

# ONLINE ADVOCACY

## Tapping Into Your Most Passionate Supporters

### THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- *The Latest Advocacy Trends*
- *Advocacy Benchmarks from The Convio Online Nonprofit Benchmark™ Study*
- *More Than a Dozen Real-World Examples of Successful Online Advocacy Campaigns*
- *5 Tips for Making the Most of Online Advocacy Campaigns by M&R Strategic Services*

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide gives you background, tips, and inspiring real-world stories about how to use online advocacy approaches to build your email list, influence public policy, and drive donations. It was created by a team of experts with the experience of working on Internet projects with more than 1,400 nonprofit organizations throughout the United States and Canada.



**For more detailed best practices on online advocacy approaches,** refer to the *Additional Resources* section at the end of this guide.

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# INTRODUCTION

It's probably no surprise to you that the Internet has transformed the way nonprofits organize, energize and mobilize activists in support of their cause. Using the Internet for advocacy—or influencing the public to agree with your organization's opinion and to influence policy makers—can be highly effective. It's a low-cost way to reach activists quickly and inspire more of them to act.

**But, let's not forget about two other ways that online advocacy can help your organization:**

## **1. Growing Your Email List**

Online advocacy can be a powerful way to grow your list of supporters. Think about it: People who are touched by your organization's mission are likely to sign a petition and even pass it along to friends and family. That's easier for them than donating or asking friends and family to donate, so it's a great way to build your organization's email list.

## **2. Increasing Donations**

Don't forget about your existing advocates: If your organization is overlooking them as potential donors, you're missing out. They're a high-value, passionate group—you know that because they're already supporting your organization's mission by taking action. Your organization's fundraising campaigns should leverage them.

**What many nonprofit organizations are realizing is that online advocacy is about more than just sending an email action alert.** It's about building an ongoing relationship with a loyal network of constituents ready to support the issues most important to your organization.

This trend in online advocacy is closely linked to the availability of sophisticated online marketing software that helps organizations use the Internet to reach new constituents, collect information about them, use that information to motivate them, track their activity with the organization and build relationships with them to encourage ongoing support. An increasing number of organizations are using this approach. And, they're incorporating it into a broader multi-channel approach that includes social media, mobile technology, advertising, direct mail, telemarketing, and live events. These groups are not only reaching new constituents and motivating them to take action, but also developing relationships with constituents so that they become loyal activists and, potentially, loyal donors in the future.

You may be a public policy manager or director who picked up this guide to read about tips for using online approaches to inspire legislative change. That's great. But, you're also going to learn about ways that you can work with your marketing, development, and government relations staffers to leverage online advocacy approaches to build your email list and raise more funds.

So, read this guide with a fresh eye. Share it with your development director. Tell your executive director and marketing staffers about it. It's a whole new way to look at your online advocacy program.

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## ADVOCACY TRENDS

As the Internet becomes an increasingly powerful force in today's advocacy efforts, its use is evolving. Any nonprofit professional with oversight for public policy—as well as those managing other organizational functions such as fundraising and marketing—should pay close attention to the latest developments.

**Here are some of the top trends:**

### A Multi-Channel Approach

Nonprofits are realizing that focusing too heavily on one communications channel is simply not smart. Just think about all of the different ways that people take in information and reply to communications: websites, social media sites, texting, phone calls, direct mail, email. The most effective approach to reaching new constituents, getting them involved, and building a long-term relationship with them is to reach out through multiple channels and also give them multiple channels in which to respond.

### Integration Of Fundraising With Advocacy

An organization's donors and activists have a strong affinity for the organization—after all, they donated money or time for the organization's cause. Coordinating advocacy and fundraising efforts immediately supplements the pool of potential activists and donors for any given appeal. Forward-thinking organizations recognize this trend. They've broken down the invisible barrier between advocacy and development, sharing lists and coordinating constituent communications for more effective campaigns.

### ► Quick Tip

Convio's software allows organizations to conduct online fundraising and advocacy campaigns, and collect information from both in a single online database. This helps any organization to more easily convert advocates to donors and donors to advocates through targeted online communications.

### Increased Use of New Media, Like Social Networking and Text Messaging

Social networks are a critically important word of mouth engine. And, they're starting to play a more prominent role for constituents of all ages. In fact, a recent study by Convio<sup>1</sup> of donor trends of the generations found that half of the people surveyed who were born in 1945 or earlier were on Facebook™. Nearly 30% of the people born 1946-1964 use it regularly.

And, don't forget about texting. Mobile phone use is phenomenal: More than 90% of people in the United States have a mobile phone<sup>2</sup>. Text messaging using mobile phones provides a convenient and quick way for a person to engage with you. The growth of smart phones, like the BlackBerry™ and iPhone™, also provide opportunities to engage with existing and potential constituents via applications.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Next Generation of American Giving* <http://www.convio.com/nextgen>

<sup>2</sup> *US Wireless Quick Facts from CTIA Media* <http://www.ctia.org>

Savvy nonprofits are starting to incorporate these and other new media channels into their overall advocacy strategy.

### More Emphasis on Community-Building

While many organizations are beginning to use the Internet to market to activists so they will take action and encourage their friends to do the same, the most sophisticated organizations are also creating opportunities for activists to connect and interact with each other to build communities and more powerful advocate networks. As activists interact with each other through online community forums or physical meetings in the offline world, they become more engaged and passionate.

### Web Forms Over Emails

An increasing number of constituents are using email to communicate their views. In response, most legislators are avoiding spam attacks and attempting to standardize electronic communications by blocking email and forcing constituents to submit their information through web forms. In fact, all but two U.S. Senators are directing constituents to their websites to send messages, versus using public email addresses.

