ELECTION
guidebook

Run: A Guide to Seeking Elected Office

This manual is built for the modern campaign for state and local offices, tailored for those working on a budget but with big aspirations.

Run: A Guide to
Seeking Elected Office

NAHB

National Association
of Home Builders

Table of Contents

welcome

"

Whether you're a first-time candidate or looking to refine your approach, this guide equips you with the tools, strategies, and insights needed to run an effective campaign.

From assessing your readiness to fundraise and connecting with voters, to leveraging modern digital tools and grassroots techniques, this book walks you through every step of the journey. We've designed this resource to blend traditional methods with innovative tactics, ensuring that you can maximize your impact while staying grounded in the principles of integrity, transparency, and community engagement.

Running for office is about more than winning an election—it's about building relationships, championing the issues that matter, and creating a lasting legacy of positive change. With actionable plans, practical examples, and comprehensive resources, this manual is your companion to navigating the challenges and rewards of public service. Let this guide be the foundation of your campaign, empowering you to step forward confidently and make a difference in your community.

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▷ # **Chapter**

The Decision to Run:
Assessing Your Readiness

Deciding to run for office is a pivotal moment that requires honest self-reflection and a thorough assessment of your personal and professional readiness. This chapter helps you weigh the challenges and rewards of candidacy by examining your motivations, community involvement, and capacity to handle the demands of public service. Use this chapter as a foundational step to ensure you are prepared for the journey ahead.

SELF-ASSESSMENT
checklist

☐ **Motivation:** Do I have a compelling and specific reason to run that will sustain me through a challenging campaign?

☐ **Unique Value:** What qualities or experiences do I bring that will benefit my community?

☐ **Community Involvement:** Have I been actively involved in local organizations or initiatives?

☐ **Public Scrutiny:** Am I prepared for my personal and professional life to be publicly examined?

☐ **Time Commitment:** Can I dedicate the necessary time without severely impacting my personal and professional obligations?

☐ **Digital Footprint:** Have I reviewed my online presence for any content that could be misconstrued or used against me?

☐ **Family Support:** Is my family supportive of my decision to run?

▷ # Chapter
Crafting a Winning Strategy

A successful campaign revolves around two equally important functions: raising money and contacting voters. To achieve these goals, you must carefully balance the three critical resources available to every campaign: **Time, People, and Money.**

This chapter outlines the steps to create a data-driven, actionable campaign plan, combining traditional strategies with modern tools for maximum impact. It also includes a personal assessment to help you align your resources and goals before diving into campaign activities.

In short, having a solid plan and strategy is the most critical factor in running a successful campaign. It serves as your living, breathing guide to the finish line.

Core Campaign Elements

ResourceManagement

Campaigns revolve around two equally important functions: raising money and contacting voters. The three resources every campaign must balance are:

◆ **Time:** The only resource that can't be replenished; plan carefully to make every moment count by prioritizing high-impact activities, such as targeted voter contact and digital outreach.

◆ **People:** Volunteers and staff to execute campaign activities. Leverage digital tools like Slack to coordinate and manage teams effectively.

◇ **Money:** Funds to fuel outreach efforts. Use platforms like ActBlue (D), WinRed (R) or Anedot to facilitate online fundraising and streamline donor management.

GatheringInformation

Before you can develop an effective game plan, gather critical information about the district and issues shaping voter concerns.

◆ **Characteristics of the Jurisdiction:** Demographic groupings of voters often share common values and points of view. To effectively target and communicate your message, you must know who your voters are.

Key voter data sources include:

• The Voter File is your main source; available from County or State level government websites. Voter registration, census, and other government databases. Utilize state board of elections websites for more information on voter demographics in your area.

- Local, state, and national party organizations.

- Use voter data analysis tools like NGP VAN, NationBuilder, or Grassroots Unwired to refine your understanding of voter demographics, voting history, and engagement patterns.

- Go drive the district - learn the potholes and parks and people.

◆ **Profiling Opponents:** Conduct the same in-depth profiling for your opponents as you do for your own candidacy. Understanding their strengths, weaknesses, and voter appeal allows you to draw meaningful contrasts between you and them. Incorporate modern sentiment analysis or social media monitoring tools (like Google Alerts) to track your opponent's online reputation and identify opportunities to differentiate yourself.

Campaign Questions

Before committing to a campaign plan, take a moment to reflect on these essential questions to ensure you're prepared for the road ahead.

Motivation

Why are you running? Can you articulate this in a way that resonates with voters? Being able to answer this question is essential, and you should have a clear, concise (8 second), and authentic message as to why you are running.

Skills and Strengths

What personal or professional experiences make you the right candidate for this role?

Support Network

Who will help you? Do you have a team of advisors, volunteers, and financial backers?

Challenges

Are there aspects of your background or current circumstances that may present obstacles? How will you address them? Are there challenges you overcame which make you best qualified for the election?

Message

What are your core campaign values, and how will you communicate them to voters?

Answering these questions honestly will provide clarity on where to focus your efforts and how to position your campaign strategically.

Developing Your Message

A campaign message is not just a slogan or a set of positions; it is a theme. In the campaign world, many refer to this as a "stump speech"—a concise 1-2 minute pitch that introduces yourself, explains the issues you stand for, and persuades voters why they should support you.

