



TOOLS ROUNDUP: APPS AND DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR ORGANIZERS

This doc was designed to travel. Please feel free to share this around with other progressive campaigners. You can download this (look under File menu top left) in several formats or link to it / [embed it](#) on a web page.

TOOLS ROUNDUP: This doc is a compilation of useful tools and resources we have found on a topic that was requested by our audience community of campaigners. If you have more to contribute on this topic, please write us at: blueprintsfcc@gmail.com

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Disclaimer / request for your help

This is a work in progress that is meant to evolve over time with input from campaigners. At the moment, the tips and ideas here reflect the voices of the [contributors/reviewers listed below](#). We are always looking to add more voices of



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campaigners that have knowledge and experience on this topic. If this is you, please contact us here: blueprintsfc@gmail.com.

Overview and principles for best tools

Modern organizing and campaigning is far from being a “digital-only” affair and while offline gatherings, election-based activities and group work may well happen offline, digital tools and platforms are often the vital thread that makes organizing large groups of people in networks possible without an army of staff or volunteers. Behind many of the leading new campaigns and movements, a set of digital tools and platforms are the glue that keep it all working together.

Overall, the best tools and systems that support organizing work should be relatively inexpensive, “plug and play” – in the sense that they can rapidly be set up and deployed to support programs – and accessible in the sense that they are user-friendly or based on platforms that supporters and organizers already use and therefore do not require special training or a long adaptation period.

The values and ethics of digital tool selection

When selecting the tools you want to use for your campaign, take a few minutes to consider and weigh the ethics and values of the companies making the tools and the security of your lists and data in that process.

Although many of these tools are inexpensive, every penny spent on technology influences the technology being developed and the values they develop those tools with. Many of the companies in the list are non-profit, progressive aligned companies, but others are for profit companies that might not align with your values or might sell their tools to your opponents. This list provides a general overview of many tools that are available and various price points, but it's worth considering issues like [the Trump campaign's use of NationBuilder](#) for the 2016 election, the security and data practices of [Google](#) and [Facebook](#), and others when you select your tools.



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If you're keeping confidential information, be sure to read up on our [recommended digital security practices](#).

And, if you're working with communities with limited technology or multilingual audiences, some of these tools might not work or be built for those functions. Famously, many text tools don't allow for accent marks. So, be sure and test out the tools to see what works best not only in the short-term --- but also for your long-term vision of the type of campaign and community you're trying to build.

Recommended tools and apps for organizers

The recommendations presented below are a mashup of advice from different sources.

They come partly from a [NetChange Consulting](#)'s compilation of tools and platforms used by leading organizations that run distributed organizing systems including: The [ACLU's People Power](#) program, [350.org](#), [Indivisible](#), [Movimiento Cosecha](#), the Bernie campaign, Canada's [Dogwood](#) Initiative, [Sierra Club](#), [Hollaback!](#), Team Internet – [Free Press](#) and the [Stop Adani](#) network in Australia.

This is combined with [Stuart Melvin's recommendations](#) of top apps for organizers, which expands on the utility of some of the solutions presented.

Finally, this roundup also integrates suggestions from our Blueprints [helpers](#) and our audience. Suggestions are still being gathered [through this input form here](#).

Recruiting folks, building lists, managing + contacting supporters

Engage with your full base and leads with CRMs (client relationship management software) with email capacity like [Action Network](#) or [Nation Builder](#) (especially these two because they allow for distributed control) though some groups prefer [Action Kit](#) and others use tools more formatted for marketing like [HubSpot](#). [Mailchimp](#) is a free or low-cost option if all you need to do is manage email lists, and [CiviCRM](#) works well if you've got a bit of coding experience.



