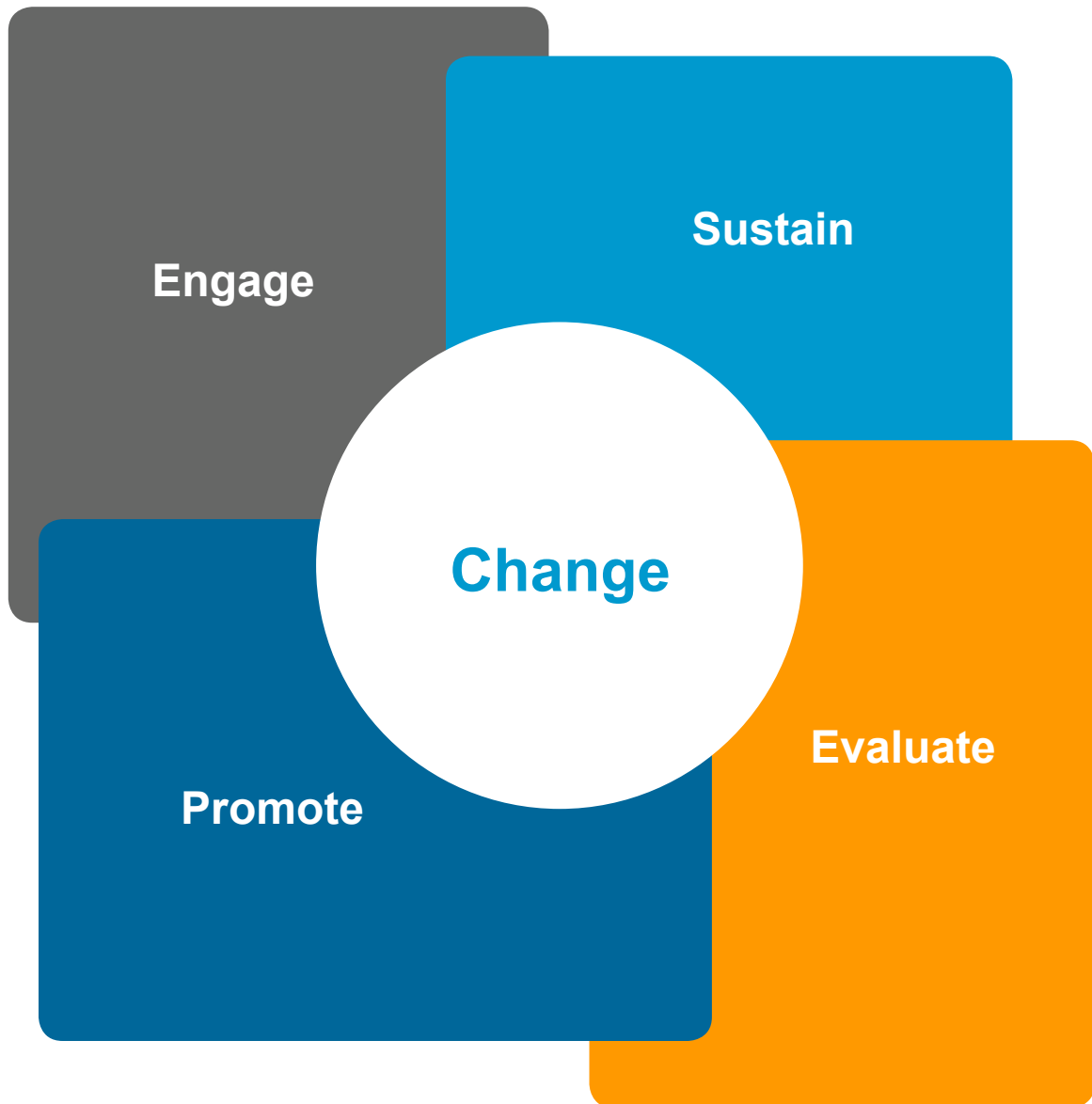


# e-campaigning ideas

Suggestions and case studies compiled by Advocacy Online



# e-campaigning ideas

Over the past seven years, since we launched the first generation of our software, e-campaigning has become more sophisticated and better integrated into overall campaign planning. Organisations launch e-campaigns with input from policy and research, media relations and communications, new media, and parliamentary affairs. It's the right approach.

But there is still a lot to learn, and we want to encourage a thoughtful sharing of ideas in this important and exciting field. The 'e-campaigning ideas guide' will hopefully provide some inspiration through the case studies presented. We also hope that the tips from our clients will help you to avoid big mistakes (we all have to make a few small ones!).

This year we set out to collect input on what we believe are four main areas of interest: engaging supporters, maintaining the interest of online communities, promoting online campaigns, and evaluating campaigns. We would like to acknowledge the input and support we've received from so many of our clients in putting this guide together.

