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Session 3: New Ways of Engaging Audiences

Engaging new audiences with Your Better Life index

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I. Introduction

1. For over fifty years, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has helped governments design better policies for better lives for their citizens. It provides a forum in which leaders and policy makers can work together to share experiences and seek solutions to common problems, and produces high-quality internationally comparable statistics used to understand what drives economic, social and environmental change.
2. Ever since the OECD started out in 1961, GDP has been the main factor by which it has measured and understood economic and social progress. But it has failed to capture many of the factors that influence people's lives, such as security, leisure, income distribution and a clean environment. Is life really getting better? How can we tell? What are the key ingredients to improving life – is it better education, environment, healthcare, housing, or working hours? Does progress mean the same thing to all people or in all countries and societies? A pioneer in this emerging field of research, the OECD has been working for almost ten years to identify the best way to measure the progress of societies – moving beyond GDP and examining the areas that impact everyday people's lives.
3. For the past 10 years, the OECD has worked on defining new ways of measuring the well-being, looking not only at how the economic system functions, but also at the diverse experiences and living conditions of people and households. The OECD framework for measuring well-being and progress, based on the recommendations made by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, covers three distinct areas: material living conditions, quality of life and sustainability.

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4. In 2011, the OECD launched the "OECD Better Life Initiative" to understand what drives well-being of people and nations and what needs to be done to achieve greater progress for all. "[Your Better Life Index](http://oecdbetterlifeindex.org/)" (<http://oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>), an outcome of this initiative, is targeted at a general audience and allows citizens to visualise well-being outcomes in OECD countries; it is an interactive tool which allows users to look at how countries perform according to the importance they give to the various components of well-being.

II. Online tool

5. Drawing upon the recommendations of the Stiglitz Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, the OECD created [Your Better Life Index](#) (BLI) – an interactive tool that allows individuals to compare well-being across countries, based on 11 topics the OECD has identified as essential to the quality of life. Currently, the Index profiles the 34 OECD member countries as well as Brazil and Russia. It will eventually include four other important partner countries (China, India, Indonesia, and South Africa) thereby representing the world's major economies.
6. The website contains an overall description of the quality of life in each country, followed by its performance across the 24 individual indicators that make up the 11 topics of well-being. Recent OECD reports and other sources of information are also available to assist those who want to learn even more about social and economic policies in their country.
7. The digital platform allows individuals to put different weights on each topic, and thus decide for themselves how to measure well-being. The resulting visualisation provides a unique view of how countries perform according to the priorities individuals themselves set. Once a visualisation is created, the user can share it and fill in a brief survey (country, age and gender). Every time someone fills in the survey, the information is stored in a dataset with the associated weights. We can thus make analysis of the priorities given to each topic by gender, age and country.
8. While launching Your Better Life Index in 2011, we have also offered the users the possibility to see the number of people who are sharing the Index as well as their priorities through the blirt.oecdcode.org webpage.
9. As from May 2012, users can directly compare their well-being priorities to those of other users by country, age and gender, and share their results. Visitors can also answer the question "What a Better Life means to me?" Their answer will then appear along with their age, gender, profile when people use the compare feature. It will also enable us to make in-depth analysis of what matters to people.
10. The Index allows individuals to compare their vision of a better life with the actual progress in their home country, leading to a better-informed and more engaged citizenry. It is a pioneering, interactive tool combining OECD substance with modern technology in order to educate, promote dialogue and encourage consensus on the balance between societal and economic well-being.

III. Audience and Media

11. Since its launch on May 23, 2011, the OECD Better Life Index has attracted nearly one million visitors from nearly all the countries in the world. Around 30 000 have shared their index using email, Facebook or Twitter and 11 500 have filled in our online survey. More

than 6000 sources have linked to the Index. It has allowed the OECD to reach out newspapers or blogs that are usually outside of its sphere of influence.

12. Following its launch in May 2011, the Better Life Index received broad media coverage. There have been some reports on TV and on radio about it ([France 24 \(France, International\)](#), [Morning Special EBS \(Korea\)](#),...). Newspapers have played a huge role in bringing in people to the website, notably we have had reviews from [Le Monde](#), [Der Spiegel](#), [Jerusalem Post](#)... The data visualisation blogs have also brought us an unexpected important share of traffic ([Information is Beautiful](#), [Flowing Data](#), [FastCoDesign](#), [Information Aesthetics](#))
13. Four elements make up a successful communications strategy: **a good product, a good story, strategic planning** and **execution**. Planning for the launch started at the end of the year 2010, well before the Index itself was built. The strategy was constructed around the fact that the Index would be something unique and innovative for and from the OECD. It would be an online rather than ‘printed’ initiative, shifting away from the ‘book culture’ and instead reflecting the OECD’s ability to engage the public using the most modern and user-friendly communication channels.
14. For the Index to work, citizens would have to be aware of it and to use it. The opening of the 2011 OECD Forum at the start of the OECD 50th Anniversary Week to launch the Index was chosen to maximise impact and involvement of external audiences. An estimated 2 000 people including Forum participants and speakers, delegations, and journalists, shared information with their own constituents and audiences worldwide.

IV. Focus on the 2011 Better Life Index launch

A. Working with the Media

15. The Index was intended as a means to reach well beyond our normal stable of financial and economic journalists. That meant carving out non-traditional storylines that would appeal to a broad cross-section of reporters.

