

How to Organize a Virtual Text Bank

Background

Text banks, where a group of people text other people to ask them to vote, volunteer or take some other action, is a relatively new communication tactic. Typically, text banks are performed in person but the COVID-19 pandemic requires a new way of organizing them. Texting enables you to reach thousands of voters quickly and efficiently with a personalized message.

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

Who Are You Texting?

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

- People who are not registered to vote or whose voter registration status is unknown, asking them to register to vote.
- People who are registered to vote but don't vote very often (called low-propensity voters).
- People who vote often (called super voters) with encouragement to vote by mail.

Your SCAN staff contact will upload the lists of people you will be texting in advance of the text bank.

How Long Should the Text Bank Be?

An in-person text bank is typically two or three hours. Keeping people online for that long could prove challenging, however, so plan for an event that is about 90 minutes long, including training at the beginning. Typically, a person can text 2,000 people in an hour.

How Do We Text People?

Save the Children Action Network uses a tool called [Hustle](#). Hustle enables volunteers and staff to text a large number of people quickly. Here are few key things to know about Hustle:

- All Hustle accounts require an email and a phone number. For security reasons we ask that you verify both to complete setting up your Hustle account.
- While you will use your own mobile device or computer to communicate with supporters over text, your personal phone number **will not** appear on supporters' mobile devices. Hustle protects your number with a local area code determined by an administrator to secure your privacy.
- Your SCAN staff contact will set you up as an agent – or Hustle user – so you can begin texting supporters.
- We will provide [scripts and responses to common questions](#) you may receive. If you are ever unsure how to answer a supporter's question, contact your SCAN staff contact.

To learn how to set up your Hustle account and begin texting supporters, [please review this handy guide from Hustle](#). Your SCAN staff contact will also provide you with training before you begin texting.

Why This Script?

[The voter registration and get out the vote \(GOTV\) text scripts](#) we've drafted leverage best practices found from experience in the field. Some key elements of the script are:

- Emphasizing making a plan to vote. The script helps voters visualize how they vote.
- Sharing the information they need to vote (links to polling locations, etc.).
- Underscoring their identity as a voter. Voting is seen as a social good and those who vote as engaging in their civic duty.

The scripts also leverage best practices for peer-to-peer texting, including:

- Using a conversational, casual tone. You want the text to sound like something you would send to a friend.
- Keeping the engagement upbeat. It's more engaging to the supporter.
- Including emojis. Testing by Hustle users has found that the use of emojis increases response rates.
- End with a question to solicit a response, and hopefully begin a conversation.

Training Other Volunteers

Because using Hustle will probably be new for most volunteers, you'll want to make sure that you devote enough time to train them. 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 text 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 texting and what your objective is. For example, if you are texting low-propensity voters, explain that you are texting them to encourage them to vote.
3. Walk people through logging into Hustle and show them the different script responses.
4. Walk through the tagging system you'll be using to track people who respond. Your SCAN staff contact will share the tracking process with you.
5. Start texting!

At the end of the evening, share a quick tally of all the number of people you texted and their responses. Hustle provides some quick reporting tools that your SCAN staff contact can share. Celebrate successes and thank people for giving their time.

How to Keep Volunteers Engaged

During an in-person text bank, there are many ways to keep people engaged by providing snacks and prizes throughout the night. While keeping people engaged during a virtual text 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 text responses (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 text bank, share a poll that people can respond to in betweentexts. 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 texts the most people 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 text.