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Focus on: Action Network

Shortly after Trump was elected, women and allies took to the streets in their millions. This global Women's March was organised using Action Network. The free version combines digital "actions" (petitions, sign up forms, events, fundraisers) with a simple but effective database and mass-email tool. Got some cash? It's well worth the \$200 pcm to become a network partner, giving your sub groups all the same tools, while the supporters they engage automatically join your main database. The non-profit and progressive-only Action Network is now the movement standard, powering everything from the School Cuts campaign to Extinction Rebellion and Friends of the Earth. Action Network are also about to launch a new mobile tool for face-to-face, 1:1 relational organising which you can [check out here](#).

Generating signup pages/action sites

Campaign CRMs (client relationship management software) with mailers as mentioned above. Create signup forms and actions in Facebook groups and Facebook Messenger.

Blast your list with SMS short code systems like [TextMarks](#) and [Mobile Commons](#), and sometimes paper to digital signup process at public events later transferred to digital spreadsheets, like [Google forms](#).

Use microsites either hosted independently or signup pages generated by CRM tools like [Action Network](#) + [Nation Builder](#) or using drag and drop page builders like [Wix](#), [Squarespace](#) or [Weebly](#) with embedded forms.

Serving low-barrier digital actions / identifying high-action takers

Hosted online petitions like [ControlShiftLabs](#), action tool suites like [New/Mode](#), built-in action tools within CRMs like [Nation Builder](#) / [Action Network](#) etc., Peer to peer texting systems like [Hustle](#), [ThruText](#) (previously known as Relay) and [Spoke](#). Phone-banking tools like [CallHub](#), [HubDialer](#) and [ThruTalk](#) (previously known as Relay Dialer).

Relational organizing tools like [VoterCircle](#) for peer to peer outreach. Another option is [rallystarter.com](#), useful for activists of all levels to create free petitions and direct action campaigns to call, email, and tweet targets.



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Internal comms / coordination within the network of supporters

[Slack](#), (or [Keybase](#) if security + encryption are a concern) [WhatsApp \(See our guide on this\)](#) , [Facebook Groups \(see our guide on this\)](#), [Trello](#), [Microsoft To Do](#) or [Asana](#) for mapping out groups tasks, [Loomio](#) (a tool for taking collective decisions without having to organise meetings / conference calls) For video conferencing, most often [Zoom](#), [Maestro conference](#) or [Jitsi](#).

Focus on: Microsoft To Do

(Browser, iOS, Android)

So you had a meeting and saved your minutes in Drive, now you need to assign to do's to each other. Like Trello and Asana (see above), Microsoft To Do is a free task management platform, with tasks (like Trello's "Cards") created in lists (like Trello's "Boards"). Lists can be shared with other via a shareable link, and once shared, tasks can be assigned to one responsible person. This enables completed tasks to be "ticked off" and this kind of accountability is the backbone of effective organising. One unusual and nice feature of Microsoft To Do is the "My Day" feature. The idea is that while you might have 25 different tasks due today, to see them like that can be overwhelming and paralysing. So instead you can choose to just add a few of them at a time to your "My Day" view. Much less overwhelming to look at and work through!

Tip: Prefer "Asana" style lists to "Trello" style boards? Check out <https://sendtask.io/> - it's free, enables unlimited users and even enables tasks to be shared with people without an account!

Focus on: Slack

(Browser, Windows, Mac, iOS, Android)

Next you need a way to keep in touch in between meetings. Facebook is ok, but not everyone wants to be on it. Email can be overwhelming. Whatsapp is great for quick back n forth in small groups or broadcasting. But to enable more scalable inter and intra-team chat, Slack is the go to. Slack is based on a "Workspace" containing multiple "Channels" where multiple users can discuss a common topic (a project, a team, an



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interest etc). While Slack no longer allows you to create a permanent invitation link, you can create one that lasts a month at a time.

Managing info within the network

Get organized and consistent with tools like [Google docs / sheets](#), [Air Table](#) and [Basecamp](#).