For example:

OECD launches a very good answer to the beyond GDP question
OECD allows people to compare lives
OECD has just created a cutting-edge crowd sourcing tool

16. Next, an extensive database was built of outlets and reporters for the BLI launch totalling almost 1,000 journalists who have either covered stories in the BLI arena or who would be interested in the subject. They were from all areas of journalism with the aim of reaching audiences from the Financial Times to Elle Magazine to free newspapers that have significant mass-public penetration.
17. Significant efforts were made upstream with key media partners to prepare the ground for coverage at launch. A week prior to the launch of BLI, a specific briefing arranged with Paris-based press to focus on the Index. Building on OECD best practices, we developed country information notes to facilitate coverage from specific national perspectives. A BLI teaser video was posted on oecd.org to whet the public’s appetite. A BLI landing page was

created on [oced.org](http://www.viewontv.org/oced/forum2011?titre=6) to ensure that BLI was indexed in Google in time for the launch. On 24 May 2011, the BLI press release was sent out to coincide with the launch of the Index at the Forum (<http://www.viewontv.org/oced/forum2011?titre=6>).

Coverage of the Better Life Index was immediate and global. External and internal analysis of our media revealed that the BLI was a key driver of overall media exposure during OECD Week, more than doubling the volume of media coverage on the first day of the Forum compared to last year.

B. Leveraging technology and public engagement via social media

18. The OECD's presence on social media platforms began in 2008 with the creation of the OECD page on Facebook, a Twitter channel and channels on multi-media sites YouTube, Flickr and Slideshare. These initiatives were expanded and developed over the following two years. As a result, strong followings emerged on each of these platforms that formed the foundation needed to conduct an effective social media campaign around OECD Week 2011 and the BLI launch in particular.
19. The social media strategy focused on building momentum ahead of the launch event during OECD Week and promoting the BLI during and after the event by tying its content to current issues of broad public concern.
20. The Twitter strategy was well-planned and methodical. The groundwork was laid by:

Tweeting the BLI in daily posts for ten days running up to OECD Week, which were re-tweeted over 200 times and drew attention to the BLI page and the video.

Tweeting on OECDlive account and making extensive use of special hashtags (#OECD50, #BLI).

Dedicating two people strictly to Twitter, one tweeting from sessions on OECDlive and the other at the booth monitoring and feeding OECD account.

Creating widgets showing the Twitter feed for both OECDlive and #OECD50 on the Forum page and dedicated social media pages. Creating Twitter lists of ministers/speakers so their posts were accessible to the general public. The four OECD Centres were also tweeting the BLI, especially the Mexico Centre and the Berlin Centre in Spanish and in German.

21. BLI outreach was enhanced by the presence of a dedicated BLI booth during OECD Week. The booth was manned by personnel wearing BLI branded t-shirts who helped participants navigate the BLI tool. This was staffed by experts in the communications and statistics directorates, and young people from student partner networks, and with computer tablets provided by RIM, the makers of Blackberry.

C. Building support through public affairs

22. OECD Public Affairs and Communications Directorate began talking about the BLI early in the year 2011 with various external partners including think tanks, parliamentarians, NGOs, civil and other society groups. These diverse audiences not only provided valuable comments and input ahead of the official BLI launch, but also agreed to participate in the Forum launch. This ensured third party endorsement with these organisations agreeing to issue press releases and undertake initiatives with the social media.

23. In the run-up to the launch, the Index was presented to key stakeholder groups in Paris and in the OECD Centres (Berlin, Mexico, Tokyo, Washington). A group of over 20 university students were invited to “test-drive” the Index pre-launch to give feedback, and make suggestions, which were in turn used to further refine the design. An additional team of students in Paris, the OECD Regional Centres and external partners, were invited to volunteer during the Forum, where they were asked to demonstrate the Index on tablet computers.
24. The choice of the OECD Forum opening session to launch the Index positioned the BLI as an important element of the OECD 50th Anniversary Week. This allowed for a high-impact launch by the Secretary-General and Slovenian President Danilo Turk, a presentation by OECD directors, followed by a full panel debate on how to measure progress with representatives from government, trades unions, the private sector and civil society. At the same time, the team of students presented the Index to Forum participants between sessions. Their efforts contributed to a spike of online visibility of the Index, as many of the Forum participants shared and tweeted their Indexes directly from the Blackberry tablets.

V. Keeping up the momentum in 2012 and beyond

25. In May 2012, the OECD launched an updated version of the BLI. New features have been developed following three strategic lines: technical evolution, research on well-being and the integration of user feedback. Taking into account these three factors, we have increased user interactivity, placing the survey at the heart of the BLI process. Once people enter their profile, they can now compare their priorities to people that have already contributed to the index. We have also introduced a blog, to build a community of users interested in well-being who would then help us to promote the Better Life Index and contribute to the survey.
26. Five new indicators have been added and one has been replaced to strengthen the topics underlying the Better Life Index. Gender and socio-economic inequalities have also been taken into account this year enabling users to compare women’s and men’s lives both between and within countries. We also officially launched the French version in May. Despite these substantial new elements, it was not deemed necessary to launch a media strategy as broad as last year’s, except in France where the launch of the French version during the election campaign had some impact.
27. With research on well-being in constant evolution, there are many new opportunities for further development of this website. Apart from adding more countries and strengthening the indicators behind various topics, main goals include integrating the notion of sustainability into the Index and strengthening interactivity to gather more information from users on their priorities and what makes for a better life.