

What Marketing Can Learn from Political Campaigns

February 2012 newsletter

As we go through our country's quadrennial political marathon, a race in which two men will spend nearly two billion dollars to be elected president, there is much we can learn from this campaign to inform our own marketing efforts.

Leaving aside some of the negative effects of this onslaught (political gridlock, character assassination, unlimited contributions), an examination of political marketing shows that - at its core - politics is really two brands fighting for market leadership in a category in which a 50+ percent market share usually equates to victory.

As you are bombarded with their messages over the next nine months, you can use that time wisely by observing the way in which these incredibly focused campaigns:

Select the Key Message. While there are many messages that a campaign might use, it is critical that this jumble of messages gets boiled down to one overarching message. This allows a wide coalition of targeted groups to be engaged even though some groups will respond to different voter benefits.

Frame the Issues. When former presidential candidate and ex-NBA star Bill Bradley was asked how the president should be chosen, he joked, "we should all have to take a jump shot." This perfectly describes framing: the campaign should revolve around the issues that frame the candidate in the best light.

Test Test Test. While polling is standard in most campaigns, many also conduct focus groups to test messaging. John Naisbitt explained it this way, "Leadership involves finding a parade and walking in

This is a monthly newsletter from Prell Organization.

Prell Organization is a marketing research firm that uses qualitative and quantitative methods to help our clients and their agencies see their brands more clearly.

Brand Clarity is a process by which consumers reveal the essence of a brand to make sure that the products and services being offered are closely aligned to their needs.

Rick Weitzer
Principal

636-728-1557
rweitzer@prellorg.com
www.prellorg.com



front of it." Or look at it this way: would you prefer that politicians didn't listen to the voters?

Stay on message. Major campaigns are very disciplined about finding the message that resonates with their audience and staying on message, even if conditions appear to be unfavorable. The key is to remain unemotionally even when the candidate is being attacked on a very personal level.

Conduct Opposition Research. Not only do campaigns want to know every strength and weakness of their opponent, they also need to know their own vulnerabilities. In this very transparent world, everything about your candidate will emerge eventually, so it's better to get out in front of this news and control how it is released.

Identify Market Segments. Campaigns usually concentrate on their swing voters, who are not loyalists, but are essential for cobbling together a majority. On the other hand, there are many occasions when campaigns have to shore up their core supporters (they call it their "base") in order to raise money or get out the vote.

Find Their Voice. You can tell when a candidate finds his or her authentic political voice because their messages start to resonate with the voters. When this occurs, the candidate appears to always say the right thing, at the right time, and everything they say is on-message.

Campaigns are amazing organizations that must think several steps ahead as if they are playing a multiple dimensional chess game that occurs at a dizzying pace. But at the same time, they must employ a marketing approach that examines science-based evidence of voter sentiment to drive their strategy.