To start things off, here are a few ideas from the team at Advocacy Online.

## Engage your supporters

Most organisations use email to encourage existing supporters to take action online. It goes without saying that the design, structure, and content of email alerts are critical to engagement with your issue. Data from the US (Exact Target study - [www.exacttarget.com](http://www.exacttarget.com)) found that open rates for email have been declining, but click through rates have been stable. So the trick is getting supporters to open your email! Make sure that you carefully consider the subject line, use split testing to see what works, and personalise the content. The best day to send emails for open rates is Friday, and the highest click-through rates are generated from emails delivered on Sundays.

## Maintain your community

A lot of work goes into the recruitment of new campaigners, so it's important to put the same effort into keeping them engaged. Drop-off rates are directly affected by the frequency and quality of ongoing communication beyond the initial campaign 'ask'. Too many organisations do not provide feedback to supporters on a regular interval or update on the progress of issues and campaigns. If you lose interest in them, don't be surprised if they lose interest in you.

## Promote your campaigns

In the last two years we've seen a significant shift toward more investment in promoting campaigns and recruiting online supporters. Many groups hit a ceiling in the size of their online communities and decided to come up with new and innovative ways of recruiting e-campaigners. Our advice to organisations is first to make sure that you are taking care of existing e-campaigners and that you have a plan to keep new recruits engaged. The next step is to develop a promotional plan that leverages the reach of your organisation in other areas (fundraising, events, media, etc.). Team up with other departments in your organisation to help each other. It's the most cost effective way forward.

## Evaluate your campaigns

Evaluation is often difficult because the primary outcome for most e-campaigning is achieving the policy objective. As this can take months and sometimes years, it is also important to establish other criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of e-campaigning. You can see from the tips submitted by our clients that criteria vary, so you need to decide what is appropriate to your organisation. Growing your community? Building awareness? The other issue is making sure that you have the infrastructure in place to collect data in a usable manner otherwise the evaluation of outcomes can be very time consuming or impossible.

# Save the Children

## Recruitment

Save the Children created a recruitment program to boost the number of active e-campaigners in their database. Part of their success has come from leveraging activities taking place within the broader communications plan for the organisation.

## Events

Various departments within Save the Children organise dozens of events every year. The campaigns team have taken advantage of this tremendous reach and used 'action cards' to sign up hundreds of supporters. For example, at the 2007 V Festival, along with other activities, Save the Children organised a Wellie Wanging competition (How far can you throw a Wellington boot?) at their tent to attract attention and encourage people to sign up. They managed to collect the names of about 1,000 supporters. They also signed up several hundred supporters using action cards which were distributed at various fundraising events including Wimbledon. School presentations on broader issues (assemblies and workshops) have also been successful.



Photo: Amy Linton



## Action Cards

Action Cards are a good way to collect the details of supporters at events or via direct mail. Save the Children have found that their 'generic' action cards are not as successful as the cards created for a specific campaign or issue. It's much easier to ask people to support a specific issue. These cards have been successful when distributed by partner organisations (schools, trade unions) and at Save the Children events. The direct mail approach has been less successful.

## Commentary

Save the Children estimates that almost 25% of their e-campaigners have been recruited through the action cards distributed at events. The Save the Children campaigns team is generally very good at asking other departments within the organisation to help them recruit supporters at whatever events are being organised. Why not leverage your existing networks first?

## Engage your supporters

**How do you get supporters interested in your issues? What techniques have you used to cut through the email and web clutter?**

*“You need to highlight that supporters can directly lobby a person of influence, and that as part of a mass movement their action WILL make a difference. We also create email templates that specifically request a reply from the campaign target. This helps campaigners to know that they ‘got through’ and forced the campaign target to think about the issue and reply. It never hurts to create a sense of urgency either.”*

**Thomas Chatterton - Campaigns Officer  
Shelter**

*“Some of our ‘activists’ are interested in particular issues that they select in their email preferences when they sign-up (e.g. whaling, farming issues) - we tailor messaging and actions that we know are of interest. It is also important to use the space in email alerts carefully. The top third is reserved for top line messages only and we try to include links to a specially prepared video on the campaign. Finally, we relate our campaign messages to human and everyday circumstances (e.g. tourism, farming, ethical eating, etc.).”*

**Andy Davies - International Production Manager  
WSPA**

*“We use a personal tone in our communications, both on the web and in our emails. Having bylines on our blog stories, signing emails and using our own names in the ‘from’ field on bulk emails (making sure ‘Greenpeace’ is mentioned somewhere in the subject line though) allows our supporters to contact us directly rather than a faceless organisation.”*

