ALL POLITICS IS SOCIAL:

Social Media Engagement Will Decide Election 2012

SocialVibe Test-Case Shows 94% Participation Rate for Engagement Advertising Campaigns with Political Themes

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Executive Summary

As the 2012 elections approach, social media engagement has become a key tenet that must be built directly into every campaign strategy. Campaigns hoping to lead in 2012 need to look to proven social methods to reach, engage, and motivate supporters with messaging that is true to their brand and ignites conversation within key influencers' social graphs.

Commercial and political advertisers are shifting more of their advertising budgets to digital media, including both online and mobile advertising. The most significant challenge in this arena is presenting information to political supporters in a manner that motivates them to share campaign information. Voters of all stripes are now actively engaged in social networking.

> **According to a May 2011 study conducted by digital agency SocialVibe, 94 percent of social media users of voting age engaged by a political message watched the entire message, and 39 percent of these people went on to share it with an average of 130 friends online.**

The more adept campaigns become at engaging social media users, the further their message will travel virally through personal contacts. If campaigns motivate supporters to express themselves while socially interacting with campaign information, they will be rewarded with an empowered army of informal spokespeople advocating on their behalf.

Candidates and campaigns up and down the ballot must plan to make outreach efforts more social this election season. Here are five key areas to focus on:

1. Use Facebook and Campaign Websites to Engage Supporters

For campaigns to make the most of their investment in an online presence, they must provide opportunities for engagement.

2. Make Your Social Presence a Conversation

A robust social networking strategy will allow campaigns to engage supporters in sharing and to monitor opposition messages.

3. Go Mobile

Roughly equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans use mobile technology to share information about political issues. QR codes, mobile use of social networking, and mobile advertising will all play an important role in 2012.[1]

4. Make E-mails Social

The technological savvy of many voters is still limited to email. And according to the Nielsen Company, active users of social media tend to spend more time using email than others.[2] Social media-enhanced email is cost-effective and allows supporters to forward information in their own time.

5. Build Allegiance through Engagement Advertising

Engagement advertising enhances consumer loyalty by combining campaign content with word-of-mouth commentary from friends and associates. Engagement advertising creates a value-exchange that invites participants to share professionally produced video messages with others and allows advertisers to target ads within Facebook based on whatever criteria they choose.

A field study by leading social media technology company SocialVibe showed that the level of sharing in a politically-themed engagement advertising campaign was double the average share rates of non-political ad campaigns.

1   IAB Reports Full-Year Internet Ad Revenues for 2010 Increase 15% to $26 Billion, a New Record. April 13, 2011. http://www.iab.net/ about_ the_iab/recent_press_releases/press_release_archive/press_release/pr-041311. Accessed May 27, 2011.
2   Gibs, Jon. Is Social Media Impacting How Much We Email? September 28, 2009. http://blog.nielsen.com/ nielsenwire/online_mobile/is-social-media-impacting-how-much-we-email/. Accessed May 27, 2011.

Introduction

Which candidate will master social media in 2012?

Our society has increasingly turned toward interactive platforms for information-sharing, blending the personal with the political. Today's families are more likely to share interesting news articles or online petitions with one-another via Facebook or email than they are to watch the nightly news together. More than ever before, voters expect to be given an opportunity to express themselves and interact with information by sharing with friends, posting to Facebook, tweeting and commenting on posts.

Social media will play a vital role in determining the 2012 election. Facebook friends, not the evening news, will inform most voters. Candidates must effectively engage the social sphere from the outset to remain competitive in this election cycle.
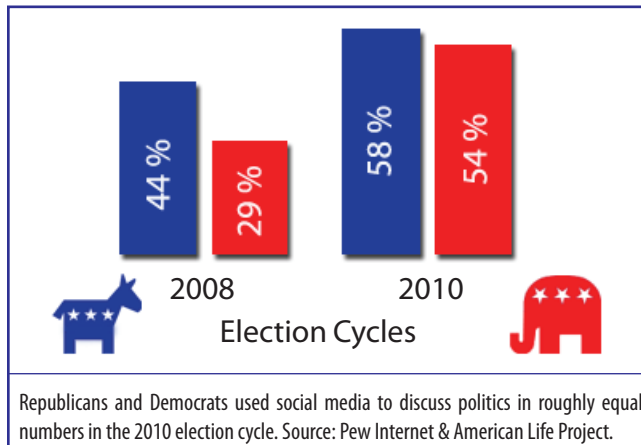
The E-voter Institute reports in its 2010 survey of voter expectations that more than 40 percent of voters expect to be able to find information on demand about campaigns, including online video and social networking. The vast majority of voters expect that all campaigns will have at least a basic website.[3]

But that's just the ante to get into the game. No online presence would be complete without a robust social strategy. Voters of all ages and persuasions are increasingly turning to social media for information about issues and candidates. According to a January 2011 report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project, Republicans and Democrats used social media to gather or share political information at roughly equal rates in the 2010 midterm election cycle.[4] As reported by the *Christian Science Monitor*, this trend reflects a major shift from the 2008 presidential election cycle, in which only 29 percent of McCain voters were active users of social networking sites compared to 44 percent of Obama supporters.

