members both the old web version of the platform and the new mobile version as well. This allows both new and old users to choose the platform that works best for them. On average, Planetromeo has a broad demographic: 80% of its users call themselves gay, 19% identify as bi and the remaining 1% identify as trans. Planetromeo is available in multiple languages (English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish), so users do not have to understand English to be able to use the app/website. Advertisements can be targeted to regions and age groups.

Hornet¹² - Hornet has a user base that is globally comparable with that of Grindr; most users are younger and tech-savvy. Hornet describe their users as 'sex-positive, opposed to stigma and understanding HIV'. These traits are supposedly due to the user-friendly interface, a commitment to health issues, collaboration with groups of men from within the gay community and an affirming environment. Hornet is available in 17 different languages including Russian, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish. Targeting ads are possible based on area, language, ethnicity and even HIV status. This could work very well in pinpointing an exact audience. However, Alex Garner, Hornet Senior Health Innovation Strategist, warns that 'targeting solely on HIV status is sometimes not very effective'. 'People can opt-in and share their HIV status if they want to. So you will not target all men with HIV by targeting positive HIV status.'

6d. Budgeting and costs

Your biggest concern may be whether you have sufficient funds for an effective campaign. Luckily, many gay dating platforms share a concern for the sexual health of their users. Therefore, they are often willing to work with health organisations for a lower price. Some have even developed a special discount or pro bono programme.

For example: Scruff's **Benevolads programme** is free and currently available in most western European countries. It gives free, geo-targeted advertising to selected non-profit organisations that work within the gay community. If it is not available in your country, you can contact Scruff directly to request it be added. Other platforms have their own schemes.

When a gay dating platform is very active in your country and has a large user base, it is more likely to offer you discounts or help in order to create a lasting customer relationship. Sexual health organisations are never the biggest customers in terms of money spent, but they do tend to be loyal. For a gay dating platform, advertisements from sexual health organisations are often a relatively small, but steady source of income.

You can find current pricing and options on the websites of the respective app companies. Always contact the individual companies and discuss your needs and budget.

6e. Reporting

Monitoring the success of your campaigns is crucial and experimenting with different platforms may be necessary to find out what works best for you. Liaise with an account manager at each platform and clearly communicate your goals to ensure that you are getting the most out of your campaign.

Some of the elements you should think about when monitoring success include:

- **Reach:** how many people are your adverts reaching and is this what you expected from your platform of choice? Comparing with other marketing methods (social media, press, outdoor) may help decide the budget you attribute to smartphone applications.
- **Engagement:** how many people are engaging with your adverts and are people reading them or dismissing them? Consider updating your content if engagement remains consistently low.
- **Engagement rate:** the percentage of people reached that also engaged with your content. It is worth paying attention to this figure when working with smaller niche platforms.
- **Referrals and conversions:** the number of people clicking through to your website and the number taking action on site. This is arguably the most important metric - if people are engaging with your adverts but not clicking through, there may be a lack of incentive or the call to action may not be clear enough.
- **Conversion rate:** the percentage who visited your website and also took action. People may click through but they may not take action on site – this may indicate a problem with your landing page or the consumer journey.

¹⁰ <https://www.grindr.com/>

¹¹ <https://www.planetromeo.com/en/app/>

¹² <http://love.hornetapp.com/>

6f. Summary

Before starting your Twitter campaign, you should do the following:

1. Choose the platform that is best for your campaign objectives.
2. Select the advert type that will work best for your target audience.
3. Create a selection of highly engaging adverts that are suited to your goals.
4. Select the best placements for your adverts.
5. Weigh up your different targeting options to ensure you are reaching at-risk MSM.
6. Allocate a budget and liaise directly with apps to ensure the best price.
7. Set holistic goals to measure the overall success of your campaign and determine a plan to measure and act upon your on-going progress, successes and failures.

Once you have completed these tasks you are ready to start your first campaign. The success of any campaign will always rely on a certain degree of trial and error, so remember to follow your campaign through every stage and be prepared to optimise and make changes as you go.

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TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Use of online outreach for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An ECDC guide to effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention

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ECDC TECHNICAL DOCUMENT

Use of online outreach for HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the European Union/European Economic Area

An ECDC guide to effective use of digital platforms for HIV prevention



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7. Online outreach

- **Getting started:** how to begin setting up a successful online outreach.
- **Creating content:** how to create and optimise content for maximum success.
- **Targeting:** how to select platforms and target key populations effectively.
- **Budgeting and resourcing:** what costs and other resources are associated with online outreach.
- **Reporting:** how to evaluate outreach activities by selecting appropriate indicators.
- **Summary:** a brief checklist to consider before starting online outreach.

