ISIL

Defeating ISIL on the modern battlefield

MVP BRIEFING
FEBRUARY 2016
WELCOME

We are in a room of industry and sector experts from tech, media, entertainment, brand and civil society. This group is gathered because ISIS isn’t just a military enemy; they have proven to be a formidable foe in the communications and culture space.

Today’s goal is to start CONVERSATION and ACTION around a key question:

In light of a force that brilliantly manipulates media, technology and culture, how can we counteract and jam their efforts?
KEY INSIGHTS
KEY INSIGHT

*ISIL treats the information battlefield as seriously as the physical battlefield.*
KEY INSIGHT

ISIL has built an extraordinary and charismatic brand. It leverages strength and warmth to recruit followers to its cause, guiding them towards radicalization at every step of the recruiting process.
KEY INSIGHT

You can’t fight propaganda with propaganda. The United States isn’t going to “out-propaganda” ISIL, but with a partner-first orientation we can change the context of the conversation.
Data science and metrics are critical to understanding the battlefield and measuring impact.
Our advantages — good people, ideas, global cultural influence, technology and global reach — are numerous.
BREAKING ISIL’S BRAND
ISIL is a strong, modern, sophisticated brand.

To break it, we first have to understand it.
We're using the word “brand” in the holistic sense. Brand in this context means an organization that is rooted by purpose and all of its activity drives against that purpose.
ISIL BRAND ≠ TWITTER

Twitter is a very strong lever for ISIL, but it’s not the only one. ISIL’s strength comes from much wider array of media and activity.
ISIL BRAND ≠ BEHEADING VIDEOS

Beheading videos are only a fraction of the content that ISIL releases. They serve a specific purpose of riling up the West and driving awareness.
EXAMINING ISIL'S BRAND

Overall attraction of ISIL's brand
Audiences
Brand architecture
Consumer journey
ISIL'S BRAND IS MULTI-FACETED AND USER FRIENDLY

U.S. Central Command Twitter Account Hacked, Possibly by ISIS
A CHARISMATIC BRAND WITH AN AGILE UNDERPINNING

ISIL LEVERAGES PRIMAL ATTRACTION

*ISIL presents itself via the classic charismatic blend of strength and warmth.*

ISIL LEVERAGES DIGITAL MENTALITY

*Organization defined by decentralization and agility.*
A CHARISMATIC BRAND WITH AN AGILE UNDERPINNING

**ISIL LEVERAGES PRIMAL ATTRACTION**

*ISIL presents itself via the classic charismatic blend of strength and warmth.*

**ISIL LEVERAGES DIGITAL MENTALITY**

*Organization defined by decentralization and agility.*
THE CHARISMA EQUATION: STRENGTH AND WARMTH

Charisma experts argue that compelling leaders, brands and communications project equal parts strength and warmth. ISIL is a master of this combination and use it to tap into the primal desire on the part of its eventual recruits to belong.

STRENGTH

Ask Mosul, city of Islam, about the lions—
how their fierce struggle brought liberation.
The land of glory has shed its humiliation
and defeat
and put on the raiment of splendor.

WARMTH

we came to the land of honor and inter
this is where I feel at ease, 100 percent

A CHARISMATIC BRAND WITH AN AGILE UNDERPINNING

ISIL LEVERAGES PRIMAL ATTRACTION

ISIL presents itself via the classic charismatic blend of strength and warmth.

ISIL LEVERAGES DIGITAL MENTALITY

Organization defined by decentralization and agility.
THE DIGITAL MENTALITY: DECENTRALIZATION AND AGILITY

DECENTRALIZATION

SHAMI WITNESS

ISIL's propaganda dissemination relies on a group of self-appointed volunteers who have no formal relationship with the group.

AGILITY

ISIL launched an app that automatically posts to users' Twitter accounts, coordinating up to 40 thousand tweets in a day to push its content to the top of trending virality.

ISIL also uses hashtags to focus-group branding concepts, manufacturing grassroots initiatives and measuring traction and response to guide messaging decisions.
WHY IS ISIL RESONATING?

ISIL communicates in methods, patterns and content that is native to a modern audience.

ISIL appeals to the primal needs to have a purpose in life, hope and the need to belong.

This combo of modern behavior + primal desires is the perfect 21st Century brand cocktail.
This combination of strength and warmth bears itself out when constructing the brand.
For this exercise, we put ourselves in the headspace that ISIL was our client.

