

Get ahead of *fake news*

Lies make it halfway round the world before truth has even got its boots on.

We all know this saying, right? And we know that this is essentially why it's hard to correct fake news online; misinformation travels so fast across social media & the internet that corrections can't catch up.

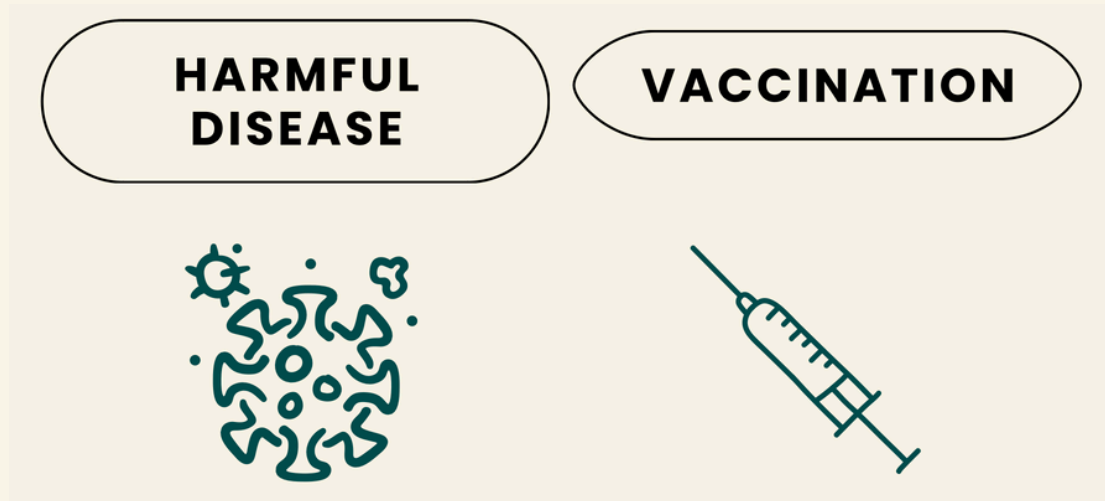
If your charity is affected by fake news you will know first-hand how misinformation – from distortion to outright untruths – can be hurtful to the individuals you work with. It can mislead the public about the issues you care about and in turn damage your charity's reputation.

You may feel that there is little or nothing you can do about it. However, don't despair!

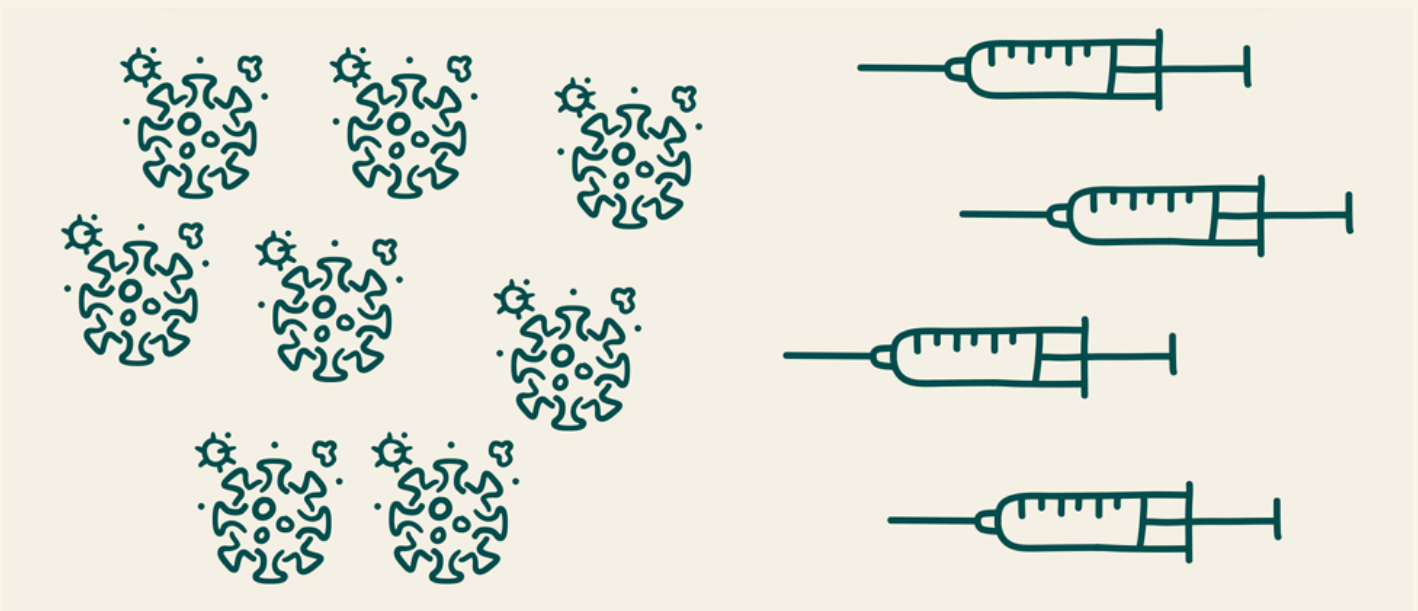
Academic research about a particular intervention may offer a good solution; pre-bunking.

