

How to Organize a Virtual Phone Bank

Background

Phone banks, where a group of people call other people to ask them to vote, volunteer or take some other action, have been a long-time staple of campaigns. Typically, phone banks are performed in person but the COVID-19 pandemic requires a new way of organizing them.

Enter the virtual phone bank! A virtual phone bank enables you to train your volunteer team and keep them engaged during the phone bank – all from the safety and comfort of their homes!

Who Are You Calling?

Depending on your voter engagement plans, you may be calling:

- People who are newly registered to vote
- People who are registered to vote but don't vote very often (called low-propensity voters)
- People who vote often (super voters) with encouragement to vote by mail

Your SCAN staff contact will supply you with the lists of people to call.

How Long Should the Phone Bank Be?

An in-person phone bank is typically between two and three hours. Keeping people online for that long could prove challenging, however, so plan for an event that is an hour or an hour and half long, including training at the beginning. Typically, a person can make around 35 calls in an hour.

Why This Script?

The [get out the vote \(GOTV\) scripts](#) we've drafted leverage best practices developed from experiments in the field. Some key elements of the script are:

- Emphasizing making a plan to vote. The script helps voters visualize how they vote.
- Reminding people that whether they vote is public information. This increases the feeling of accountability.
- Stressing high voter turnout. This is another way to say, "All the cool kids are doing it!"
- Sharing that you are a local volunteer. People trust people who are local more than someone from a national entity.
- Underscoring their identity as a voter. Voting is seen as a social good and those who vote as engaging in their civic duty.

Training Other Volunteers

Many people are nervous when they make calls to strangers – even experienced volunteers! Offering training helps people feel better prepared. Select the [online meeting tool of your choice](#) and be sure that all of the volunteers have the link when you remind them about your online phone bank.

Here is a sample training agenda:

1. Welcome with a fun ice breaker to start. Thank everyone for coming.

2. Talk through who you are calling and what your objective is. For example, if you are calling low-propensity voters, explain that you are calling them to encourage them to vote.
3. Read the script with people, explaining why it is crafted as it is.
4. Lead a role play so people have a sense of how an interaction may occur.
5. Walk through the tracking system you'll be using to track people you speak with, their commitment to vote, etc. Your SCAN staff contact will share the tracking process with you.
6. Start calling! People can leave their cameras on but mute their audio while they call to make it more like an in-person event.

At the end of the evening, share a quick tally of all the calls you made together. Celebrate successes and thank people for giving their time.

How to Keep Volunteers Engaged

During an in-person phone bank, there are many ways to keep people engaged by providing snacks and prizes throughout the night. While keeping people engaged during a virtual phone bank presents some challenges, it can be done! Here are a few ideas:

- **Keep the chat box open:** Keep the chat box open if anyone has a question. Share your favorite calls (someone who is a first time voter or a really funny conversation you had) in the chat to keep motivation up!
- **Share a poll:** Many online meeting tools have interactive options, such as polls. A couple of times during the phone bank, share a poll that people can respond to in between calls. The poll can be about the volunteers' own voting plans or something not related to the elections at all. Just be sure to craft poll questions that everyone can answer.
- **Have a contest:** Reward the person who dials the most times a special prize. It can be a SCAN swag item or perhaps a gift card to a local coffee spot. Be sure to tell people about the contest during the training so people feel extra motivated to dial.