However, the use of web forms by legislators has created a unique challenge for organizations: Almost every legislative web form is different, so automating delivery of legitimate messages is difficult. The good news is that a vendor coalition is working on standards for delivering messages to Congress that will do away with the current “every-member-has-their-own-web-form-with-different-requirements” situation.

#### ► Quick Tip

Look for online advocacy software, such as Convio’s, that includes tools for automatically entering constituent data into a legislator’s website in the correct format.

***If you’re not actively watching these trends, you should.*** They’re indicators of how your constituents are increasingly communicating. They’re also road signs for which direction your advocacy programs should be heading to effectively build your email list, inspire more activists to take action, and raise more funds well into the 21st century.

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# LIST-BUILDING THROUGH ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

To have successful advocacy, fundraising, and marketing programs, you need a base of supporters with whom you can develop a strong relationship. Your advocacy efforts can help. This means gathering new email addresses, promoting advocacy with existing online constituents, learning about constituents' interests and keeping them informed and engaged.

The good news: Your fundraising and marketing staffers also have a vested interest in building your nonprofit's email list. So, be sure to work together for even better results.

**Here are six techniques to help you reach new constituents and get them signed up:**

## 1 GATHER EMAIL ADDRESSES OFFLINE

Every time you communicate with existing or prospective supporters, you have the opportunity to collect email addresses. Planned interactions such as renewal appeals, membership drives, and event invitations are perfect opportunities to ask for email addresses. Simply add an email address field to all response forms. At events where you'll interact with a large number of constituents, set out a newsletter sign-up sheet or offer a giveaway for attendees who drop in a card with their name and email address.

Remember, when asking constituents for email addresses, you should emphasize the benefits they'll receive by providing this information. Remind supporters that by communicating with them online, your organization can save money and time, allowing you to more effectively serve your mission. Also emphasize the benefit of timely communication: With email communications, you're better equipped to respond to compelling events and inform them quickly of important news, developments, events and programs.

### ► Quick Tip

When collecting email addresses, be sure to let people know that the organization is collecting this information and how it will be used. And, always give people a chance to opt out of receiving email.

## 2 GATHER EMAIL ADDRESSES ONLINE

Your website is fertile ground for reaching new prospects and existing constituents and collecting their email addresses. Visitors to your website have sought you out because they're interested in your organization. This existing affinity is a powerful incentive for online visitors to provide you with the information you need to build relationships with them online. **Some proven techniques:**

- **Provide a quick online registration mechanism.**

Use a web-based form that allows site visitors to register, and that automatically captures the information in an online database. Your registration form should be easy to read and

fast to complete. Think carefully about the information you need to capture, and minimize the number of required fields to ensure a quick, easy process for online registrants.

- **Give site registration prominent placement.**

Dedicate a consistent area of your home page to promoting online registration. Place it in an eye-catching spot to reflect its importance. And, don't forget to promote registration throughout the rest of your website—consider including a registration link in your page wrapper so the message will be promoted on every page of your site.


Also, consider using “lightbox,” also known as “modal windows,” that pop up and request a response from the visitor before he or she can continue browsing the page. This is a great way to call attention to an issue and get people to quickly sign up to support it.

- **Promote the benefits of online registration.**

Make registration compelling for your site visitors, and they will register. Create special benefits for registered members, and link to a separate page explaining the perks, such as free email newsletters, advance notification of upcoming events, or members-only pricing for ticket sales. Then, invite site visitors to register by using an action phrase such as “Register to receive updates” or “Sign up for our educational newsletter.”

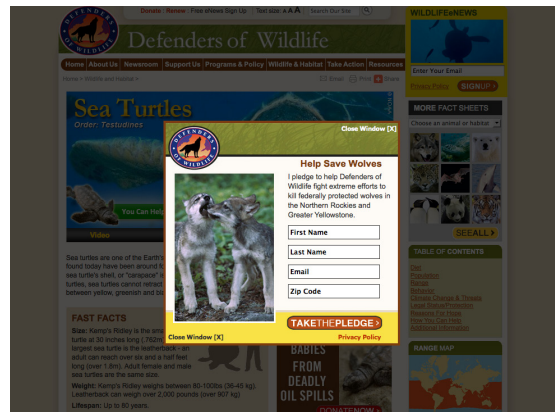
- **Make the most of web marketing.**

Consider taking advantage of the free Google Grants program for search engine marketing (SEM). With SEM, you “purchase” keywords to promote visibility. Keep in mind that searchers are pre-qualified prospects; you need to compel them to visit your website and act by crafting offers that are designed to drive traffic and registrations.

 **For more information about building an email address file**, download *The Basics of Email Marketing for Nonprofits: Using Email Communications to Build and Strengthen Constituent Relationships*, <http://www.convio.com/emailbasics>

### **3** CREATE A LIST-BUILDING CAMPAIGN

Consider creating some fun and/or engaging campaigns to get people to register on your website. For example, start a photo contest designed around a prominent advocacy issue. Offer voting on “your favorite \_\_\_\_\_”. Offer a free gift such as a bumper sticker, mug or shirt. Select an evergreen action to promote—one that will be relevant for a long period so that you don't have to swap out your campaign frequently.



*Defenders of Wildlife uses a “lightbox” to draw attention to an issue and encourage visitors to sign a petition.*

## 4 SWAP LISTS

Consider working with other like-minded organizations that might be willing to “trade” their list with you for a one-time email. They can send a “chaperoned” email on your behalf to their list and vice-versa, giving you both a chance to reach out to new prospective supporters. These emails can drive constituents to take some type of action, and by doing so, they will then be opted in to your list. If you choose to do this, be sure to de-duplicate your two lists; a number of firms offer a low-cost service for de-duping lists. There’s no need to solicit your own list if you already have their email address—in fact, it’s likely to annoy them.