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[3] E-Voter Institute. Social Networks Supercharge Politics: Turnign Action into Votes in 2010. Results from the E-Voter Institute's Fifth Annual Survey. September 2010. http://www.evoterinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/e- voter_voter-2010-survey-overview.pdf. Accessed on May 18, 2011.

[4] Smith, Aaron. 22% of online Americans used social networking or Twitter for politics in 2010 campaign. Pew Internet & American Life Project, January 27, 2011. http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2011/PIP-Social- Media-and-2010-Election.pdf . Accessed on May 16, 2011.

Part of this shift in user rates relates to the growing use of social media by people age 50 and older.[5] Social communication offers candidates and campaigns the opportunity to engage with voters and empower them to put their own twist on content as they share it with friends. Effective marketing to today's social media user – whether you are selling toothpaste or promoting the platform of a Congressional candidate – creates a "mutually beneficial relationship."[6] Political campaigns are more likely than commercial products to inspire passion, and as such have an even greater potential to motivate social media users to share information about a candidate with friends and followers. With 50 million consumers "liking" a brand each day on Facebook, campaign managers can learn lessons from the commercial world that will translate to victory in the political realm. Social media users who persuade friends to like a candidate or issue on Facebook or follow a candidate on Twitter will feel even more committed to that campaign.

Republicans and Democrats used social media to discuss politics in roughly equal numbers in the 2010 election cycle. Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Commercial and political advertisers are shifting more of their advertising budgets to digital media, including both online and mobile advertising.[7] Although traditional media advertising revenue saw a slight uptick in 2010, general trends show that spending in print and broadcast media is expected to remain relatively flat through 2015.[8] In contrast, eMarketer recently released a study that shows a growing investment in digital advertising and predicts, "social networking sites will increase revenues by 55%" in 2011 alone.[9] Investments in digital advertising for the 2012 cycle have already begun, with the Democratic National Committee/Obama for America jointly allocating significant funds to digital advertising in the first quarter of 2011.[10]

According to a May 2011 study conducted by digital agency SocialVibe, 94 percent of social media users of voting age engaged by a political message watched the entire message, and 39 percent of these people went on to share it with an average of 130 friends online. The deep attention and loyalty that results from viral message sharing is why brands such as Microsoft, Proctor & Gamble, Coke, Disney, and others are shifting their advertising dollars from television to social media. Every major television network has turned to social media to advertise their own TV shows and connect with their audience.

5   Quintanilla, Eloise. Republicans now as nimble as Democrats on social media, study finds. Christian Science Monitor, January 27, 2011. http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2011/0127/Republicans-now-as-nimble-as-Democrats- on-social-media-study-Finds. Accessed May 19, 2011. Accessed May 19, 2011.

6   Solis, B. (2010). Engage: The Complete Guide for Brands and Businesses to Build, Cultivate, and Measure Success in the New Web. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

7   IAB Reports Full-Year Internet Ad Revenues for 2010 Increase 15% to $26 Billion, a New Record. April 13, 2011. http://www.iab.net/about_the_iab/recent_press_releases/press_release_archive/press_release/pr-041311. Accessed May 20, 2011.

8   Perrin, Nicole. May 2011. Traditional Media: Dollars and Attention Shift to Digital. (Web summary). http://www.emarketer.com/Reports/All/Emarketer_2000792.aspx. Accessed May 27, 2011.

9   Perrin, Nicole. US Digital Ad Spending: Online, Mobile, Social. April 2011. http://www.emarketer.com/Reports/All/Emarketer_2000794.aspx. Accessed May 25, 2011.

10   Kaye, Kate. DNC and Obama Spent Half Million Online This Year. April 29, 2011. http://www.clickz.com/clickz/ news/2046653/dnc-obama-spent-half-million-online. Accessed May 25, 2011.