That practically meant that we built out the brand from a positive space, leaning into strengths and what it has to offer to a potential recruit.
THE TARGET AUDIENCES

GLOBAL MEDIA

COUNTRY

COMMUNITY

FAMILY / FRIENDS

INDIVIDUAL
A NOTE ON RECENT US ISIL SUPPORTERS

71 individuals have been charged with ISIL-related activities since March 2014.

The average age is 26.
86% are male.
Their activities were located in 21 states.
51% traveled or attempted to travel abroad.
27% were involved in plots to carry out attacks on U.S. soil.
40% of the cases involve recent converts to Islam.

In America, this issue isn't just about Muslim youth.
Hunch: ISIL attracts disaffected youth who are drawn to the strength, the sense of adventure and purpose that ISIL promises.
ISIL: A BRAND OF STRENGTH AND WARMTH

OVERALL BRAND NARRATIVE
We are establishing the Caliphate, a.k.a. Muslim Utopia

WHO WE’RE FOR
True Believers

WHO WE’RE AGAINST
“Them” — Assad & the West

PERSONALITY
Strong, Passionate, Supportive

KEY BEHAVIOR
Adaptive, Agile

KEY BEHAVIOR
Guide & Support

KEY BEHAVIOR
Bold, victorious moves

SPIRITUAL BENEFIT
Access to Paradise

EMOTIONAL BENEFIT
The thrill of having a place to belong

FUNCTIONAL BENEFIT
The ability to live in a pure, thriving society

KEY ACTION
Inspire Muslims

KEY ACTION
Define and protect the teachings

KEY ACTION
Establish, fund & run the merciful utopia

KEY NARRATIVE
We are strong

KEY NARRATIVE
You will have a place in the world

KEY NARRATIVE
We are building a pure Muslim state

KEY NARRATIVE
Save Sunnis from genocide
HOW ISIL RECRUITS PEOPLE TO THEIR CAUSE

Primary motivation of a potential recruit

How a potential recruit feels at this stage

What a potential recruit feels at this stage

What a potential recruit is at this stage

What ISIL does
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary state of a potential recruit</th>
<th>PHASE ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A DISAFFECTED AND EMPATHETIC STATE OF BEING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How a potential recruit at this stage</td>
<td>Alienation, disenfranchisement, isolation, resentment and boredom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a potential recruit at this stage</td>
<td>I have no real home, no purpose, my life feels directionless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a potential recruit is at this stage</td>
<td>Searching for identity, role models, meaning, belonging, adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What ISIL needs</td>
<td>Leverages a “less than perfect” cultural context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# HOW ISIL RECRUITS PEOPLE TO THEIR CAUSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary action phase of a potential recruit</th>
<th>PHASE ONE</th>
<th>PHASE TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How a potential recruit feels at this stage</td>
<td>Alienation, disenfranchisement, isolation, resentment and boredom</td>
<td>Curious, slightly thrilled by the extremeness of their actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a potential recruit feels at this stage</td>
<td>I have no real home, no purpose, my life feels directionless</td>
<td>These guys aren't going anywhere, in fact, they seem pretty powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a potential recruit is at this stage</td>
<td>Searching for identity, role models, meaning, belonging, adventure</td>
<td>Paying attention to media, discussing ISIL, understanding ISIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What ISIL does</td>
<td>Leverages a &quot;less than perfect&quot; cultural context</td>
<td>Creates content primed for Western attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW ISIL RECRUITS PEOPLE TO THEIR CAUSE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary characteristic of a potential recruit</th>
<th>PHASE ONE</th>
<th>PHASE TWO</th>
<th>PHASE THREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alienation, disenfranchisement, isolation, resentment and boredom</td>
<td>A DISEFFECTED AND EMPATHETIC STATE OF BEING</td>
<td>REPEATED EXPOSURE VIA NEWS MEDIA KEEPS ISIL TOP OF MIND</td>
<td>GET CURIOUS, LOG ON AND DISCOVER A NUANCED ONLINE PRESENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curious, slightly thrilled by the extremeness of their actions</td>
<td>Curiosity, identification, alignment, thrill, rebellion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have no real home, no purpose, my life feels directionless</td>
<td>These guys aren't going anywhere, in fact, they seem pretty powerful</td>
<td>This is intriguing, exciting. ISIL is misunderstood. My POV matters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for identity, role models, meaning, belonging, adventure</td>
<td>Paying attention to media, discussing ISIL, understanding ISIL</td>
<td>Consuming content, aligning ISIL with their sense of self, beginning to share &amp; disseminate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverages a “less than perfect” cultural context</td>
<td>Creates content primed for Western attention</td>
<td>Creates a multi-layered aspirational narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# HOW ISIL RECRUITS PEOPLE TO THEIR CAUSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary driver of a potential recruit</th>
<th>PHASE ONE</th>
<th>PHASE TWO</th>
<th>PHASE THREE</th>
<th>PHASE FOUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disaffected and empathetic state of being</td>
<td>Alienation, disenfranchisement, isolation, resentment and boredom</td>
<td>Curious, slightly thrilled by the extremeness of their actions</td>
<td>Curiosity, identification, alignment, thrill, rebellion</td>
<td>Belonging, power, solidarity, special, elite, defensive, cognitive dissonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How a potential recruit at this stage</strong></td>
<td>I have no real home, no purpose, my life feels directionless</td>
<td>These guys aren’t going anywhere, in fact, they seem pretty powerful</td>
<td>This is intriguing, exciting. ISIL is misunderstood. My POV matters</td>
<td>It’s us vs. the world, I’ve found my true home, my calling, my purpose — and I must act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| What a potential recruit is at this stage | Searching for identity, role models, meaning, belonging, adventure | Paying attention to media, discussing ISIL, understanding ISIL | Consuming content, aligning ISIL with their sense of self, beginning to share & disseminate | Actively sharing content, proselytizing, and/or getting ready to go to ISIL territory |