7a. Getting started

Reaching out to communities in digital spaces is also known as online outreach or online fieldwork.

The purpose of online outreach is to provide an array of services in digital meeting places where men who have sex with men (MSM) commonly spend time. Outreach work in digital communities can be effective in:

- reaching MSM typically considered at risk, invisible or hard to reach;
- identifying previously unidentified communities;
- providing contextually-relevant information to 'gated' communities based on their sexual practices, identities and HIV status.

Online outreach may include education, risk-reduction counselling and provider-based referrals to reliable information sources and other resources, including testing and treatment locations [1,2,3]. Health messages are primarily delivered to individuals (via personal profiles on websites or dating applications) and sometimes to groups of people (for instance via chatrooms or bulletin boards websites). For projects with limited resources (budget, time and trained staff or volunteers), advertising may be more cost effective than online outreach provided by paid staff members.

Table 1. Differences between online outreach and advertising on dating platforms

	Online outreach	Advertising
Provider	Staff member	Automated algorithm
Target	Individual profiles	Groups of users
Interaction	Personal, tailored, agile, real-time	Mass-media focussed, targeted, determined in advance, asynchronous
Scale and reach	Small scale, depending on staff time	Large scale, depending on budget
Required resources	Staff (paid or voluntary), time, training	Promotion budget, visual and/or animated materials, mobile-optimised online content
Expenses determined by	Time and costs of staff members	Total number of clicks or impressions

Active versus passive outreach

You can decide between two types of outreaching interactions: an 'active' (provider-initiated) or a 'passive' (user-initiated) approach. The best approach depends on your objectives. Both approaches require that you are always identifiable as a reliable source of information and support.

A passive approach involves the use of a profile on a dating platform to attract users to ask their questions. With a passive approach it is always the user that initiates the conversation. Common questions that health workers receive relate to:

- Facts about HIV and STI transmission
- Nearby testing locations
- Availability of free testing
- Nature and purpose of the health worker's online presence [4].

Case study: The Netherlands

'I created a profile with information about what our health service offers to MSM. Plus a number of provocative questions, deliberately without answers. Such as: Is pre-cum risky for HIV or not? These questions make it easier to start a conversation. I never approach men. Men are supposed to approach me, not vice versa.

(...) I intentionally invite visitors to ask questions about unsafe sex. Remarkably, I get questions on the chat that I get a little less quickly during my office hours. For example, what are the risks of water-sports, or how can I best clean my rectum before anal sex? I also receive a lot of questions from an audience that we don't see during our consultation hours enough: bisexual, 'hetero-identified' men.'

Source: *Toolkit MSM SANL* [5]

Active outreach means that you initiate conversations by sending messages to individual users. You need to acknowledge that prevention workers are always guests on the platform. Health worker's profiles usually have the same status and have to abide by the same rules as any other user with a profile.

Case study: France

'We inform guys nearby that we're currently providing free HIV testing services in their area or that a support group is taking place in the following days. We also use them to provide counselling on sexual health and inform men of existing services in their area. We have a proactive position, contacting guys and not just waiting for them to contact us.'

Source: *ECDC (2015). 'Understanding the impact of smartphone applications on STI/HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the EU/EEA'. [6]*

Most platforms do not explicitly invite prevention workers to do online outreach. If your active approach is considered too intrusive users or website owners may complain, report and block you from the website. It can be difficult to counter this decision.

Table 2. Active versus passive approach

Approach	Active	Passive
Description	Provider takes the initiative to message one user within a group of users	Provider waits until a user takes the initiative to send a message
Objectives	Increasing awareness and use of services Sharing information with target populations Partner notification	Counselling users online Tailoring in-depth information for users Stimulating communication about sexual health
Use	Increasing provision-use	Responding to needs
Activities	Sending health-related messages to individual profiles Posting messages in discussions or chatroom sessions with multiple users Sending invitations to multiple users on bulletin boards, forums or chatrooms to join one-on-one conversations	Answering questions of individual users/profiles Answering questions in discussion threads on bulletin boards/forums Sharing information or dispelling myths in publically visible profile texts
Advantages	Large output in a short amount of time Greater visibility Targeting populations with filters Incidental or irregular activity is possible	Clients' needs central Greater acceptability among users Less likely to be blocked or reported Multi-tasking is possible In-depth
Disadvantages	First message needs to be concise and effective Less focused on needs of clients Can be considered 'spam' by users Terms of services (conditions of use) may disallow the promotion of services May compete or interfere with automated broadcast messages May have lasting effects on provider's reputation	Time and labour intensive Fast and adequate answers required Unpredictable and variable output Regular presence is needed Demands comprehensive knowledge and skills Difficult to reach users with low awareness or engagement Sensitive to abuse of service and privacy concerns.