## 5 PROMOTE ADVOCACY WITH EXISTING ONLINE CONSTITUENTS

Your existing donors and volunteers are good prospects for activism. Their past activity indicates that they already have a strong affinity for your organization. Your existing online constituents are good prospects, too. For example, constituents who read a lot of content on your website about children’s issues would be more likely to respond to your latest advocacy alert about upcoming child-related legislation. Use email, website, and social media interactions to identify donors, volunteers and other constituents who are not currently activists, and promote your advocacy activities to them.

## 6 ASK ACTIVISTS TO RECRUIT OTHER ACTIVISTS

When you communicate with activists, encourage them to share your message with their friends and colleagues via email or on their social networks. Provide “tell-a-friend” and social sharing links in your website and email content that let activists easily share alerts and other information with a personal note. Also, consider providing email greeting cards on your website so constituents can send them to friends and family. Because constituents send these communications to others with whom they already have a personal relationship, recipients are more likely to open them and read the content, which in some cases may be a call-to-action.

### ► Quick Tip

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Social networks thrive on user-generated content, and there’s probably no easier way to spread your message than by allowing activists to pull content into their streams, feeds, etc. for their personal networks to consume. With Convio’s new Social Sharing feature, you can now enable your Convio-hosted sites to make your content portable and reach into the personal networks of anyone who visits your site.



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# MOBILIZING ACTIVISTS FOR POLICY CHANGE

Now let's talk about your specific job for a while. You need online techniques that motivate people to take action. But you might be surprised: Online advocacy is just one aspect. Successful policy campaigns involve a multi-channel approach.

**The nine techniques in this section will help you to create effective email, website and other messages to extend your reach and inspire action.**

## 1 CREATE COMPELLING EMAIL MESSAGES

Email is one of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to reach activists immediately. There are many things you can do to increase the effectiveness of each message you send. Keep subject lines short and use them to convey urgency and compel recipients to open the email immediately. Personalize the message by including the recipient's name and noting that he or she is receiving the email as a result of having indicated an interest in the topic at hand. Make the email brief, but provide enough background to trigger action.

## 2 TEST!

Prior to sending your email to hundreds or thousands of people, you should thoroughly test your communication. This important process prevents distribution of emails containing costly and/or potentially embarrassing mistakes. Designate and train a few people within your department or organization, and send test messages to this group to maintain consistent quality standards.

You also should take advantage of the inherent benefits of the Internet by sending test messages to a sub-set of target recipients prior to sending it to your entire email file. Your online advocacy software should help you do this easily. Because the Internet allows you to send messages and receive responses quickly, you can compare response rates of different messages and subject lines, and then refine your email message before sending it to the entire constituent base—ensuring the maximum response for each email campaign.

### ► Quick Tip

There are many things to consider when sending email communications.



**For more details about topics including spam, email communication frequency and message testing,**

refer to the Convio guide, *The Basics of Email Marketing for Nonprofits: Using Email Communications to Build and Strengthen Constituent Relationships*, available here:

<http://www.convio.com/emailbasics>

## 3 INCLUDE LANDING PAGES OR MICRO-SITES

While email is the cornerstone of your online advocacy efforts, it's also important to include a link to a landing page for each campaign—where constituents can go to find out more about the issue you're

promoting, and where they can take action. Another way to extend the reach of your advocacy campaign is to promote it on pages throughout your website to capture the interest of new site visitors and those who do not receive your email communications.

Also consider creating a micro-site. This can be a section on your website with its own web address and that has its own campaign branding. Similar to a landing page, a micro-site has a tight focus on a specific campaign to drive people to act immediately.

As with your email messages, be sure to test your landing pages and micro-sites to ensure they work correctly and that they don't have dreaded typos. Also as with your email messages, you can have two different versions of your landing page or micro-site in which you vary the message and/or graphic that's delivered to site visitors. This will help you to determine which messages or graphics inspire higher action rates.

## 4 CULTIVATE INTEREST

Use the Internet to provide advocacy-related information that will pique constituents' interest in activism. For example, send an email with a link encouraging constituents to visit your website to view scorecards that show how legislators voted on key issues. Or, send timely updates about significant votes or new developments. Sending regular updates and other communications helps to keep your organization top-of-mind and make constituents feel more connected with the organization. This, in turn, makes them more likely to support your organization when you send an action alert.

### ► Did You Know?

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Effectively influencing change requires confidence that your messages are reaching legislative officials. The Convio Advocacy Delivery Assurance Program actively monitors to ensure your constituents' web forms, emails, and faxes get to the right people as quickly as possible.

## 5 USE VOTE DATA

Continuing grassroots efforts after votes have taken place can help ensure ongoing support for the issues most important to your organization. Your online advocacy software should allow you to use legislator vote data to develop scorecards that rate legislators based on how they voted with respect to your organization's position on an issue. It also should allow you to create vote pages with a description of an issue, vote date, your organization's position on the issue, how constituents' legislators voted on the matter, and the legislators' scorecards. And, it should allow you to target action alerts to a subset of your email file based on how individuals' legislators voted on a specific issue.

# CASE IN POINT

## EFFECTING LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

Here's a great example of using online advocacy techniques to effect substantial legislative change: Defenders of Wildlife was able to quickly mobilize large numbers of their constituents in support of a single member who championed an issue.

