

Psephology Today

Campaign Secrets, Hot Tips & How-to Strategies for Winning Candidates

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Psephology (see-fol-oh-gee) noun - The study of political elections



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UNPLUGGING FROM THE MATRIX

I do not exactly have an addictive personality. I enjoy my adult beverages, but not for breakfast...and not every day. Enjoy tossing a ten-spot in the bar-top poker machines, but only rarely. I can even enjoy a cigarette or two on rare occasions without lapsing back into a pack-a-day habit.

But the iPhone got me. And it was definitely a gateway drug.

I was originally sold on getting a "smart" phone so I could get my emails on the fly without having to wait until I got back to the office. Next thing you know, I had a Twitter account.

Then Facebook.

Then Linked-In.

Then **ANGRY BIRDS!**

Before I knew it, I was hooked. And I continue to break "Breden's Law" by texting while sitting at red lights.

Oh, and it didn't end once home. Gotta refresh Twitter every 60 seconds and checkout the ol' Facebook page every five minutes (or less).

I need help. I've become social media addict. And this has got to end!

But I can't quit "cold turkey." Indeed, when used responsibly, social

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Endorsements Matter...Don't Let Anyone Tell You Differently

Last month I leveled some sharp criticism at a state legislative candidate, Paul Anderson, over the content of his press release announcing his campaign. So I think it's only fair that I give the man a pat of the back for his press release announcing his official filing for office.

Now, most of it was boilerplate...but then there was this:

Anderson has received support throughout Nevada from local business owners and community leaders, including endorsements from:

*Assemblyman Scott Hammond
Assemblyman Lynn Stewart
The Honorable Don Ashworth
The Honorable Bob Beers
The Honorable Jay Bingham
The Honorable Chad Christensen
The Honorable Mike Montandon
The Honorable Sig Rogich
The Honorable Bruce Woodbury
Bob Ansara
Les and Barbara Bawden
Travis Brady
Dr. David Christensen
Vern Christensen
Chris Cole
Jeff Cooper
Chris Dean
Greg Desart
Alex Garza
Dave and Jen Johnson
Bart Jones
Jay Kornmayer
Todd Leany
Mary Lau
Dr. Bill Leavitt
Suzette LeGrange
Monte Miller
Doug Roundy
Brandon Smith*

*Ed Smith
Rod and Renee Stewart
Annie Sutorius
Mark Swarts
Tom Thomas
Tim and Laura Woodruff
Brent Wright*

Smart. Very smart. Anderson could be facing a crowded GOP primary...and taking this opportunity to show a WIDE range of support – from elected officials, establishment insiders and just plain average ordinary citizens – and listing them all in the release like this...very nicely done.

What party leaders and donors are looking for most in a candidate is...a winner. It's just that simple. And being able to demonstrate strong support from others shows credibility and confidence.

There is a natural human instinct to want to be with winners. And there's a band-wagon effect. If people who don't know you see that other people – especially highly regarded and well-respected people – are getting behind you, they have a natural tendency to want to "get with the program," too.

And bear this in mind: People don't trust politicians and don't believe a word they say (especially when a politician running for political office says he or she isn't a politician!). But they will believe their neighbors, and they will believe their friends, and they will believe their family and they will believe their co-workers.

So the most powerful messenger for your campaign isn't always necessarily you, the candidate – but those who are behind you, especially those who aren't politicians. And listing them like this (and on your website) will go a long way towards growing that list even bigger.

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Rebecca Keaton
Gregory Ament
Robin Lockwood
Gerald Farrell
Jack Roy
Irene Scruton
Mark Dale
Eric Weissmann

7 SIMPLE SECRETS ABOUT LITERATURE

By Mark Montini, CampaignSecrets.com

Every campaign has it. And every campaign can make it better without much work. What is it? Literature. Here are seven simple secrets you can use to improve your literature.

1. Use headlines.

Headlines are the most read part of your literature. Be sure they deliver a message. "Smith on taxes" doesn't cut it. "Smith will cut taxes" is much better.

2. Use sub-headlines and captions.

Sub-headlines and captions are the second most read part of your literature. Most people don't use them well, if at all.

3. Avoid folded literature.

You only have eight seconds to deliver your message, why waste two or three of them opening the literature?

4. Highlight your name.

There are an infinite number of things you can put on literature. Experience. Pictures. Endorsements. Issues. Don't let them interfere with the single

most important thing on your literature: your name.

5. Use good photos.

The cliché "a picture is worth a thousand words" is true. Still, it's amazing how often campaign literature features bad photos. Yes, it's hard to get good pictures. But it's a must. Why would you pay to print "a thousand bad words" about your candidate?

6. Don't squeeze.

Never use a font size smaller than 10 points. If you must use a smaller size to squeeze everything in, you need to use a larger piece of literature or fine-tune your message - it's likely to be the latter.

7. Don't be too creative.

Advertising legend David Ogilvy used to say the best way to ruin a good ad is to give it to creative designers. The design won't get people to vote for you. The "ad" will. As long as your literature looks professional, you're okay. Don't get carried away making it "pretty."

IT'S THE MESSAGING, STUPID!

As Republican strategist extraordinaire, Joe Gaylord explains in **FAST-START: Fundraising & Communications** (www.campaigndoctor.com/faststart), what you as a candidate are doing, in essence, is building “a small communications company from scratch.” Because “A campaign is all about persuading people to join, to donate, to vote.”

In other words, it's all about them, the voters, not about you, the candidate. The purpose isn't to talk about how great you are, but to persuade them to vote for you, donate to you and volunteer to work for you.

So let's take a look at two case studies of recent candidate announcements to see a stark difference. Here's the first one, exactly as I received it:

CASE STUDY #1

Tom Blanchard Republican Candidate for Assembly District 35

When looking at the problems Nevada faces as a state, from the highest unemployment rate in the nation to an educational system that continues to fail our children, it might be easy for some to overlook the biggest problem facing nearly every family in Assembly District 35; the unprecedented collapse of the Nevada housing market. One does not need to have my many years of experience in real estate to see how deep the problem runs. All anyone needs to do is drive through the communities of Mountain's Edge, Southern Highlands, Coronado Ranch and Nevada Trails to witness the many vacant, foreclosed, and abandoned houses or to talk to the homeowners who are still in their homes, but are hopelessly underwater, to realize there is no end in sight to the problem.

