

Students For The National Equality March

Ez Texting Text Messaging Case Study

Objective

Students for the National Equality March collaborated with the NoH8 Campaign, as well as the Service Members Legal Defense Network, to create a "flash protest" to oppose the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy, which denies lesbian and gay Americans the opportunity to serve openly in the US military.



Solution

David Valk, of Students For The National Equality March, used Ez Texting's group text messaging service to collect phone numbers of students who would be converging on Washington, D.C. for the National Equality March. These students would then be alerted on the day of the "flash protest" of the time and location.

Implementation

Students For The National Equality March rented the keyword NOH8 on Ez Texting's shared short code, 313131. The NOH8 Campaign is a photographic silent protest created by celebrity photographer Adam Bouska and partner Jeff Parshley in direct response to the passage of Proposition 8 in California.

In the organizing phase of the campaign, Students For The National Equality March used Ez Texting's service as the glue that bound a grassroots social media effort. Their typical call to action – "For info on the Flash Protest in DC on Oct 10th for the repeal of "DontAskDontTell" text the word NOH8 to 313131" was spread in various ways:

- 4,000 plus fans of their Facebook page were urged to text in the keyword NOH8 to 313131 to receive information about the flash protest.
- They tweeted similar calls to action using their organization's Twitter Account. The NOH8 Campaign tweeted the call to action as well. The appeal to text NOH8 to 313131 was retweeted hundreds of times, allowing the message to spread virally.
- Emails were sent out to 2,000 student leaders around the country, asking them to text in to get the message.
- Finally, the call to action was added to the Students For The National Equality March's official blog.

On October 10th, Students For The National Equality March commenced their “flash protest.” In total, 827 participants opted-in to receive a text message indicating a time and location to meet in Washington DC. The text message was sent just after 1PM: “ATTN!! FLASH PROTESTS IN DC!! MEET @ WASHINGTON MONUMENT ... 3PM. END DONT ASK DONT TELL!”

Outcome

“It was the next generation of activists who kick-started the National Equality March with a flash mob – and it was 23-year-old David Valk who rallied the troops. – *The Advocate*



The Advocate, a national publication, documented the number of participants grow between 3:15PM and 3:50PM. On-duty police officers estimated a total of 1,200 people participated in the student-led flash protest. This number is higher than the number of people who opted-in to the message campaign, proving the power of a word of mouth campaign in a short period of time, coupled with the important nature of the topic.

The Flash Protest attracted National Media attention from the likes of CNN, *The New York Times*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *The Advocate*. This coverage was complimented by articles in local and student newspapers around the country.

“Ultimately, I think the real success of this action was that it created a sense of legitimacy for young organizers – new technologies, including mass-text campaigns, have redistributed power to young activists, and created a new model for social organizing. – *Dave Valk*



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