more onion

EMAIL TO MP

campaigns that get

NOTICED

Emails to MPs
THAT GET NOTICED

Online campaigning tools have made it easy to help large numbers of your supporters email their MPs. But with UK MPs now receiving hundreds of emails a week, how do we make sure this type of action remains effective?

The following advice is based on what politicians have told us make an email more likely to get their attention. Overall, it's clear that it's far better to take time to create a well-researched and carefully set up action than one where every MP receives a standard email. But we know that time is always a factor, so we've also included practical tips to help you easily and quickly plan and setup powerful MP actions in Campaignion, more onion's campaigning and fundraising platform.

As well as Westminster MPs, Campaignion enables you to target MEPs, elected representatives in the devolved regions and nations of the UK, Councillors, and your own data sets. These tips will be equally useful for actions targeting them.

If you would like help with any of this, or to discuss Campaignion or your ideas for a campaign, please get in touch.

CONTACT us
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Personalised emails are better but
IT'S STILL A NUMBERS GAME

MPs say they are more likely to read personalised, well written emails from their constituents. But numbers do still count – the number of emails and letters received on a particular subject is often used as a gauge of public opinion.

Therefore it's worth playing around with a few ways to encourage personalisation whilst tracking the impact on your conversion rates.

Image: Global Justice Now!

How to help your supporters personalise
THEIR MESSAGES

Provide key facts and talking points to make personalising emails feel less intimidating.

Give users the background information they need about the issue to confidently add their voice.

Take it step by step - ask supporters a personal question on the first page and then have this automatically insert into the email.

These answers don't need to be one word responses, you could ask supporters to select from different statements, or write a free text response to a question.

Tip: In Campaignion, you can use 'tokens' in your message template to enter any information or text gathered in your form, both in an editable or non-editable part of the message.

Are there supporters who are directly affected by your issue or whose voice might stand out to MPs?

Supporters often have direct experience or expertise related to your campaign issue. Encourage them to use this in their message.

Campaignion tip: Use conditional fields to show or hide content or form fields based on how supporters respond to a question. For example, if a user ticks a box saying they're directly affected by the issue, you could have a free text field appear which asks them to say how.

How to make your

FORM FEEL EASY

Making your forms easy and unintimidating will make a huge difference to your conversion rates. We've dedicated a whole report to making brilliant forms, you can read it here: www.more-onion.com/optimise-webforms

An email your MP action form will have more requirements than simpler actions such as a petition. But you can still make sure they are easy for users to fill in and keep your conversion rates high.

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Help make messages
RELEVANT TO EACH MP

An MP who has never engaged with the work you are doing shouldn't be receiving the same request as one who has been campaigning on an issue for years. Put like this, it sounds obvious. But if you have the same template message for all MPs, this is what you are encouraging.

It only takes a bit of preparation and extra set up time to make your template messages much more tailored and effective.

Image: UK Parliament

How to make sure
MESSAGES ARE RELEVANT

Create different template messages for different MPs

Questions to think about:
*   Do the different party lines require different messaging?
*   Can you tailor messages based on previous engagement or voting record?
*   Are there any MPs who should be sent different messages because of committees or groups they are part of?
*   Do MPs in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland need different messages?

Campaignion tips:
*   *When setting up your default message, it's easy to 'add a specific message' for an individual MP or group of MPs. You can set up filters based on name, email, political affiliation, constituency, and country.*
*   *You can also set up your own custom groups of MPs using regular expressions (see our case study below.) Our support team can provide you with the list of MPs and further guidance, or even set it up for you.*
*   *You can also choose to exclude certain MPs or groups of MPs from receiving messages. Remember to add an explanation for your supporter and if relevant, something else they can do.*
*   *Don't forget to drag your filters into priority order once you've set them up.*

MP actions: integrated into your campaign plan

Your MP targeted actions are of course just one stepping-stone in your campaign journey. It's important to think about how they fit into the ongoing relationships you are building with your supporters as well as with MPs, and how they fit within the overall strategy of the campaign.

Campaignion keeps track of every interaction with your supporters, and this information can be integrated with your email marketing platform*. The combination provides you with powerful ways to set up supporter journeys.

- Build the relationship by making it feel like a conversation not a lecture. Refer back to actions a supporter has previously taken, or their responses to questions you've asked.
- Build engagement step by step. A good email to MP action requires time and input from supporters, especially if you're asking them to write their own messages. It can be more effective to introduce current or new supporters to your issue with a straightforward petition or pledge action, and build from there.
- Don't forget to give feedback, even if it's just campaign progress rather than 'wins'.

Campaignion tip: This could all be handled by an automated email sequence, for example using MailChimp automations.

We have a report that focuses just on creating great supporter journeys as well as how to automate them: https://www.more-onion.com/SupporterJourneys

* We currently support MailChimp, Clever Reach, Dotmailer (CharityeMail) and Optivo but we're constantly extending the integrations directory.

Case study: British Cycling
BUILDING SUPPORT

In their 'Turning the Corner' campaign, calling for a simple, universal rule around road junctions, British Cycling started with a petition to attract attention. Once the petition was handed in, they kicked off the second stage of the campaign, asking supporters to email their MPs to support a change of rules in Parliament.

