

Using House Parties to Engage Constituents

House parties are a great way to bring people together in one place to discuss an issue, cause or goal. They started growing in popularity during the 2004 elections, and have increasingly become a staple for sophisticated fundraising and communication efforts. House parties connect individuals offline by combining classic online communication strategies, such as mapping and viral marketing, and using them to encourage people to get together at “parties” centered around a common issue or goal.

Benefits

- Connect with individuals offline
- Build momentum region by region
- Identify 'super' supporters

Three-Way Communication

House parties are a way for constituents to engage in 3-way communication — you are communicating with them, they are communicating with you, and they are communicating with each other. Providing these outlets for cross communication enables constituents to have a deeper relationship with your organization, both online and offline.

House Party Considerations

Here are just a few things to keep in mind as you consider using house parties to drive constituent engagement:

- Party hosts should be viewed as “super activists.” Their passion displayed by volunteering to host a house party should be an indicator of their loyalty and commitment to your organization.
- Every party will be different — and that’s ok. Managing numerous simultaneous house parties, possibly nationwide, can be challenging. They each are going to have their own “vibe” — some more serious, some more lighthearted. Many will be mini-rallies for your organization, some fundraising powerhouses, others reminiscent of Tupperware parties. Be prepared to let them take shape naturally. However, you can preserve your brand by providing party hosts with valuable, downloadable toolkits that offer talking points, content, and other information. Then sit back and let the constituents create their own personal experiences.
- You might not make money — just yet. Remember, the main objective of the house party is engagement, and that does not always happen simultaneously with fundraising. While the ultimate goal of most engagement strategies is to raise money, it may take another two or three personal touch points from your organization until these individuals feel compelled to give. But, just in case a house party inspires them to give right away, be sure that your online donation form is up and running smoothly the night of the parties.

Real Results

One nonprofit teamed up with Lifetime Television to produce an original 2-part mini-series entitled “*Human Trafficking*”, which took an issue the organization had been trying to abolish, and put it in the national spotlight.

With the help of McPherson Associates, the nonprofit launched a nationwide house party event on its Web site to maximize the number of individuals tuning into the program, and to provide them with information about how to get involved with the organization.

The house parties were initially promoted through a series of five emails to the organization's email list. Each message contained a theme, such as "save the date," or "be a party planner," and was forwarded using viral marketing techniques. Recipients were invited to either host or join a house party, where they would watch the movie, "*Human Trafficking*," and discuss the issue afterward. Individuals were sent a link to the nonprofit's Web site, which had a map of the U.S. where individuals could sign up to host a party or locate a party near them to attend. Party hosts were also given the option of keeping their location anonymous, and only allowing individuals they specifically invited to view their location. Lifetime Television also promoted the house parties on their Web site via a Web page dedicated to the film, and hosted the blog discussion after the airing where viewers could share their opinions on the film and the issue.

Get Started Now

Like any strategic marketing campaign, the key to house parties is to ensure you are well prepared. McPherson Associates can work with your organization to design a house party campaign — from issue awareness to advocacy and fundraising and list acquisition.

Contact

Lisa Marie Walls,
Director of Online Communications
McPherson Associates
610-640-1555, x105
lwalls@mcphersonassociates.com

Party hosts were then sent a link to a "house party toolkit," which included facts and statistics about human trafficking, talking points, and ways to get involved regarding the issue, such as signing a petition. All copy was written and pre-approved by the nonprofit in an effort to have consistent messaging associated with their brand and the issue.

More than 75 house parties were hosted nationwide, viewership for the film exceeded expectations and traffic to the organization's Web site tripled during that period.

About Convio

Convio is a leading provider of on-demand constituent relationship management software and services to nonprofit organizations to enable nonprofit organizations to more effectively raise funds, influence public policy and support their missions by leveraging the Internet to build strong relationships with constituents. The company's online constituent relationship management, or eCRM, solution includes a suite of on-demand software modules for fundraising, advocacy, email marketing and Web content management complemented by a portfolio of best-in-class consulting services. For more information, please visit www.convio.com.

About McPherson Associates

McPherson Associates, Inc. is a full-service direct marketing and online communications agency specializing in taking nonprofit fundraising programs to the next level. Their team of fundraising professionals develops the right strategy, message and communication campaigns to help organizations effectively raise more money. At the same time, their innovative ideas and creative graphic designs serve to attract attention to strengthen nonprofits brands. They believe fundraising campaigns should be fully integrated, and combine traditional direct marketing practices with new technology to create consistent, effective campaigns across all communication channels. For more information, please visit www.mcphersonassociates.com.



Austin | Berkeley | Washington, DC
888-528-9501 | 512-652-2600 | info@convio.com | www.convio.com