

Online Petitions

To demonstrate that you have broad support for a cause, you should consider creating a petition. In the past, petitions were created by a person going door to door asking for signatures on a piece of paper. This results in a limited number of signatures since you can only reach people in your vicinity. Now there is a much more efficient way of collecting signatures – e-petitions. An e-petition is a petition that exists online and allows supporters to go a website to add their signature. While you should not abandon the traditional petition for some constituencies (like people who don't have access to computers), a move to an e-petition can broaden your reach and thus get you more signatures.

An online petition can help you:

- Demonstrate mass support for a particular action quickly and easily.
- Get signatures from people from all over the world rather than just in one region.

While e-petitions are very easy to use, they have some drawbacks that you may want to consider. Since people are not actually signing their name but rather typing their name and email address, the validity of the signature is sometimes in doubt. This is especially an issue when the petition allows people to sign their name as Anonymous. Some e-petition services try to overcome this by making signatories confirm their email address before their signature is posted.

Tips for Writing a Petition

(from “[How to Write a Petition](#)” by GoPetition)

- **Know your target.** Who will you send the petition to once signatures are collected? Make sure this person has the power to do what your petition advocates for. Keep this in mind when writing the petition. Tailor it to that audience.
- **Be concise.** Clearly state the goal of the petition, a little background information and then link to more information if necessary. Make sure you explain what the problem is and why the solution you propose is needed.
- **Be realistic.** Write a petition for something that you can achieve. Aim high, but be realistic!
- **Spell check!**

Promote your Petition

You cannot create a petition and expect it to attract thousands of signatures by itself. You have to promote it. Here are some ideas to get your petition attention (all of which involve using your other ICT tools to promote the use of this one):

- **Write a press release** about the initiative your petition is about and urge people to sign the petition. Send this press release out to everyone on your email list.

- Promote your petition on your **website**.
- **Find a popular blogger** that is interested in the issue your petition is about and ask him or her to blog about the petition and urge his or her readers to sign it.
- Promote your petition on **Facebook, Myspace** and any other social networks you're on.

Petition Providers

There are several websites that will host your petition for free. Below is a sample of some of them:

Petition Online

<http://www.petitiononline.com/>

This is a petition site that allows you to create free online petitions. Two of its main features are that you can choose what information you want signatories to give and that the petition text cannot be edited after it is submitted. While the latter doesn't sound like a feature, it makes the petition more significant since you cannot change the text after people have already signed it. This adds authority to your petition.

Care2 Petition Site

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/>

Care2 is a website dedicated to activism and change on a variety of issues including the environment, human rights, health and more. Part of their robust website includes a petition site where users can create petitions related to social change issues. This is a great place to put your petition as the people who use Care2 are the type of people who will identify with your cause. One downside is that the author of the petition can edit the text of the petition after people have signed it.

iPetitions

www.ipetitions.com

This is another free petition site. It has features such as the ability to customize your petition page's look, add additional questions to ask your signatories, and more. One downside to iPetitions is that the author of the petition can edit the text of the petition after people have signed it.

CitizenSpeak

<http://www.citizenspeak.org/>

CitizenSpeak is not quite a petition but has a similar effect. Instead of gathering signatures and then presenting them to an official, CitizenSpeak helps you manage a campaign of getting your supporters to send emails directly to officials. It creates a webpage for your cause that contains your template letter. Then you send out the URL of the page to your supporters, they fill out their personal information, add a personal statement if they like and then they can send the email to the official with the click of a button.

iConcur

<http://apps.facebook.com/iconcur/>

If your organization uses Facebook, adding the iConcur application to your profile can help you tap your Facebook network for signatures to a petition. iConcur is an application that allows you to create a petition on Facebook and invite your friends to sign it. This is an innovative idea, but you may not get as many signatures this way than if you created a petition at an outside website and just notified your Facebook friends of its location.

Additional Resources

How to Write a Successful Petition

<http://www.ipetitions.com/how-to-write-petition.html>

Tips on how to write a petition that will garner many signatures.

How to Write a Petition

<http://www.gopetition.com/howtowritepetition.php>

Tips on writing and promoting your petition.