The most significant challenge in this arena is presenting information to political supporters in a manner that motivates them to share campaign information with others. As noted by the E-Voter Institute, "When people are inclined to forward email and links, campaigns need to be more creative in messaging so as to tap into that desire to share compelling content and ideas."[11] Voters and supporters are actively engaged in social networking of all stripes – the challenge is for campaigns to translate that energy into increased sharing on social networking sites.

Engagement advertising within social media engages users in a give-and-take with a brand

11   Jagoda, Karen A.B., et al. Persuading and Motivating Voters: What Will It Take in 2010? October 2009. http:// evoterinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/evi-survey-findings-2009. pdf. Accessed May 27, 2011.

Helping Supporters Persuade and Engage

Much as brand advertising aims to develop consumer loyalty, political campaigns persuade and engage potential supporters. The more adept campaigns become at engaging social media users, the further their message will travel virally through personal contact online. Social media can be leveraged to strengthen a voter's relationship with a candidate or issue and/or to inspire further action, ranging from providing a personal endorsement (e.g., "liking" a campaign's Facebook page) to sharing a message from the candidate, to making a micro-donation via text message. Social media users can also share persuasive information with friends and colleagues in moments from their computer or mobile device instead of spending hours making phone calls or canvassing.

Voters of all ages and persuasions are increasingly turning to social media for information about issues and candidates.

President Obama's 2008 campaign showed how a robust investment in gathering email addresses, cell phone numbers, and Facebook user information could be leveraged into a network of everything from volunteers willing to make campaign calls from home to a broad network of low-level donors.

If campaigns motivate supporters to express themselves while socially interacting with campaign information, they will be rewarded with an army of informal, but highly connected, spokespeople advocating on their behalf.

Five Ways to Make Political Campaigns More Social

The challenge for political campaigns in 2012 is to find the right balance between retail politics, mass media outreach, and the power of social media to actively engage supporters of all demographics. Entire generations of voters are increasingly relying on the Internet almost exclusively to learn about news, issues, and to engage with campaigns. With the median age of a TV evening news viewer approaching 63 years old,[12] in this election cycle it is possible that 18 to 35 year old voters will not even hear a candidate's message if it is not presented to them through social media channels.

With this in mind, candidates and campaigns up and down the ballot must plan to make outreach efforts more social this election season.

Here are five key areas to focus on:

1. Use Facebook and Campaign Websites to Engage Supporters

According to Facebook, the website now has about 150 million adult users in the United States. Half of all Facebook users log in on any given day to keep up on the latest news and information posted by their friends and loved ones. Users spend more than 700 billion minutes per month on the site worldwide. More than 2.5 million websites have integrated with Facebook, including over 80 of comScore's U.S. Top 100 websites and over half of comScore's Global Top 100 websites.[13] Facebook users are accessing the site more often through their mobile devices; more than 250 million active users currently do so around the world. People who access the site through their smartphones and tablet devices are twice as active on the site as other users. (See below for more information on how to use mobile devices to engage potential supporters.)

One of the most important Facebook statistics for political campaign purposes is that the average user has 130 friends on the site. That's 130 people available for any user to share information about a candidate or issue they support with one simple click. With Americans looking to social media and websites for news and information, and showing greater levels of trust for sources forwarded by someone they know,[14] campaigns must take heed of these growing trends. According to the E-Voter Institute, 81 percent of voters expect political campaigns to maintain basic websites that

12   Seltzer, Louisa Ada. Nightly news viewers are aging faster. Media Life Magazine (web). April 30, 2010. http:// www.medialifemagazine.com/artman2/publish/Dayparts_update_51/ Nightly-news-viewers-are-aging-faster-asp. Accessed May 27, 2011.

13   http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics. http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics. Accessed May 27, 2011.

14   Global Advertising: Consumers Trust Real Friends and Virtual Strangers the Most. July 7, 2009. http://blog. nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/consumer/global-advertising-consumers-trust-real-friends-and-virtual-strangersthe- most/. Accessed May 27, 2011.

provide general information about the candidate or issue.[15] But placing a static website up at a convenient URL misses the opportunity to engage visitors as ambassadors, donors, volunteers, and voters. Every campaign website should, at the very least, invest in Search Engine Optimization, purchase alternate URLs in order to protect a candidate's image and message by redirecting all searches to the campaign's main website, and make it easy for visitors engage on- and off-site.

