

Noise or a campaign? Six signs a story about you is being pushed

Most negative commentary about an organisation subsides without intervention. A smaller share is organised, and organised activity can move quickly from damaging an organisation's reputation to affecting its staff and sites. These are the indicators Exarma examines first. No single indicator establishes that activity is organised; several appearing together warrant closer assessment.

1 Repeated wording across unrelated accounts

Accounts with no apparent connection post near-identical text, images or hashtags within a short period. Replication at this scale is among the more reliable indicators of coordination.

2 New or repurposed accounts

A large share of the activity comes from accounts created recently, with few followers, or that have abruptly changed their name or subject matter.

3 Irregular timing

Posting concentrates at hours unusual for the location, or a story moves from little attention to wide circulation within hours with no news event to account for it.

4 Movement across platforms and languages

The same claim appears in quick succession on several platforms or in several languages, often first in small groups and later in larger ones.

5 An existing grievance

Stories that spread tend to attach to concerns already strongly held, such as employment, land, pay or safety. A genuine grievance is also what most often carries a story from online discussion into physical action.

6 A call to action

The content moves from opinion to instruction, naming times, places or people. At that point the risk extends beyond the organisation's reputation to its staff and sites.

Where several indicators appear together

Preserve copies of the material, with dates and times, before it is removed. Avoid engaging the most prominent accounts, as replies tend to extend a story's reach. Establish the facts, brief the security and communications teams, and decide who should respond. A trusted local voice is often more credible than a corporate statement.