Meeting the needs of your target population

Health promotion should always meet the needs of your target populations. Based on international literature, the following objectives match the needs of MSM in relation to HIV, sexual health and online prevention. Depending on your country's context, issues of homophobia, stigma and discrimination may require equal attention in your outreach work. ILGA's [Rainbow Europe](#) [7] resources and the European Commission's [Eurobarometer on Discrimination](#) [8] provide up-to-date information on discrimination and human rights in your region.

Potential objectives of online HIV prevention and sexual health promotion

- Stimulate open communication about sexuality
- Decrease HIV-related stigma and support respectful communication concerning HIV
- Increase awareness and perceptions of risk relating to HIV and STIs
- Increase basic knowledge and dispel myths concerning HIV and STIs (transmission, symptoms)
- Increase knowledge of local or online services for HIV and STI testing and prevention
- Increase knowledge of safe and pleasurable sex
- Recruit MSM for online or offline HIV prevention interventions
- Improve knowledge concerning consistent and correct condom use
- Increase communication concerning protective behaviour, HIV and STI testing
- Increase awareness and knowledge of new biomedical prevention strategies, including pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP/PrEP)
- Increase awareness and knowledge of HIV viral load and risk reduction strategies
- Promote harm reduction in relation to sex-related alcohol and drug use
- Promote information-seeking behaviour
- Support meaningful and fulfilling sexual and intimate relationships
- Support partner notification.

Guiding principles for online outreach

Client-centred approach

A client-centred approach means providing a non-judgemental environment of empathy and openness. Negative experiences and long waiting times are the primary reasons for MSM who have experience of online prevention work not wishing to use such services again. Confidentiality concerns stop some MSM from accessing online prevention. It is necessary to always maintain a client-centred approach that is sensitive to your clients' needs, expectations and interests, including their right to privacy.

Positive approach to sex and relationships

Gay culture is often considered as highly sexualised, but when European MSM are asked individually what they consider to be the best sex life, most of them formulate this in terms of desire for relationships and intimate connections [9]. A positive approach to sex and relationships is necessary in order to offer engaging and holistic HIV prevention work.

Greater involvement and meaningful engagement of people living with HIV

Meaningful engagement and greater involvement of people living with HIV are important principles for any prevention activity. This includes involving HIV-positive MSM in activities that aim to prevent new HIV infections as well as activities involving STI prevention, including hepatitis C [10].

Participatory quality development

Participatory quality development strives for continuous improvement of health promotion projects. It is characterised by the optimal participation of stakeholders (target populations, service providers, funding bodies and other important parties). The needs of and insights into the local situation of your 'front line' outreach workers and target populations are key to the success of the activity. As part of the Quality Action project, a handbook on participatory quality development has been developed in five languages [11].

Privacy and confidentiality

Online outreach work provides a level of anonymity not found in many other types of intervention. However, concerns relating to confidentiality and privacy are common among MSM. During the design and implementation of online outreach work, two aspects require your attention: security and confidentiality.

Secure software

Always discuss software and security issues with your IT department or IT support prior to starting online fieldwork. Some sexual networking platforms may confront you with malware or malevolent software hidden inside advertising banners. Avoid security issues by:

- Installing recommended updates to your operating system, applications and web browsers;
- installing security software on computers, laptops and mobile devices;
- working on private, password-protected Wi-Fi networks. Third parties can easily scan unprotected or public Wi-Fi traffic and steal sensitive data.

Confidentiality agreements

Organisations that conduct online outreach should have policies in place that explicitly cover online interaction and registration of information that could be used to identify clients. Ensure that:

- all staff members (outreach, IT, support staff and volunteers) have signed confidentiality agreements;
- access to sensitive data remains limited. Avoid registering names, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, IP addresses, geo-location data, profile names and other information that can be used to identify individuals.

