Campaign Strategy with Text Message Marketing by Lexoremman

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Ambitious political candidates are now using text messaging to communicate with their supporters in the hope of replicating President Obama's 2008 social media strategy. But these imitators may not enjoy the same success, in part, because they're not developing a mobile marketing strategy around their text messaging effort.

Text marketing needs to be part of an overall communications strategy that includes print, online, radio and TV advertising. Moreover, campaigns need to have a strategy in place for collecting supporters' mobile phone numbers and using those numbers to push for action.

The Obama campaign, for instance, built its enormous mobile phone database by promising to break the news of his vice presidential pick via text message. Obama's campaign messaged more than 1 million mobile phones with the announcement that then-Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.) had been chosen.

Obama's strategy also included running a Super Bowl ad in February 2008, asking supporters to text "HOPE" to 62262 (or O-B-A-M-A) on their mobile phones. The campaign collected the mobile numbers and used them to inform supporters—particularly elusive young voters—about speeches, local volunteering opportunities and, eventually, get out the vote (GOTV) efforts.

Making text messaging interactive and requiring supporters to engage is the real key to success when it comes to utilizing this communication channel.

Take Wisconsin's Russ Feingold (D), whose 2010 text effort showcased one example of how to successfully capture cell numbers. On opening day for the Milwaukee Brewers that April, his Senate campaign asked people to text them predictions of who would win the infamous mascot sausage race—Bratwurst, Polish, Italian, Hot Dog or Chorizo. The Polish sausage won, by the way, and while Feingold didn't it was undoubtedly a clever and successful text marketing technique.

By some estimates, there are 4.3 billion text messages sent every day to the some 330 million mobile devices in the United States. Here are a few ways for campaigns to harness this fast growing medium:

Develop a database of supporters' mobile phone numbers. It is essential that these lists are formed of supporters who have specifically opted in to receive text information from the campaign. Use meetings, monthly publications, newsletters and other events to gather this data. Don't wait: start developing this list today, even if you don't plan on investing in a text strategy until next year. This is crucial to the success or failure of your text campaign.

Choose the right partner. This is extremely important. Sending large volumes of texts requires specialized messaging infrastructure and an experienced messaging provider to ensure successful delivery. If delivery cannot be guaranteed, campaigns have no way of knowing their messages were received and voters don't know if campaigns received their response. Your service provider should be able to deliver real-time confirmation.

Decide how often to send messages to supporters. Text is a timely channel, but in some cases constant and repetitive messages do more harm than good. Some frequent messages turn into spam and annoy people. Text is still considered a spam-free channel.

Once the data is collected and the text strategy is in place, campaigns can do everything from conduct surveys, inform supporters about voter registration and absentee ballot deadlines, promote down-ballot candidates or make a GOTV push.

It's a powerful tool to send supporters a text message to remind them to "VOTE TODAY" or "BRING A FRIEND WITH YOU TO VOTE." In 2012, elections will be won by the candidates who get it.

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