

# A guide to 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 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 change-making 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 raising a cohort of supporters to be leaders. In turn, they'll recruit their own networks. Picture a snowflake that spreads further outward and outward.

## What's the difference?

	Standard Petition	Organized Petition Campaign
Has a clear call to action	X	X
Makes social sharing easy	X	X
Incentivizes and tracks recruiting		X
Allows you to own all data generated		X
Elevates leaders to drive growth		X
The petition is the first step in a broader path		X

## 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* for the sole purpose of reaching new supporters at a scale and speed not attainable through traditional group signup forms. Petitions yield incredibly valuable data because people are expressing a 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 okay...	...But this is better
<b>Advocacy Petition</b>	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.
<b>Brand Petition</b>	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!

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

- Does it clearly articulate what's at stake?
- Is it concise?
- Is it anchored by action verbs? (eg. join, stand, fight, etc.)
- 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 signers. Since "need" is the operative word, begin with what's absolutely vital. Remember, shorter petitions get more signatures. Each additional field you're asking signees to fill out creates a barrier. At the same time, you want to ensure that you have all the information you need to guide your supporters to take the next step.

## Most petitions ask for:

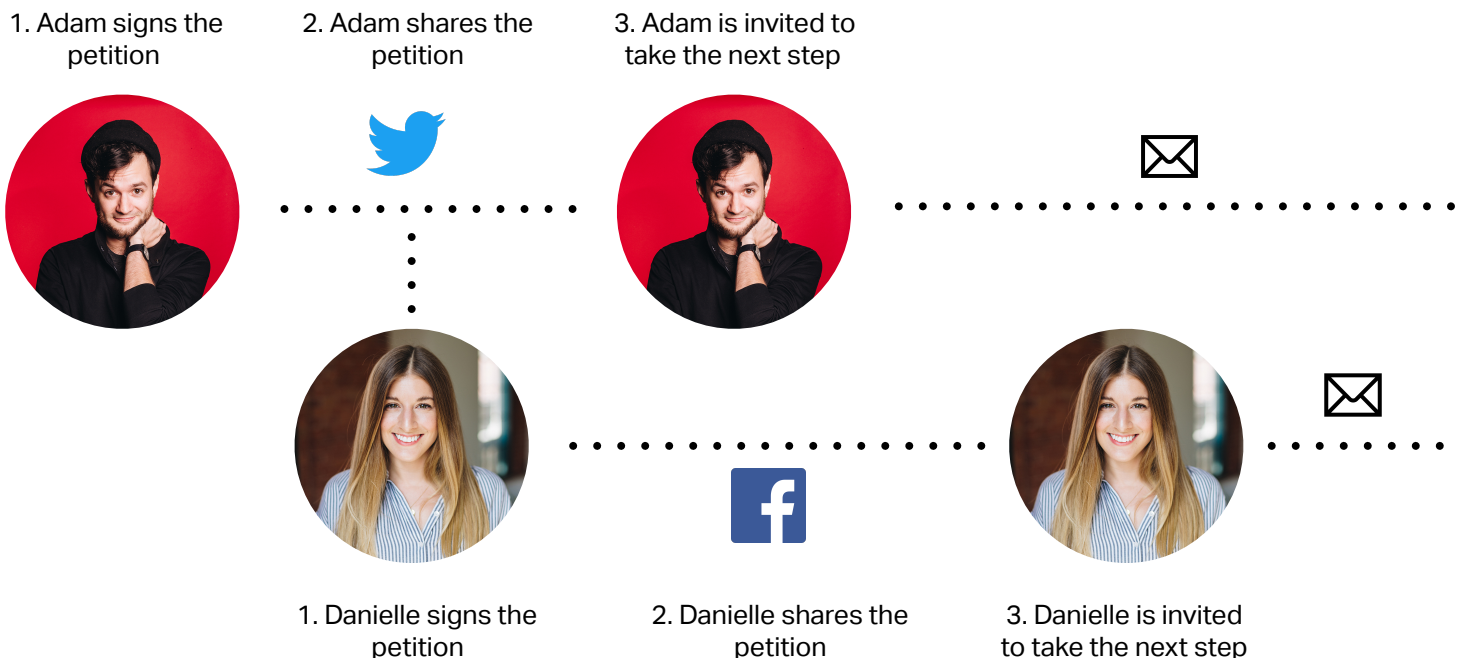
- First name
- Last name
- Email address
- Checkbox to receive email updates
- Zip code