Collaboration with dating platforms

It is advised to always contact the platform you wish to do outreach on in advance to discuss your objectives and how they can be best achieved. Endorsement from dating platforms helps to build trust in your online activities. Many global platforms do not openly support or facilitate online outreach activities. Instead, they often refer to paid advertising as an alternative to online outreach.

In many countries local platforms exist that are very popular among MSM. If you want to set up online outreach, consider collaborating with local dating platforms in your country instead. Your local partners may be more open to facilitating your outreach work.

7b. Targeting

Targeting specific populations with your intervention means you can better tailor your activity to their needs and change your message accordingly. You can target your activity in two ways:

- by choosing specific platforms;
- by using filters within platforms to reach specific groups of users.

By choosing the right platform and by filtering users, you can improve the effectiveness and reach of your work and prevent negative feedback from users for whom your message is less relevant. Moreover, there are apps and websites that specialise in specific subcultures or sexual practices.

In order to choose the best platforms in your region, you should first assess:

- which platforms are most popular in your region. Contact the platform and ask how many users they have in your region or conduct a local community assessment to find out which platforms are most popular.
- the possibilities and limitations of the platform.

Using filters to reach specific groups

Many platforms provide possibilities for selectively showing users based on physical, demographic or sexual characteristics. These filters are especially useful for active outreach work, because they allow you to send tailored messages to different subgroups.

Filters also allow you to reach more users in applications that limit the number of users visible in the grid. Use filters to send messages to narrow subsets of users, change the filter to another subset or send messages, thereby expanding your reach significantly within a short period of time.

Filters can work against you, especially when you conduct passive outreach. If a large proportion of your target audience filters out specific characteristics that match your profile, you are no longer visible to the group you aimed to reach. Therefore always involve your local community to maximise the quality of your outreach work.

Improving your visibility

Some platforms have a functionality that allows users to see which profiles recently visited theirs. This functionality can be used to make your passive outreach approach more visible among users.

7c. Creating content

In terms of online outreach, MSM voice concerns over the privacy, confidentiality and trustworthiness of online services. Since some dating platforms do not officially allow health promotion, it is important not to violate their terms and conditions of use.

The most important content you need to consider in advance:

- Information on your website
- Profile description
- Messages (when conducting active outreach).

Information on your website

Placing up-to-date and easy-to-find information about your online outreach activities on your official organisation's website improves your transparency and credibility. Information is thorough if it includes:

- Details of the platform on which you operate;
- How users can recognise your profile;
- The purpose of your intervention;
- When and how often you are online;
- A work-related phone number or e-mail address so that users can contact you if they have questions or complaints.

Profile description

It is crucial for your profile to be as authentic and professional as possible. Your profile description should include enough information for users to easily identify your organisation. You may choose to develop a mascot or persona to improve your visibility and recognisability, or connect your online presence to a campaign.

Adding a picture to your profile will attract more attention and personalise your service:

- You may choose to use images of your organisation, project staff, events or campaign pictures, or stock images bought via stock image websites.
- Consider using stock photographs instead of a profile picture if all outreach workers are female, or if male workers want to remain anonymous.
- Make sure your organisation owns the copyrights of each image you use to avoid legal issues.

However, too much information about your offers or services could violate the terms and conditions of the platform. Always review the terms and conditions of each platform prior to drafting your profile name and description.

Case study: the Netherlands

'I created a profile with information about what our health service offers to MSM. My profile contains a number of questions, deliberately without answers that invite visitors to ask questions about unsafe sex. For instance: Is pre-cum risky for HIV or not? These open questions make it easier to start a conversation. Remarkably, I get questions that I don't get during my office hours. For example, what are the risks of water-sports, or how can I best clean my rectum before anal sex? I also receive a lot of questions from bisexual and hetero-identified men, who we don't see enough during our consultation hours'.

Source: Soa Aids Nederland (2015). Toolkit Internetveldwerk voor MSM. [5]

Recommendations for profiles

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a unique and recognisable username Use the name of the organisation Include basic information and a profile picture Include contact information for the organisation (work-related-e-mail address and/or phone number) Include social media connections (work-related Facebook, Twitter or Instagram) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use personal email address Link to personal social media accounts Use personal phone numbers List sexual preferences or sexual statistics about the outreach worker Explicitly mention services or offers Link to paid websites or services.

Message

Users may consider personal messages actively sent out by healthcare workers to be intrusive. Make sure your message is as inviting and acceptable as possible, be careful with the tone of voice used, and ensure all essential information is given up front. Your objectives should be transparent and it should be easy for the user to find more information or share their questions and comments.