To ensure your message resonates:

- Test it on friends and family to see if they understand why you are running.

- If you have the resources, use focus groups, surveys, or social media polling to test and refine your message.

STUMP SPEECH

Why are you running?

What do you believe?

How are your beliefs different from the opposition?

What will you accomplish in office?

- Share your message across multiple platforms, from traditional media to digital strategies tailored for Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

- Reinforce your message consistently through newsletters, programmatic digital ads, and direct voter outreach and contact.

ACTION PLAN
campaignstrategy

Set Your Goals:

Define objectives like number of doors knocked, voter turnout targets, fundraising milestones, and digital engagement benchmarks.

Target Audience Research:

• Use voter data tools like the voter file combined with a map of the district to identify key targeted audiences by demographics, location, party registration.

• Refine your approach with digital tools like Nation Builder or L2, which allow for advanced voter segmentation and outreach.

DEMOCRATS
YOUNG FAMILIES
SENIORS

Craft the Message:

- Develop a message that aligns with voter priorities and contrasts your platform with your opponent's. Your goal is to match your key message within the existing frame of voters in your district.

- Create content that resonates across platforms, ensuring your message is accessible to diverse demographics.

Plan Your Voter Outreach and Contact:

To effectively reach voters in your district, it's crucial to determine the best outreach methods. What strategies have previous candidates used? Understanding what has worked in past campaigns is an essential first step in developing your voter contact plan.

Most local campaigns use a mix of traditional and modern outreach methods. The key is to engage voters through the platforms and tactics they are most familiar with and prefer when receiving candidate information.

Figure Out How Voters Receive Information:

Once you understand the demographics of your district and identify your target audience, consider the best ways to reach them.

- **Older Voters:** If your district has a significantly older population, door to door, direct mail and targeted radio ads can be effective in ensuring they receive your message.

- **Younger Voters:** For younger demographics, digital strategies are essential. Tactics such as digital advertising, text messaging, social media engagement, and video content on key platforms will help you connect with them.

- **Mixed Demographics:** If your district has a combination of older and younger voters, a blended approach is necessary. Use traditional methods like direct mail and door-to-door canvassing alongside modern digital strategies, including:

  - Social Media Campaigns: Create platform-specific content to engage voters.

  - Local Influencers: Partner with trusted community voices who align with your message to expand your reach.

- **Email Newsletters:** Keep supporters informed with regular updates and clear calls to action.

- **Digital Ads:** Target specific voter segments effectively. Facebook ads can be a cost-effective option for campaigns with limited budgets.

- **Virtual Events:** Host online town halls or live Q&A sessions to engage voters who prefer digital interactions.

- **Text Campaigns:** Use text messaging to fundraise, persuade, and mobilize voters.

Your voter outreach strategy should reflect the composition of your district and be outlined in detail. In today's fragmented media landscape, reaching voters is more challenging than ever.

Conducting the necessary research to identify the right outreach methods—and using a well-balanced combination of tools and tactics—will be key to the success of your campaign.

Fundraising is the lifeblood of any campaign. Successful campaigns require not only meeting financial goals but also building relationships with supporters and ensuring transparency. This chapter combines traditional fundraising methods like personal solicitation and events with modern strategies that leverage digital platforms, crowdfunding, and data analytics. By utilizing both personal and online tools, you can optimize your fundraising efforts and maximize your resources.

GET ORGANIZED
staycompliant

Before you begin fundraising, it's crucial to establish the right foundation. Proper organization and compliance ensure that your campaign operates legally and efficiently. Here are key steps to take before launching your fundraising efforts:

- **Form Your Committee:** Establish a fundraising team that includes a campaign finance chair and a treasurer. These individuals will help manage finances, oversee contributions, and ensure compliance with legal requirements.

- **Appoint a Treasurer:** Your treasurer plays a critical role in tracking donations, handling financial disclosures, and maintaining accurate records. This person must be trustworthy, detail-oriented, and familiar with campaign finance regulations.

- **Understand Compliance Requirements:** Campaign finance laws vary by state and jurisdiction. Ensure you are familiar with reporting deadlines, contribution limits, and filing requirements. Consult your local election office or a campaign finance expert to stay compliant.

- **Set Up a Campaign Bank Account:** Open a dedicated bank account for your campaign to separate political contributions from personal finances. This step is essential for transparency and accurate financial reporting.

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- **Track and Report Donations:** Maintain thorough records of all contributions and expenses. Use campaign finance software or spreadsheets to monitor financial activity and prepare necessary reports.

Fundraising**Test**

Write down the names of 25 people who you believe will help you with a campaign check or help in raising funds.

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Fundraising Principles

A campaign's ability to succeed often hinges on its ability to raise funds. More importantly, the ability to raise funds rests primarily on the back of the candidate. Specifically, you have to be willing to do one simple thing: "ask".

If you are not willing to ask others to contribute to your campaign —and ultimately invest in you, the candidate—your fundraising will struggle. Remember that you are the chief fundraiser for your campaign. While it may be awkward or uncomfortable, the more you ask, the better your chances of raising the funds you need to be successful.

KeyPrinciples

Whether through personal connections, events, or online contributions, fundraising efforts should always prioritize clear messaging, effective outreach, and ethical practices.

