

TACTIC

CREATIVE PETITION DELIVERY

Petitions can often feel ineffectual, but when you deliver them creatively — with art, theater, or humor — you can make public opinion more visible to a campaign target.

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Duncan Meisel is a strategic troublemaker who lives in Brooklyn, where he conspires on how to respond to the impending end of the world. He is particularly interested in trying to stop the warming of the earth, ending the impoverishment of America by corporate power, and putting an end to the prison system as we know it.

“A NUMBER OF WELL-LABELED BOXES ROLLED INTO A TARGET’S OFFICE IS A TRIED AND TRUE APPROACH, BUT OTHER UNUSUAL TACTICS CAN BE HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AS WELL.”

“Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.”
—Erich Fromm

Online petitions are an effective way of spreading information, raising an outcry or putting pressure on a target. But online tactics alone are easily ignored by targets. To translate virtual signatures into real-world action, a number of netroots organizations have developed the art of creative petition delivery. While publicizing your message and the support it has garnered, creative petition deliveries put public pressure on your target.

It’s helpful to find creative ways to physically quantify the number of petition signatures (see: THEORY: Activism). A number of well-labeled boxes rolled into a target’s office is a tried and true approach, but other unusual tactics can be highly effective as well.

For a petition asking the World Health Organization to investigate and regulate factory farms, the international multi-issue campaign organization Avaaz set up 200 cardboard pigs — each representing 1,000 petition signers — in front of the World Health Organization building in Geneva, providing the media with a visual hook on which to peg stories about factory farms and swine flu.

The location of delivery can also make a huge difference. In protest against a multibillion gas deal with Israel (see: STORY: Stolen Gas

POTENTIAL RISKS

Sometimes you might have the urge to be overtaken by your imagination, leading you to construct complex scenes of creative delivery and eventually getting overwhelmed by an idea and its implementation. Keep it simple! Also, keep in mind that you need to be as straightforward as possible so that any member of public is able to understand the demand of your campaign.

RELATED TOOLS

Stories

- Stolen Gas Campaign
- Stop Praver Plan

Tactics

- Advanced leafleting

Campaign), the Jordan Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) movement handed the deputy head of parliament a petition to be delivered to the Prime Minister on behalf of the people. Taken by surprise, the PM stormed off during the session and his reaction generated increased public mistrust in, and negativity towards, the government's narrative.

But you don't always have to physically occupy the same space as your target — attracting media attention can be an effective way to reach a target as well. In one instance, to deliver a petition against nuclear energy to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Avaaz purchased an ad in *Der Spiegel*, the German paper of record.

Or try a more outlandish media stunt. To deliver a petition against deepwater oil drilling in the Arctic, Greenpeace International sent its executive director to a controversial oil rig in the middle of the ocean, where he trespassed onto the rig to deliver the petition to the ship's captain — at which point he was arrested and held for four days. Between the unusual way it was delivered and the media coverage that resulted, the petition was difficult for the target to ignore.

Sometimes less public tactics can be equally effective: to deliver a petition about cluster bombs to a UN conference debating arms munitions treaties, Avaaz first digitally delivered 600,000 petition signatures to the head of the conference, and then quietly distributed 1,000 fliers to conference attendees (see: TACTIC: Advanced leafleting), describing the issue and listing the number of people who'd signed the petition. Even the subtle hint of public pressure created a stir in the often obscure world of UN diplomats. The delivery had a big impact on the eventual outcome of the conference, which did not adopt a draft treaty to allow stockpiling of cluster bombs.

Creative petition deliveries allow organizers to turn online outcry into offline action. By becoming unavoidably visible to a campaign target (see: PRINCIPLE: Make the invisible visible), creative deliveries make sure the voices of thousands of petition signers are publicly heard.

Originally published in Beautiful Trouble.

LEARN MORE

How Our Petitions Work

Avaaz

https://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/how_an_online_petition_works/

- Artistic vigil
- Distributed action
- Trek

Principles

- Brand or be branded
- Bring the issue home
- Choose tactics that support your strategy
- Choose your target wisely
- Consider your audience
- Create online-offline synergy
- Don't fall in love with your tactics
- Escalate strategically
- Kill them with kindness
- Make the invisible visible
- Play to the audience that isn't there
- Put your target in a decision dilemma
- Show, don't tell

Theories

- Action logic
- Artivism
- Ethical spectacle

Methodologies

- Action star
- Pillars of power

TAGS

Action design, Art, Humour, Media