| **What ISIL does** | Leverages a “less than perfect” cultural context | Creates content primed for Western attention | Creates a multi-layered aspirational narrative | Close the deal with extremely personal attention |
OVERALL COUNTER STRATEGIES TO TAKE ON EACH PHASE

PHASE ONE
A DISAFFECTED
AND EMPATHETIC
STATE OF BEING

Empower a strong pro-Muslim
creative and community culture

Primarily via civil society
(culture, music, entertainment,
programs, hackathons, etc.)
create positive Muslim voices
and opportunities in society
BOOST MUSLIM PRESENCE, ARTS AND CULTURE

This is largest swath of activity as it includes shifting a sub-culture's place in the larger culture.

In this bucket, the audiences are culture at large as well as Muslims within US culture. **Can we normalize being Muslim in the US?**

ISIL preys on a sense of alienation in Muslim youth, one that is felt by Muslims in Western countries but also felt by those who don’t see a proud future in Arabic countries as well. **It can be difficult to be young and Muslim today... and ISIL leverages that.**

By elevating Muslim personalities, art and culture and supporting the creation of more mainstream, indigenous Muslim content, there is an opportunity to give Muslim youth aspirational models and paths when they look out in the world.

---

**THE WORLD LOOKS BRIGHTER FOR MUSLIM YOUTH WHEN:**

- Jay-Z nurtures young Muslim artists
- Hollywood creates mainstream Muslim characters
- YouTube's content fund for Muslim youth takes off
OVERALL COUNTER STRATEGIES TO TAKE ON EACH PHASE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A DISAFFECTED AND EMPATHETIC STATE OF BEING</th>
<th>GET TUNED IN TO ISIL VIA NEWS MEDIA THAT KEEPS ISIL TOP OF MIND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empower a strong pro-Muslim creative and community culture</td>
<td>Change the strength narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily via civil society (culture, music, entertainment, programs, hackathons, etc.) create positive Muslim voices and opportunities in society</td>
<td>Develop strategies to change the traditional and digital media dialogue and expose the realities of ISIL.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social media is important, but for ISIL traditional media is still the "great amplifier". Right now, the media is serving an ISIL awareness driver, bolstering the perspective that ISIL is a strong, winning brand that attracts disaffected Muslims as well as those simply looking for adventure.

However, life on ground in ISIL territories is seldom idyllic. Defectors have many stories of boredom, corruption and senseless violence.

Is there an opportunity to leverage truths of the "utopia" to discredit the strength narrative that ISIL has crafted both in traditional media and other spaces?
### OVERALL COUNTER STRATEGIES TO TAKE ON EACH PHASE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A DISAFFECTED AND EMPATHETIC STATE OF BEING</td>
<td>Empower a strong pro-Muslim creative and community culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily via civil society (culture, music, entertainment, programs, hackathons, etc.) create positive Muslim voices and opportunities in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET TUNED IN TO ISIL VIA NEWS MEDIA THAT KEEPS ISIL TOP OF MIND</td>
<td>Change the strength narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop strategies to change the traditional and digital media dialogue and expose the realities of ISIL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET CURIOUS, LOG ON AND DISCOVER A NUANCED AND COMPASSIONATE ONLINE PRESENCE</td>
<td>Disrupt their digital landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop smart digital strategies, counter-messages and supporting analytics to create the fuzz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENGAGE IN DIRECT DIGITAL INTERVENTION

No one becomes radicalized simply through discovering online videos and tweets — a key step in the process is connecting directly in a 1:1 dialogue with an extremist.