◆ **Set Clear Goals:** It will be important to clearly set your fundraising goal based on what you will need to implement your plan and have the necessary resources to reach voters.

Define your fundraising targets early. Set both overall goals and incremental milestones to measure progress and motivate your team. For example, aim to raise a specific amount within the first 30 days to demonstrate campaign viability.

◆ **Engage Supporters:** Your donors are also your advocates. If a donor is choosing to support your campaign vs taking their family to McDonald's for dinner - they are a voter.

Maintain communication with them, express gratitude, and keep them informed about how their contributions are making an impact.

◆ **Plan Your Budget:** Allocate your resources carefully. Identify essential campaign expenditures, such as staff salaries, voter outreach, advertising, and event costs, and ensure every dollar aligns with your campaign's goals.

Crowdfunding

Eve

Phone
Banking

COMPONE
blendeds

Solicitation

Dig
Ac

ents

Social Media

ENTS OF A
strategy

Email
Campaigns

ital
ds

Outreach

COMPONENTS OF A
blendedstrategy

A modern fundraising strategy requires combining the effectiveness of traditional methods with the efficiency and reach of digital tools. This integrated approach ensures your campaign maximizes resources while connecting with donors across multiple platforms.

BlendedStrategy

Events

In-Person Fundraisers

Host events like house parties, meet-and-greets, or galas to build personal connections.

Promote Online

Use Facebook Events, email invitations, and social media posts to expand your audience and drive attendance.

Solicitation

Start with your personal network to secure early contributions. These initial funds can demonstrate viability and build momentum.

Crowdfunding

Launch a campaign on platforms like GoFundMe or CrowdPac to engage a broad audience.

Include compelling visuals, videos, and testimonials to inspire contributions.

Phone Banking

Combine traditional phone calls with digital tools like CallHub or NGP VAN to track interactions and follow up efficiently.

Social Media

Share engaging content on Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter) to connect with potential donors.

Create TikTok videos showcasing your campaign's impact to engage a younger audience.

Email Campaigns

Use platforms like Mailchimp or Constant Contact to create personalized email appeals. Include progress updates and clear calls to action to motivate donors.

Outreach

Approach political action committees, unions, and advocacy organizations for endorsements and financial support. **Align your message with their priorities to secure funding.**

Digital Ads

Use targeted digital ads on Google or social media platforms to reach specific voter and donor segments. Highlight milestones or urgent appeals for maximum impact.

ENHANCING
donorengagement

01

Transparency

Clearly explain how contributions will be used to win your campaign and share regular updates to build trust and encourage continued support. Remember, your donors are investors. They must believe that you will succeed and that their contributions will be spent wisely.

02

Mobile Optimization

Ensure all donation pages are mobile-friendly, as most users will access them via smartphones.

03

Recurring Donations

Offer monthly giving options for sustained funding. Platforms like ActBlue, WinRed or Anedot make this process simple for both the campaign and donors.

04

Social Proof

Share testimonials or donor spotlights to inspire others. For example, highlight a donor's story on social media or in email newsletters. Donors who are recognized and thanked for their contribution will give again.

TRACKING & OPTIMIZING
fundraisingefforts

01 Use Data Analytics

Monitor donor trends using tools like NGP VAN or NationBuilder to identify high-value donors and tailor outreach.

02 Email A/B Testing

Test different email subject lines, ad designs, or donation page layouts to see what resonates most with your audience.

03 Monitor ROI

Regularly assess the cost-effectiveness of events, ads, and other fundraising efforts to ensure you're allocating resources wisely.

04 Adjust Strategies

Use data insights to refine underperforming approaches. For instance, if a social media campaign isn't gaining traction, adjust the messaging or audience targeting

Return on Investment, or ROI, is a universal mode of measurement you can use throughout a campaign to quantify the success of paid tactics. Whether you're puting $100 towards a paid tactic or $1000, the ROI is a standard number to help you compare the effectiveness of each dollar put towards a campaign.

Use the equation below to help quantify your ROI:

$$ROI = \left(\frac{\text{Amount Gained} - \text{Amount Spent}}{\text{Amount Spent}} \right) \times 100$$

FIRST 30 DAYS
checklist

Laying the Foundation & Initial Fundraising

Establish Your Fundraising Infrastructure

- ☐ Form a fundraising committee and appoint a treasurer.
- ☐ Open a dedicated campaign bank account. Most major banks and credit unions offer business or campaign accounts that comply with political finance regulations.
- ☐ Ensure compliance by reviewing state and federal fundraising laws. (See Appendix C for Legal and Compliance resources).
- ☐ Set up a system for tracking and reporting donations. (see Fundraising Tools in Appendix A).

Develop Your Fundraising Strategy

- ☐ Set clear fundraising goals and milestones.
- ☐ Draft a fundraising message and donor outreach plan.
- ☐ Create necessary fundraising materials (emails, scripts, social media assets) that align with campaign key messaging and branding.

Kickstart Fundraising Efforts

- ☐ Secure early contributions from personal contacts.
- ☐ Host a virtual or in-person kickoff fundraiser.
- ☐ Launch a crowdfunding campaign with a compelling video and clear goals.

ONGOING CAMPAIGN
maintainingmomentum

Engage and Expand Your Donor Base

- Send biweekly email updates with progress reports and donation requests.