Pre-testing and improving your message

To make sure your message is of the best quality, always pre-test your message with your target population. In order to pre-test your message you should:

- invite MSM who already use your services to give feedback on your message;
- develop two or three versions of a message and let users choose their favourite;
- improve your message based on their feedback and share your experience.

It is often necessary to change your message on a regular basis to grab the attention of your audience. Before changing your message, always evaluate your previous message and improve by looking at what you have learned from past interventions.

7d. Budgeting and resourcing

Calculating staff time

There are no standard calculations for the time it takes to do online outreach. Passive outreach work generally takes more time than active outreach work, but this largely depends on frequency and duration, scale and reach, and the worker's scope for multi-tasking.

With regard to staff time, make sure that staff members with a medical, IT and communication background are available to provide technical support and feedback. If your financial resources are insufficient, consider working with volunteers to expand your reach.

Membership costs

Memberships and subscriptions are not always necessary for your online outreach. Many platforms offer free options. Others limit the number of users they show and the filtering options they provide to non-paying users. Due to the relatively low cost of monthly subscriptions, their benefits may outweigh their costs.

Resources required for online outreach

Online interventions are a cross between classic prevention work and online education and counselling [12]. They require time and perseverance.

- Individual conversations between users and professionals often entail complex questions, requiring more than just medical knowledge of HIV and STIs.
- Training is necessary to ensure staff members have adequate knowledge and skills to perform high-quality outreach work.
- Beneficial personality traits include empathy, respect, authenticity, directness, commitment, discipline, identification and open-mindedness.

Case study: Serbia

'My advice with app outreach is: be persistent! Try to be individual with everyone and get people into a personal conversation in order to reach them. It may take more time, but it will be effective.'

Source: ECDC (2015). 'Understanding the impact of smartphone applications on STI/HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the EU/EEA'. [6]

Professional knowledge and skills

Users can disclose many questions and complex issues in a short period of time. In addition to a knowledge base in HIV and STI transmission and prevention work, providers should have the following professional skills to do online outreach work:

- Written communication
- Knowledge management and self-reflection
- Referral knowledge: when and where to refer users to other support services.

Case study: Spain

'We believe in peer education so we organised three months of training to have some prepared volunteers who are available for online counselling about sexual health. We also meet once a month to coordinate and support these volunteers. Training and supporting the people who are going to provide any service on the app is also important (it's a lonely activity, with not many chances to share experiences). And it requires knowing what health resources are available and where to refer individuals.'

Source: ECDC (2015). 'Understanding the impact of smartphone applications on STI/HIV prevention among men who have sex with men in the EU/EEA'. [6]

Written communication

Text-based communication lacks non-verbal communication, such as body language and intonation. This means you should write textual responses consciously and carefully and check if your responses match the user's needs. For practical suggestions on managing conversations during online outreach we refer to the chapters on 'Troubleshooting—Tips and tricks' in 'The Cruising Counts Guide' and 'Prolonging and ending conversations' in the manual 'We are the Sexperts!' [3,13].

Knowledge management and self-reflection

To tackle questions effectively you require in-depth knowledge of topics ranging from basic HIV and STI transmission; available services; specific sexual practices and risks to broader sexual health-related themes. It is important that outreach workers have the ability to listen, reflect and learn.

Outreach workers themselves can also use online resources to find answers to uncommon questions. This information should always be adapted to the individual's needs and capacities. Additional training may be necessary to ensure that prevention workers have sufficient knowledge and skills to provide the right information and support.

Referral knowledge

When you promote or refer to online resources, please ensure that the contents or services you promote are mobile-optimised or at least mobile-friendly. The following online resources should be available for online outreach workers:

- HIV and STI information including viral hepatitis
- Testing and treatment locations
- Safe sex and sexual risk reduction information
- Sexual health information and resources
- Mental health and substance abuse resources and counselling services
- Domestic and sexual violence information and resources
- Information and resources specifically for youth
- Information and resources specifically for transgender people.

Case study: the Netherlands

'An important part of my chat counselling is motivational interviewing. I find that men often try to reduce the risks for themselves and to put words in my mouth. My job is putting our key message to the front ('get tested') and making sure they keep their personal responsibility in their own hands. I do this by asking lots of open questions and sharing my reflections'.