During the spring of 2010, Defenders of Wildlife called on their Colorado supporters to contact their State Representatives and urge them to support House Bill 1238, an important piece of legislation to help save the lives of local wildlife and reduce costly—and potentially fatal—wildlife-vehicle collisions. The bill requires the Colorado Department of Transportation to work with the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Colorado State Patrol to identify “Wildlife Crossing Zones,” and post signs to let drivers know when they’re entering one. Thanks in large part to the **more than 3,500 advocacy messages that were sent** by the organization’s constituents to Colorado’s Representatives and Senators, the bill was passed.

The screenshot shows the Defenders of Wildlife website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, About Us, Newsroom, Support Us, Programs & Policy, Wildlife & Habitat, Take Action, and Resources. Below the navigation bar is a search bar and a text size selector. The main content area features a large article titled "Defenders Helps Pass Colorado Bill to Reduce Wildlife Road Kill, Collision Fatalities". The article text states: "Each year, thousands of animals are killed while trying to cross Colorado's highways, including elk, deer, mountain lions, and the imperiled lynx. Wildlife-vehicle collisions are not only a threat to our animals but to human safety as well. Crashes have cost Americans more than \$8 billion annually along with hundreds of lives lost. Thankfully, the Colorado Legislature has taken steps to reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions. During the spring of 2010, Defenders of Wildlife called on our Colorado supporters to contact their State Representatives and urge them to support House Bill 1238, an important..." An image of a lynx is shown in the article. To the right of the article is a sidebar with a "Defenders in Your World" section, a "Support Wildlife" section with a "DONATE NOW" button, and a "DEFENDING WOLVES" section. The website also features a "Black-footed Ferret" image and a "Success Stories" menu on the left.

Using Convio Advocacy, Defenders of Wildlife constituents were able to garner legislative support to pass a Colorado bill to reduce wildlife road kill.

## 6 GIVE ACTIVISTS MULTIPLE OPTIONS

After you've spread the word about your latest advocacy issue, it's critical to give activists a convenient way to make their voices heard. Remember, not everyone wants to take action in the same way. Provide pre-formatted letters on your website that constituents can easily customize and automatically send to the correct decision-makers via web form or by fax. For returning advocates, populate any form fields automatically for their convenience.

## 7 ENSURE MESSAGE DELIVERY

Your online advocacy campaign's success will depend largely on getting your activists' messages to the right decision-makers. But, with the growing volume of email aimed at decision-makers today, reaching the right people at the right time has become a challenge. Messages might not get delivered or, if they do, might go unread because staffers cannot keep up with the volume.

To manage the flood of messages, many legislators' offices only accept constituents' input through web-based forms on the legislators' websites. At the same time, an increasing number of advocacy groups are realizing that general email blasts are not always effective, and they're looking for alternatives to ensure their activists' messages get through. The right online tools can help:

- **Look for flexibility in targeting.**  
Invest in online tools that provide the flexibility to easily and quickly create target groups of the exact decision-makers and influencers required for each campaign. You should be able to organize targets in a variety of ways (legislators, administration officials, corporate CEOs and media, for example) to build a rich database for future use.
- **Offer constituent matching.**  
Ensure your online tools match each activist with the right elected official who represents him or her, and then delivers the activist's message to that official.
- **Offer multiple delivery options.**  
Don't rely entirely on email to get your message across to decision-makers. With email volume increasing so dramatically, a multi-channel approach that also includes faxes, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings will help ensure that the message gets through. Look for online tools that will automatically try an alternative means of delivery if a message fails to get through. For example, if an email bounces back, your software should automatically send a fax as a back-up. When you do use email, be sure to have online tools that can automatically route constituents' messages through web forms or other technology-based filters, if necessary.

## 8 COORDINATE ACROSS YOUR ORGANIZATION

Here it is again. That point about working with your development and marketing staffers. It can't be said enough. It really is that important. Consider this: If you're about to launch an advocacy campaign about a compelling issue, don't you think that same issue would be a way to attract new constituents? New donors? New volunteers? And, if your development staffers are about to launch a fundraising campaign

around a particularly moving topic, isn't that an ideal opportunity for you to ask those same folks to take action on that issue? By coordinating your efforts, you'll improve your overall results.

## TAKE A MULTI-CHANNEL APPROACH

It just makes good sense: People take in information and reply to communications via websites, social media sites, texting, phone calls, direct mail, and email. The most effective approach to reaching new constituents, getting them involved, and building a long-term relationship with them is to reach out through multiple channels and also give them multiple ways in which to respond. This may include the use of online advertising, micro-sites, video, social media, billboards, telemarketing, direct mail, and events. Be sure to build a multi-channel approach into your advocacy program, and you'll see maximum results.

# CASE IN POINT

## MULTI-CHANNEL ADVOCACY

PETA used a multi-channel approach to raise awareness about the annual Canadian seal hunt and to encourage the Canadian Parliament and 2010 Olympic Committee to end the practice. The campaign successfully leveraged petitions and action alerts, email, online advertising, an interactive micro-site, the use of compelling video, social media, billboards and demonstrations.

Because of PETA's fast-acting and compelling multi-channel approach, along with creative design, PETA's campaign continues to educate and advocate. The organization was able to take an issue they've been working on for many years and promote it in fresh, new ways by using tools including Convio's online marketing products to create a powerful campaign.

### The Results

- **More than 430,000 page views** and 117,875 participants
- **31,790 new constituents**
- **More than 24,000 tell-a-friend e-mails** were sent
- PETA kept the issue fresh by providing new ways for supporters to take action, such as by creating another advocacy campaign urging people to boycott products. This follow-up advocacy campaign received **56,923 page views** and had 20,935 people take action.



PETA developed a multi-channel advocacy campaign, leveraging petitions, action alerts, email, online advertising, an interactive micro-site, video, social media, billboards and demonstrations that compelled over half a million people to take action online to encourage the Canadian Parliament and 2010 Olympic Committee to condemn the Canadian seal hunt.