For campaigns to make the most of their investment in an online presence, they must provide opportunities for engagement. These opportunities could be as simple as including links to Facebook and Twitter and as sophisticated as providing an Electronic Press Kit about the candidate. The press kit can easily be forwarded with a personalized message by supporters who want to recruit friends to the cause. Tools like Facebook Connect offer easy opportunities for campaigns with limited resources to include interactive elements on their sites while simultaneously enhancing their Facebook presence.

Tim Pawlenty's presidential campaign offers virtual incentives for supporters who share his message via social media.

While it may have been novel for President Obama to offer campaign updates via text and email in 2008, those tactics are now standard fare for presidential candidates. Republican presidential contenders Tim Pawlenty, Newt Gingrich, and Mitt Romney all invite visitors to their campaign websites to sign up for email updates and donate online. However, as of May 2011 only Mr. Pawlenty's site provided incentives for supporters to serve as his advocates and ambassadors in their communities. Supporters can sign up to be part of the "Pawlenty Action" team, which allows members to earn points and badges for posting to Facebook, sharing their Twitter account with the campaign, volunteering, and recruiting others. This invitation for a value exchange between supporters and the campaign lays the groundwork for voters to engage.

The Pawlenty site offers rich media opportunities both on- and off-site. Site visitors are invited to watch video housed on the site and/or to subscribe to the candidate's YouTube channel. Visitors are also invited to inform the candidate's platform by responding to the prompt, "The next president should…". Mr. Pawlenty is also using Facebook Sponsored Stories ads to further integrate his website with his Facebook presence and to extend his viral reach into the newsfeeds of friends of people who "like" the information they see in any of the advertisements.[16]

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15   E-Voter Institute. Social Networks Supercharge Politics: Turnign Action into Votes in 2010. Results from the E-Voter Institute's Fifth Annual Survey. September 2010. http://www.evoterinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/e- voter_voter-2010-survey-overview.pdf. Accessed on May 18, 2011.
16   Kaye, Kate. May 27, 2011. Tim Pawlenty Tests Facebook Sponsored Stories. http://www.clickz.com/clickz/ news/2074620/tim-pawlenty-tests-facebook-sponsored-stories. Accessed May 27, 2011.

As of May 2011 President Obama's campaign website had not yet caught up to the latest trends in online engagement, although his campaign site indicates it is still in its beginning stages. Options for engaging with the Obama reelection campaign include making a donation, "liking" him on Facebook (as do more than 21 million Facebook users), and finding opportunities to plug into real-world activities in each supporter's community.

2. Make Your Social Presence a Conversation

If the 2010 midterm Congressional election showed us anything, it's that social networking is not just for young liberals. Twenty-two percent of adult internet users engaged with political campaigns in the last election cycle overall. Of those who are over 50 and also use social networking sites, 33 percent used these sites to get political news, post political content, and otherwise engage with a candidate or a cause. Of social media users in the 18-29 age group, 42 percent used social media for those purposes.[17] While the numbers still show stronger political use of social networking sites among younger voters, the difference between these two groups is not nearly as stark as it was in the last presidential election cycle.

Engagement and personal connection is the new standard for online activity. As reported by the Pew Internet & American Life Project:

The main reason our survey respondents gave for following political groups on social networking sites or Twitter is that doing so helps them feel more personally connected to the candidates or groups they follow—36 percent said that this was a "major" reason they followed these groups or candidates, and an additional 35 percent said it was a "minor" reason.[18]

Campaigns must embrace the elements of social networking that create its appeal: the ability to share. Twitter may offer the opportunity to broadcast information, but if a campaign uses Twitter to talk but not to listen it is missing out on half of the conversation. Twitter users seek to connect, not simply gather information. Just like campaigns of the past have been tempted to see creating a website as a necessary box to check off, today's campaigns must take care to truly join the give-and-take of a social networking conversation.

Consider the powerful use of Twitter for regime change during the 2011 Arab Spring. Twitter was not used to make static political announcements, but rather to inspire, engage, even enrage fellow countrymen to the point of action. Protesters used the medium to share compelling photos and personal experiences that added texture and urgency in a way that a news report never could.

Campaigns in the United States have much to learn from Mid-East activists who effectively harnessed social media to further a political agenda and motivate action, both on- and off-line.

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17   Smith, Aaron. 22% of online Americans used social networking or Twitter for politics in 2010 campaign. Pew Internet & American Life Project, January 27, 2011. http://www.pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2011/PIP-Social- Mediaand-2010-Election.pdf . Accessed on May 16, 2011.
18   Ibid.