That is why I have chosen to enter the race for

Assembly District 35. Over the last 24 years I have chosen Nevada as the place to work and call home. Together with my wife Krista, who was born and raised here in Las Vegas, we have built a successful business and raised our 9-year-old son in this great state. Nevada has been very good to us and we have decided now is the time to give back. I have testified before congress, traveled the country lecturing real estate agents and lenders on the housing crisis and now want to take my 31 years of diverse experience on this issue to Carson City in order to find real answers to the problem. I know it won't be easy. If it was, we would not be facing these issues in our housing market today. It was "well-intentioned" government programs that created the problem and even more "well-intentioned" programs that have not only failed to solve the problem but have made it worse. Most importantly, until the housing crisis is resolved we can not truly start to rebuild our economy.

I encourage you to visit my website at www.blanchard4nevada.com to learn more about my campaign and myself.

*Sincerely
Tom Blanchard
Republican Candidate Assembly District 35
"Your Voice Matters"
7945 W. Sahara Ave. #106
Las Vegas, NV 89178*

* * * * *

Oh, Lord...where to begin?

1.) The headline is all about the candidate, not the voter and doesn't promise the voter any kind of benefit if the voter takes the time to read the rest of the announcement.

2.) The paragraphs are too long and the overall body copy is too short. Remember, odds are the voters don't know you or anything about you -

and “the more you tell, the more you sell.”

And break up the paragraphs to make them more eye-appealing for the reader.

3.) While the foreclosure problem is a legitimate issue, I’m not sure it’s the #1 issue that Mr. Blanchard thinks it is. And we suspect it’s the #1 issue for Mr. Blanchard because that’s the business he’s in!

4.) In articulating the problem, Mr. Blanchard lays no blame at the feet of his opponent. In fact, he doesn’t even bother to name his opponent, assuming (wrongly) that everyone knows who the incumbent assemblyman for District 35 is.

5.) The last two paragraphs are textbook examples of “I-disease.” They’re all about how great the candidate is without spelling out how the voter will benefit by choosing to elect the candidate to represent them.

For example: “I have testified before congress (and failing to capitalize Congress).” So what? What’s that mean to me, the voter?

But perhaps the worst part is this: “(I) now want to take my 31 years of diverse experience on this issue to Carson City in order to find real answers to the problem.”

Whoa! You want to go “find” the answers to the voters’ problems? You mean you don’t *have* a solution already?

Folks, people aren’t looking for somebody who’s “looking” for the solution to their problem; they’re looking for somebody who *knows* how to fix their problem and is capable of doing so.

6.) Another textbook campaign domain no-no. You do not use “4” in place of “for” in your URL, because when you do, you have to explain that cute little (dumb) move every time you give out your domain name verbally - in speeches and in radio and TV interviews.

“Go to www.blanchard4nevada.com. That’s Blanchard, the numeral 4, Nevada, dot-com.”

7.) And finally, a classic lame-o slogan. “Your Voice Matters”? Really? What the hell does that mean? How does that benefit the reader/voter/donor?

And again, all of these problems with this announcement are discussed in detail in the FAST-START home-study program, so if you haven’t purchased it yet...what are you waiting for?

By contrast, consider this announcement I drafted for a candidate and new Winner’s Circle member running for the state Legislature in an adjacent district:

CASE STUDY #2

Isn’t a 4-Year Recession Long Enough?

It’s time to stop the insanity of re-electing the very people who caused the problem!

It’s one of the most-overused clichés in history... probably because it’s also one of the truest: The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

Which is why it would be insane to once again elect Paul Aizley to represent us in the Nevada Legislature.

Folks, we know the problems...

- *While tourism is coming back a little, tourists are spending less...so even though Nevada is doing better, it’s kind of like your fever dropping from 102 degrees to 101.*
- *For all the talk of economic “diversity,” gaming is what we do...and if we don’t get out in front of the online gaming wagon, Nevada could end up sucking hind teat to Macau, the Bahamas or even Atlantic City.*
- *You don’t create jobs in the private sector with*

government policies and bureaucracies that penalize, frustrate, over-regulate, tax, block, intimidate and discourage the very people who create jobs in the private sector.

- *Foreclosures aren't just a problem for those losing their homes, but for neighbors who see the value of their own homes continue to tank thanks to all the empty houses on the streets around them.*
- *For all the talk of making "annual yearly progress," the simple and unacceptable fact is that many of the public schools in Nevada which aren't outright "failure factories" are "manufacturers of mediocrity"...and just dumping more money into the system won't fix it.*
- *"Green" energy is no substitute for cheap energy if you're a low- or middle-income family being squeezed by gas prices at the pump hovering around \$4.00 a gallon.*

I could go on and on...but you get the drill.

The Great Nevada Recession & Meltdown started in the fall of 2007. Paul Aizley became our assembly in 2008. Since that time, things have only gotten worse...all with Mr. Aizley – a retired university professor with no real-world, practical private-sector experience – representing the voters of District 21.

During his career in public office, Mr. Aizley's "solutions" to our problems have included:

- *Voting for \$1 billion worth of higher taxes in 2009 – including hikes in the cost to open and operate a business in Nevada, and doubling the penalty/fee employers pay the government for every worker they hire.*
- *Adding insult to injury, Mr. Aizley voted for an extension of \$620 million worth of tax hikes again in 2011. In fact, Mr. Aizley actually voted for 17 out of 18 bills in 2011 that would have raised taxes or fees.*
- *Mr. Aizley has done nothing to spur tourism in Nevada.*
- *Mr. Aizley has done nothing to reduce*

unemployment in Nevada.

- *Mr. Aizley has done nothing to really fix the foreclosure problem in Nevada.*
- *Mr. Aizley has done nothing to protect Nevada's leading role in the gaming industry.*
- *Mr. Aizley has done nothing to reduce energy costs for Nevadans.*

But here's what Mr. Aizley DID do...

He actually voted for a bill to "dumb down" the graduation requirement for high school students!

I'm sorry, but in my book, you don't improve education by watering down the standards.

Enough of this insanity.