Source: Soa Aids Nederland (2015) Toolkit Internetveldwerk voor MSM. [5]

Cultural communication

Outreach workers need to have sufficient understanding of the appropriate vernacular and cultural values to communicate effectively. Online communication between MSM is saturated with euphemisms, abbreviations and acronyms. The perceived anonymity of dating platforms allows MSM to interact in more open and sexually direct ways and express specific interests and fantasies. Prevention workers need to remain cautious when drawing inferences solely based on profile descriptions, such as sexual identity and risky behaviour. The importance of sexual fantasy and gratification in online communication between MSM should not be underestimated [14].

Spending time on digital platforms will help you to learn about the target population and convey messages in your own words [15].

7e. Reporting

To demonstrate the results of your work, activities must be recorded continuously and consistently.

This requires short easy-to-use registration forms that include your most important indicators and allow staff members to write open comments and observations.

The data you need to collect will depend on your objectives. Commercial platforms tend to emphasise impressions and numbers of users, whereas prevention workers value behavioural change. Funding bodies have their own requirements in terms of evaluation and reporting and stakeholders may disagree on what information is necessary.

Before you start online outreach the following steps will help to evaluate your work:

- Develop an evaluation plan with key performance indicators;
- Provide practical tools for data collection;
- Design a procedure for clients to share feedback or complaints;
- Ensure consistent and continuous data collection;
- Evaluate and give feedback to staff members;
- Engage stakeholders in your evaluation;
- Share lessons learned.

The effectiveness of your work will depend on the objectives you have defined. Performance indicators make it easier to measure the progress and results of your work. Indicators can be defined at many levels, including process and results.

Table 3. Examples of performance indicators

Examples of performance indicators			
Process/quality	Results/output	Results/outcome	Results/impact
Duration of conversations (measured in time or number of messages)	Number of messages sent	Number of MSM ever tested for HIV	HIV incidence rates among MSM
Proportion of on-topic conversations	Number of questions/messages received	Number of MSM tested for STIs in past six months	STI incidence rates among MSM
Service user satisfaction rating	Number of one-on-one conversations	Number of MSM vaccinated against hepatitis B	Level of HIV-related stigma experienced by MSM
Number of negative responses/complaints received	Number of referrals offered	Proportion of MSM always using condoms	Level of sexual satisfaction
Proportion of service providers trained in online outreach	Proportion of users reached compared to total number of users	Proportion of MSM who disclose HIV status	Quality of life
Proportion of service providers using protocols or frequently-asked question standards	Proportion of contacts in demographic categories (age, ethnicity, urban/rural)	Proportion of HIV-positive MSM on antiretroviral therapy	Proportion of HIV-positive MSM who are undetectable
Number of community members/stakeholders participating on project advisory board	Proportion of conversations resulting in service referrals		
Satisfaction of community members/stakeholders on project advisory board			

Typically, up to five 'key performance indicators' are selected which summarise the most important elements of your work and are measurable within the scope of your project.

Helpful tools

The following tools are helpful for online outreach on websites and necessary if you want to work on dating applications.

Mobile devices

Some platforms are only accessible from mobile devices and not from computers. When choosing between mobile devices, consider using tablets instead of smartphones. Tablets share most of the functionalities of smartphones, have bigger screens and can be extended with keyboards, making typing and multi-tasking easier. If your organisation cannot provide devices to staff members personally, think about including a budget in your project for the purchase of the required mobile devices, additional software and hardware, including earphones and a wireless keyboard [16,17].

Access to websites and applications

Security software such as firewalls may limit or block access to the necessary online resources. Ask the IT specialist in your office to make sure that each staff member involved in online outreach has access to specific websites, dating applications and wireless networks.

Changing your GPS location

Most geosocial networking applications automatically determine your location. Working from the same GPS locations restricts your reach, because the number of profiles that appear in the grid is often limited. To reach more profiles in the vicinity, you can change your GPS location by installing additional applications that allow you to manually select your location [18].

7f. Summary

Before starting your campaign, you need to:

- understand the opportunities and limitations of online outreach;
- understand the needs of your target groups;
- select the most appropriate platform(s) and target your outreach to groups;
- create a realistic trustworthy profile for your outreach interventions;
- implement a plan for each intervention and a strategy to avoid risks;
- understand all the associated resources required for online outreach, including funding;
- outline clear goals and key performance indicators and develop practical registration tools to measure your results.

Once you have completed these tasks you are ready to start reaching out online. The success of any activity will always depend to a certain degree on trial and error so remember to follow through at every stage and be prepared to optimise and make changes as you go.

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