What is pre-bunking?

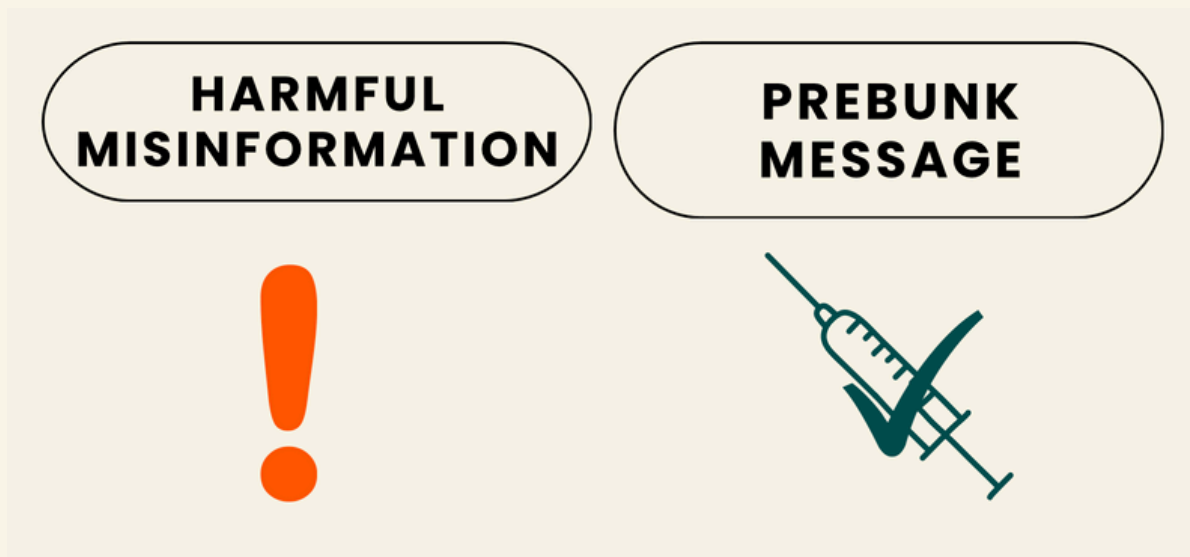
Pre-bunking is like a digital copycat of vaccination in medicine and public health.



Vaccinations essentially work by exposing people to a small, weakened dose of a disease. The body then builds resistance making it ready to recognise and resist the same hostile invader when exposed to it in the future.



Pre-bunking works in much the same way ...



By exposing people to small doses of misinformation, weakened by the inclusion of the correct information, people can build a resistance to the inaccurate claims.



Then, when exposed to the misinformation again, they are less likely to fall for it.



Here are 3 questions to help you think through how pre-bunking might work for your charity;

What misinformation damages our charity or the people it helps? Is the misinformation about people, statistics, tropes, geographical facts, specific misconceptions?

Use your answers to craft your pre-bunking message. Don't forget, the idea is to state the misinformation but weaken it.

Is there a cycle to the misinformation that affects our charity?

Are there specific events that trigger lots of misinformation? eg the school year, a particular holiday, an election

If you can predict when misinformation will be at its height you could time a pre-bunking campaign accordingly. Of course, you can pre-bunk at any time!

Who voices the misinformation and who believes it?

eg politicians, particular publications, the public generally, pressure groups?

Choose the right counter-voice for your intended audience.

Do you need a voice of authority or an influencer? A cartoon or well sourced facts?



3 types of pre-bunking message:

The 'Fact' sandwich

Start with your facts

Did you know that... Research shows...
This person is...

Add in the misinformation

Some people will tell you... You may have heard... Perhaps you thought...

End with facts

But the reality is... What they don't want you to know is... Research shows...

The 'Fact' bridge: *from danger to safety*

Warning!

Speak to your audience's emotions - they are in danger of being lied to or manipulated...

The vaccine

say what the untruth is that they will be exposed to

The Facts

explain what the facts are, what the reality is, now they are safe

Which door accesses your audience?

Claims

Are you pre-bunking specific claims or story lines that feed into a wider narrative?

Address these directly; they are inaccurate or fake.

Technique

Are you pre-bunking types of misinformation eg fake photos, misleading headlines, AI fakes?

Address as one example of ways bad actors try to fool us.

Stereo types

Are you pre-bunking tropes and stereotypes?

Address an example and explain how this feeds into a wider narrative.



If you want to read more, and get some ideas as to how you can use pre-bunking, here are some useful links:

Cambridge study of pre-bunking

www.cam.ac.uk/stories/inoculateexperiment

Poynter deep dive into pre-bunking

www.poynter.org/fact-checking/2022/what-is-prebunking-fact-checking/

Harvard Kennedy School show how a game can pre-bunk information.

<https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/global-vaccination-badnews/>

For a great 'how to' resource

<https://prebunking.withgoogle.com>

**Janette's website is www.besmartcookie.co.uk
For regular tips, follow on IG @besmartcookie**

