

Organizing a successful petition campaign

Publishing a petition is only the beginning. *Organizing* means finding and elevating your organization's "hidden" leaders to drive growth on a massive peer-to-peer scale.

The internet makes it possible for literally anyone to publish a petition and spread it on social media, but there's a big difference between just publishing a petition and actually *organizing* a successful petition campaign. The critical distinction is that the organizing approach harnesses rich engagement data about your leaders (who's sharing the petition; who's recruiting peers to sign it) to drive *more action* from *more people*.



What is organizing?

Practiced by trailblazing campaigns and world-changing movements, organizing is the most efficient way to grow your supporter base. It runs on people power. Instead of telling everyone en masse to take the same action, you're going to raise a cohort of supporters to be leaders. They'll in turn recruit their own networks. Picture a snowflake that spreads outward and outward.

What's the difference?

	STANDARD PETITION	ORGANIZED PETITION CAMPAIGN
Has as a clear call to action	✓	✓
Makes social sharing easy	✓	✓
Incentivizes and tracks recruiting		✓
You own all data generated		✓
Elevates leaders to drive growth		✓
Petition is first step in broader path		✓

What's the goal of your petition?

✓ I want to influence a decision

The workhorse of petitions.

✓ I want to fire up my base

Many petitions aren't directed at any specific decision or decision maker. Instead, they're fundamentally expressive. Leaders use them to reconnect supporters with the mission.

✓ I want to rapidly grow my base

More and more organizations across diverse sectors are using the petition *format* and *approach* (not necessarily the word itself) for the sole purpose of reaching *new* supporters at a scale and speed not attainable through traditional signup forms. Petitions yield incredibly valuable data because people are expressing value-based affinity for your organization's project or overall mission. Research on successful mass movements shows that shared values fuel growth far and above purely demographic factors.

Your petition's call to action

This is the easy part. Create a call to action that is clear, compelling, and concise.

THIS IS OKAY...		...BUT THIS IS BETTER.
Advocacy Petition	California's water table is drying up and our policies are hurting conservation efforts. Sign our petition to support the Water Smart Bill!	I stand with 865,000 fellow Californians in the fight for smarter policies to conserve our beautiful state's scarce water resources.
Brand Petition	Support CMF Music and Amazing Records as we launch a national grassroots effort uniting country music fans in community service projects.	Add your voice to a nationwide movement of country music fans dedicated to serving our local communities!

Think about your call to action. As an exercise, write it down:

Use this checklist to cross-examine your call to action:

- ☐ Does it clearly communicate what's at stake?
- ☐ Is it concise?
- ☐ Is it anchored by action verbs? (eg. join, stand, fight...)
- ☐ Does it link individual action to a larger action?

Your petition's data fields

Now it's time to decide what information you need to collect from petition supporters. Since "need" is the operative word, begin with what's absolutely vital. Remember: Shorter petitions get more signatures. Each additional field you're asking signatories to fill out creates a barrier. At the same time, you want to ensure that you have the information you need to lead people to take the next step.

Most petitions include:

- First name
- Last name
- Email address
- Checkbox to receive email updates
- Zip code

Some additional fields to consider:

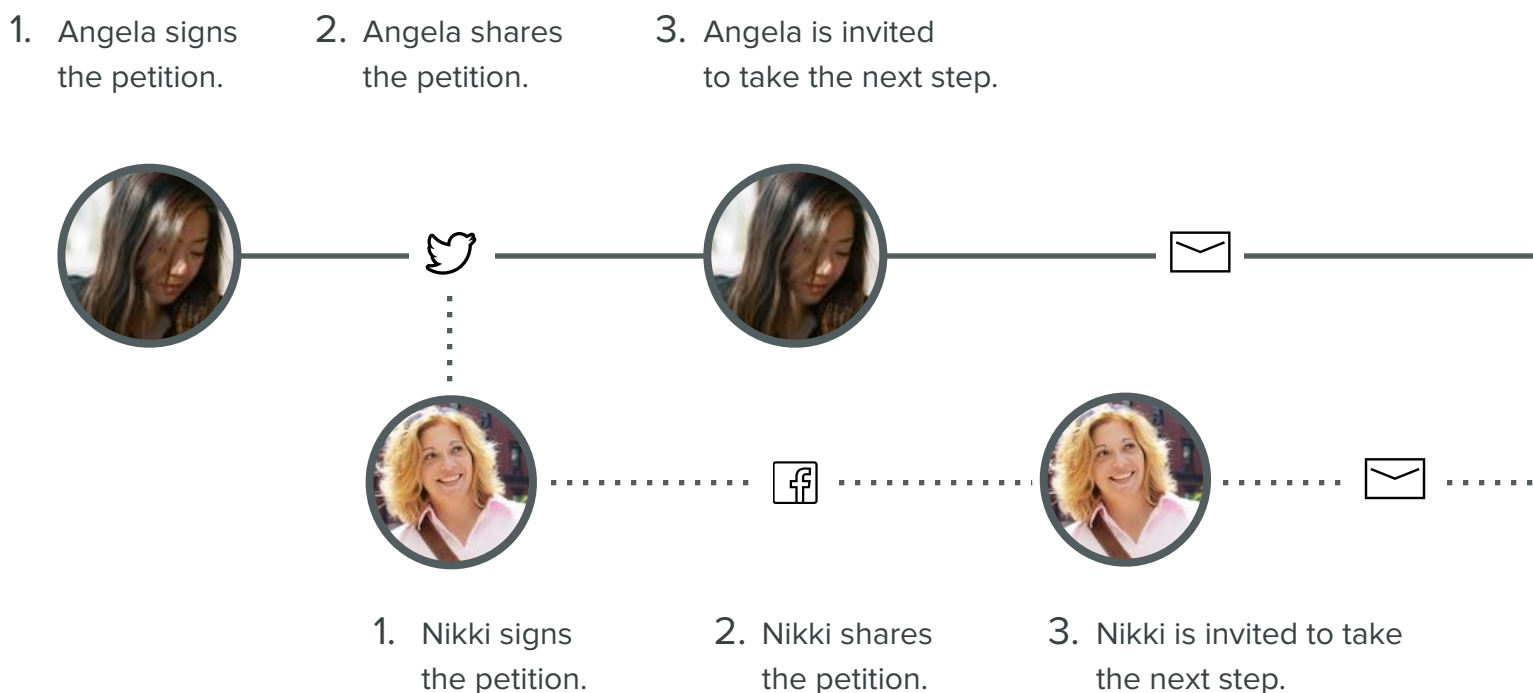
- Cell phone number
- Checkbox to receive text updates
- Optional comments field
- Checkbox to indicate interest in taking a specific next step (eg. volunteer)
- Self-identification dropdown menu (eg. demographics, issues, possible next steps)

List the data fields your petition will include:

Make the most of social recruiting

The moment of signing a petition is a powerful one. People who sign a petition are expressing their affinity for the shared vision of a larger community. In other words, *a signature is the very beginning of the journey*. What steps come next?

Every petition campaign should aim to seamlessly sequence the following steps:



Why is this sequence so critical?

The single largest challenge in a petition campaign isn't getting people to sign — it's getting people who sign to take the next step. Following the above sequence will significantly increase your rate of conversion from signature to social share and from signature to recruiter. Peer effects replicate this sequence on a huge scale. People are most likely to sign a petition when they see friends signing, too. Tracking is the other reason this sequence is so critical. You don't just want to be collecting data on who's signing. You want data that will help you rapidly grow — data on who's sharing, who's recruiting, and who's best at recruiting.

Here's another look at this sequence:

1. First, Angela **signs** the petition.

Will you sign?

First Name Last Name

Email Mobile phone

☒ Send me email updates ☒ Send me text message updates

Comments (optional)

☒ I want to help spread the word.

ADD SIGNATURE

2. After adding her signature, Angela lands on a screen that prompts her to share support for the petition on social media.