My name is Phil Regeski. (Yes, it's Polish...so you know I know how to take a joke and overcome a handicap!)

I'm running against Mr. Aizley...and I'm asking for your vote.

I'm a professional water engineer - so I know all about the water district and its rate increases... and exactly what we have to do to protect our water resources in our desert community.

I'm a small businessman, so I know exactly how the government gets in the way of people who are trying to hire the unemployed...and exactly what we have to do to fix it.

I'm also the father of a pre-teen daughter...and to be honest, I have NO IDEA how to fix that!

All kidding aside...as the saying goes, real change requires real change.

Now...

We can continue on the hamster-wheel path Mr. Aizley has us on...never-ending economic stagnation, unemployment through the roof, foreclosures on every corner, taxes up the ying-

yang and education down in the dumps.

Or together we can move in a new direction that will end the Great Nevada Recession & Meltdown, put workers back into jobs, people back into vacant houses and put excellence back into education.

I know people are often hesitant of change – including changing elected officials - but as John Wayne said in Chisum, “Things usually change for the better.”

Let’s you and me change things for the better in Nevada.

Sincerely yours,

*Phil Regeski
Assembly Candidate/District 41*

* * * * *

A very different type of letter, no?

- 1.) The headline isn’t about the candidate; it’s about the pain being suffered by the voters, along with posing a question to immediately draw the voter into the conversation.
- 2.) No beating around the bush. The letter and campaign are about “firing” the incumbent, so don’t pussy-foot around that; come out with guns a’blazing.
- 3.) Outline ALL of the problems that could possibly be impacting the reader/voter. In the CASE #1 example, unless the reader believes he’s being severely harmed by the foreclosure problem, there’s no reason for him to read on.
- 4.) Use “bullet points” to break up the copy and make it more eye-appealing and easy for the voter to read.
- 5.) Remember, your job is to persuade voters who have voted for the incumbent in the past to “fire” the person they hired. Nobody likes change

and nobody likes to admit they made a mistake, so you HAVE to give them reasons to make a change. Pointing out some of the incumbent’s “bad” votes starts to make that case.

6.) The best humor a candidate can use is self-deprecating humor. Other jokes can backfire if not presented correctly. Making fun of your own heritage by invoking a well-known stereotype puts you on safe ground and “humanizes” you.

7.) Make a specific “ask.” In this case, we specifically asked for the reader’s vote...but this could easily be converted into a fundraising letter.

8.) It’s OK to talk about what “you have” - as long as you also talk about what “they get.” The candidate has “this” experience, so the voter gets “that” benefit. I have, you get. Get it?

9.) Again, people are resistant to change, so arguments that help overcome that resistance are critical.

Invoking the legendary John Wayne is particularly strong - especially with older voters. Quoting Lady Gaga, though surely better known among younger voters (who don’t turn out to vote in numbers anywhere near the 50+ age group), wouldn’t have anywhere near the same effect.

10.) And finally...no stupid, meaningless slogan...and a call to action to work together, as opposed to suggesting the candidate is the Lone Ranger who single-handedly will solve all the world’s problems.

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Dr. Chuck Muth,

Muth's TRUTHS

The Coming Internet Sh*t Storm

As a general rule, *Psephology Today* is focused more on the nuts-and-bolts of campaigns than on issues; however, here's an issue that could also have serious repercussions on your campaigns in the future, so let's give you a heads up and get it on your radar screen.

The following is a warning from marketing guru Dan Kennedy to businesses who use email to market their products and/or services...but the warning applies to campaigns, as well:

*"If you are now relying on your own email to make your money, I'm telling you here and now, you are heading into a sh*t-storm. I am confident that free email CANNOT continue as you now know it, because the U.S. government must increase the subsidy to the post office and will try taxing business email to do it.*

"But whether or when that happens, federal and state sales taxes on all e-commerce is guaranteed to occur. Damn soon.

"Amazon.com has been fighting this one on everyone else's behalf, and gradually losing it. 41 states are so far upside down financially they'll have no option but to raise every tax and invent every new tax imaginable, and still get federal bailouts, still likely default on pension obligations...and that's before the full weight of ObamaCare doubles the states' Medicaid costs and takes official unemployment back up past 9%.

"If you don't think these desperate states' governors and legislators are going to 'fix the

injustice' of untaxed online sales to their residents, you are a nitwit.

"I also predict a website 'real estate tax' - technically, they're probably already subject to many states' commercial property taxes, and at very high valuations, and don't think cash-starved, marching-towards-bankruptcy states aren't having these discussions, too.

"Somehow commercial users of Facebook will be taxed. There are taxes on other ad media—why not this?"

Now, to be sure, Kennedy isn't ADVOCATING these taxes; he's simply warning you that they are being discussed and actively considered by legislators and governors. Forewarned is forearmed.

Too Much Information

Steve Pearson of CivicNEXT and Ford O'Connell of Civic Forum warn candidates about confusing quantity with quality on their websites.

"On the information side, the rookie mistake is to confuse the ability to publish an unlimited amount of information on your website or Facebook info tab with the desire of the audience to wade through your magnum opus.

"Likewise, crowding your home page with an excessive number of action buttons and links makes them easy to find, but less likely that the important actions will stand out.

"There is no hard and fast rule on the maximum number of words or links on a page, but if it takes a typical visitor minutes rather than seconds to figure out what it is you want to tell them or have them do, you deserve a 'delay of campaign' penalty."

About that Youth Vote

Election after election after election after election ... we hear of one campaign or another targeting the "youth vote" - roughly the 18-35 year old group. In 2008 we heard all about how the youth vote was really, really energized for Barack Obama and would turn out in record numbers on his behalf.

Didn't happen.

Here's a more stark and more recent demonstration of this: On March 21, there was a special election to fill a vacancy on the Las Vegas City Council. Turnout was exceptionally low - barely into double digits. But of those who DID turn out and vote...

Almost 75% of them were 55-years of age or older.

And THIS is why - especially if you're a Republican candidate for office - you need to worry and think long and hard about how to address the issues of Medicare and Social Security...because those two issues hit seniors where they live, and seniors vote.

Now, I'm not saying you should never reach out to the "youth vote" demographic; however, if you have limited resources - and what campaign doesn't? - you need to prioritize the amount of

**The only vote that counts
belongs to someone
giving you money."**

- Dan Kennedy

time, effort and money you devote to this group.

