

NEW!

2003 Edition

LDO

e-Campaigning

Self-Assessment

Check-list

**Find out where you stand and what to
do next with your e-campaign**

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<http://online.libdems.org>

Introduction:

Welcome to the LDO e-Campaigning Self-Assessment Chart. The purpose of this guide is to help people put priority on the things that campaigners around the country have found are most useful in winning votes and building up the strength of the party.

This 'self-assessment chart' is an attempt to capture everything LDO currently knows about e-campaigning. But LDO members are learning more about how to use the internet for campaigning every day. If you join LDO at <http://online.libdems.org>, you will get the latest campaign news and updates automatically.

Essential areas - your absolute top priority:

Is your e-campaign consistent with your conventional campaign priorities?

- Get your **key messages** in the **front page of your website** and the **first few lines of your emails**. Never assume people will click through from the front page of your site or scroll down your email or your website.
- If your e-campaign isn't following *from* your overall campaign, it's a waste of time. Keep it tightly integrated.
- All the key messages (e.g. squeeze message, two-horse race graphic or bar-chart, "working hard all year round", top local campaigns/petitions, record of action/promise of more, petitions, surveys etc.) need to be there up front.

Tick when completed

Do you ask for people's email address whenever you ask for their address or phone number?

- Many people are more willing to give their email address than their telephone number. Ask journalists too.
- Where you have permission to contact people on a wide range of issues, put their email address into EARS to enable you to send targeted personalised messages - for example, sending **recruitment** or **rapid rebuttal messages** to defs/probs. You can send targeted email with EARS and Microsoft Word in almost exactly the same way as printing out target letters.

Tick when completed

Do you comply with data protection legislation?

- If you collect email addresses from the public, be careful how you use them - especially with email addresses you get via casework.
- A commonly used paragraph included in many leaflets, that gives general permission, is: *"We would like to keep you informed about the progress of this campaign and other issues which we think you may find of interest. Please let us know if you do not want any of the information provided above to be used for this purpose."*
- **Unless you specifically ask for permission to contact people in other areas when you collect the email, only send people email on the topic they contacted you about or for the purpose they gave you their email for.**
- **Always offer people information about how to stop receiving emails with every message you send.** It's best also to explain how you got their email in the first place - "I'm writing to you because..."

Tick when completed

Are you collecting email addresses of local members and activists?

- Comparisons of local parties across the UK show those that collect and use their members' email addresses build membership faster than those that don't.
- Set a local target based on the percentage of people online in your area. Nationally, over 46% of households are able to access the internet from home, but this varies from over 52% in the East of England to 31% in Wales.
- The best way to collect email addresses is to ask in person - or on paper lists at members meetings.
- If you have permission from members, inform Membership Services (ld_members@cx.co.uk) about any email addresses that you have collected; please send in the person's email address, full name, postcode and membership number. Membership Services will also send your Membership Secretary email addresses collected centrally.

Tick when completed

Is your email or web address (URL) in all literature and posters?

- It's worth printing URLs on posters as an ongoing reminder of where to learn about your candidate.
- On leaflets, it's more important to provide an email address than a URL.

Tick when completed

Do you have address, telephone and contact details on your website?

- This is always the most looked for information on a candidate's website. During election time include details of how to find your campaign HQ - including a map for helpers, e.g. via a link to <http://www.multimap.com>.
- It's a good idea to use a form on your web-site to enable people to contact you, but make sure the form asks for name, address and telephone number - as well as just the e-mail address.

Tick when completed

Do you have an e-mail discussion list for local members?

- Discussion lists can be surprisingly powerful tools for motivating, involving and retaining members. Uses include reminding people of meetings, sharing minutes and local campaign news - and asking members for help.
- Web-sites such as <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com> have easy pages to help you set up lists.
- Unless you have collected several hundred e-mail addresses, discussion lists where anyone can post a message encourage more involvement than announcement-only lists.

Tick when completed

Do you have an imprint on your web-site and your mailing list emails?

- Ask your agent for the right "Published and promoted by ... on behalf of ..." statement and include it on the front page of all web-sites and at the bottom of all public or bulk emails. Add "Printed by [name and address of company hosting the site]" for web-sites and "Printed by [name and address of person sending the email or of the mailing list provider]" for e-mail. In all cases, the address must be a real postal address.

Tick when completed

Are you inputting the email addresses you collect into EARS?

- EARS (Election Agents Records System) is now set up to work with email addresses. If you have permission to send people email, you can now record their email address in the 'Emailh' field on EARS's Data Entry page.
- Once email addresses are in EARS, you can use EARS's 'Freeform Mailmerge File Output' function to get simple files you can use with Word and Outlook to send targeted and personalised emails.
- For full details, buy the LDO Guide "Email Campaign Guide" (free to LDO members) or contact EARS directly.

Tick when completed

Do you have a link to the federal party membership page?

- If someone's interested enough to find your site, there's a very good chance they might join the party.
- The page to link to is <http://www.libdems.org.uk/supportus>. Already one in eight members joins via the website.

Tick when completed

Critical Areas

Can people register their local support on your site?

- This can be a good source of new members and deliverers. You can also include some questions in the registration form that asks supporters how they might want to help.
- After they've filled out your questionnaire, link them through to the federal party membership page.

Tick when completed

Has your local party signed up to the Extranet?