THANK YOU FOR SIGNING

Tell all your friends, they should join you! A link will be included. (0 chars left)

☒ Tweet ☒ Post on Facebook

POST

[No Thanks](#)




3. Angela is then **invited to take the next step** -- in this case, participating in a more formalized peer recruiting contest.

HELP RECRUIT SUPPORTERS

We're thrilled that you want to help us spread the word! You can recruit friends and family members to sign the petition using the link below, and recruited signatures will be automatically recorded. The top 100 recruiters will receive exclusive tickets to our nationwide tour.

Your personal tracking link

TOP RECRUITERS

Organizing to drive growth

You've launched the petition itself and created a basic flow for social recruiting — terrific! This part separates novices from the pros. Let's dig into the organizing strategy for taking your petition campaign to the next level.

1. Launch a social recruiting program that's trackable and scalable

Track social capital — So much ink spilled on “gamification” misses the whole point of using a social capital or currency system: it's an elegant way to track engagement. Doesn't need to be complicated -- just decide on how many points someone should get for sharing the petition and recruiting peers.

Highlight your leaders — Now you're going to create a leaderboard that highlights supporters with the most social capital (eg. your top recruiters). Use it to keep track campaign leaders and recognize them publicly.

Publish a page to lay it all out — This signup or volunteer page should accomplish 3 things: (1) Clearly describe what you're asking recruiters to do (2) Stir excitement about the reward -- anything from a shoutout to a free widget to an exclusive event invite; (3) Feature your leaderboard.



2. Elevate your leaders and influencers to grow the petition's reach

Start with an inventory — Comprehensive. Data-Driven. Easy. Those are the three things to aim for in doing an inventory of your leaders and influencers. Leaders are your petition's recruiters. Influencers are people who support your petition and have large audiences of their own. You might already have a low-fi way of identifying them, but with so many different channels of engagement and the internet's scale, most organizations have hundreds of "hidden" leaders and influencers.

Make a personalized ask — You might have some influencers in your audience who'd make ideal Social Media Ambassadors. Certain leaders have powerful stories to share; create opportunities for them to do so online and offline. Consider one influencer who might agree to be a Guest Broadcaster — the "voice" of your organization for the duration of a specific engagement campaign. Calls to action sent via influencers can get as much as 4x the conversion rate of emails sent directly from "Your Organization's Name."

Equip them with resources — You've got to make it exceedingly simple for your petition's leaders and influencers to do what you're asking them to do. Anyone who's helping your organization as a recruiter should have a unique recruiter link that will seamlessly track their progress (more on the next page!). For Social Media Ambassadors, set up a click-to-tweet page that you routinely circulate. For Guest Broadcasters, spearhead email copy and scheduling so that your influencers can just give the green light.



3. Micro-target to attract new influencers to your petition

Here's your secret weapon — Some of the most successful digital petition campaigns in the world use a simple but highly effective method. It begins by identifying several Twitter handles that are followed by people who are likely to support your petition. With software designed for leaders, you can easily import the followers of any Twitter handle into your database.

Drill down to prioritize — Maybe you've just imported 10,000 Twitter followers. Now you want to narrow the pool to find cohorts among them who meet certain criteria — people who have significant audience reach, social sway, and affinity for your mission. For example, you might target followers of @climatechange and @environment and @greenparty to find everyone with over 1000 followers, an above-average Klout score, and the word “student” in their Twitter bio. “Follow” their Twitter accounts, see who follows back, and invite these new influencers to help spread your petition!

Matches all of the following:

with any of the following Tags

@climatechange_follower

@environment_follower

@greenparty_follower

Add Group Row

and Number of twitter followers

is greater than or equal to

1000

Add Group Row

and Klout score

is greater than or equal to

40

Add Group Row

and Bio

contains

student

Add Group Row

Add criteria

Filter

Save Filter As...



Ready to make it happen?

Leaders around the world use NationBuilder software to launch petitions, grow a community of supporters, and drive action on a massive scale.

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