Twitter provides deep and broad opportunities to engage campaign supporters in an ongoing dialogue that can energize a candidate's or an issue's base to take action and share ideas. Whether a campaign develops a memorable cache of hash tags, tweets photos of events and supporters, or creates incentives for followers to retweet key messages, a robust Twitter strategy can generate the same kind of passion seen in countries struggling to overthrow oppressive regimes.

Twitter also offers opportunities for campaigns to learn more about what their followers are saying, and to search and monitor what messages are motivating their opponents. Campaigns should take the time to research and follow top-priority reporters and potential endorsers (ranging from local elected officials to politically active organizations) with the hope that these individuals and groups will follow the campaign in return.

> **Roughly equal numbers of self-identified Democrats and Republicans use mobile technology to gather and share information about political issues.**

Campaigns that master the effective use of social networking will successfully inspire "FOMO" among supporters: a Fear Of Missing Out. If someone attends a rally, make it easy for her to post photos, videos and comments to the campaign's Flickr page and/or YouTube Channel. Tag event attendees in Facebook photos from rallies and meetings, and invite supporters to tag themselves to deepen the connectivity between the campaign's Facebook page with those of its supporters. Inviting supporters to contribute their perspective to the story of a campaign will greatly increase its reach.

Encouraging people to engage with a campaign on Facebook also allows the campaign to engage in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) with its supporters. In a commercial setting, CRM enables a company to understand each customer's full picture and experience with the company. Campaigns can take advantage of similar techniques to better understand what motivates its supporters. Understanding motivation in turn makes it possible for campaigns to target messages appropriately and to engage in conversations that encourage further interaction.

Facebook makes it possible to target messaging to supporters with excruciating specificity. Campaigns can target by political party, a cross-section of information imbedded into a profile (ranging from a user's "likes" to the topics she discusses on her wall), and by age, gender, and location. This type of targeting makes it much easier for campaigns to highlight their most persuasive messages when communicating with each Facebook user.

3. Go Mobile

The use of mobile communications has increased dramatically since 2008. According to market research firm comScore, 2010 saw the number of mobile users in the United States that accessed a social networking site at least once a month via their mobile device reach nearly 58 million users.[19]

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19   comScore Releases Inaugural Report, "The 2010 Mobile Year in Review". February 14, 2011. http://www.comscore.com/layout/set/popup/layout/set/popup/layout/set/popup/layout/set/ popup/layout/set/ popup/layout/set/popup/layout/set/popup/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2011/2/comScore_Releases_Inaugural_Report_ The_2010_Mobile_Year_in_Review. Accessed May 27, 2011.

Cell phones, smartphones, and tablet devices provide easy opportunities for users to share ideas as well as information for campaigns to gather invaluable data. As noted above, Facebook users who access the site through their mobile devices are twice as active in social media as non-mobile users.

Roughly equal numbers of self-identified Democrats and Republicans use mobile technology to gather and share information about political issues. However, Democrats in the 2010 election cycle were somewhat more likely to use their cell phones specifically for campaign-related activity, such as texting friends about how they voted. Perhaps as a reflection of how younger generations perceive what it means to be politically active, more than one-fifth of cell phone users who engaged politically on their cell phones did not cast a vote in the election.[20]

The Obama campaign leveraged the cell phone data it collected in the 2008 election to create a sense of connection with its supporters. The Obama campaign even created an iPhone app to make it easy for supporters to connect with the campaign. By sharing coveted information – like his pick for Vice President – first via text message, President Obama gave supporters something of value in exchange for that information. In short, Obama played on the "FOMO" of his followers and successfully coaxed their cell phone numbers from them in exchange for first access to information. The campaign was then free to use those numbers for everything from texting requests for low-dollar donations to phone banking to Get Out the Vote.

In 2012, mobile communications will play an even more important role in political campaigns. Mobile communications make it possible to combine real-world experiences with online interactivity. The growing use of Quick Response (QR) codes merges these worlds. Smartphones that are equipped to read QRs allow users to instantly "check in" to an event via Foursquare or Facebook. Because Foursquare automatically links to Facebook and Twitter accounts, users who scan a QR code provide a mutually beneficial exchange when they do so: the user gets to announce to friends and followers that he is at a hip political event, and the organizers of that event are able to gather information from him in return.

The Obama for America campaign created an app to allow iPhone users to easily connect with the campaign in the 2008 election cycle.

