### explore the benefits and features of townhall

***Create a destination for voters to voice opinions, prioritize issues, and offer insights.***

* **Online suggestion box:** Voters post ideas, and other members of the community vote those ideas up or down in an idea forum.
* **Online town meeting:** Voters post questions, other members of the community vote the questions up or down, and campaign or organization hosts respond in a moderated forum.
* **Open discussion between you and citizens:** Voters post questions, other members of the community vote the questions up or down, and campaign or organization hosts and community members respond in an open forum.

A successful campaign depends on real connections with voters. When you can’t be everywhere, use Microsoft TownHall to engage with voters online: Scale your communication, aggregate feedback, and gain voter insight.

Microsoft TownHall is an online tool that fosters, organizes, moderates, and houses online conversations, driving rich discussion around top issues and concerns. It is a place to ask, answer, and prioritize questions that are top of mind. The most popular or relevant questions bubble to the top, so participants can readily see timely topics at any given moment.

The flexible design of TownHall provides availability using any Web browser and across multiple platforms, and the TownHall software is available at no cost. Because it’s hosted on Windows® Azure™, TownHall is ideal for people who don’t want to manage bulky technical infrastructure. It’s available using a pay-only-for-usage model, so customers don’t have to pay for unnecessary hardware and bandwidth that might sit idle, nor do they have to worry about handling a crush of traffic around a spike in activity. Windows Azure will do the heavy technical lifting. A typical campaign or office holder can connect with more than 100,000 constituents, 24 hours a day, for pennies per engagement.

### WHY microsoft townhall?

Today’s on-demand society requires unlimited online access to people, organizations, and information from a variety of electronic devices. Microsoft TownHall provides political candidates and organizations with an online and always-available vehicle to engage with voters and supporters and gain valuable insights within the constraints of existing budgets. Participants can join the conversation on whatever Internet-connected device they may be using at a given moment.

TownHall features a user-friendly, lightweight interface that is optimized for the collection of data, which is stored in Microsoft SQL Azure. From there, you can pull the data into a number of existing and familiar tools, including Microsoft Office Excel®. TownHall is available as downloadable source code that is customizable for your specific requirements.

To increase participation, TownHall is equipped with a user reputation system, which allows individuals to earn points and badges for their contributions to the community. There are several approaches to earning points. Organizations can “rally the troops” by tailoring TownHall to accommodate various scenarios, including rewarding offline activities. For example, TownHall has been used by NASA for the Be a Martian Web site, which enables the public to participate as citizen scientists to improve Martian maps, take part in research tasks, and assist Mars science teams studying data about the Red Planet. In less than six months, Be a Martian participants have earned more than 2.2 million points.

These days, voters expect to be heard. TownHall gives you a variety of ways to meet their expectations and to identify and respond to their most important concerns.

**How do people engage?**

TownHall is available to citizens using mobile phones, Web browsers, and tablet computers.  
  
Think about TownHall as a forum that public officials or candidates can embed on their home pages—across multiple platforms, including popular desktop operating systems, and across tablets and mobile devices, such as Windows Mobile®, iPad, iPhone, and Android.

You can integrate TownHall into Facebook fan pages and third-party sites, by using widgets. And users can share TownHall questions and comments on Twitter and Facebook, extending the conversation to include members of their broader social communities.

**Get started with Microsoft TownHall today!**

Download the code:

[*http://code.msdn.microsoft.com/TownHall*](http://code.msdn.microsoft.com/TownHall)

Until July 31, 2010, get the Azure Introductory Special, and try TownHall on Azure at no cost:

[www.microsoft.com/campaignready](http://www.microsoft.com/campaignready)

Watch online demos, find a technology partner, and get other ideas for your campaign:

[www.microsoft.com/campaignready](http://www.microsoft.com/campaignready)

### WHo should use townhall?

**Microsoft TownHall is not just for political candidates**—it’s for any individual or organization that wants to engage with a community. Because TownHall is cloud-based, it is easy to set up and requires no long-term commitment, so your TownHall site can be ongoing or short lived. Consider TownHall if you want to engage:

* Voters in a political or issue campaign.
* Constituents looking to interact with government agencies.
* Customers of a brand.
* Attendees at an event.
* Customers looking for support.
* Fans of a sports team, TV show, film, or other topic.
* Disaster victims looking to connect with resources.
* Virtual teams that include internal and external resources.

In the same way that TownHall fosters conversation between public officials and citizens and between agencies and citizens, it can foster conversation between non-profit organizations, associations, and corporations and the customers and communities they serve.

**WHY MICROSOFT?**

As one of the largest hosted services providers in North America, Microsoft has more than a decade of experience in online solutions and offers a solid track record. Here is just a sample of cloud-based technology from Microsoft.

* Windows Live™ Hotmail®, one of the most popular messaging services worldwide, with more than 400 million accounts.
* Microsoft Office Live Meeting hosts 5 billion conference minutes per year.
* Microsoft Exchange Hosted Services manages 2.4 million e-mail messages each day.
* Windows Live ID processes 1 billion authentications each day.
* Bing™ serves as many as 2 billion search queries per month.