Less than a year later, the campaign has already seen a significant victory with the London Assembly's Transport Committee calling for research on how British Cycling's Turning the Corner initiative could work in the capital.

British Cycling set up different message templates for the transport minister, as well as each of the political parties. They also asked supporters to write a note explaining why the issue mattered to them. This was automatically inserted into the beginning of the message.
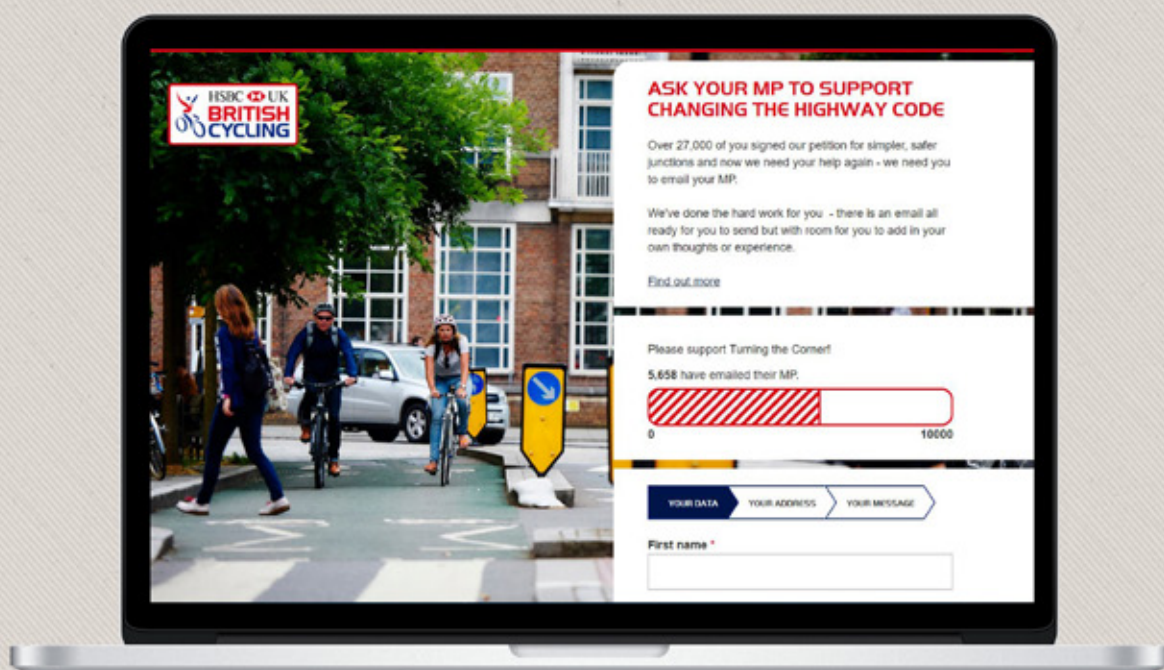
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Concrete requests, for
THINGS THEY CAN DO

It may seem surprising, but MPs tell us that they are constantly asked by campaigners to take action on issues without any clear suggestions of what they can actually to do to help. Or, they are asked to do something that isn't within their power.

Make sure your 'ask' is well researched. Don't fill up their inboxes for the sake of it!

Bonus: If supporters can see that your action has a clear and meaningful goal, you'll also improve your conversion rates.

Geographical
CONSIDERATIONS

The UK's devolved Parliaments and Assemblies

Supporters and MPs in devolved nations won't appreciate being asked to take action on an issue that only applies in England. Likewise, make sure you don't ask Westminster MPs to take action on an issue not controlled by UK Parliament.

Tip: Campaignion has multiple databases available so you should be able to make sure you are targeting the correct group of politicians.

Non-UK supporters

Email to MP actions work best when there is a good reason for supporters to be contacting their representative in parliament. But for non-UK residents, there may be something else they can do to support the campaign. No matter what, make sure it's clear where your action applies, and who can take it. If your action is compelling and gets shared, you're not in control of who comes to the page, so think about those potential new supporters too.

Campaignion tip: You can use conditional fields to show an additional message based on how they fill in a form field such as 'country'. For example, you might want to explain that the action can only be taken by UK residents. You could also add a link to alternative actions.

Case study: Open Rights Group

USING SPECIFIC MESSAGES

In their action to email MEPs about a website censorship proposal, Open Rights Group didn't just use the pre-existing filters available to them in Campaignion, they also setup their own custom filters using regular expressions. This allowed them to make sure that MEPs sitting on particular committees received messages relevant to their role.

Open Rights Group pay attention to details at every step of building their actions. Here are some other nice ideas they use:

- Their forms explain why the data they ask for is needed
- Bullet point guidance notes help supporters write unique messages
- Supporters are encouraged to send any responses to politicianreplies@openrightsgroup.org. That has helped them identify politicians who could be allies.

Tip: Our support team can help you use regular expressions to set up the filters you need in Campaignion.

We hope this report was helpful
If you'd like to know more about Campaignion or would like some support with your campaigns, please get in touch. Whether it's creative, strategy, or technology, we're here to help.

We're particularly interested in working together on projects where we can push forward the technology to enable more effective online campaigning. If you have an idea you'd like to explore, please get in touch!

CONTACT us
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