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# CULTIVATING LONG-TERM SUPPORTERS (INCLUDING DONORS) THROUGH ADVOCACY

Getting activists involved in a single issue is one thing. But, keeping them involved is vital to the ongoing success of your advocacy program and your organization's mission. As with any constituent, you must nurture relationships with your activists to retain them. And, part of nurturing the relationship includes encouraging them to support your organization in other ways, such as making a donation.

***Try the following six techniques to deepen your relationship with activists and keep them involved.***

## 1 KEEP IN TOUCH

By maintaining an ongoing conversation with your activists, you'll keep them educated, interested and involved with your cause. Remember to update them on new or existing issues through web content, email communications and social media channels. Be sure, too, that you not only thank them for taking action, but also keep them informed about the results of their action. Like any constituent, activists can feel disconnected from your organization if they take action, and then never hear from you until they're asked to take action again. They may ask themselves, "What happened regarding that issue? Did my taking action make a difference?"

Be sure to include activists in other updates as well. As your marketing and development staffers plan email newsletters and other updates, include activists in the audience. Keeping them up-to-date on all aspects of your organization's activities will deepen your relationship with them and help them understand the breadth of your mission and the need for their ongoing support.

## 2 GIVE CONSTITUENTS A VOICE

This is true for activists, donors, volunteers, and just about anyone else involved with your organization: Constituents who feel they have a voice in the organization are more likely to support the organization's cause. Create an ongoing conversation with constituents through online surveys, polls and petitions. In addition, create a constant narrative by regularly updating website content, your Facebook page, and any other web presence you may have. Supporters will stay engaged online to see how the organization is progressing toward its goals.

## 3 CREATE A SENSE OF SHARED IDENTITY

In addition to giving all constituents the sense that they have a voice in your organization, it's important to make them feel part of the cause. Consider creating an online community as well as online forums (such as blogs) to allow constituents to voice their opinions, make suggestions and communicate with donors, volunteers, other supporters, and your organization's staff. Also consider allowing supporters across the country to create and participate in regional meetings; you can offer this capability through online tools such as Convio's Personal Events tool.

## 4 CREATE PERSONALIZED ONLINE ACTION CENTERS & EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Setting up an action center, or a dedicated advocacy section, on your website will give your visitors a place to easily sign up as activists. Remember to personalize content on each constituent's action center with action alerts relevant to his or her geographic location and interests, acknowledgement of past participation, and the latest information on how each action alert has performed. Do the same with your email communications. Making sure that all of your online communications are relevant to constituents not only keeps them interested in your updates, it also shows them that you are concerned about what's important to them.

### ► Quick Tip

Look for online advocacy software, like Convio's, that helps you automatically generate personal action center pages based on the information you gather about your constituents.

## 5 OFFER REWARDS

Consider offering reward points that constituents can accrue based on various online behaviors such as taking action, making a donation, or forwarding email messages to friends. Allow each registered constituent to view his or her reward point balance at any time on a personalized web page, and redeem rewards points online for gifts or other promotional items.

## 6 CROSS-MARKET

As you build long-term relationships with your activists remember that they have an affinity for your organization. So do your organization's donors. If your organization isn't tapping into these groups' natural affinities for your organization's mission, you're missing out. Be sure to coordinate your advocacy and fundraising campaigns, and consider sending special communications asking activists to donate and asking donors to take action.

### ► Did You Know?

Convio's online advocacy software offers comprehensive capabilities to query, measure and analyze advocacy campaign success. It also gives you an in-depth look at online behaviors and histories of constituents so you can cross-market to them. For example, a person who took action on a particular issue might be willing to make a donation to support your organization's work around that issue.



# TIPS & TRICKS

## ADVICE FROM THE PROS

By Steve Daigneault, Vice President, M&R Strategic Services

Online advocacy is no longer in its infant stage. Countless organizations have used online petitions to send billions of electronic letters to Congress. Within the nonprofit community, some have asked themselves whether or not this advocacy is just “slacktivism,” or a means for people to feel good without getting out of their chair, yet making little impact.

Regardless, online advocacy is here to stay. And, it’s each organization’s job to make the most of online advocacy efforts. Below are five tips on how organizations can use online advocacy to impact the outcome of an issue, while also building public awareness, raising money, and growing a community of supporters.

### ► Five Tips to Make the Most of Your Online Advocacy Campaigns

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- 1. Leverage the 24-hour news cycle.** Content on the web changes every minute. That means the actions you post and promote need to be hyper-relevant to the moment: Why does this action matter right now, this very minute?
- 2. Talk about what else you’re doing.** Expose the full breadth of your organization’s work on an issue, and how this one petition fits into your overall plan to move an issue forward. That could be your staff visits to the Hill, an event you’re holding where you’ve invited media, or partner organizations that are pooling names to make a bigger impact.
- 3. Confirmation pages matter.** Once someone signs a petition, you’ve got a split second to capture their interest to take the next step. Oftentimes that means asking them to tell their friends, but some organizations might find more success landing them on a donation page that has a thank you message above it. That simple soft ask can sometimes convert more activists to donors than a straight-up appeal.
- 4. Don’t just ask once.** Everyone’s inbox is flooded these days; sometimes you have to send the same action a few times to get traction. Build a campaign around an action, promote it two or three times via email, post it on your social network pages, and create a homepage promotion for it.
- 5. Set goals and deadlines.** In the absence of a real world moment, sometimes you can create your own moment. Set a hard deadline and a specific goal for the number of actions you need. Reinforce that deadline and goal wherever you promote the action. If possible, show progress towards your goal with a thermometer.

