



## Taking brand advocacy to new heights on Change.org

*Virgin America gathers popular support to fight rising airfare and open new gates at Dallas' Love Field airport*



The airline industry needs competition. Without choices, regard for the consumer would be ignored through rising fares and diminishing amenities. This is exactly what the people traveling through Dallas' Love Field airport were facing. With 16 of the 18 gates controlled by one airline, fares had risen 37% in five years, the largest increase anywhere for an airport of its size. When the airline controlling the other two gates was acquired, it was forced to divest its gates and the Department of Justice offered them to Virgin America.

But the dominant airline objected, wanting the last two gates for full control of the airport. The decision went to the Dallas City Council.

"We knew we needed to build a campaign quickly. We asked ourselves, what's the fastest and most effective way to engage our audience? We knew we wanted to build a website, but decided our first step was to launch a Change.org petition in order to begin building momentum and support right away while we built out other campaign assets," explained Jill Fletcher, Brand and Social Media Manager at Virgin America.

With the help of Hill+Knowlton Strategies in Dallas, Virgin America's brand marketing team launched a "Free Love Field" Sponsored Campaign on Change.org in just a few days.

"Change.org made sense because of the speed with which we could launch and recruit supporters, the ability to target an audience and the tools to directly engage with decision makers," Murali, SVP at Hill+Knowlton Strategies shared.

The excitement and engagement around the petition made it clear that this campaign had potential. Increasing momentum, Virgin enlisted creative agency 1Trick Pony to build-out a microsite with fun, brand-aligned imagery, which they promoted across social media. Sir Richard Branson got involved, filming a cheeky love letter to Dallas' Love Field and holding a pep rally.

Within 10 days, the petition had gathered 27,000 signatures. Of the signers, 12,000 chose to join Virgin America's email list.

The Virgin America team printed out the 27,000 signatures and presented them to the Dallas City Council, who awarded Virgin America the Love Field gates shortly thereafter. With the help of passionate brand advocates, Virgin America celebrated a victory for the airline, and even more so, for Dallas travelers.





# Tips and tricks for brand advocacy

*How Virgin America won its Free Love Field campaign*

## 1. Be swift

Virgin America knew that speed was essential. They were able to immediately launch a petition and follow it in close succession with a microsite, tongue-in-cheek video featuring the iconic Sir Richard Branson, and subsequent social media promotion.

## 2. Stay classy

While Virgin America was going head to head with another airline to compete for gates, it never once named its Goliath-like competitor. Nor did it attempt to drag its name through the mud.

Class and courtesy win.

## 3. Aim your campaign

Virgin America targeted its supporter recruitment on Change.org to focus on the greater Dallas area as well as major metro areas across the US, knowing that people living in cities would care most about affordable travel options.

## 4. Advertise your petition

Virgin America not only invested in a Sponsored Campaign to drive support, but also in Facebook Ads and Google AdWords directing to the petition. “The Change.org petition was our campaign hub and we drove much of our paid traffic there,” Murali shared.

## 5. Have fun with it

Across the family of beloved brands, Virgin has always maintained a fun and cheeky tone, which shone through this campaign from the love letter video to Dallas Love Field, to the photo of Branson covered in lipstick kisses. “Many corporate brands are hesitant to have fun. Virgin America approached this campaign with a playful tone and people liked it,” Murali explained.

## 6. Thank us like you mean it

Virgin America thanked all its new email leads with a discount on a flight to or from Love Field airport. Yes, please.

### CHALLENGE

- Convince Dallas City Council to award Virgin America gates at Dallas’ Love Field airport
- Quickly rally customer support

### SOLUTION

- Create Change.org Sponsored Campaign
- Recruit supporters in Dallas and US metro areas
- Drive traffic to petition through microsite and paid traffic



### RESULTS

- Victory! Virgin America wins gates at Dallas’ Love Field
- Received 27,000 petition signatures in only 10 days
- Recruited 12,000 new email leads

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