**Jamie Woolley - Web Editor  
Greenpeace UK**

*“Engaging supporters online starts with trying to condense complicated policy issues into easy-to-understand campaigning ‘asks’ that require minimal effort. Our email alerts are short and succinct, and we use e-newsletters to ‘warm up’ our supporters beforehand. Finally, the e-newsletters serve as a ‘chaser’ creating a second opportunity for supporters that don’t respond to the alert.”*

**Jae Bond - Online Campaigns Adviser  
NSPCC**

## Maintain your community

**Once you’ve found an interested supporter, how do you keep them engaged over a longer period?**

*“We estimate that roughly 1,000 people will take part in any given campaign action. This consistent level participation is driven by the personal connection to childhood disability shared by our supporters. We have also tried to run actions that are consistent with our strategy but aimed at different targets: MPs, local authorities, PCTs, and local media. This variety helps to maintain the interest level.”*

**Steve Broach - Campaign Manager  
Every Disabled Child Matters**

*“If supporters can see that their action has made a difference then they are more likely to continue to campaign with us. So a big part of our retention strategy is feeding results back out to our supporters. When we hand in a petition that has been signed online, we feed this back to supporters. If we get feedback from the government, we share the news. This helps us keep drop-off rates down.”*

**Jonathan Purchase - Youth Campaigner  
Save the Children UK**

*“Keeping your communication personal helps to retain the commitment of supporters. Other suggestions are: not to overuse supporters, give positive feedback, provide a variety of actions, and offer rewards.”*

**Thomas Chatterton - Campaigns Officer  
Shelter**

# Greenpeace UK

Energy Saving Light Bulbs

## The campaign

Greenpeace estimated that if older incandescent light bulbs were replaced with efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs, the UK could prevent five million tonnes of CO2 being released into the atmosphere each year. The objective of this campaign was to convince all major UK retailers to stop selling incandescent light bulbs. Greenpeace put together a league table of UK retailers ranking them on their commitment to a phase out in order to highlight who needed the most encouragement.



## The action

The 'ask' of the campaign was initially an email sent to the CEOs of about 10 major retailers. These companies all featured in the league table, and while several had poor commitments for phasing out incandescent bulbs, one in particular stood out: Woolworths. So the campaign switched and targeted only Woolworths. The 'ask' now was to email the CEO of Woolworths, but Greenpeace also created a neat little online tool that would take a postcode and retrieve the telephone number of the nearest Woolworths store. Why not call the local store manager!

## Key learnings

The telephone number facility was a great idea to create pressure at the local level. The only drawback was limited tracking to see who actually made the calls. There is also some speculation that the 'dual ask' – telephone the local store and email the CEO – may have caused some confusion. You can't argue with the result though. Woolworths agreed to a complete ban by 2011.

# Every Disabled Child Matters

Community Newspaper Action

## The campaign

Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM) launched a successful online media campaign earlier this year as part of their drive to encourage local councils to sign up to the EDCM Local Authority Charter. The Charter is a series of specific commitments EDCM is asking Local Authorities to make by January 2008.

## The action

In addition to asking supporters to write directly to local councils, EDCM set up a facility on Advocacy Online for supporters to write a letter to local newspapers. Publication of the letters in local newspapers helped to raise broader public awareness and increase the political pressure.



## Evaluation

The media action was very successful with 187 supporters taking part. Based on EDCM's media monitoring, 46 letters to editor were published in various newspapers. An analysis of the coverage meant that the campaign message was exposed to almost 1.7 million people providing an equivalent advertising value of £17,375.

# Promote your campaigns

## What are the most effective techniques for building awareness and engagement beyond your opted-in email database and website visitors?

*“Posting on third party websites is an effective way of reaching a broader audience that may not come to our own site, although managing a growing portfolio of profiles is time consuming. The challenge is to drive that new audience into taking action. One surprise we have had is our 20 minute film on decentralised energy which has received nearly 60,000 views on Youtube and is still rising.”*

**Jamie Woolley - Web Editor**  
Greenpeace UK

*“We’ve had a lot of success at events. A high percentage of our database has been recruited this way. We also have ‘giveaways’ to get people at events to come over speak to us.... people like a freebie after all! We also find postcards to be effective and continue to use these alongside email actions as it allows us to reach more people. On all of the cards we produce, people can only join our e-campaigns network. They are one of our key acquisition tools.”*

**Jonathan Purchase - Youth Campaigner**  
Save the Children UK

*“Two full page articles in the Daily Mirror added about 1,000 supporters to our campaign database overnight. Other than high-level media coverage, our supporter base has grown through word of mouth, particularly from us getting on the road and delivering conference presentations to audiences of parents and professionals. That has probably been more effective for us even than viral emails urging sign-up.”*