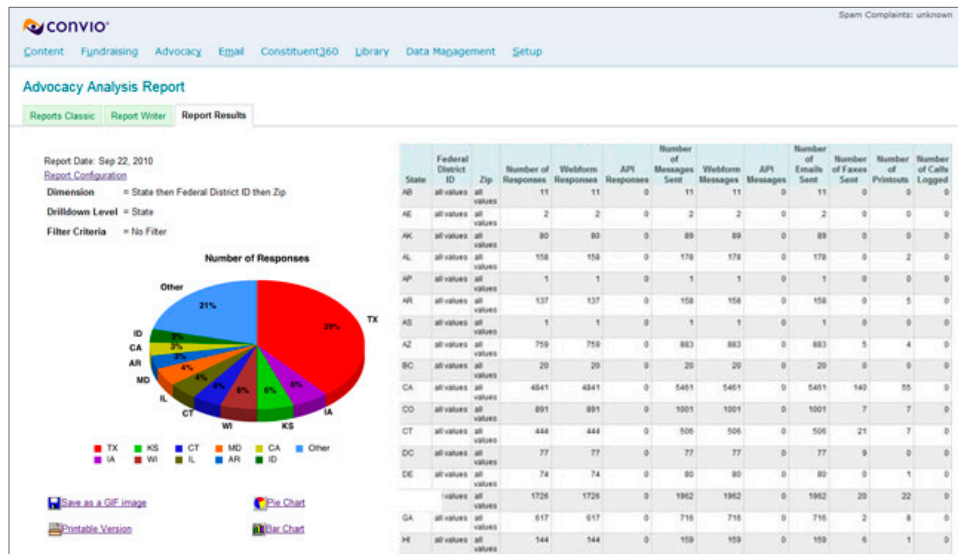
# MEASURING RESULTS

One of the major benefits of using online tools to help with your overall advocacy efforts is stronger tracking. Tracking both aggregate and individual response will help you evaluate and improve your campaigns.

**Here are two important aspects of reporting that your online advocacy tools should offer:**

- **Monitor status of active action alerts.**

Be sure to select online advocacy software that helps you accomplish specific goals. For starters, look for capabilities that allow monitoring of the status of active action alerts. You should be able to do things such as check on whether decision-makers are receiving emails, see the effectiveness of each delivery channel, and quickly determine what's going wrong when messages fail to make it to the decision-maker so you can make adjustments accordingly.



Monitor and share the performance of your action alerts in a format that is easy to share with organization stakeholders.

- **Report on aggregate advocacy efforts.**

Your online advocacy tool should deliver complete aggregate reports on your advocacy efforts, not just information on the status of individual alerts. You should, for example, be able to view summary reports of all your action alerts over a given period or analyze the effects of your efforts against specific criteria, such as geographical location or donor status.

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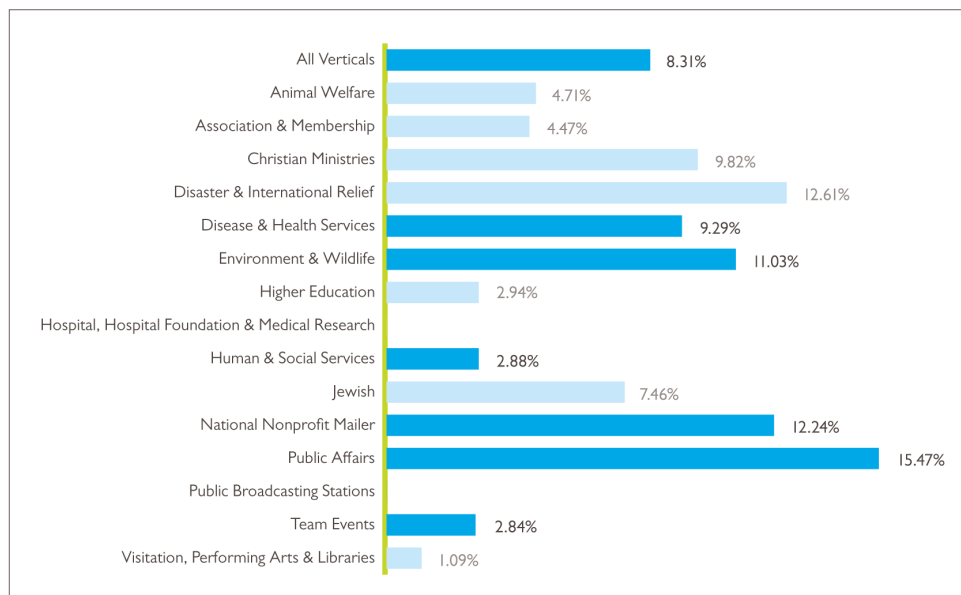
## ADVOCACY BY THE NUMBERS

Are you ready to see how your organization's online advocacy efforts measure up? Convio's annual Online Nonprofit Benchmark™ Study<sup>3</sup> is designed to help you evaluate online marketing metrics, see the effectiveness of your organization compared with similar organizations, and determine strategies for future success.

The 2010 study analyzed data compiled from nearly 500 nonprofit organizations, representing millions of online interactions and transactions from Convio's online marketing products. The study aggregates results into benchmarks that you can compare against your peer group and the industry as a whole. Of this year's 499 study participants, 134 were engaged in advocacy on the Convio online marketing and fundraising platform during 2009.

### Advocates on Email File

The following chart shows that of those organizations engaged in online advocacy using Convio, **8.31% of constituents on their email file took at least one advocacy action**. For some verticals, such as Public Affairs, as much as **15% of their constituents engaged in online advocacy**. (Note: No study participants from the Public Broadcasting Stations or Hospital, Hospital Foundation & Medical Research verticals engaged in online advocacy through Convio during this period.)