- There's a lot of useful information on the private section of the Federal party site (called the Extranet). The sign-up link is in the top-right of <http://www.libdems.org.uk>.
- Your PPC (or ex-PPC) should have access. S/he can also nominate 3 members of the local team for access too.

Tick when completed

Do you have a fast download time (8 seconds on a normal modem)?

- Many commercial sites target 8 seconds as their download time. After 15 seconds, over half your visitors will have got bored and left. Target about 30kB **maximum** for the front page including *all* graphics and photos.
- More and more people are now accessing the web via phones and PDAs. This makes it even more important to make pages small and easily downloadable.

Tick when completed

Do you have your contact details, information and email addresses on other people's local sites (local newspapers, community sites etc.)?

- Find well-visited web-sites relating to your local area - and ensure they have up to date information about you.
- Unless you're an MP, assume local community sites will get more visitors than your party political site.
- If there's a facility for discussion, it can be productive to join in and put across the Liberal Democrat view.

Tick when completed

Is your site listed on the federal site's list of local sites?

- If the federal website does not link to your local site, send the information to Mark Pack (markpack@cix.co.uk).
- Once you are listed on the federal website, you will also be included in the Lib Dem part of <http://www.dmoz.org> and then automatically listed in many other search engines.

Tick when completed

Is your site accessible to visually impaired visitors?

- Check this easily with 'Bobby' at <http://bobby.watchfire.com/>. It gives simple advice how to fix problems.
- The RNIB also have useful guidelines at <http://www.rnib.org.uk/digital>.

Tick when completed

Worth doing if you have time:

Do you have an 'ask a question' section on your site?

- Includes a page to ask questions and show online answers. A US example is at <http://www.stuartwaldman.com/>
- This is a good way of pre-empting 'frequently asked questions'. Voters like to know candidates' positions.
- People who tried this in the General Election were surprised how popular this feature was.

Tick when completed

Do you publish surgery details?

- An easy way to publish this information to local voters.
- Put this information onto other local community sites too.

Tick when completed

Is your site optimised for search engines?

- Try to include likely search terms in the text of your front page - in particular it's helpful to include place names for the different parts of your ward or constituency. A good example is <http://www.ealinglibdems.org.uk>.
- Reinforce these through the use of META tags - TITLE, KEYWORD and DESCRIPTION.
- To find out more, buy the LDO Guide "Websites, search engines and directories" (free to LDO members).

Tick when completed

Do you have interactive campaign pages?

- Allow people to find out more about your key campaign themes, send letters and fill out petitions and campaign surveys online - see <http://www.easb-libdems.org> for an example.
- Also link to federal or regional interactive campaign pages like www.savethenhs.org or www.savethetube.org.
- People are more likely to browse your site and give their email address if you offer them something to do.

Tick when completed

Do have printable photo(s) - for use by press and focus editors?

- Having a downloadable press kit can save you a surprising amount of office time in high profile elections.

Tick when completed

Do you have an annual report/record of action?

- A useful add-on to your biography. It's helpful for voters and media to see, but hard to put out with every Focus.

Tick when completed

Do you analyse your web statistics?

- This helps identify what's working and what's not. Use a free program like Analog (<http://www.analog.cx/>) to analyse web logs or a free service like Captain's Log (<http://www.room101.co.uk/captains-log/>).

Tick when completed

Do you have an ongoing survey on your website?

- Have a survey form to ask about local issues, national issues and voting intentions.
- Where possible, mirror the questions you have in your door-to-door surveys.

Tick when completed

Do you collect email addresses of election helpers?

- This is extremely helpful in target seats and by-elections. Ask helpers for their email addresses. Regularly invite ex-helpers back to campaign - especially before weekends.

Tick when completed

Do you have a link to your Lib Dem MP and/or Lib Dem MEP?

- This reinforces the message that 'we can win here'.
- It's also a useful service for the public.

Tick when completed

Do you have a sign-up box for local news or consultation?

- You can easily set up a newsletter mailing list with <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com> - although increasingly people are using EARS to manage the email addresses of local voters.
- Steve Webb MP successfully uses his local list to consult with local voters on national and local issues.
- Add a space in the sign-up box for name, address and postcode. This will help identify the right voter in EARS.

Tick when completed

Fun to experiment with - but not essential:**Do you have downloadable campaign materials for printing out to let people campaign with you?**

- Some people are happier completing surveys or petitions offline and posting them back for example.
- Also try downloadable posters.

Tick when completed

Do you have alternative URLs linking to your site?

- Possible endings include .org, .com, .org.uk, .co.uk. Also consider likely misspellings.
- You can't always rely on people remembering your web-site address exactly.
- Allows you to have www.yourconstituency-libdems.org and www.yourname.org.

Tick when completed

Do you have a search box on your website?

- By seeing what people search for, you get ideas on how to improve your site. Rarely worth it for small sites - but helpful for MPs or other elected representatives.
- The best place to get a free search engine if you want one is <http://www.atomz.com>.

Tick when completed

Do you have specific campaign URLs for your local campaign pages?

- Too late to start this at election time, but the experience of <http://www.scraptuitionfees.com> is very encouraging.
- Make sure you include 'tell a friend' pages to make the campaign get passed on by email from person to person.

Do you have a press release archive?

- These can be a lot of work and rarely visited. It's better to build an email mailing list and send out news that way. More people will read the messages that way.
- If you want to have press releases on your site, try to file them by campaign theme as well as chronologically.