Scrub Your List

"The country's voter registration system is in dire need of an upgrade," reports Campaigns & Elections Magazine. "That's the conclusion of a recent study conducted by the Pew Center on the States."

How bad is dire?

"A full 12 million records contain an incorrect address, and 1.8 million dead people are still listed as voters across the country," C&E notes. "In addition, close to 2.8 million voters are registered in more than one state."

One of Lincoln's Laws for winning elections was to "make a perfect list of voters." Considering this report, you may have your work cut out for you in this regard in your district.

What to Give Your Finance Committee

Craig Varoga of Campaigns & Elections Magazine was asked what materials campaigns should provide to members of the candidate's finance committee. His answer:

"First and foremost, they will need contact information for candidate and campaign leadership.

They'll also need a list of top donors and their contribution history in similar races; a list of top potential prospects and their contribution history; job descriptions of consultants, staff and volunteers involved in fundraising; benchmarks and goals for each member of the finance team and a polling memo.

"Finally, make sure they also have a budget and campaign outline. No need to get into the weeds with this, but provide enough background so that donors have confidence in your team and program."



A Tale of Two Fundraising Letters

Just at random, I received two direct mail fundraising letters on the same day. One had a decent opening sentence...the other, rather lame. So here's a refresher lesson on direct mail fundraising.

First, both letters failed right out of the box for the same reason: no headline. Nothing that jumps out and screams to the recipient, "READ ME!!"

Instead, both led off with their campaign logos: The first was Tea Party Express. The second was Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin.

Folks, I know you probably paid good money to a graphic designer for your logo, and I know it feeds your ego featuring it prominently at the top of the page...but that's prime fundraising real estate. DON'T waste it on ego gratification. This isn't about promoting you; it's about getting a donation.

If you have to use your logo, put it on the bottom or on your reply card/form.

The headline at the top is the first thing the recipient is going to read...IF...you're fortunate enough to even have your letter opened.

(Sidenote: Both carrier envelopes were weak; though TPX's was better. But that's another lesson for another day.)

So your letter should have a powerful headline that either scares the bejeepers outta them or

promises a tremendous benefit. The TPX letter had no headline whatsoever; Gov. Walker's headline, if you can call it that, read "Friday Evening."

Fail.

As far as salutations go, TPX addressed me as "Dear Fellow American." Gov. Walker addressed me as "Dear Fellow Conservative."

This one's a no-brainer. Bill Maher is a "fellow American." For that matter, so is Nancy Pelosi. Is this letter intended for them? No. TPX is clearly an organization appealing to conservatives, not "fellow Americans." Short of individually personalizing each letter (cost prohibitive in large-scale mailings), "Dear Fellow Conservative" is clearly the better salutation.

Now...which of these two opening sentences is the more powerful?

1.) TPX: "If you've had enough of the career politicians who've spent us into bankruptcy..."

Or...

2.) Walker: "Conservatives are under attack in Wisconsin and that means..."

Yep. The TPX opening is warmed-over typical Washington, DC standard fare run-of-the-mill cookie-cutter pabulum.

On the other hand, Walker's hits me where I live. I'm a conservative. And I'm "under attack"? Yes, tell me more! This is the kind opening sentence that really could have/should have been a headline in big, bold print at the top.

But let's not stop at the first paragraph; let's look at the entire first five opening paragraphs of each, starting with TPX:

If you've had enough of the career politicians who've spent us into bankruptcy...

If you've had enough of government-knows-best elected officials who don't know (or care) what the Constitution says about limited government...

And if you've had enough of the liberal elites who mock and then discard the foundational values and principles of our great Republic...

Then today I'm asking you to join the TEA PARTY EXPRESS and help make a real and lasting difference for our country.

Because 2010 was just the beginning!

Come on, folks! When was the last time you and your family sat around the dinner table agonizing over "liberal elites who mock and discard the foundational values and principles of our great Republic"?

And how many times have you stood around the water cooler at the office discussing with co-workers how y'all could "make a real and lasting difference for our country"?

Average, ordinary people - to whom this letter was directed - don't talk like that or think like that. They don't care about liberal "elites" - whoever THEY are; they don't like liberals, period! And their motivation isn't to simply "make a difference;" they want to kick the bums out of office!

I could go on, but let's not. The opening is weak. I'm sure some people will still give money because TPX has successfully branded itself as an effective conservative activist organization, but because of its well-publicized nationwide bus tours...not this letter.

On the other hand, let's look at Gov. Walker's first five paragraphs:

Conservatives are under attack in Wisconsin and that means...

There's *BIG TROUBLE AHEAD* where you live.

If the powerful labor unions get their way in my state...

They'll get their way in yours.

Our crisis today, is your crisis tomorrow!

Perfect pitch...pitch perfect.

Now, I know - and probably you do, too - that Walker is facing a recall election by government employee unions upset with the reforms he pushed through the Legislature last year. But even if I didn't, this copy speaks to ME. It stirs my curiosity because it WARNS me, not only of impending danger, but of impending danger IN MY OWN BACK YARD.

And which is the better boogie-man for stirring up the conservative masses..."liberal elites" or "powerful labor unions"? Liberal elites are Miss Nancy's Sunday School. Powerful labor unions are Darth Vader and the Empire!

The rest of Gov. Walker's letter was a pretty good read, as well. He added additional boogie-men, including "President Obama's Political Machine," the "MoveOn.org Radicals" and, of course, George Soros. Plus...short paragraphs, short sentences and short words, with lots of white space.

And finally, both letters have pretty weak P.S.'s - which are the second-most read parts of a fundraising letter, aside from the headline - though again, Walker's is better. Neither is a direct "ask" for a specific action or donation amount...and neither provides a "surprise" benefit for the reader should they take the time to read the full letter.

All in all, Walker's is pretty good, so I'm including it with this month's *Winner's Circle* package so you can read it in full.

SPECIAL REPORT

Everything Republican & Conservative Candidates Need to Know About Avoiding the Five Most Common Campaign Website Mistakes

By Mark Montini

Websites have quickly become a necessity for campaigns at every level.