**Median Percentage of Advocates on the Total Email File, 2009**

Light blue denotes sample sizes fewer than 10 organizations, n=134.

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<sup>3</sup> The Convio Online Marketing Nonprofit Benchmark Index™ Study <http://www.convio.com/benchmark>

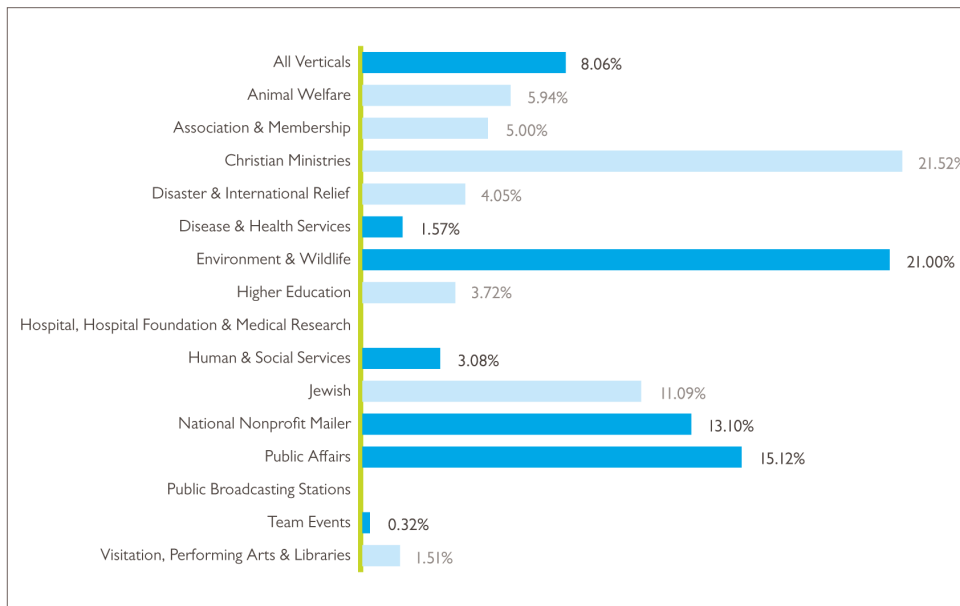
### Advocates Who Have Also Donated Online

Another important metric is how effectively organizations convert activists to financial supporters. The following chart shows that **7.33% of online activists also supported the same organization financially online**. This metric does not factor in activists who made a gift offline, but not online.

For some verticals, such as Animal Welfare, this metric was almost three times the industry average, which suggests that online advocacy, in addition to advancing an organization’s mission, may be a significant source of prospects for fundraising. Organizations are becoming increasingly sophisticated at converting activists to donors, but much potential still remains.

### Online Donors Who Have Also Advocated Online

Conversely, the following chart shows that **8.06% of all online donors on file also took an online advocacy action with the same organization**. For the Environment & Wildlife vertical, **21% of online donors engaged in online advocacy**. Convio believes that engaging donors in online advocacy helps to cement relationships, thus enhancing donor retention rates and lifetime value.



**Median Percentage of Donors Who Have Taken an Advocacy Action**

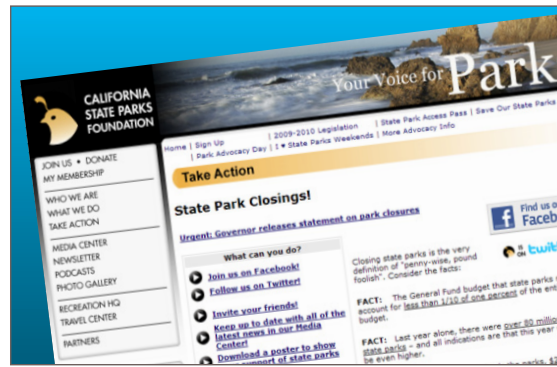
Light blue denotes sample sizes fewer than 10 organizations, n=134.

# YOU CAN DO IT, TOO: REAL-WORLD STORIES TO INSPIRE YOU

Each year, Convio recognizes its clients that have shown innovation and achievement through the use of Convio's online marketing software and services to better engage supporters to help fulfill their missions. The following four are award winners and notable mentions from the past few years that showed innovative, results-driven success at using online advocacy approaches to build their email list, influence legislation, and drive donations.

## California State Parks Foundation,

a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting, enhancing and advocating for California's magnificent state parks, was presented with an Innovator Award for their online campaign against cutting the budget for California's state parks by \$70 million. Within four months of launching the online campaign, the organization tripled its email file, **adding an average of almost 30,000 email addresses per month**. The online campaign was mounted in early 2009 in response to the California governor's proposed budget cuts that would force the closure of 220 state parks. California State Parks Foundation partnered with Adams Hussey & Associates to launch their multi-channel strategy to raise awareness around the impending state park closures.



## Christians United for Israel (CUFI),

whose purpose is to provide a national association through which every pro-Israel church, parachurch organization, ministry or individual in America can speak and act with one voice in support of Israel in matters related to Biblical issues, received a notable mention for their successful house file building that went beyond an email appeal. CUFI designed a campaign in order to capture more signers to the pledge to Stand for Israel prior to the organization's testimony to Congress. CUFI used Convio Rewards to track when a current user had friends fulfill signing the Pledge to Stand with Israel and when they reached the goal of five friends having signed the pledge; they qualified to receive a free copy of David Brog's (Executive Director of CUFI) book, *Standing With Israel*. The campaign resulted in CUFI taking **more than 110,000 names to Congress**—more than 35,000 above their goal, and the campaign has continued since then to **surpass more than 165,000 pledge signers**.