- Run targeted social media ads highlighting specific fundraising milestones.

- Promote recurring donation options for sustained funding.

- Monitor donor trends and refine outreach strategies based on analytics.

Amplify Fundraising Efforts

- Organize a major fundraising event or virtual telethon to energize supporters.

- Share urgent calls to action on social media as deadlines approach.

- Publicly thank donors to build goodwill and encourage last-minute contributions.

- Ensure all final compliance reports and financial disclosures are prepared and submitted on time.

Show Thanks

- Unless your last name is Obama or Trump you are not too busy to send a personal handwritten thank you note. A simple postcard is a perfect way to thank an investor in your campaign; and will lead to future investment.

Chapter
Voter Contact

Voter turnout is the culmination of your campaign's efforts to engage, educate, and mobilize your supporters. Effective strategies rely on a combination of targeted outreach methods and modern tools to ensure your message reaches and resonates with voters.

This chapter explores proven methods that blend traditional tactics, such as community events, volunteer-driven canvassing, and campaign signage, with innovative digital tools like social media campaigns and peer-to-peer texting.

Beyond logistical readiness, successfully connecting with voters requires understanding their needs and the priorities of your community. Consistently engaging voters across multiple channels builds recognition, fosters trust, and strengthens relationships over time.

Campaigns benefit from strategic planning to ensure that voters encounter your message repeatedly through diverse touchpoints, from informative emails and text messages to personal conversations and interactive virtual events.

VOTER TURNOUT
coreprinciples

- **Focus on Your Base:** Prioritize your outreach efforts on voters who are likely to support you but may need encouragement to cast their ballots.

- **Identify Swing & Persuadable Voter Groups:** Beyond your base, recognize the importance of swing and persuadable voters—those who may not be fully committed but can be won over with the right message. In general elections, these voters can determine the outcome, making targeted engagement crucial. Use issue-based messaging and direct outreach to connect with them effectively.

- **Use Data Strategically:** Leverage voter data to identify key demographics, geographic areas, and voter habits. Tools like NGP VAN, NationBuilder, L2 or state voter files can help you track voter engagement and prioritize resources effectively.

- **Start Early:** Begin turnout efforts weeks before Election Day, especially to encourage early and absentee voting. Repeated contact increases the likelihood that voters will show up. Turnout efforts can include tactics like direct mail, peer-peer texts or digital ads outlining key voter dates.

VoterPlan

0 1

Identify Target Voters

Use voter databases and analytics tools to segment your audience into groups based on their level of support.

Likely Supporters

Persuadable Voters

Low-Prosperity Voters

02 Prioritize Contact Methods

Refer to the Voter Contact Tools section for a comprehensive list of outreach methods, including both traditional and digital tools. These methods, such as peer-to-peer texting, campaign websites, direct mail, and social media outreach, will help you effectively connect with voters.

03 Encourage Early and Absentee Voting

Highlight the convenience of voting early or by mail. Provide clear instructions and deadlines on your website, emails, and social media.

Direct voters to local and state Board of Elections (BOE) websites, which often provide up-to-date, accurate information about voter registration deadlines, early voting locations, and absentee ballot processes.
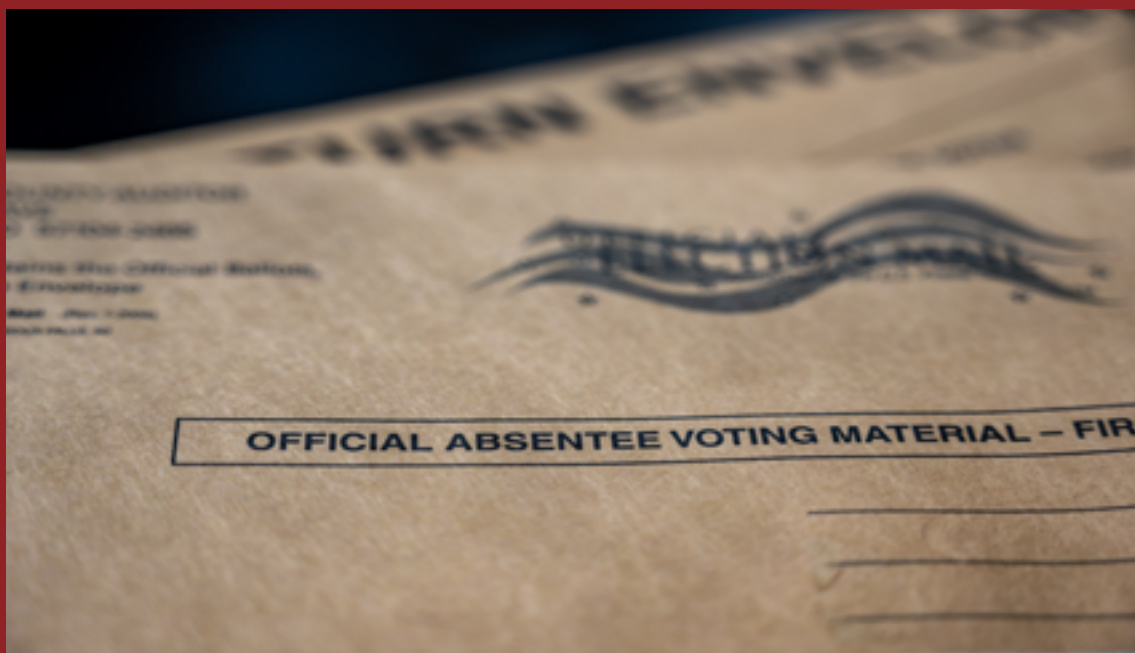
VOTER
contacttools

Your voter contact strategy should utilize a mix of traditional and digital tools to engage voters effectively and drive turnout.

