



# CASE

DIS:ORIENT

“**Listening In:  
Strengthening Social  
Media for Impactful  
Journalism**”

# STUDY

## IN SHORT

Dis:orient reorganized its social media team and consulted outside consultants in order to expand its reach, as well as producing and promoting its first podcast.

## ABOUT THE NEWS OUTLET

Dis:orient is a media outlet in Berlin dedicated to providing critical and nuanced reporting on West Asia and North Africa in a global context. The German media landscape had limited reporting on Israel and Palestine and this project wants to change the limited discourse.



## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Dis:orient aimed to expand its reach beyond a niche, academic audience by strengthening its social media strategy and experimenting with new, more accessible formats. The project also sought to introduce audio storytelling through a podcast in order to broaden engagement.



## IMPLEMENTED SOLUTIONS

The team reorganized its social media workflow to rethink platform strategies and content formats. Dis:orient launched its first podcast, coordinated a decentralized production process, and tested video and audio formats adapted for social platforms. By adjusting tone, presentation, and promotional methods, the newsroom increased visibility and follower growth.

## WHY THIS PROJECT?

The members of the team found the story of West Asia and North Africa an important one to tell in the German media landscape. The team was approached by two people in Germany who had lived in Palestine. They wanted to find a newsroom to tell the story of the region.

## HOW DID APPLYING DESIGN THINKING PRINCIPLES HELP?

Dis:orient is a very niche platform and the output is often academic. Design thinking helped the team find new ways, especially in regard to social media, to approach a wider audience. The team implemented suggestions from outside consultants in an attempt to appeal to a wider audience and use new formats to make the content more approachable in a less academic environment. The team intends to continue this process and to keep the interests of their target audience in mind.

## DID DIS:ORIENT'S APPROACH CHANGE ENGAGEMENT WITH ITS AUDIENCE IN ANY WAY?

Dis:orient gained a lot of followers on Instagram. It also gained followers on Spotify and other audio platforms. There were also more followers who actually interacted with the video format.

## WHAT CHALLENGES DID DIS:ORIENT ENCOUNTER AND HOW WERE THEY ADDRESSED?

The members of the project struggled with coordinating the de-centralized team to sit down in a studio and record the podcast. Articles can be written anywhere but podcasts are often location-specific. In order to bridge the distance, the team worked online on the script. The team found a studio in Berlin where they could record sessions and host guests for interviews. Then other parts of the team would edit the recordings.

Additionally, the marketing aspect was a challenge. Many people on the team didn't want to put their faces on social media, which some consultants advised them was necessary in order to reach a wider audience. Thus the team had to find ways to show content where people don't show their faces and adapt their talking side. Now that the team has published five or six episodes of the podcast, there has been a shift in the way the team communicates.

## HOW WAS THE PROJECT RECEIVED BY DIS:ORIENT'S AUDIENCE?

The project was received quite well. Audiences were pleased to see this topic discussed in the German media. Listeners really liked the podcast content and the other formats allowed the team to reach a broader audience. The team also attracted a younger audience through the various formats.

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## WHAT INSIGHTS OR LESSONS DID DIS:ORIENT GAIN FROM THIS PROJECT?

The team gained new knowledge about social media and how to interact with audiences, especially on how to use video formats. The team learned a lot about producing podcasts and gained new ideas and methods for engaging audiences. The host learned to speak more fluently and the team learned to ask better questions, becoming less stiff and camera shy. The team also learned more about the general European media landscape, regarding new corporations and what is happening in other countries.

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## WHAT DOES DIS:ORIENT PLAN ON DOING NEXT?

The team will continue with the online magazine and to use more video formats and other formats that work well with social media. The team is looking at more episodes being produced on the topic of Palestine, Israel, Germany, and the relations between those countries. But after this, the team wants to do a second season based on a format they already did within the magazine with different articles that were published, called *grenzgedanken* in German.

The team wants to bring the podcast format to other topics to increase its reach. They want to look at structures within Europe, EU borders, and border violence, and economic reasons and what that means for people with different passports with regard to how migration works. Additionally, the team wants to implement new format ideas such as reels, user queries, and accessible social media formats in simpler language, existing independently of the magazine work. The team wants to fulfill their educational mission while also creating and developing journalism that reaches people outside their existing bubble.

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## WHAT ADVICE WOULD DIS:ORIENT GIVE TO OTHER JOURNALISTS OR ORGANIZATIONS CONSIDERING A SIMILAR PATH?

In the face of political crisis and public funding cuts, it is important to try. Interact with people from other countries who face similar problems and find ways to invest in stories that motivate you.

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