**NARAL Pro-Choice America**, a national organization advocating for and providing comprehensive information on reproductive rights in the U.S., received a notable mention for their creative bumper-sticker-slogan contest during the 2008 election. Using a multi-stage approach, the organization asked supporters to submit bumper sticker slogans, and then vote on the winning slogan, as well as leveraged both Convio Surveys and text messaging to provide multiple methods for engagement. As a result, they received 6,904 submissions, and 24,938 activists cast votes in the contest. The campaign also brought in more than 1,000 donations including hundreds of first-time donors, and distributed thousands of bumper stickers to pro-choice voters.



**Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM)**, a nonprofit organization that promotes healthy, plant-based diets for disease prevention and modern, non-animal methods in medical education and research, received an Innovator Award for their use of Convio Online Marketing solutions to develop a year-end giving campaign that combined an advocacy component and a matching gift challenge. As a result of the campaign, over 900 gifts generated a **300% increase over the previous year's online campaign**.



A screenshot of the Convio Advocacy Software website. The top navigation bar includes 'OUR PRODUCTS', 'OUR SERVICES', 'OUR RESEARCH', 'OUR CLIENTS', 'OUR PARTNERS', 'ABOUT US', and 'FOR CLIENTS'. The main heading is 'Convio Advocacy Software' with the tagline 'Build a network of loyal activists online'. Below this, there are sections for 'OVERVIEW', 'FEATURES', 'RESOURCES', and 'TESTIMONIALS'. The 'OVERVIEW' section contains text describing the software's capabilities, such as providing a complete online advocacy solution and enabling users to manage campaigns. A testimonial from the American Diabetes Association is also visible.

## Convio Advocacy

Learn how Convio Advocacy can help your organization. Watch our Quick Tour video: <http://www.convio.com/advocacy>

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## HOW CONVIO CAN HELP YOU

Convio provides software and services that help nonprofits more effectively attract, engage and cultivate supporters. As a web-based platform, Convio is a cost effective solution that will grow with your organization and can integrate with other systems to extend your online reach.

### Web-Based Software Suite

- Fundraising
- Donor Database & Management
- Events
- Peer-to-Peer Fundraising & Events
- eCommerce
- Web Content Management
- Advocacy
- Email Marketing

### Strategic and Technical Services

- Strategy Consulting
- Campaign Management
- User Experience & Research
- Analytics
- Website Design Services
- Technical Design & Integration
- Custom Development
- Training & Support

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## WHY CONVIO IS DIFFERENT

### Passion

Our team is passionate about helping nonprofits further their missions and achieve real results. Over 75% of our client services staff has worked in the nonprofit sector. Meet our team and see examples of our work with clients at [www.convio.com/portfolio](http://www.convio.com/portfolio).

### Trusted Strategic Advisor

Convio is the preferred technology and services partner for over 1,300 nonprofits of all sizes—including over half of the top 50 charities—helping them to achieve tangible results through:

- Database Management & Segmentation
- List Building & Donor Acquisition
- Advocacy & Outreach
- Fundraising
- Event Participation & Fundraising
- Website Engagement & Conversion
- Online & Multi-Channel Strategies
- Training & Support

### Track Record of Innovation & Results

We're a pioneer for online and integrated marketing for nonprofits. Here are just a few examples:

- **Industry Benchmarks**—launched the industry's first benchmark study which we publish annually
- **User Engagement Pathways**—created the concept of defining clear communications paths via email and website to increase engagement and conversions and build this into our product
- **Accessibility**—partnered with Easter Seals to develop a first-time program to offer accessible technology, job training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities
- **Convio Go!**<sup>™</sup>—launched the industry's first affordable, guided fundraising program resulting in a return of \$3 for every \$1 spent
- **Driving Results**—In 2009, Convio helped nonprofits process: \$921 million in online donations, 51.5 million advocacy calls to action, and 3.8 billion emails (95% delivery rate)



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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Convio Research

- **The Next Generation of American Giving**, <http://convio.com/nextgeneration>
- **The Convio Online Nonprofit Benchmark™ Study**, <http://www.convio.com/benchmark>
- **The Wired Wealthy: Using the Internet to Connect with Your Middle and Major Donors**, <http://convio.com/wiredwealthy>

### Convio Best Practice Guides

- **Using the Internet to Raise Funds and Build Donor Relationships**, <http://www.convio.com/fundraising>
- **Nonprofit Website Fundamentals**, <http://www.convio.com/websiteguide>
- **Basics of Email Marketing for Nonprofits**, <http://www.convio.com/emailguide>
- **Going Social: Tapping into Social Media for Nonprofit Success**, <http://www.coonvio.com/socialmedia>
- **Holiday Giving Guide**, <http://www.convio.com/endofyeargiving>

### More Convio Resources

- **On-Demand Webinars**, <http://www.convio.com/webinars>
- **Quick Tour Videos**, <http://www.convio.com/quicktour>
- **Sign up for our newsletter**: *Convio Connection*, a free bimonthly newsletter for nonprofits on how to attract constituents, drive action, and build loyalty through online relationship management. <http://www.convio.com/newsletter>

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## ABOUT CONVIO

Convio is the leading provider of on-demand constituent relationship management (CRM) software and services that give nonprofit organizations a better way to inspire and mobilize people to support their organization. Convio Online Marketing, the company's online marketing suite, offers integrated software for fundraising, advocacy, events, email marketing and web content management, and its Convio Common Ground™ CRM system helps organizations efficiently track and manage all interactions with supporters. All Convio products are delivered through the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model and are backed by a portfolio of best-in-class consulting and support services and a network of partners who provide value added services and applications focused on the unique needs of nonprofit organizations. For more information, please visit [www.convio.com](http://www.convio.com).

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