Facebook has made it easy for users to "like" an event or a cause after scanning a QR code. Campaigns can also allow people to earn Foursquare badges for attending candidate events just as they might for frequenting their corner bar, thus further integrating campaign activity into people's everyday lives. The Mitt Romney campaign recently took advantage of this feature by creating a

20   Rainie, Lee and Aaron Smith. Politics goes mobile: 26% of Americans used their cell phones to connect to the 2010 elections, December 23, 2010. http://pewinternet.org/~/media//Files/Reports/2010/PIP_Mobile_Politics.pdf. Accessed May 25, 2011.

Candidates are integrating QR codes into printed campaign materials.

Foursquare badge for participants in a one-day fundraising event in Las Vegas.[21]

According to a recent article on marketingforecast.com that provided a preview into communications strategy in the upcoming presidential campaign cycle:

Look for campaigners to deploy quick response codes, mobile check-ins and hyper-local targeted messages on Facebook. Candidates who prove themselves adept at using these tools can connect with a younger demographic and save money that would have otherwise been spent on traditional media.[22]

The key to using these tools effectively is to invite mobile technology users into the conversation. Don't simply post a QR code and mine the data it provides: invite people who attend a rally to add to the conversation about who was there, what was said, and what they thought. Invite supporters who attend a specific event to go out into their community and send back images that speak to the campaign's central issues – whether it's photos of a boarded up store on Main Street or a long line at an ER that is under-staffed.

Mobile engagement advertising is a powerful new tool that enables supporters to upload photos and incorporate their personal images into candidate messages they share. Uploading photos, which has been successfully used in social media advertising campaigns for brands as diverse as General Electric, Ford, and Disney, is the latest tool being harnessed by candidates.

IDC research reports that U.S. spending on mobile advertising in 2010 was approximately $743 million and is expected to reach $1.2 billion in 2011. With mobile devices quickly emerging as the platform through which people connect online, campaigns must take advantage of these trends by developing creative engagements that appeal to supporters and invite them to share with others in their networks.

Campaigns will get the most from these technologies when they are able to take advantage of a connection and turn it into a sharable conversation that can spread campaign messages virally. People who might not be willing to phone bank for a candidate may be happy to forward photos of themselves at a campaign rally to hundreds of friends.

Campaigns should leverage these kinds of informal campaign interactions by making it easy for people to share images and links through a variety of social networking platforms, including text and email.

21   Kaye, Kate. Mitt Romney Hires Digital Director, May 31, 2011. http://www.clickz.com/clickz/news/2075007/mitt- romney-hires-digital-director. Accessed June 1, 2011.
22   Crosett, Kathy. Lobbyists and Candidates Plan Early Ad Spending for the 2012 Campaign, May 3 2011. http:// www.marketingforecast.com/archives/11278. Accessed May 17, 2011.

4. Make E-mails Social

While the world of social networking is rapidly evolving among particular subsets of the population, the technological savvy of many voters does not extend far beyond a basic use of email. Unlike brand advertising, which tends to target younger audiences (due to spending patterns), campaigns have an obligation – and a motivation – to effectively connect with voters of all demographics. So while it would behoove all campaigns to invest in the more sophisticated modes of social networking explored above, they should not do so at the expense of traditional email marketing. Also, according to the Nielsen Company, active users of social media tend to spend more time using email, rather than less[23] – so email can be used effectively to supplement other social networking efforts.

While younger voters may be disinclined to even open emails, their parents and grandparents still rely on email for information and connection. Campaigns should continue to communicate via email to share campaign updates, upcoming event schedules, rich media, and fundraising appeals. By integrating video and opportunities to connect on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube into emails to campaign supporters, political campaigns can also invite older generations into these newer forms of social networking by giving them a peek into the latest trends. And, just as younger voters share campaign information through a wide swath of social networking tools and engagement advertising, older voters can forward emails to friends and colleagues while adding their own commentary to the campaign's message.

94% of voting age users engaged by a political message in social media watched the entire message, and nearly 40% went on to share it with their friends.

While not as shareable as Facebook newsfeeds, reaching supporters via email also has advantages over other types of social media. Email allows people to forward information in their own time. It allows them to engage friends on a political issue any time of day or night, and provides the recipient with that same flexibility, thus removing the sense of intrusion that often accompanies persuasive political calls. It also eliminates the cost and waste that goes along with producing and distributing printed persuasive mail pieces.

23   Gibs, Jon. Is Social Media Impacting How Much We Email? September 28, 2009. http://blog.nielsen.com/ nielsenwire/online_mobile/is-social-media-impacting-how-much-we-email/. Accessed May 27, 2011.