It doesn't matter if you're running for city council in urban Chicago or dogcatcher in rural Otero County, voters in today's world expect you to have a website. If you don't have one you run the risk of being written-off as not running a serious campaign.

This new reality of 21st century campaigning means a lot of candidates have been forced to learn about campaign websites "on the run." And, unfortunately, for many of them that "learning" has been done at the School of Hard Knocks.

In 2002 alone, more than 1,800 campaigns all across America used the products and services offered by my company. Almost all of them had websites and, a good number of them will admit they made some big mistakes. A few will even tell you those mistakes cost them their elections.

This free special report reveals the five most common website mistakes I see and includes critical information you can use to avoid making the same mistakes on your campaign.

Campaign Website Mistake #1: Spending Too Much Money

The biggest mistake that campaigns make on their websites is spending way too much of their hard-raised money on them. Yes, websites are a necessity. And, yes, you want your website to look professional. But, the reality is that websites have not yet proved to be effective vote-getters.

On the other hand, things like direct mail, phone calls, and radio advertisements are proven voter getters.

So, the more you spend on your website the less you have to spend on proven vote-getting tactics. Imagine how you'd feel if you invested just \$500 too much in your website and ended up getting beat by just a few votes. That \$500 probably made the difference in your winning and losing. After all, with \$500 you could have:

- Sent 1,800 more pieces of voter mail
- Made 5,400 more get-out-the-vote- phone calls
- Run 75-150 more radio ads
- Published another 2-4 newspaper ads

Any one of those things would have made the difference.

Websites are cool. They can do fascinating things. But they just don't measure up to traditional campaign tactics when it comes to delivering votes – and that's what campaigns are all about.

The key to avoiding this mistake is keeping your priorities straight from the very beginning of your campaign. When Election Day is several months – or even years – away, it's easy to spend more than you should on things like websites and other unproven tactics. You're much better off saving that money until the final weeks of your campaign when you'll receive the greatest return on your investment.

Keep in mind that you can always add to your website later in the campaign. You don't need to build the perfect site right now.

Your #1 website priority early in your campaign should be to get a professional site for as little money as possible – even if that means forgoing some of the "cool" features you want to add later.

BEWARE OF HIDDEN WEBSITE FEES!

One critical thing to mention with regard keeping your website costs low is that you must protect yourself from hidden fees many website companies charge.

Here's how this game works. Website companies lure you in offering to build a full-function website for a surprisingly low price like \$599. It's hard to pass up a deal like this when you know custom-built sites typically cost at least \$1,500.

It sounds like a great deal until you start getting invoices for hidden fees like:

- \$29/month for hosting
- \$19/month for personalized email
- \$49/month for credit card processing plus a fee on all contributions
- \$75/hour for edits and changes
- \$100 for your domain name

And don't even think about disputing these charges or not paying the bills. These companies will simply shut down your site. Unfortunately, they have all the leverage in these situations.

At the end of the campaign, you'll have spent more on all the hidden fees than you did on the entire website.

Unfortunately, the hidden fee game has become standard operating procedure for a lot of website companies. It's great marketing on their part – get you in the door with a low price then make their money back after you've signed a contract. It's not a good situation for your campaign, though.

What these hidden fees are called and how much they cost varies from company to company, but 9 times out of 10 when you get offered a great price upfront, there's usually some hidden fees lurking in the background.

To avoid this mistake, ask the company for complete breakdown of everything you might

POSSIBLY pay for your website. "Possibly" is the key word. Really press them on this with the clear implication that you will not pay for anything they don't divulge prior to your signing the contract. Be sure to ask them about all the items on the list above.

The best situation is if they offer an all-inclusive package.

For example, with **CampaignSiteBuilder.com** you pay an all-inclusive monthly fee which includes everything: hosting, email, unlimited edits, and more. The only additional charge is a 7% processing fee on all credit card contributions. That's it. Everything else is included.

All-inclusive pricing like this eliminates surprises and allows you to focus on your campaign rather than having to worry about how much you're spending on your website.

Campaign Website Mistake #2: Paying for Everything Upfront

Raising money early in your campaign is incredibly difficult. But it's also incredibly valuable -- even more valuable than the money you raise late in your campaign. Why? Well, it's just like in business.

Your seed money allows you to invest in key areas.

For example, let's say you have \$3,000 in your campaign account and invest it in direct mail fundraising. That \$3,000 is likely to produce \$5,000-\$10,000 by the end of your campaign. After all, every donor you get today will have several more months to contribute more money to your campaign.

On the other hand, if you spend that \$3,000 on your website, that's all you get for it. Sure, you might get a few hundred dollars in contributions through your website, but you can be sure the return on your investment will be much, much

less than the \$5,000-\$10,000 return if you'd invested it in fundraising.

Sure, you'll have to spend some early money on things that don't have a good return on investment like literature. However, you should try to limit those expenditures as much as possible.

PAYING MONTH-TO-MONTH IS THE BEST OPTION

That's why I always encourage candidates to look for companies that offer a month-to-month payment package rather than the typical "pay-it-all-upfront" package. It's much better for your campaign if you can spend \$100/month on your website rather than \$1,200 upfront. It's just like earning interest on your money. The longer you can keep it in the bank the better.

One other important benefit of a month-to-month program is that it allows you to get your website up sooner. The reason is simple. If you raise \$100/day it will take you 12 days to pay for your website with the "pay-it-all-upfront" package.. However, if you choose a \$100/month website package, you can have your website up after just one day.

There's another "worst-case-scenario" benefit you'll get with a month-to-month payment package as well. I hope you don't experience it, but it has happened to other campaigns.

Let's say that you fall behind in your fundraising and make the decision to cut expenses everywhere possible. If you've spent \$1,200 upfront on

your website, the only money you can save is on hidden fees like those outlined in mistake #1. The \$1,200 you spent upfront is gone. There's no way to get it back if circumstances change – even if you've only used your site for a few months.

On the other hand, if you go with a month-to-month program, you pull the plug without losing everything you'd budgeted for your website. Again, I hope this isn't a scenario you experience, but it has happened and better safe than sorry.

Campaign Website Mistake #3: Not Accepting Credit Card Contributions

If you're running a small campaign, you may think this mistake doesn't apply to you because you're not going to raise more than a few thousand dollars for your entire campaign. Let me assure you, however, it does.