Focus on: Google Drive

(Browser, Windows, Mac, iOS, Android)

Before anything else, you're going to need someplace to store, share and collaborate on minutes, strategies and other documents. Google Drive is your answer. Open to all and easy to use, Google Drive has helped scale movements from Indivisible to Extinction Rebellion.

Campaign design planning + mapping

[Mural](#) (a brainstorming and remote collaboration tool based on design thinking), [Kumu](#) (a data visualisation tool designed for problem analysis and stakeholder mapping).

Focus on: Plectica

(Browser)

Life is complex. You might need to develop a “relational map” of the people (and power) in your community or workplace. Or you might need to collaborate with others remotely to brainstorm a complex campaign strategy. Plectica has you covered. This mind mapping tool is based on principles of “systems thinking”, helping you work through a holistic view of a complex issue.

Planning / scheduling /managing events

[Eventbrite](#), Facebook Events, Calendly, shared Google calendars.

Focus on: Doodle



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(Browser, iOS, Android)

The original scheduling app. Organisers need to schedule time to meet and talk to each other and others. Doodle is the answer. You might be familiar with the original tool: create some time/date options, send the link to your invitees, they pick the ones that work for them, enabling you to easily choose a date that works for the majority. But Doodle has a great new feature: "Meet me" enables you to connect your calendar and send a link to your invitee. They can see when you're free and choose a slot that works for them. What's more, Doodle also now lets you run a poll for things other than dates, which can be a good way to take an online vote.

Creating quick and affordable campaign videos

[Microsoft FlipGrid](#) allows campaigns to easily gather video testimonies and voices from supporters.

[Adobe Spark](#) (a free Adobe product) allows users to edit videos, add captions and text frames and even free background music.

[Lumen5](#) (with a free 1 user option) is another easy-to-use video creation site that offers a vast royalty-free library of stock clips that can come in handy when creating issue-specific videos

All of the above have been tried and tested by several low-budget progressive political campaigns in the U.S. as documented in the Democracy Labs case studies cited in [Other resources](#) below.

Other folks recommend [Lightworks](#), [VSDC](#) or [iMovie](#) for video editing. To add captions and subtitles to videos you've already created: [YouTube directly](#) or [Movavi](#).

Free graphics/ logos / visuals & editing

Make free or super cheap visuals with [Stencil](#), [Snappa](#) and [DesignBold](#).

[Unsplash](#) is recommended as an online resource for royalty free photos.

Focus on: [Canva](#)



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(Browser, iOS, Android)

Making things look sexy is a skill, and with a distributed organising programme you should be able to find graphic designers to help out. But Canva can save you if you can't. A free platform chock full of swish looking templates for logos, flyers, social media images, infographics and the rest. Jump on here and make your cause look lovely.

Other resources

- [NetChange Consulting's common elements of a distributed organizing "tech stack"](#). The table presented is a compilation of tools and platforms used by leading organizations that run distributed organizing systems. To download this table [as a PDF, click here](#)
- [Stuart Melvin's "My top 10 apps for organisers"](#) post on Medium
- [Democracy Labs](#), which supports low-budget progressive political campaigns in the U.S. has documented several use case where affordable video technology helped campaigners deploy effective appeals to their base below:
 - [Virginia Candidates Create Issue-Specific Campaign Videos](#)
 - [Innovations In Persuasive Storytelling](#)
- [ACRONYM's 2019 Digital Organizing Tools Assessment \(created to support U.S. progressive political orgs making tool choices\)](#)
- [Social Movement Technologies](#) offers extensive webinar-based trainings and resources on digital infrastructure needs for progressive groups.
A good rundown of digital infrastructure for organizers is provided in the following webinar: [Top 2019 Tools & Tactics to Bump Up Your Online Organizing Game](#)
See all of their offerings here: <https://courses.socialmovementtechnologies.org>.
- [Drew Wilson](#) has prepared a collaborative list of [Digital Tools for Activism on this GitHub page](#)



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Attribution

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