	DIGITAL	TRADITIONAL
Door-to-Door		✓
Langing Pages	✓	
P2P Texting	✓	
Direct Mail		✓
Visibility Efforts	✓	✓
Social Media	✓	

Door-to-Door

When running for local office the most important part is ASKING people for their vote. And no better way to ask than in person. Door Knocking will teach you a lot about yourself and your community; you will hear "no" a lot but you will also become a better public servant.

What goes into a successful door to door effort?

◆ Data on where the right voters to contact live.

◆ Ability to capture more data and names of volunteers / yard sign locations

◆ Volunteers to help the campaign cover more territory efficiently

Landing Pages

Create specific landing pages for targeted voter outreach campaigns (e.g., early voting reminders or issue-specific advocacy).

Your campaign website serves as the central hub for voter engagement. Ensure it includes:

◆ Key information about your platform.

◆ Voting resources like polling locations, absentee ballot instructions, and registration deadlines.

◆ A prominent call to action for donations and volunteer sign-ups.

◆ Media Kit showcasing pictures, b-roll and videos for supporters to share publicly.

P2P Texting

Use platforms like Hustle, ThruText, or RumbleUp to send personalized text messages to voters.Text messages can share key information such as early voting dates, polling locations, or reminders to vote on Election Day.

This method allows for highly targeted, direct communication that feels personal to the voter.

Direct Mail

Targeted mailers can effectively reach voters who prefer physical materials over digital communication.

Direct mail pieces should focus on:

◆ Clear, concise messaging. Less is more and bullet points are your friend!

◆ Including voting dates and polling locations.

◆ Directing recipients to your campaign website or their local board of election website via QR codes for more information.

Visibility Efforts

Yard Signs: These remain a cost-effective way to boost name recognition, especially in high-traffic areas.

Campaign Branding: Use branded banners, window decals, and posters to increase visibility at events and community gatherings.

Social Media

Use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to run targeted ads and post regular updates. Encourage supporters to share campaign content, creating a ripple effect that expands your reach.

PLAN FOR
voterturnout

Pre-Election

☐ **Set Up a Campaign Website:** Include key details such as your platform, polling locations, absentee ballot deadlines, early voting instructions, and calls to action for donations and volunteering as well as a media kit.

☐ **Build a list of likely supporters** using voter data tools like NGP VAN or state voter files via a data hub, like L2. These usually will need to be purchased, so be sure to build this into your overall budget.

☐ **Send peer-to-peer text messages** with personalized reminders about early voting and absentee ballot deadlines using platforms like RumbleUp or Hustle.

☐ **Distribute targeted direct mail** that includes voting dates, polling locations, and links to local Board of Elections (BOE) websites.

Election Day

☐ **Set up a command center** to monitor voter turnout in real-time and adjust efforts accordingly.

☐ **Use peer-to-peer outreach** to remind voters about polling locations and encourage participation.

☐ **Share real-time updates** and motivational posts on social media to energize your base and create a sense of urgency.

Post-Election

- [ ] **Analyze turnout data** from digital platforms, voter databases, and tracking tools to refine outreach strategies for future campaigns.

- [ ] **Publicly thank voters and volunteers** on social media, highlighting the campaign's impact and celebrating community engagement.

- [ ] **Send follow-up emails** to donors and volunteers expressing gratitude and sharing next steps for ongoing involvement.

Chapter
Maximizing Earned Media

Earned media—coverage gained through news outlets, community influencers, and social media—plays a vital role in building your campaign's credibility and amplifying its message.

Unlike paid media, earned media requires proactive engagement, consistent messaging, and strategic timing to effectively reach voters.

This chapter outlines how to blend traditional press relations with modern digital strategies to maximize your media presence.

MEDIA STRATEGY =

RELATIONSHIPS + CONSISTENCY + TIMING

Build Relationships Early

Cultivate connections with local journalists, bloggers, and media outlets well before you need coverage.

A strong network will increase the likelihood of favorable stories.

Stay Consistent

Align all media efforts with your campaign's message and tone. From press releases to social media interactions, ensure consistency in how your story is told.

Timing is Everything

Plan media outreach around key campaign milestones, such as your campaign launch, endorsements, or major policy announcements.

Tactics for Earned Media

MediaLists

Identify local and regional media outlets, including newspapers, TV stations, radio shows, and online publications. (See Appendix E for a generic media list template).

PressReleases

Write concise, compelling press releases that highlight newsworthy campaign updates. Include quotes from you or campaign leaders to add depth.

Use media advisories to invite press to events or alert them to upcoming announcements. (See Appendix E for a generic press release template)

MediaEvents

Plan press conferences or media days to attract coverage. Ensure events are visually engaging and provide press kits with campaign materials, photos, and videos.

OfferExclusives

Partner with select media outlets for exclusive coverage of major campaign moments to ensure deeper, more personalized stories.