Having a website that allows credit card contributions has an impact on more than just your website. If you have this feature on your website, you can also accept credit card contributions in every other area of your fundraising. You simply use the secure credit card processing page on your website to process the contributions.

In a slow economy, this is extremely important. It can make the difference between a \$25 contribution and a \$100 contribution – or whether you get a contribution at all.

USE CREDIT PROCESSING FOR MORE THAN YOUR WEBSITE

It's just like in business. The easier you make it for people to buy things (i.e. contribute), the more likely they

Traditional Websites: \$2,500-\$15,000
Our Competitors: \$750-\$2,100 per year

Our Limited Time Special Price Offer
\$24.95/mo. or \$197/year
No setup fees. No minimum number of months. No cancellation fees.

Regularly Just: \$34.95/month or \$299/year!

are to do so.

Just think about it. If you accept credit card contributions on your website, you can also accept credit card contributions with your fundraising mail, event invitations, and even your fundraising calls.

There is one warning I want to make about accepting credit card contributions. It goes back to mistake #1 – spending too much on your website. In order to accept credit card contributions you must have something called a merchant account. Many campaigns spend more than they should to get one. There are two ways to get a merchant account for your campaign:

1. Set up your own merchant account

This process usually takes a few days and requires that you complete an application, pay a setup fee that can run anywhere from \$50 to \$200, pay a transaction fee of \$0.15 to \$0.35 for each transaction as well as an additional 2-4% of each transaction. And this doesn't include the extra money you'll have to spend to have your website developer integrate the system into your website. I would never recommend this option for a campaign.

If you still decide to get your own merchant account despite my opinion, the best deal I've found is offered at <http://www.PayByWeb.com>.

2. Use a credit card processing service.

With this option you simply pay for the right to use another company's merchant account. The money from contributions goes into their bank account and they send you a check every month or so.

The big benefit of this option is the cost. Most companies charge a monthly fee of \$19.95-\$49.95 plus a 3-5% processing fee for each transaction.

A few companies have programs which charge a

slightly higher processing fee, but no monthly fee. The industry standard for this type of program is about 10%. While 10% may seem expensive, it's actually a great deal when you do the math.

Let's say you process \$300/month in credit cards (this is a very high number as most smaller campaigns only receive a few hundred dollars total). If you pay a flat 10% fee, you'll be paying \$30/month.

On the other hand, let's assume you use the monthly fee + processing fee option and your monthly fee is \$24.95 with a 4% processing fee. You would pay \$36.95 to process the same \$300 in contributions -- \$6.95 more than with the flat 10% fee.

Based on this calculation, I'd always recommend campaigns choose a "flat fee" company – especially if they can find a company offering rates under 10%.

Two important notes here. First, this example is based on processing \$300/month. Most local campaigns only process about \$100/month, so your savings with the flat fee will be even more. Second, these costs don't include any expenses associated with integrating the specialized code required for processing credit cards into your website. In some cases, you may also have to pay more for hosting in order to have a secure contribution page.

The best deal I've found using the flat fee approach is <http://www.digitaldonations.net>.

Campaign Website Mistake #4: Not Promoting Their Websites

Unfortunately, many campaigns take what we like to call the "Field of Dreams" approach to generating traffic for their websites. You remember, "If you build it, they will come."

Well, it just doesn't work that way. Here's an example.

A few years ago I visited the website of a candidate for Congress in Indiana and made a shocking discovery.

The site was great. It had obviously been designed by a professional firm. I'd estimate the site cost \$5,000 to \$10,000. As I read through the information on the homepage, I stumbled upon a startling number.

At the bottom of the homepage was a counter. Counters display how many people have visited a site. You've probably seen them on other websites.

The counter on this site was at 183. That's right...183. I was the 183rd visitor to the site. What's worse is that it was only about 5 weeks before the election. The campaign had spent \$5,000 to \$10,000 on a website that had been viewed by just 183 people.

Let's say the campaign tripled the number of people who visited their site in the final 5 weeks of the campaign. That means they would have had 549 people visit their site. That means they spent between \$9.10 and \$18.20 per visitor! And that's not even unique visitors. That number includes people who visited multiple times -- even campaign staff who visited the site.

What a waste of money.

I have no doubt that the campaign had high hopes for their website when they launched it at the beginning of the campaign, but they didn't take the time to determine exactly how they wanted to promote it. It simply got pushed aside by "more pressing" issues.

I guarantee that if the campaign had known they'd only have 183-549 visitors to their site, they wouldn't have spent nearly as much as they did.

INCLUDE YOUR WEBSITE ADDRESS ON ALL PRINTED MATERIALS

Many so-called experts say the way to avoid this mistake is to get listed in search engines like Yahoo or Google. Not surprisingly, they also offer expensive packages to do it for you.

While their approach has a little merit for an eCommerce site, it has absolutely no merit for a campaign site. You can register with every search engine, including paying hundreds to be listed on Yahoo, and you'll do very little to help your campaign. This is especially true for local campaigns.

Think about it. Have you ever done a search to find the websites of candidates for school board? Governor, maybe. School Board, no. The bottom line about generating traffic for your campaign website is that 90+% of the people who visit will do so because of something you did.

The #1 rule for generating traffic to your website is to include your address (www.yourcampaign.com) on every piece of printed material your campaign produces. From fundraising mail to push cards to press releases, be sure that you include your website address. It's the best way to generate the maximum amount of traffic to your website.

Campaign Website Mistake #5: Letting Their Sites Get Stale

I can't tell you how many campaign websites I've visited that have old events featured under their "Upcoming Events" sections. That's not a good way to get visitors to return to your site.

There are several reasons this can happen.

First, the campaign may have gotten hooked into a contract with hidden fees for changes and simply couldn't afford to make the changes. The

details of this are outlined in mistake #1.

Second, the campaign may have submitted the changes to their website company and are just waiting for them to be made. Unfortunately, this isn't all that rare, especially for small local campaigns. Think about it. If a website company has to choose between spending time with a \$500 customer or a \$5,000 customer, guess who they choose.