## 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)

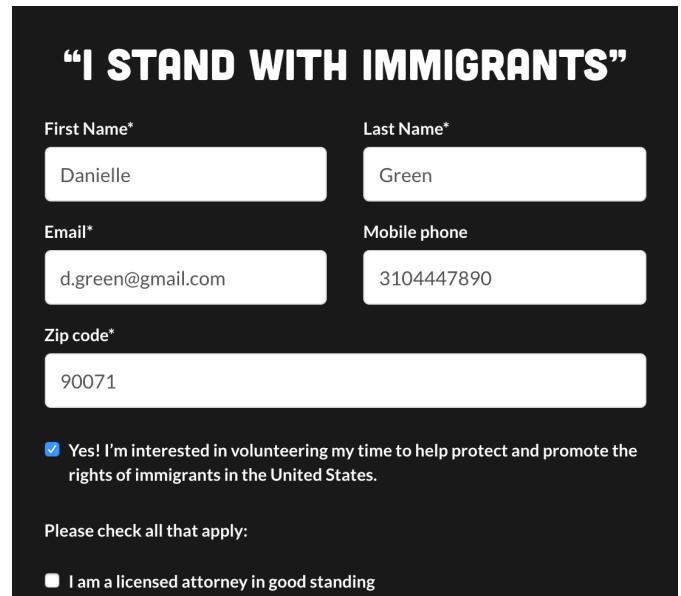
## Make the most of social recruiting

The moment of petition signing is a powerful act. 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*. Every petition campaign should aim to seamlessly sequence the following steps:



## Here's another look at this sequence:

1. First, Danielle signs the petition.



**“I STAND WITH IMMIGRANTS”**

First Name\*  Last Name\*

Email\*  Mobile phone

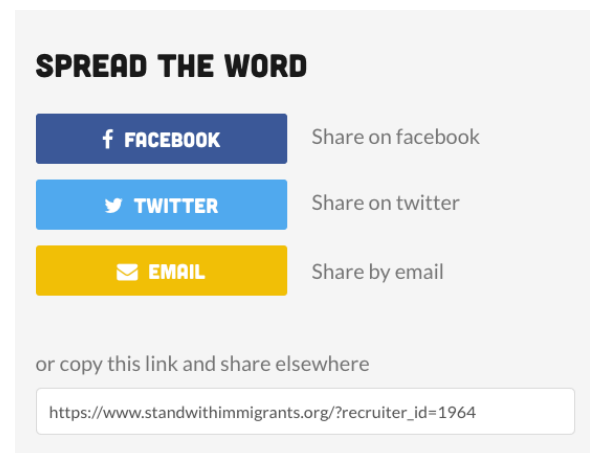
Zip code\*

Yes! I'm interested in volunteering my time to help protect and promote the rights of immigrants in the United States.

Please check all that apply:

I am a licensed attorney in good standing

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



**SPREAD THE WORD**

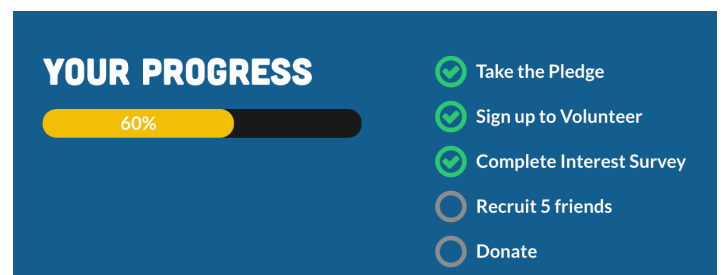
Share on facebook

Share on twitter

Share by email

or copy this link and share elsewhere

3. Danielle is then invited to take the next step—in this case, participating in more engagement actions in order to take her profile from 60% to 100%.



**YOUR PROGRESS**

60%

- Take the Pledge
- Sign up to Volunteer
- Complete Interest Survey
- Recruit 5 friends
- Donate

## 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 supporter to recruiter. Peer-to-peer efforts 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.

## Organizing to drive growth

You've launched the petition itself and created a basic flow for social recruiting—terrific! This part separates the novices from the pros. Now, 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. It 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 of 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 up 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 four times 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 NationBuilder, 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 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!

**Ready to make it happen?**

Customers around the world use NationBuilder's software to launch petitions, grow their supporter communities, and drive action on a massive scale.

**NationBuilder gives you everything you need to organize a successful petition campaign:**

- Themed petition pages
- Seamless data capture
- Influencer targeting
- Recruiter links
- Gamification
- Tracking
- Advanced filtering
- Data sync
- Social match
- Dynamic profiles and dashboards  
Mapping
- List segmentation
- Integrated email, social, and text keywords
- Twitter follower imports

**Ready to start your own petition?**

Start for free at <https://nationbuilder.com/create> or connect with our sales team at [solutions@nationbuilder.com](mailto:solutions@nationbuilder.com) or 1-213-992-4809