ISIL's personal, 1:1 digital approach needs a similarly personal, 1:1 digital approach to battle it. By engaging in direct, digital intervention via authentic third party participants, ISIL overtures can be headed off at this vulnerable moment in the recruitment journey.

WATCHOUT: This kind of work needs to be crafted carefully. It is not helpful to set up an atmosphere where the Muslim community is being asked to "police" their own community.
DISRUPT ISIL’S ONLINE TACTICS

ISIL is notorious for their savvy online efforts to disseminate information and drive recruitment.

There is a pressing need to optimize digital anti-ISIL tactics, such as injecting complexity and denying digital safe haven to their efforts and communication.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OVERALL COUNTER STRATEGIES TO TAKE ON EACH PHASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A DISAFFECTED AND EMPATHETIC STATE OF BEING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower a strong pro-Muslim creative and community culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily via civil society (culture, music, entertainment, programs, hackathons, etc.) create positive Muslim voices and opportunities in society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **GET TUNED IN TO ISIL VIA NEWS MEDIA THAT KEEPS ISIL TOP OF MIND** |
| Change the strength narrative |
| Develop strategies to change the traditional and digital media dialogue and expose the realities of ISIL. |

| **GET CURIOUS, LOG ON AND DISCOVER A NUANCED AND COMPASSIONATE ONLINE PRESENCE** |
| Disrupt their digital landscape |
| Develop smart digital strategies, counter-messages and supporting analytics to create the fuzz |

| **THROUGH INTENSE 1:1 INTERACTION, CONVERT TO THE ISIL CAUSE** |
| Anti-radicalization: empower communities to see and counter radicalization |
| Help communities, friends, mothers, imams, teachers recognize signs of radicalization and give them support, language and tools to combat it without creating a sense of deputizing a community against itself |
DEVELOP COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community is everything in this battle.

It is vital that communities continue to create programs where Muslim youth feel empowered in their day to day life. Also, Muslim communities should be empowered with the knowledge and tools to interrupt those on the path to radicalization.

The good news is that these community groups already exist. How can we amplify their effectiveness and efforts while letting them maintain their authentic connections to the community?
One last note...
QUANTIFY SUCCESS AND ASSIGN CLEAR OUTCOME METRICS TO ALL INITIATIVES

ISIL is agile, iterative and focused. Any efforts done to combat it must be as well. Every effort that gets implemented should be underpinned and driven by a strong data approach that gets clearly communicated to allies and partners.

- "Spock on the bridge:" technical and analytical input at a strategic level
- Empower communications and partnership teams with self-service analytics
- "Fast data" gives functional teams real-time, objective feedback and opportunity to quickly adapt
OVERALL COUNTER STRATEGIES TO TAKE ON EACH PHASE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A DISAFFECTED AND EMPATHETIC STATE OF BEING</td>
<td>GET TUNED IN TO ISIL VIA NEWS MEDIA THAT KEEPS ISIL TOP OF MIND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THROUGH INTENSE 1:1 INTERACTION, CONVERT TO THE ISIL CAUSE</td>
<td>GET CURIOUS, LOG ON AND DISCOVER A NUANCED AND COMPASSIONATE ONLINE PRESENCE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Empower a strong pro-Muslim creative and community culture
Primarily via civil society (culture, music, entertainment, programs, hackathons, etc.) create positive Muslim voices and opportunities in society

Change the strength narrative
Develop strategies to change the traditional and digital media dialogue and expose the realities of ISIL.

Disrupt their digital landscape
Develop smart digital strategies, counter-messages and supporting analytics to create the fuzz

Anti-radicalization: empower communities to see and counter radicalization
Help communities, friends, mothers, imams, teachers recognize signs of radicalization and give them support, language and tools to combat it without creating a sense of deputizing a community against itself
APPROACHING TODAY
SAY HELLO

You’ve already been divided into interdisciplinary teams at your table.
60 MINUTES TO IDEATE

Spend the next hour ideating using the framework in the envelope on your table
# Breaking the ISIL Brand

**The Elevator Pitch (Objective + Idea)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Key Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecosystem to Support the Idea</th>
<th>Key Metrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Next Steps**
POPCORN PITCH-BACK

*Each team will have five minutes to pitch their idea to the broader room.*
ROOM DISCUSSION

We'll have a discussion around the ideas and potential next steps.
LET'S GO