



## 2015 GLOBAL DIASPORA WEEK LAUNCH EVENT

October 9, 2015

### Notes

**Session Title:** Digital Diasporas

**Speaker(s):** Anastasia Dellaccio, Sister Cities International & Rami Khater, Andalus LLC

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#### **Session Summary:**

Anastasia and Rami kicked off the session with a discussion of how they have used digital media to effectively engage audiences around the world and how they think diaspora in particular can harness the tools available to them to communicate with one another and back home. The facilitators then opened up discussion with attendees by asking about how the audience had used digital tools to effectively engage with the diaspora or where they have had challenges. Attendees contributed their experiences and also asked questions of the rest of the group, who was helpful in offering suggestions based on their own experiences. In this way, we were able to workshop several attendees' comments and questions. The discussion began with more traditional media such as social networks and email and expanded to discuss the use of maps and cell phone apps (such as WhatsApp and Snapchat) to tell stories and connect people.

#### **Key Themes:**

- Theme 1: Connectivity is power and digital tools are an equalizer.
- Theme 2: Strong digital assets create ties not just between diasporas and home countries but between other communities who are alike. Networks are power.
- Theme 3: Even though the medium continues to adapt, change, advance- the basis of any effective communications strategy is still telling a good story.

#### **Notable Quotes/Soundbites:**

- *Even with new technology, no matter how you're trying to connect, it's still about storytelling. – Anastasia Dellaccio, Sister Cities International*
- *Regarding the clutter of messages and content out there today, yes, there are more voices, but there are a lot more people enabled to listen and engage. – Rami Khater, Andalus, LLC*
- *Digital technology, whether its snapchat or other mediums, can place you anywhere...digital diasporas have created opportunities for a two-way exchange". –Anastasia Dellaccio, Sister Cities International*
- *Technology allows us to break barriers. – Rami Khater, Andalus LLC*

- *Just because you're engaging digitally doesn't mean you should take the people to people piece away. – Anastasia Dellaccio, Sister Cities International*

**Best Practices/Recommendations/Suggestions:**

- Social math works. When you're trying to tell a story, and especially when you're asking for money, you need to demonstrate what the money will do. For example, \$5 = 20 Liters of water.
- Don't try to be on every social network and every medium at once. Choose a few and do them well.
- There are two key pieces to effective story-telling: finding the right voice and the right medium for it.

**New Partnerships or Commitments & Follow-up Action Items:**

- Diasporas need to pair up with marketing people to create digital savvy, culturally resonant stories and experiences.
- IdEA agreed to work with the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program to help identify and recruit African diaspora scientists for their network.

**Discussion Topics/Audience Questions:**

- There was a discussion about how to find the authentic voices to tell stories. It was agreed that sometimes these voices are the quietest but they have the most to say. There were a number of suggestions including doing due-diligence through networks, working with intermediaries to make these contacts and get these stories, and finally, respecting the medium that person would want to use. Perhaps they don't want to provide a statement by email, maybe they prefer a photo shoot, or maybe they want to send you texts via WhatsApp- find the authentic medium to match the authentic voice.
- Rebecca Walker from AudioNow, a call to listen platform that connects diasporas to content in their home countries with a local cell phone number, asked about the issue with audio content not being searchable online. Another attendee had recently encountered a social enterprise who is working on this very issue and they shared the information- hopefully AudioNow will find a solution out of the enterprise's work.