



# The IDC Guide to Online Pipelines

*Version 1.2*

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# Introduction

The internet is a very manipulative place. It's full of algorithms and echo chambers and is quite literally designed to be addictive. It destroys our brains to keep us scrolling, and scrolling, and scrolling. On a personal level it's unhealthy, but on a political one it's dangerous. The far-right rabbit hole is very real, and very slippery, and it seems as if those who run and own the internet really want to make people into fascists.

This guide is part of our attempt to fight that. Just as someone can fall down the rabbit hole to hatred and hierarchies, we can provide a leftist pipeline towards kindness and equality.

Here you'll be able to read a basic outline of how you get leftist conversation into an online community, and how you can use that conversation as a pipeline to lead people towards offline community activism and organizing. The guide won't be perfect, but hopefully it'll be a good starting point.

# A Note on the Internet

Before we start, we need to understand how the internet works.

The internet is a **frictionless discourse**. People engage with it as a way to escape their material conditions. As such, **almost all internet discussion is entertainment. No one goes to the internet to be challenged.** Plenty of people might go online to argue, but that's not the same thing. An internet argument is a performance of ideology—a way to display and reinforce one's beliefs.

What I'm getting at is: **do not get into arguments on the internet. They are a waste of time.**

It might be fun to dunk on people, but when internet arguments happen they only reinforce the views each party came in with. These arguments do no work besides entertaining either party's friends or communities, and are almost never in good faith. You can't organize through bad faith.

That means our content must always be made in good faith, because we aren't performing—we really are trying to lead

people to the left. Since most of what we do is online, we can't connect to our audience's material struggles as easily as real-world organizers can. We just have to do our best to meet people where they're at and show them what we're offering and be confident that other people will pick it up. We can't get mad if they don't. We just have to try again.

What does all this mean for you? Put simply:

**All content should be made in good faith.** Do not post anything that mocks community members. Instead, focus on providing information and being thought-provoking. You want to prompt curiosity and validate feelings of alienation. Be inflammatory to the system and those in power, not to those around you.

**Do not start or engage with bad-faith arguments.** Answer genuine questions, but don't help things get heated. If someone's a lib or chud, calling them that will just make them moreso.

**If you do get into an argument, persuade the public, not the person.** You're never going to get through to Chudnutz1488. Instead, argue with your words directed to the public. Use the argument as an opportunity to teach them. They're the ones who you might persuade.

# The Funnel Strategy

Funneling is a strategy found in any kind of organized campaign. The basic template is to elicit interest in an audience, engage with that interest on a deeper level, and then leverage the connection made through that engagement with a call to action.

In simpler terms: **agitate, educate, organize.**

In unionization efforts, funneling takes the form of organizers helping workers to identify workplace issues (agitate), learn how they might solve them through unionizing (educate), and then follow through with the creation of a union (organize).

On the internet, these three stages of funneling are constantly varying. You'll have communities you think need agitation, only to come across people already trying to figure out how to get involved in organizing and direct action. You might have hard leftists squabbling over whether Stalin's cooler than Mao and have to educate them on the importance of material action. Or you'll find a blackpilled doomer who needs to be agitated into having hope again. Take your efforts one-by-one, post-by-post, user-by-user. **The internet is immaterial and dynamic, which means internet organizing has to be the same.**

# Agitate

Most everybody knows on some level that our material conditions are bad and unfair. But most everybody is also conditioned by capitalism to accept and internalize those conditions as the way of things. We're made to feel as if we deserve only the smallest crumbs conceded to us. We're brainwashed into thinking any complaints we have and any anger we feel is unworthy and invalid.

**Agitation is the act of getting people to value themselves again.** To really see what's being done to them and realize it's wrong. To feel worthy, and valid, and deserving of a better world.

But most of all, agitation is getting people to get themselves to want things to be better. It's not about showing up and shouting "You have a world to win! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" but instead getting people to realize "Wait a second. We DO have a world to win. Let's break these chains!" **People are far more likely to accept leftist ideas if they feel as if they've thought them up on their own.**

On the internet, getting people to that moment of realization takes the form of creating content that pokes at the status

quo's contradictions and absurdities in an entertaining, thought-provoking way.

Take this meme as an example:





This piece is an okay nudge for a general audience. It's timely (at time of writing, during the first wave of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic), addresses a material issue for the working class, and is funny enough to provide the usual mental huff of amusement. It entertains and criticizes. Ideally it would focus on the system of capitalism rather than the government, which is just the managerial staff of the system, but no post is ever perfect.

But how do we use this silly thing to agitate?

First, through a title with a hook. Something that makes it more likely that people will engage with the post and comment. A rough example might be "They're always like this, aren't they?" if you want to start a discussion about how the Canadian government tends to provide as little aid as they can get away with. **Starting a conversation is the best route to agitating.**

A conversation lets you build rapport and share more content that might get people thinking. But you have to be careful. You have to let people think. You don't have to hide that you're a communist – it would be in bad faith to lie – but you shouldn't try or ever expect to convert someone right to communism in a single conversation. **Agitation can take weeks or even months before you start seeing any**

**significant results. Maybe even longer.**

What you should also keep in mind is that the kind of issues you'll use to agitate with will vary from community to community. Environmentalists might be more amenable to pointing out how capitalism can literally never be ecologically sustainable, and conservatives might be more amenable to workers' rights, while some liberals might want a way out of feeling like passive-aggressive hypocritical buzzkills literally all of the time. **You have to meet people where they're at, talk about what they like, and be interested in what they say.**

So you're going to have to do your research. To properly agitate, you need to know what agitates your audience. What do they care about? Why do they care about it?