Digital Strategy

Digital Earned Media

To increase visibility, leverage social media by posting shareable content such as campaign updates, behind-the-scenes moments, and voter testimonials. Encourage your supporters to amplify your message by resharing these posts.

Partnering with local influencers, bloggers, and content creators can help spread your message authentically.

Focus on those who align with your campaign values and can engage their audiences effectively.

A unique, campaign-specific hashtag can spark conversation and bring unity to supporter content across platforms. Make it memorable and easy to use.

Encourage supporters to share their experiences with your campaign. Highlight their user-generated content—photos, videos, and testimonials—on your official

PERFORMANCE TRACKING

Monitor your coverage.

Adapt to feedback.

Strengthen relationships.

channels to build trust and connection.

Finally, ensure your campaign website is fully optimized. Include a dedicated press page or media kit featuring high-resolution photos, b-roll, policy briefs, and media contact information. Use SEO best practices to improve discoverability.

1

Pre-Campaign

◆ Build a media contact list with journalists, bloggers, and influencers.

◆ Develop a press kit with campaign photos, bios, and background materials. This can live on your website and does not need to be physically mailed out to reporters - this is an outdated tactic!

2

Mid-Campaign

◆ Regularly issue press releases for campaign milestones.

◆ Host events designed to generate news coverage.

◆ Share social media updates and engage directly with online followers to amplify visibility.

3

Post-Campaign

◆ Analyze media coverage to assess the impact of your earned media efforts.

◆ Maintain relationships with media contacts for future campaigns.

06 ▷ **Chapter**

Digtial Tools for the Modern Campaign

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, staying ahead of the curve is essential for running a successful campaign. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter), along with modern tools like podcasts and digital advertising, have revolutionized how candidates connect with voters, amplify their message, and build trust within their communities.

These tools offer creative, targeted ways to engage diverse audiences while complementing traditional methods like direct mail, face-to-face outreach, and voter events.

However, these tools are only as effective as the strategy behind them. Technology and digital platforms are constantly evolving, and campaigns that can adapt to these changes will have a competitive edge. Mastering these tools requires thoughtful planning and a clear understanding of your audience.

If your team lacks the expertise to fully utilize digital platforms, enlisting the help of a social media manager or digital strategist can ensure that your campaign maximizes its potential while remaining professional and modern.

By blending innovative digital tools with proven campaign techniques, you can create a cohesive, multi-channel strategy that leaves a lasting impression on voters. This approach ensures your message is seen, heard, and remembered, no matter where voters are engaging.

On the following pages, you'll find a list of modern tools and their potential to enhance your campaign.

Modernized Tools

Social Media

Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X (Twitter)

Potential To:

Build visibility and engage diverse audiences through consistent updates, live interactions, and shareable content.

How to Explore

Share campaign announcements, event promotions, and policy highlights.

- Use Instagram and TikTok for short, engaging videos that humanize your campaign and reach younger voters.
- Run polls or Q&A sessions on Twitter to drive conversations and build trust.

Blend with Classic Method

Add social media links or QR codes to flyers and event handouts, encouraging voters to follow your campaign online.

Digital Advertising

Google Ads, Social Media Ads and YouTube Ads

Potential To:

Reach highly targeted voter groups by tailoring ads based on demographics, geography, or interests.

How to Explore

- Use Google Ads to make your campaign website easily discoverable.
- Run Facebook and Instagram ads for voter outreach and event promotion.
- Use YouTube pre-roll ads to showcase campaign videos and endorsements.

Blend with Classic Method

Pair digital ads with direct mail campaigns to reinforce key messages.

Podcasts

Potential To:

Connect with niche audiences through in-depth discussions on campaign priorities and personal stories.

How to Explore

- Appear as a guest on popular local podcasts to reach engaged listeners.
- Highlight podcasts as a way to share more detailed policy ideas than other platforms allow.

Blend with Classic Method

Share links to podcast episodes in newsletters or at town hall events.

Email Campaigns

Potential To:

Maintain regular contact with supporters by providing updates, event invitations, and donation appeals.

How to Explore

- Use platforms like Mailchimp or Constant Contact to craft personalized emails.
- Send timely reminders for early voting, events, or fundraising deadlines.

Blend with Classic Method

Distribute summaries of your email content at events or in mailers.

Influencers

Potential To:

Expand your reach authentically by collaborating with trusted local voices.

How to Explore

- Partner with influencers whose audiences align with your target demographics.
- Co-create posts or videos endorsing your campaign.

Blend with Classic Method

Highlight collaborations on your website, in newsletters, or at campaign events.

1

Pre-Campaign: Laying the Foundation

◆ **Assess Tools:** Identify which platforms align best with your audience (e.g., Tik-Tok for younger voters, podcasts for policy-focused content).

◆ **Set Up Accounts:** Create or update profiles on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, and ensure consistency in messaging, branding and tone.

◆ **Create Initial Content:** Post a mix of introductory videos, campaign announcements, and personal messages to establish your digital presence.

◆ **Build Collaborations:** Reach out to influencers, podcast hosts, and local partners to explore early collaborations and set up guest appearances.