5. Build Allegiance through Engagement Advertising

The next frontier for political outreach within social media is engagement advertising. Engagement advertising enhances consumer loyalty by combining video content with word-of-mouth commentary from friends and associates. Instead of attempting to disrupt a user's online experience, engagement advertising creates a value-exchange: people choose to engage in an interactive advertisement to access information that they find interesting or entertaining; a company or campaign gains active attention from the user, who chooses when and where to engage in the sponsored activity; and the user gains credits for playing social online games, premium content, or other virtual goods that they find of value. The depth of the reach of engagement advertising contrasts sharply with early modes of online advertising, such as banner ads, which have been shown to be largely ignored by most people.[24] Campaigns looking to old Web 1.0 advertising formats to help drive online social interactions are unlikely to see the results they seek.

According to the Nielsen Company, active users of social media tend to spend more time using email, rather than less.

Unlike banner and pop-up advertising, the goal of engagement advertising is to provide users with an opportunity to deepen their online experience by gaining access to something that they want at a time when they are interested in engaging with the advertiser's message. Engagement advertisement campaigns are carefully placed where people are already involved on their favorite sites, immediately making the message relevant to the user.

A great example of engagement advertising is Microsoft's campaign with Zynga's FarmVille, a social networking game that is available through Facebook. In exchange for engaging with an interactive ad about Bing, FarmVille players were given an opportunity to earn virtual FarmVille currency. Once players completed the engagement, they had the option to share the engagement. The results were impressive: not only did Bing dramatically increase its Facebook fan base by hundreds of thousands of users, but 70 percent of these new fans went on to visit the site within a month of completing the engagement, and were more than twice as likely to use the search engine than Bing's other Facebook fans. Equally impressive, the engagement had a 119 percent completion rate thanks to FarmVille players sharing the engagement with their Facebook friends. This earned media greatly reduces overall marketing costs.

Engagement advertising has proven itself to be one of the most powerful innovations in the history of advertising, particularly in the digital age. The leaders in this field have transformed the quality of online advertising, finally tapping into the interactive mode of the Internet by creating an emotional, engaging experience for users. Another advantage of engagement advertising is that it allows advertisers (including campaigns) to carefully target ads within Facebook based on whatever criteria they choose: gender, age, affiliation, zip code.

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24   Dolliver, Mark. Ignoring Internet Banner Ads. November 29, 2010. ADWEEK. http://www.adweek.com/news/ technology/ignoring-internet-banner-ads-103905. Accessed May 31, 2011.

Because all engagement advertising is user-initiated and non-disruptive engagement ads leave users excited about what they've seen and motivated to share that information with others, creating a "share-ripple" that goes far beyond the initial audience targeted by the campaign. In the world of commercial advertising, consumers who opted into engagements and were motivated to share the brand message do so with an average of 130 people. The value of this earned media can greatly exceed that of paid media. These types of advertising campaigns can see their paid investment spread virally to ten times more viewers than they paid for in their initial targeting.

The next frontier for political outreach with-in social media is engagement advertising.

These types of engagements are particularly relevant for political campaigns, which exist to inspire and engage potential donors, volunteers, and voters. Campaigns can leverage engagements to prompt an ongoing conversation with Facebook users by inviting them to take periodic polls that could be used to inform a candidate's platform, or may reveal geographic areas by zip code that would be interested in other types of targeted outreach, such as door-to-door canvassing. Sophisticated candidate and issue campaigns will leverage these engagement opportunities to connect with supporters while simultaneously gathering valuable information about each engagement participant.

For candidates at any level who have their sights set on higher office, engagement advertising offers a unique opportunity to begin raising awareness beyond a geographic area via supporters' personal networks. A compelling engagement will be interesting and often universal in its themes, often with messages that resonate beyond county or state lines.

Similarly, Members of Congress can direct portions of their Federal Franking budget to fund engagement advertising campaigns in a targeted and interactive way to gather and share information with their constituents during non-election periods.

Well-crafted engagement ads leave users excited about what they've seen and motivated to share that information with their community.

To show how this model translates in the world of political outreach, the social media technology company SocialVibe put together a field study that combines the power of engagement advertising with the passion of political identity. The advertising campaign was run under the title, "Politics with Confidence: What's Your Affiliation?" Users of Facebook who live in Iowa were invited to participate in the engagement through a value-exchange platform. SocialVibe discovered that with a media buy of just $25,000 in engagement advertising, thanks to viral sharing, the campaign reached voting-age users in all 50 states within the first 24 hours.

