

Advantages and Disadvantages of Countering Online Disinformation

ACTION	ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE
Do not respond directly. Instead, let the disinformation die out organically while you continue to monitor conversations.	Allows a conversation that may not be visible to your audience to die out quickly. Does not “throw gas on the fire” or grant additional legitimacy to the false information at the core of the attack.	Audiences that may have engaged with the disinformation may harbor negative views about you and your organization. Posts or messages could continue to be shared on “slow burn” for a long time, undermining your local organizations’ relationships and efforts.
Directly counter the disinformation through your organization’s existing online media channels. ⁸¹	Allows organizations to correct false statements or claims about them or their work. (If this course is taken, it should be done swiftly.) Can be effective if the organization is trusted in the community and has deep local ties.	Developing and publishing content, and then monitoring response to it takes time and human resources, and requires significant local knowledge to do effectively. There is also the possibility that counter- messages can backfire, open your organization to unwanted political attention or conflict, or reinforce initial false claims or disinformation.
Respond to disinformation through mission-aligned local partner organizations and influencers	Leverages local influence and networks of trust to counter harmful narratives; protects your organization’s position as an apolitical outsider with a focus on helping people.	Could expose your defenders to criticism as “mouthpieces” for outsiders. May not be as direct or targeted as when your organization’s communications team refutes disinformation.
Promote alternative messages that provide information to your audience through new narratives.	Changes the narrative by presenting new information or alternative messages.	Developing and publishing content, and then monitoring response to it, takes time and human resources.