

## **The New Grass Roots**

### *Five Critical Steps for Building a Strong Social Media Network*

Just a few years ago, the Internet was a simple place for candidates and causes. Just put up a website, hope people find it, and do everything else the way it had been done before.

But today, websites are a small part of the on-line puzzle, while messages and issues are shaped and driven by a seemingly endless set of users and an ever-expanding group of platforms including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube and other things you may not even have heard of ... yet.

As you develop a modern web campaign, there are a few basic rules to follow:

- Keep it simple. Use the basic tools that are already well-known and widely used – tools you yourself know and use when you're on-line – to join the conversation about you, your campaign, your candidate, or your cause.
- Interact with people in ways that vest them in your cause long-term – for this election cycle and future ones as well.
- And strive to turn your website into the central hub in the online conversation about you. Make it your foundation for your activity on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other Internet outposts. And work to bring voters back to your website, where they can learn more about the campaign and become invested in it.

Here are five tips for putting these prescriptions into practice:

### **1. Maintain Your Wikipedia Page**

If the first thing interested voters or reporters do is Google a candidate, the second thing they do is check out that candidate's Wikipedia entry. An up-to-date, factually accurate and well-cited Wikipedia entry is essential. However, *the entry itself should not be managed or edited by the campaign, campaign staff, candidate or anyone working on a campaign computer.* Doing so would violate the rules of the Wikipedia community, leading the entry to be "flagged." Instead, volunteers should be encouraged to update and maintain the accuracy of your Wikipedia page. Wikipedia the sixth busiest website in America – it's a smart investment of volunteer time.

### **Wikipedia Resources and Best Practices:**

- Great article from politics media on engaging with Wikipedia:  
<http://www.politicsmagazine.com/magazine-issues/april-2010/its-a-wiki-world/>

### **2. Use Search Advertising**

One of the most affordable and cost-effective tools for a campaign, search ads (which on search engine sites such as Google or Yahoo) offer an efficient way to engage potential voters. Search ads ensure that a campaign is present with the right message when voters are seeking information related to it. These ads are highly targeted, relatively inexpensive, easy to create, and flexible in cost and content.

### ***Search Advertising Resources and Best Practices:***

- Google campaign toolkit: <http://www.google.com/events/campaigntools/>
- Study of best online advertising practices from spring of 2008: [www.valueclickmedia.com/ipdi\\_best\\_practices\\_for\\_political\\_advertising\\_online.pdf](http://www.valueclickmedia.com/ipdi_best_practices_for_political_advertising_online.pdf)

### ***3. Organize on Facebook***

With more than 100 million users in America – almost one-third of the population – Facebook provides a familiar and easy way for potential supporters and voters to learn about and engage with any campaign. Facebook allows campaigns to have real-time, two-way conversations on issues big and small. And Facebook advertising provides another highly targeted, affordable, and effective way to build a new community or expand an existing one.

### ***Facebook Resources and Best Practices:***

- Facebook tips for advertising: [http://www.facebook.com/ads/best\\_practices.php](http://www.facebook.com/ads/best_practices.php)
- Inside Facebook blog – useful tips and trends: <http://www.insidefacebook.com/>
- Facebook page how to from Wellstone Action: <http://www.wellstone.org/best-practices-campaigns-using-facebook>

### ***4. Customize Your Conversation on Twitter***

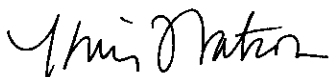
Twitter is the world's fastest and most potent message accelerator. It can be a very effective tool in a new media campaign – if it's used right. Twitter isn't about what someone famous ate for breakfast. Instead, it's a real-time conversation that any campaign can instigate, participate in or follow. A campaign simply must pick and choose its conversations, monitoring the discussion and interacting with the folks who are participating (relevant and influential opinion makers, bloggers, politicians, reporters and activists, etc.). Campaigns that do these things will be able to follow conversations across the web in real time and speak – directly and instantaneously – to voters about these issues.

### ***Twitter Resources and Best Practices:***

- Twitter "How to" Blog: <http://www.twitter-howto.com/>
- Twitter Guidebook on Mashable.com: <http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter/>

### ***5. Create a Clean, Easy to-Use, Integrated Website***

Given the power and breadth of today's web, a campaign doesn't need to spend the time or money creating the next MyBarackObama.com. However, a campaign must work to ensure that its website remains the base for everything it does online. A website should be simple, clean and frequently updated. It should connect to the campaign's Facebook, Twitter, PhotoBucket, YouTube and email presence, engaging people in ways they prefer. And those connections should bring folks back to the campaign website, where they can donate, sign-up and volunteer. In this, the website becomes a campaign's on-line base, making it easy and obvious for people to take action and participate.



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