2

During the Campaign: Driving Engagement

◆ **Leverage Platforms Strategically:**

◆ Post regular updates and videos on social media to maintain voter interest.
◆ Use digital ads to promote events, key messages and voting information to targeted audience segments.
◆ Engage directly with voters through Twitter threads or live Q&As on Instagram, Tiktok or Facebook.

◆ **Focus on Integration:**

- ◆ Use QR codes on mailers or posters to drive traffic to your social media profiles or website.
- ◆ Highlight digital content (e.g., TikTok videos, podcasts) during in-person events to extend reach.

◆ **Track and Adapt:** Use platform analytics (e.g., Facebook Insights, Google Ads metrics) to monitor performance and adjust strategies in real time.

3

Post-Campaign: Maintaining Momentum

◆ **Analyze Results:** Review performance metrics from social media, ads, and podcasts to identify what resonated most with voters.

◆ **Express Gratitude:** Use social media, email, or podcasts to thank voters, supporters, and collaborators.

◆ **Preserve Content:** Archive high-performing videos, podcast episodes, and ads for future use.

◆ **Stay Engaged:** Continue posting updates and engaging with your audience to maintain the relationships built during the campaign.

KEY REMINDERS

Quality Over Quantity:

Focus on fewer, high-quality tools that align with your audience.

Keep It Cohesive:

Ensure all digital and traditional methods reinforce a unified campaign message.

Don't Hesitate to Seek Expertise:

If your team lacks the resources to maximize digital platforms, enlist the help of professionals.

Getting out the vote (GOTV) is the final and most critical phase of your campaign. A successful GOTV strategy ensures your supporters make it to the polls through a combination of data-driven targeting, personalized outreach, and logistical support. This chapter provides actionable steps to mobilize voters efficiently and maximize turnout on Election Day.

GOTV
coreprinciples

- **Identify Key Voter Segments:** Focus on voters who are likely to support you but may need reminders or assistance to vote. Prioritize outreach to low-propensity voters and un

- **Use Data Strategically:** Leverage tools like NGP VAN, NationBuilder, or Grassroots Unwired to segment voters, monitor engagement, and track turnout progress. Use real-time data to focus efforts where they're needed most.

- **Start Early:** Begin outreach weeks before Election Day to encourage early and absentee voting. Frequent contact increases the likelihood that voters will follow through.

GOTV
planexecution

- **Peer-to-Peer Text Messaging:** Use platforms like RumbleUp, Hustle, or ThruText to send personalized, trackable messages with reminders about polling locations, hours, and deadlines. Messages should also highlight key reasons to support your campaign to motivate action.

- **Canvassing and Door-to-Door Outreach:** Combine in-person efforts with data-driven tools like MiniVAN or Ecanvasser to track voter interactions and ensure thorough coverage of priority areas.

- **Encourage Early and Absentee Voting:** Highlight the convenience of early and mail-in voting in all communications. Use your campaign website, social media posts, and direct mail to provide clear instructions and deadlines. Direct voters to their local Board of Elections (BOE) website for up-to-date information.

- **Social Media Engagement:** Create countdown posts leading to Election Day to maintain momentum. Share testimonials from voters and supporters to inspire others to turn out, and use live updates to energize your base throughout Election Day.

- **Set Up a Command Center:** Establish a central hub for monitoring turnout, addressing voter questions, and coordinating last-minute outreach. Use real-time data to identify and mobilize low-turnout areas.

Tracking and Refining Your GOTV Efforts

- ◆ **Monitor Real-Time Turnout:** Use voter tracking tools to see who has already voted. Focus final outreach efforts on those who haven't yet cast their ballot.

- ◆ **Adjust Outreach as Needed:** If certain neighborhoods or demographics are underperforming, deploy additional resources, such as volunteers or targeted text reminders, to those areas.

- ◆ **Analyze Results Post-Election:** Review data from GOTV efforts to evaluate which tactics were most effective. Use these insights to refine strategies for future campaigns.

example
GOTV ACTION PLAN

01

PRE-ELECTION

▷

- Build your voter contact list using tools like NGP VAN or L2.

- Promote early voting and absentee ballots through peer-to-peer texts, direct mail, and social media.

- Train volunteers for door-to-door canvassing and voter assistance.

- Set up a command center to monitor turnout in real time.

- Use peer-to-peer texting platforms like RumbleUp to send reminders to voters who haven't yet cast their ballot.

- Share motivational content and live updates on social media to energize supporters.

02 ▷ ELECTION DAY

POST-ELECTION ◁ 03

- Publicly thank voters and volunteers via social media and email.

- Send personalized thank-you messages to donors and key supporters, emphasizing their role in your campaign's success.

- Analyze turnout data to identify successful tactics and areas for improvement in future campaigns.

BEYOND
electionday

- **Thank Supporters:** Use personalized emails, social media posts, and videos to express gratitude to volunteers, donors, and voters. Public recognition builds goodwill and sets the stage for future connections.

- **Maintain Communication:** Keep your campaign website and social media channels active to share updates, promote community initiatives, and continue engaging with your audience.

- **Analyze and Reflect:** Review campaign data using tools like NGP VAN, NationBuilder, and Google Analytics to identify what worked and areas for improvement. Conduct surveys or host virtual town halls to gather feedback from your supporters.