People who entered the engagement were invited to select three of twelve photos that most appealed to them three times in a row (for a total of nine photos). SocialVibe then used an algorithm based on the themes that most appealed to the user to determine which category was most likely to match the user's political leanings. After participants were placed into a political category,

Please select 3 photos below:

Next

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SocialVibe's Iowa test case reached social media users in all 50 states within 24 hours.

- Share Rate (in percentages)
- Average Time Spent (in seconds)

| | Benchmark | Iowa Case Study | Brand A Motion Picture | Brand B Appliances | Brand C Toys |

The share rate in SocialVibe's Iowa case study was more than double the average share rate for its other social media engagement advertising campaigns.

they were then invited to share their results with their Facebook friends. Users who received an invitation to participate in the engagement through a friend were also given the opportunity to forward the link to their friends. The level of sharing that resulted from this case study was significantly higher than the average share rates of nonpolitical ad campaigns. SocialVibe typically sees a share rate of about 14 percent in its engagement advertising campaigns; the *Politics with Confidence* campaign had double the typical response rate and came in at a 30 percent share rate. Even more significantly, the campaign spread from a narrow outreach campaign in Iowa to reach participants quickly throughout the country – all through participants eagerly wanting to share the experience with their friends online.
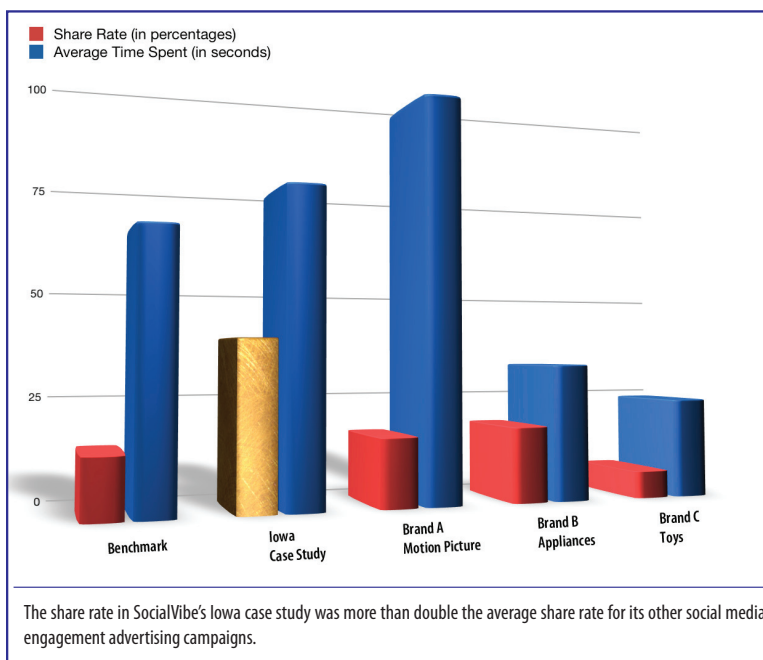
If a presidential candidate were to launch a similar campaign during the Iowa Caucuses, he or she would reach voters throughout the country with his or her message—intact and undiluted—just as voters are beginning to tune in to the 2012 presidential election in earnest.

With this type of enthusiastic engagement and sharing around political themes, political campaigns of all types—whether for issues, voter initiatives, or candidates— would benefit from taking advantage of engagement advertising within social media. Campaigns have the option to tailor their messages and methodology for each engagement, and have the potential to gain valuable information from both participant responses and from tracking share rates and geographic trajectories. Most importantly, campaigns that pursue engagement advertising will meet potential supporters at a moment when they are most interested in interacting with their messages.

Political campaigns must continue to evolve their modes of communication if they hope to remain relevant in today's increasingly fragmented and interactive world. By leveraging the latest trends in social networking, campaigns can motivate political participation of all kinds while engaging and inspiring current and future generations.

SOCIALVIBE

Jay Samit is CEO of SocialVibe, a digital advertising technology company that provides the most effective form of engagement advertising for some of the world's top brands. A 25-year digital media veteran, Samit lead the White House's 1996 Initiative for Education & Technology and spearheaded the effort to create Internet access for America's schools. Unlike ad networks that simply deliver impressions through display advertising, SocialVibe provides opt-in engagements that consumers can share across their social graph. SocialVibe enables advertisers to engage at a time when consumers are most motivated to participate in brand experiences, such as while playing a social game, donating to charity or accessing premium content. SocialVibe enables engagements on the Web and on mobile, reaching a universe of more than 400 million socially-connected global consumers. Visit www.socialvibe.com or check out twitter.com/politicalvibe.