Lucky for us, privacy is dead. Just about any online community maintains content stretching back to its creation. Most even tell you how popular certain conversations were through likes, retweets, views, upvotes, or even just the number of comments in a thread. It takes barely any effort to understand exactly what makes a community tick.

But what are we looking for, specifically?

We want to know where they're at. What their exact politics

are, what their material conditions might be, what their sense of humour is, what memes they use, what external content they bring in to share. We want to know the issues they're touchy about and the ones they'll engage with. **We want to know what to provide to this community so that we'll be able to talk to them.**

The content you want to be making here should follow the tone you find in the community. Use their meme templates and reference their pop-culture. Find their in-jokes and understand them and join them. Speak about their issues in their language, but with the knowledge that you have.

Remember: all internet conversation is entertainment. To get people to listen to us, we're going to have to make them enjoy it. We have to be the funniest, the coolest, and the kindest kids on the corner. That doesn't mean pretend to be what you think people believe is cool. You already are cool. You are cool and good and kind, and you are talking about something important. People will like you if you remember that.

When done right, people love getting agitated. They get to open their eyes and care about things again. It makes them feel alive. Like they've lost their chains. Like they have a world to win.

# Educate

So you've gotten people agitated or found someone that's already there. These people are upset, they see that things are wrong—but they don't know very much. They've just got the feeling that the world should be better.

In a lot of online left communities, this is the point where people start repeating “READ THEORY” instead of educating people. This is because many of us haven't read leftist theory, but have absorbed performances of it through online content, and are in turn performing what we have seen performed so that we look more leftist. As a result most of us have a superficial, or, at best, narrow understanding of theory. We know how things work just enough to make memes and post about systemic issues, but we can't really teach anyone worth a damn unless someone's done the reading. Even then, that education is still online and immaterial. There's no proof to it.

Your approach has to be better. You have to get agitated people to have a material understanding of theory as quickly as you can. That means you have to have a material understanding of theory. **That means organizing while you educate. Theory has to be tied to praxis.** Real-world

experiences teach arguments made in theory better than a thousand online debates. If you volunteer on an election campaign and see how people decide who to vote for (which is often literally just what the news says or if a candidate shows up at their door) you're going to immediately understand how limited electoralism is in actually making political change, and why that can't be where progressive action ends.

More than that, **when someone makes a material commitment to a cause, they are far more likely to stick with that cause.** Solidarity is a wonderful feeling when you've been suffering under capitalist alienation.

So for our purposes, **education focuses teaching people theory alongside teaching them how to get involved.** We have two fantastic resources for this. The first is **Workerpedia.co**, an archive of answers to common bad-faith arguments. The second is the **Organize Canada database**, which lists progressive organizations in every province with descriptions of the issues they tackle.

If you are looking to know what to say when educating someone, here is a broad outline of how to go about it:

- Sympathize with the person's agitation; remind them their

anger's worthy.

- *[If they are asking how to fight the issue]* Refer them to an organization whose cause is relevant to the issue that has agitated them.

- *[If they are asking why the issue exists]* Ideally, provide an answer informed by theory and proven by a real-world example to ground the answer in material conditions. A perfect example would involve an organization near to the person you're educating, so that you can recommend they get involved to start learning for themselves.

# Organize

Organizing is difficult on the internet because organizing is material work. You can educate people on how to get involved in organizing, but you aren't actually organizing if you're just posting on the internet.

**This is where we ourselves get involved with organizations, alongside the people we've agitated and educated and motivated to go out and engage in praxis.** We provide media coverage, social media boosts, and other coordinated efforts that have material benefits for organizations. We go out and engage in direct action and mutual aid, protests and strikes and whatever else our communities need. **We don't get to stay on the internet.**

We are not outside our funnel. At different times in our movement we will have to be agitated, and educated, and organized, just as much as we agitate, educate, and organize others. This is a collective effort we're undertaking, and we have to prove it's collective by being a real part of it. Otherwise we're just playing around on Reddit and YouTube and, I don't know, Yahoo Questions.

We have to get out into our own communities. **I'll again plug**

**the IDC's Organize Canada database** as a wonderful tool for finding whether or not there are organizations near you to join. **If there are no leftist organizations near you, that just means you get to start the first one.** Reach out to an organization from the IDC's database that's either just outside your area or that you find interesting and ask them for help.

**If you don't feel like you're ready to start an organization of your own, get involved with a more mainstream organization in your area as a way to teach yourself about the difficulties any organizing effort in your community will have to face.** You will have to make a point about asking how the organization goes about operating, or take an active role in the organization's operations so you can learn those things firsthand. Whatever you learn you can modify to fit a more leftist organizational structure. Good examples of these are soup kitchens, watershed groups, after-school programs, and political campaigns. They'll fix absolutely nothing in the long run, and you shouldn't let them exploit too much of your time (political campaigns are particularly bad for that), but they can help you feel more confident about starting your own group.

You can also use this kind of volunteering to do real-world agitation and recruitment. While a lot of people engage in



liberal activism to pad their resumes, others genuinely want to help and might be more open to learning why exactly the issues they're trying to help with are created by the system we live in. There may even be other leftists in these groups that also don't feel as if they can start a group on their own. The conversations that come out of these interactions will also show what you really do and don't know about your political beliefs, which will help guide you in your own education.

By making our beliefs material we will get better at agitation and education and organization. Our methods will improve and our movement will grow. **By each of us organizing and getting organized, nothing that happens to one of us will stop all of us.**



NEVER

STOP

POSTING!