TOOLS FOR BOOSTING YOUR IMPACT

Want to make a media project that grabs audiences and propels them to action? Use this guide, produced by the Dot Connector Studio team, to dream up, build, and assess the outcomes of your production. Inside, you'll find questions and tools that we've developed with our clients and research partners to help you think through the phases of your project, identify your engagement strategy, and assess your project's impact.

There is no one-size-fits-all model for impact, and some of these visual models may be more applicable to your project than others. As you review this guide, take the time to think about your own specific goals. For example, if your goal is to lobby for changes to a specific public policy, then your media impact strategy will be different from someone whose goal is to craft an aesthetic masterpiece. The questions on the next page will help you get started.

Dot Connector Studio is a media production and strategy firm based in Philadelphia. We collaborate with journalists, transmedia producers and funders to research and develop social impact projects. Our team will help you build powerful and unexpected connections between platforms, users, and influencers. Learn more: dotconnectorstudio.com
KEY QUESTIONS

HOW DID THIS ALL START?
Can you describe the genesis of your project and where you are now?

WHAT’S YOUR PITCH?
Can you describe your project in a single sentence that will engage audiences?

WHAT’S YOUR VISION?
• What are your broad goals?
• What are three short-term goals that will help you reach this broader vision?

HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE?
• What platforms are you using for your project, and what others are next in line?
• Do you have a visual branding strategy?
• Do you have a content strategy?

WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?
What are the challenges you are facing? Why hasn’t this topic been adequately addressed previously?

WHO CARES?
• What competing projects or groups address this topic?
• What makes your project unique and important?
• How are people connected to your subject talking about it?

WHO’S INVOLVED (OR SHOULD BE)?
• Audience. Who are the primary and secondary targets for your project?
• Partners. Name three key institutions or notable individuals who do work connected to this topic. Are you working with them?
• Funders and Investors. How will this project be supported financially?

HOW ARE YOU TRACKING IMPACT?
• Have you been tracking web and distribution metrics?
• Have you been tracking responses from key stakeholders in the field?
• How else are you tracking your progress?
Use this Dot Connector Studio model to help plan the different phases of your social impact media project.

- **Remember to Prototype!**
- **Set up metrics before launch**
- **Make sure they’re measurable**

Use these tools to think through the phases of your social impact media project. Visit dotconnectorstudio.com for more strategy tools.
How does your media project connect with users and move them to action? Use these models to help think it through—over time, you may find yourself applying more than one.

**Big Bang**
This model is designed to generate awareness, to reach as much of the targeted audience as possible. Often, such media projects will include an explosive event or coordinated launch.

**Bridge Builder**
This model is designed to open dialogue across users who have differing opinions. Such media projects create new pathways for debate and exchange between communities that don’t typically interact with one another.

**Networked Hub**
Rather than simply seeking to expand audience size, this model focuses on user engagement and mobilization. Such media projects are designed to intensify connections among users, outlets and related organizations around a particular topic, issue or identity.

**Invention Engine**
This model is designed to stimulate and harness the creativity of users and collaborators. Highly participatory, such media projects serve as perpetual motion machines, constantly engaging new creators and platforms to expand the shape and reach of the project.
**Fan Club**
This model is centered around a personality, group or brand with a goal of increasing visibility and growing the base. Users of such media projects may connect with one another, but most often communication moves from the hub to the periphery.

**You Are Here**
This model is designed to build local community and intensify experiences around shared spaces and concerns. Such media projects have a clearly defined geographic focus, and aim to thicken the relationship between community members and local institutions.

**Captivator**
This model is designed to engage and hold the attention of users, generating empathy and loyalty. Such media projects aim to transport users into another place or state of mind, and are often more interactive than participatory.

**Domino Effect**
This model is designed to move influencers to action. Such media projects don’t need to reach a large audience, but rather mobilize users to interact with a target as part of a series of steps towards reaching a goal or shifting a debate.

**Aha!**
This model is designed to spread an unexpected bright idea, with a goal of widely influencing conversation. Such media projects aim to disseminate an insight or a new frame, creating opportunities for network-building and outreach.

**Safe Space**
This model provides content relevant to a targeted community, along with a managed forum that allows users to communicate privately. Such media projects allow members to cohere around a shared issue or identity and hash out internal differences without fear of criticism from outsiders.
Plan your media project strategically and you’ll find that you have more partners than you realize! Use this Dot Connector Studio tool to help identify them.
ARE WE THERE YET? A ROADMAP FOR CREATING HIGH-IMPACT INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARY

Interactive productions take many forms. Use this map to help think about impact strategies from beginning to end, asking at each stage where you are taking your users — and yourself as a creator.

1. MAP IT OUT
   Why take this journey? Why interactive?
   What's your destination?

   Inspiration
   Media innovation
   Personal transformation
   Mobilization
   Group or community cohesion
   Engagement of influencers/policymakers

   Who are your travelling companions?
   • Partners
   • Funders
   • Engaged community members
   • Crew

2. WHAT'S YOUR VEHICLE AND WHY?
   Who's in the vehicle now?
   Who will you pick up?
   Will you switch drivers?
   Do you have enough fuel?
   Can anyone pull you over?
   Who's documenting the trip?
   Who can pull the emergency brake?

3. LAUNCH
   Which roadways will you use—or will you forge your own?

   3.1 Start:
   What communities are you passing through and how can they hop on?

4. FORKS IN THE ROAD
   Fork 1
   Passenger pickup:
   Who else should come along?

   Fork 2
   Take a poll:
   Where do passengers want to go?

   Fork 3
   Check your odometer:
   Are you close to your goal?

   Fork 4
   Scenic overlook:
   Relax and celebrate your team!

   Fork 5
   Switch vehicles:
   Is the new vehicle built for speed? Capacity? Cost savings? Longevity?

5. PIT STOPS
   More Input
   More Money
   More Visibility
   More Partners

6. THE LONG TRAIL
   • Can you continue?
   • Do you want to?
   • Who else can take the wheel?
   • Keep updating your trip journal

Who's in the vehicle now?
Who will you pick up?
Will you switch drivers?
Do you have enough fuel?
Can anyone pull you over?
Who's documenting the trip?
Who can pull the emergency brake?

Illustration: John Bloch for TFI Interactive
MORE FROM DOT CONNECTOR STUDIO


Media Impact Festival: Case Studies bit.ly/impactfest

The tools in this booklet were adapted from collaborative research by Dot Connector Studio’s Jessica Clark, including AIR’s What’s Outside? Public Media 2014; The Center for Media and Social Impact’s Designing for Impact and Public Media 2.0 (2009); TFI Interactive’s Are We There Yet? (2015) and Beyond the Echo Chamber (New Press, 2010). Learn more at dotconnectorstudio.com/strategy-tools

Thanks to the funders that have supported these many collaborations: the Ford, Wyncote, Knight, and MacArthur Foundations, The Fledgling Fund, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the National Endowment for the Arts.