Third, and most common, is that the campaign had a volunteer build their site. Early on, when the campaign was slow and there weren't many changes, the "volunteer" was able to keep up with all the requested changes. But, understandably, when the campaign began to heat up and changes needed to be made every few days, the volunteer fell behind on the changes.

That's why I encourage every candidate to make sure they can make changes to their websites on their own.

If you know how to FTP files to and from your website, understand HTML coding, and have purchased a program like Microsoft Frontpage or Dreamweaver, this isn't a big deal. If you're a normal person, however, and have absolutely no idea what that last sentence means, then you'll want to pay careful attention to the next few sentences.

There's no reason for you to have a website that

doesn't allow you to easily make changes 24/7/365 without any special software or training. If your website company says they can't provide that access to you, I will almost guarantee you that it's because they have hidden "change/edit fees" they want to charge.

Now, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying candidates should manage their own sites. Candidates should focus all their attention on meeting voters and raising money. I'm just saying that they should be able to make changes if a worst-case scenario arises.

I spoke with a Republican State Party leader a few days ago and, believe it or not, she told me that they couldn't find their "volunteer" website programmer and had no idea how to make changes to their site. Don't put yourself in that position.

Be sure you have the ability to quickly and easily make real-time changes to your site.

You can see an example of this technology at <http://www.gopsites.com/demo.htm>.

If a website company won't allow you that access, I'd recommend you use a different company. If a volunteer doesn't have the time or expertise to program that technology, I wouldn't recommend you let them build your website. Instead you might want to put them in charge of updating your site once you get it built.

Tell Me a Story...

“People do not buy things. They do not buy services. They do not buy programs. They don't even buy solutions. They buy stories. Stories are essential to your marketing. Conversions happen in stories. You want to convert more prospects to paying customers (donors or voters). Conversion leads to conversion.” - Dan Kennedy

Secrets to High Email Open Rates

How to Write Email Subject Lines that Increase Open Rates

by Jarrett Ray

Some email subject lines are descriptive of the email content. Others use proven techniques that have resulted in high open rates in the past. The best approach is to combine one or two proven strategies with a short description of the content of your email.

1. Numbers and Counts: The subhead of this section is a perfect example. People don't read online content, they scan it. Numbered lists, bullet points, and bolding all appeal to the innate organization of how online readers prefer content.

Example: "4 Facts About Wisconsin Union Protests"

2. Urgency: The half-life of an email is remarkably fast, which is why this strategy is popular with retailers who often send emails daily. If a reader believes they can wait to read your email, it's unlikely they will return at a later time. Enticing readers with a realistic reason to immediately act is a proven method for higher email open rates.

Example: "Happening Now"

3. Ask a Question: Remember when your teacher would tell you that there are no stupid questions? The key here is to capture the question many are curious about, and then let readers know you intend to answer it in your email.

Example: "Dick Lugar or Richard Mourdock?"

4. Localization: If your email is geo-targeted to a specific city or state, use the name of the location in the subject line. Most are proud of their city or state and are going to want to know why it's being

mentioned.

Example: "Enraging Video from Michigan"

5. Personalization: Many email marketing services allow you to append first names and other data to an individual's email address. If you want your email to stand out, use a detail about them—their first name or their total donation amount to your organization—as a way to peak their interest.

Example: "John, will you stand with Indiana or Obama?"

6. Timeliness: The best strategy to make an email successful is to focus on an ongoing event, breaking news, or a deadline. Many federal campaigns use the end of the Federal Election Commission's fundraising quarters and the corresponding reporting structure as a compelling way to ask their supporters to

contribute. Many other organizations time their email campaigns around major legislative news.

Example: "President Obama signs TARP bailout"

Here's the bottom line: when writing your next email, make sure a good amount of thought goes into choosing the subject line. The tips and proven strategies above can help navigate that email to your reader's inbox and ensure higher email open rates. In a world of cluttered email accounts, your email subject needs to stand out to enable your message to penetrate the audience. Success means recruiting more volunteers, gaining additional supporters, and increasing the number of contributors to your cause or campaign.

(Originally appeared in March 2012 issue of Campaigns & Elections Magazine)

The best strategy to make an email successful is to focus on an ongoing event, breaking news, or a deadline.

How to “Carefully Cultivate” Volunteers

“We know volunteers are valuable, but they are also difficult,” writes Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, a research fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford. “You can’t rely on ‘walk-ins.’ That’s why the best field staffers actively recruit and keep people involved.”

Remember, that’s also one of the 3 things a candidate is supposed to do: Ask for votes. Ask for money. And ask for volunteers.

“But even in campaigns...that carefully cultivate and understand the importance of volunteers,” writes Nielsen, “the interface between campaign staff and those who come to donate their time and effort is full of friction that complicates even the best laid field plans.”

Ain’t that the truth.

“The source of the friction is essentially that staffers and volunteers have different perspectives on what a campaign is and how it’s supposed to work,” Nielsen continues. “Staffers, broadly speaking, have a vocational approach to politics.”

Volunteers, on the other hand, “certainly consider themselves to be a part of the campaign, but they are clearly not part of the campaign organization. They don’t take orders from staff, and they come and go of their own accord.

“To run an effective field effort based on volunteers, campaigns need to take these differences into account, respect them and make room for them.”

“The best field staffers,” Nielsen concludes, “are those who take time to explain to volunteers how field works and why it matters; those who sit down and make a few calls with them, and those who are ready and willing to shoot the breeze a bit.

“If a campaign makes people feel involved, it is more likely that they will stay involved.”

Amen.

Whether you’re using some new whiz-bang computer software program “or you’re just using a big piece of poster board in your office,” writes Colin Delany in his Technology Bytes column, “make sure to use competition to drive staff and volunteers to excel.

“Set concrete organizing goals - number of calls made, number of donors recruited, number of doors knocked - and challenge teams to meet them,” Delany reminds. “And be sure to recognize the standouts.”

GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING

By Nancy Bocskor

- **ASK**
- Take the time to develop a WRITTEN fundraising plan with goals and deadlines
- **ASK**
- Be specific regarding amount. If not, a potential donor may decline because he is afraid he'll give too much or too little
- **ASK**
- Make repeated appeals. Once they have given, ask them to give again and again until they can no longer afford to give or have reached their legal limit.
- **ASK**
- Create a sense of urgency. Express a critical need for financial support and suggest time constraints.
- **ASK**
- Diversify fundraising techniques. Develop a broad financial base. Avoid depending solely on one method to raise all the money.
- **ASK**
- Research. The more information you know about a potential donor, the more successful your fundraising efforts will be.
- **ASK**
- Stick to proven methods. Be willing to introduce new ideas to the "tried and true" methods, but don't depend solely on unproven methods.
- **ASK**
- Get advice. Ask people familiar with fundraising, perhaps the fundraiser for the state party or the best fundraiser in your district, to help you develop a comprehensive fundraising plan for your campaign.
- **ASK**
- Know the law. Above all else, OBEY these laws.
- **ASK**
- Always say "thank you!" Regardless of the amount. Make sure they feel appreciated.
- **ASK**
- Make your own contribution first. A candidate's shows potential contributors and others that you seriously believe your race is winnable. Don't expect people to make the financial sacrifice and give if you haven't.
- **ASK**
- Use flattery. Potential donors tend to be busy, successful and important people who like to be recognized.

(Nancy is the author of "Go Fish: How to Catch - and Keep - Contributors." You can buy it from her website at www.NancyBocskor.com)

After eating an entire bull,
a mountain lion felt so good
he started roaring. He kept
it up until the noise at-
tracted a hunter who shot
him.

The Moral: When you're full
of bull, keep your mouth
shut.

- Author Unknown



What is Your Biggest Campaign Headache?

Do you have a campaign problem that's giving you a headache, especially one where you're getting **15** different suggestions for fixing it from **15** different people.?

Need a referee to relieve your pain once and for all.

Then shoot your question to The Campaign Doctor and let us help you solve almost any campaign-related problem on our monthly Q&A calls - yet another benefit of Winner's Circle membership.

These FREE problem-solving, tele-class sessions are can only field a limited number of questions, so get yours in ASAP.

Email them to **Chuck@CampaignDoctor.com**

Resource Directory

Campaign Literature/Signs

Dottie Ward
M2M Strategies
980 Lakes Parkway"
Lawrenceville, GA 30043
(678) 942-8416
dward@m2Mstrategies.net

Voter Contact Mail

Jim Bieber
Bieber Communications
3609 W. McArthur Blvd.
Santa Ana, CA 92704
(714) 210-3630
info@biebercommunications.com
www.biebercommunications.com

Campaign Websites

www.CampaignSiteBuilder.com

Automated Phone Calls

Jerry Dorchuck
P.M.I., Inc.
web: <http://www.robocalls.com>
cell: 215-370-5509
office: 850-482-5079
fax: 877-561-5261
mail: PMI, Inc. • PO Box 698 • Marianna, FL 32447

Opposition Research

Joe Giardiello
TCB Consulting
joegop@gmail.com
<http://www.facebook.com/TCBPoliticalConsulting>

You're Invited...but Please Don't Come!

You'd think after all these years that nothing would surprise me in politics anymore. And then this (name withheld to protect the guilty)...

A campaign sent me and my wife an invitation to attend a dinner for a certain candidate. The dinner tickets were \$89 per person. I like the candidate, so I RSVP'ed - 2 tickets at \$89. I mean, what could possibly go wrong with such a straight up offer and acceptance, right? Wrong.

In response to my acceptance of the invite, I was advised that the event had been changed. Dinner tickets were now \$250 per person...but if that was too expensive for me (it was!), then I could come to just a cocktail reception after the dinner for \$50 per person.

So after extending an offer I accepted, the campaign almost TRIPLED the cost...but offered me a consolation prize of about a tenth of the value for about a 40% discount (check my math; I went to public school!).

I politely declined, explaining that \$250 was too much and I really wanted to take my wife to dinner, not just drinks. So let's recap where we are here:

I was asked to pay \$89 a head for 2 dinners (total \$178) which I agreed to. Then after accepting the offer, the offer was changed and the price was jacked up to \$250 a head which I wasn't about to pay. Nor was I going to pay \$50 a head for a couple glasses of wine. So the campaign had a decision to make.

They could make me happy, honor their original offer and take the \$178 bird in the hand...or get nothing, - other than a disappointed, if not pissed off, otherwise supporter.

They opted to get nothing. Dumb, dumb, dumb.

Alas, apparently I wasn't the only one not happy with this bait-and-switch. Hours later I received an email letting me know that others had also expressed displeasure and so the original offer was being re-extended.

Which is fine...but it still doesn't take that bad taste out of my mouth. And at press time, I'm still not sure if I'm going to go or take a pass. In any event, this was an unnecessary self-inflicted wound. So how's your event coming along?

(continued from page 1)

media and my smart phone are extraordinarily helpful and valuable tools. So I've gone into gradual detox so as not to suffer any crippling withdrawal symptoms. But it's not easy.

Get this. The other day, I actually went into a fast-food restaurant for lunch...and didn't take my iPhone with me! And unbelievably, when I got back in the car...I hadn't really missed anything of any consequence.

Encouraged by this progress, I'm now starting to schedule (on my smart-phone calendar!) a "Matrix Free Day" with the kids...where we'll spend the day together without taking any calls on my cell phone, without checking emails, without checking for text messages, without checking Twitter, without checking Facebook and without checking voicemail.

It'll be heaven! (Or hell.)

Anyway, the point is...

Whether you're a candidate or a business owner (actually, candidates are kinda both), you cannot allow yourself to become a slave to social media to the detriment of running your campaign or business and, more importantly, marketing your campaign and business.

Or even **MORE** importantly spending time with your family. And I'll be writing more about this in the weeks and months ahead.

Ding! Shoot. New text just came in. Gotta go....

Dr. Chuck Muth

Professor of Psephology
(Homeschooled)

Excuse Me, Madame: Hot Tip on Women's Titles

from Fundraising for Dummies

"Do you refer to your female donors as Ms., Mrs. Or Miss? What if she's a doctor? Different women have different preferences around this issue, and some women will be insulted if you refer to them incorrectly.

As a general rule, older donors are most comfortable with traditional titles (Mrs. or Miss) and younger donors often use Ms. This should be recorded on a case-by-case basis, and you should include a place in your donor file to specify which title the donor prefers."



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