Continuous Learning

◆ **Educational Resources:** Explore courses on platforms like Coursera, LinkedIn Learning, and Toastmasters International to deepen your knowledge of digital marketing, data analytics, public speaking, and campaign strategies.

◆ **Networking:** Join organizations like Leadership Institute or VoteRunLead, and attend webinars or in-person events to stay current on modern campaigning techniques.

"

The end of a campaign is the beginning of new opportunities. Regardless of the outcome, your efforts have built relationships, inspired action, and strengthened your connection to the community.

Post-election, focus on maintaining engagement, reflecting on successes and challenges, and equipping yourself with tools for future campaigns or initiatives.

Win or lose, your campaign marks the beginning of new opportunities. The relationships you've built, the skills you've honed, and the connections you've strengthened will serve you well in future endeavors. Take time to reflect on what worked and where you can improve, using the lessons learned to inform your next steps.

Stay engaged with your community by maintaining communication and continuing to advocate for the issues that matter. With your network and experience, you are well-positioned to drive meaningful change and embrace the next chapter of your journey in public service.

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Conclusion

APPENDIX &
resources

The following appendices provide examples of available resources that can support campaign efforts. These tools and services are intended as a guide and do not constitute an endorsement by NAHB.

This is not an exhaustive list but includes resources that have been utilized by successful campaigns in the past. Some of the vendors listed are partisan; however, we have included examples from both sides to ensure a broad perspective.

Appendix A: Digital Tools for Campaign Success

Voter Data and Analytics

- NGP VAN: Voter data management and outreach.
- NationBuilder: Comprehensive campaign management.
- L2 Political Data: Demographic and voter data services.
- Grassroots Unwired: Mobile canvassing and voter data tracking tool.
- Ecanvasser: Canvassing and voter engagement platform for managing face-to-face outreach efforts.

Peer-to-Peer Texting Platforms

- RumbleUp: Personalized texting for campaigns.
- Hustle: Scalable peer-to-peer texting.
- ThruText: Text message outreach with tracking capabilities.
- Peerly: Enhanced P2P texting with video and rich messaging.

Fundraising Tools

- ActBlue: Donation platform for Democratic candidates.
- WinRed: Fundraising tool for Republican candidates.
- Anedot: Fundraising platform for campaigns, churches, and nonprofits.
- CrowdPac: Crowdfunding platform for political campaigns.
- NationBuilder: Comprehensive campaign management that includes fundraising capabilities and tracking.

- Open Secrets: A nonpartisan resource that tracks money in U.S. politics, providing transparency on campaign donations, PACs, lobbying, and political spending.

Social Media Management and Promotion

- Sprout Social: Manage, schedule, and analyze social media campaigns with advanced analytics and social listening.
- Canva: Design graphics for social media and print materials.
- TikTok: Create campaign videos to engage younger audiences.
- Facebook Events: Promote in-person fundraisers and online campaign events.

Volunteer Coordination

- Slack: Team communication and task management.
- Asana: Organizing campaign workflows and tasks.

Media Tracking and Analysis

- Meltwater: Monitor media coverage, analyze trends, and track campaign mentions.
- Google Alerts: Free tool for tracking mentions and updates online.
- Google Analytics: Monitor website engagement and assess campaign traffic sources.

Digital Advertising Platforms

- Google Ads: Use programmatic and targeted advertising to reach specific voter and donor segments.

Email Campaigns

- Mailchimp: Create personalized email appeals and campaign updates.
- Constant Contact: Manage email outreach with robust tracking capabilities.

Appendix B: Training and Development Resources

Campaign Training Programs

- EMILY's List: Training for left-leaning women candidates.
- Leadership Institute: Campaign and grassroots training for right-leaning candidates.
- VoteRunLead: Focused on empowering non-partisan women to run for office.

Online Learning Platforms

- Coursera: Courses on public speaking, leadership, and digital marketing.
- LinkedIn Learning: Classes on campaign strategy, communication, and fundraising.
- Toastmasters International: Training in public speaking and communication.

Appendix C: Legal and Compliance Resources

Campaign Finance Regulations

- Federal Election Commission (FEC): Rules and resources for federal campaigns.
- National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS): Links to state-specific campaign finance laws.

Data Privacy and Security

- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): Guidelines for handling personal data (if applicable).
- California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA): Data protection standards.

Appendix D: Early Voting and GOTV Resources

Polling Information

- BallotReady: Comprehensive voting information for voters.
- Vote.org: Tools for voter registration, polling place lookup, and absentee ballots.
- Local Board of Elections (BOE) websites: Accurate, up-to-date voting information for your area (check local directories).

Volunteer Coordination

- Slack: Team communication and task management.
- MiniVAN: Mobile app for canvassing and voter tracking.
- Asana: Organizing campaign workflows and tasks.

Appendix E: Templates

- [Example Peer-Peer Texts:](#) 3 text examples, Early Voting, Absentee, GOTV
- [Press Release Template:](#) Includes headline, key details, quotes, and media contact information.
- [Media List Template](#)
- [Fundraising Email Template:](#) includes clear ask, donor impact statement, and call to action.
- [Social Posts Templates:](#) Includes example captions for absentee voting, early voting reminders, and other important voting dates, plus suggested hashtags, graphic examples / timelines, and engagement tips.
- [Direct Mail Examples](#)
- [Digital Ad Examples](#)

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