**Steve Broach - Campaign Manager**  
Every Disabled Child Matters

*“We use a wide range of recruitment vehicles. The mix includes:*

- advertising campaigns (print and online)
- leaflets, handouts and action cards
- viral emails
- events - festivals, conferences, etc.
- stunts - exhibitions, film screenings, ‘staff-on-the-streets’”

**Thomas Chatterton - Campaigns Officer**  
Shelter

*“We focus on nifty web media projects like [www.pigsof-god.org](http://www.pigsof-god.org). It’s a specially packaged campaign centered on one issue. We worked to get it into the forums and built a*

*viral component. Here’s another tip. If a ‘form based’ advocacy action is multi click, or just too many clicks, we see drop off. Using AJAX or similar technology to avoid page refreshes would bump up response rates.”*

**Andy Davies - International Production Manager**  
WSPA

# Evaluate your campaigns

## Once a campaign has come and gone, how do you evaluate the results? Achieving the policy objective? Participation? Awareness?

*“Achieving our campaign goals is the obvious answer, but even if we don’t immediately manage that, creating an interested and concerned audience we can go back to for the next push is an important factor. The usual stats such as list growth, web traffic and conversion rates to actions or donations can be used alongside more qualitative measures such as the tone of the responses we get online or by email or how much of an authority the organisation becomes on a campaign issue.”*

**Jamie Woolley - Web Editor**  
Greenpeace UK

*“We evaluate the success of our e-campaigns using several measures: participation rates, feedback from campaigners, and feedback from government ministers. Policy change is of course the single most important outcome, but sometimes the policy change doesn’t happen straight away. A good example is the £30 million for listening services which was announced after the campaign had ended. You need to be patient if your evaluation is based on the policy goal.”*

**Jae Bond - Online Campaigns Advisor**  
NSPCC

*“If the policy objective is achieved then this is the key success measure. Growth in our campaign network as a result of an action is also a Key Performance Indicator for the organisation. We believe it’s also important to measure the extent to which our supporters think a campaign is successful. A survey will go out to collect the feedback. Taking suggestions on board for future campaigns also shows that we’re listening which is vital for future campaigns successes.”*

**Jonathan Purchase - Youth Campaigner**  
Save the Children UK

# NSPCC

## Banner Recruitment

The NSPCC has experimented with a mix of online and offline marketing to promote campaigns and recruit campaigners. As website banner advertising provides the potential for relatively high targeting, the campaigns team decided to test the waters. The primary objective of the campaign was recruitment.

### The campaigns

Two different creatives were developed for two different campaigns. The first campaign - Internet Safety – encouraged the public to sign an online petition calling on UK electronics retailers to only sell computers with child protection software pre-installed. The second campaign - 100 Days - encouraged the public to pledge support for a campaign asking the new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, to develop an action plan to tackle violence against children in his first 100 days in office.

### The banners

The Internet Safety banner included a photograph of a little girl using a computer (shown here). This immediate visual connection to the issue helped these banners to perform significantly better than the creative used in the 100 Days campaign. The conversion rate for people that clicked through the Internet Safety banner was above 30%.

### The action

For both campaigns, the emphasis was on a very simple 'ask' that could be completed on a single page without the need to click through to further pages. This is a critical success factor for any banner ad campaign. The other important success factor was carrying the branding from the banners onto the landing page to encourage the conversion.

### Commentary

The campaign has been successful in cost effectively recruiting thousands of new supporters for the NSPCC. Despite a relatively long eight month run for Internet Safety campaign it continued to generate excellent conversions. It is important to make sure that the target audience is ready to engage with your issue – selecting a publisher for campaign recruitment is not only about the 'right demographic'.



# Acknowledgements

Advocacy Online gratefully acknowledges the contribution to this guide made by our clients. We believe the real value of this guide is their insight and experience. Thank you to: Greenpeace, the NSPCC, Save the Children, Shelter, WSPA, and Every Disabled Child Matters.



Advocacy Online is a leading provider of e-campaigning software and services. Established in September 2000 in London, England, our client base now includes over 60 leading charities and campaigning organisations in the UK, Canada, and Australia. Several of our clients rely on our software to run their campaigns in more than 10 countries around the world.

Our corporate objective is to develop innovative e-campaigning products that are fully supported by a team of professionals that want campaigns to succeed.



Our e-campaigning software is called e-activist 3.0. This product has been developed in order to:

- *provide campaigning organisations with easy to use tools to build and launch online actions*
- *create online actions with effective and targeted messaging*
- *create online actions that can be completely customised to the client's needs*
- *provide campaigning organisations with advanced tools to track, monitor, and evaluate their e-campaigning activity and community*
- *provide supporters with simple and engaging ways to take part in online actions*

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