Political Science 146 – Public Opinion and Mass Media: Citizens’ Democratic Basics

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  - Contain: Candidate biography, issue statements – they don’t usually cover every issue, contact information, schedule.
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- Back then though, websites were more like brochures: talking points, rarely updated, not dynamic.
Social Media Campaigns

- Brochure model gave way to more interactive model

- Some candidates actively reach out to traditionally alienated voters (e.g., young voters, minority voters)

- Interact with potential supporters

- Provide supporters with venue for becoming part of the campaign – “Latinos por Obama,” “LGBT for Obama,” etc.

- These changes have largely been aided and facilitated by social media: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, others
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- Twitter began to play a significant role since 2008 election.
  - Microblogging service allows users to send/read short 140 character messages. Great for instant updates, etc.
  - Campaigns choose which Twitter accounts to follow; allow Twitter users to follow campaign accounts
  - Followers can re-tweet candidate content – expanding candidate’s reach to other networks
  - Twitter allows for direct communication between candidates (and/or their staffs) and voters
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New Practices: Microtargeting

- Microtargeting – Fueled by advances in communication and database technology, campaigns can now target certain voters (groups) with specific information – beyond party, gender, to include items such as race/ethnicity, neighborhood characteristics, Census information, magazine subscriptions, and other consumer data.

- The point is to appeal to voters on very specific issues that the individual voter is likely to hold important.

- Think about it, if you get a flier in the mail about college loans/repayment are you more likely to pay attention to it than something about social security? Probably.

- Campaigns construct data profiles of supporters and swing voters based on: where people live, their occupation, purchasing behavior, credit scores, search patterns and history (make sure to turn on incognito!), etc.

- Specific campaign ads are displayed to Facebook users based on their self-reported political views/content of recent posts.

- Believed marketing companies have profiles (based on average of 1500 pieces of data) for about 96% of Americans!
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New Practices: Personalization

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- Supporters often become friends with other supports, developing a growing network.
New Practices: Sustained Engagement

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4. Become active in offline activities
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  - These are all things that are done today, sort of common-sense things. All started with Dean campaign
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- Sustained engagement with supporters – people became Deaniacs – people actually created material for the blog

- In single 24 hour period, Dean campaign posted 400 blog messages, spurring 4,000 comments

- Around 2,000 comments a day posted to Dean campaign website

- "Guest blogger" contests – got people more involved

- Blog was used to ask for suggestions about speeches or campaign events

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- This linked individual supporters together created a deeper connection among supporters and campaign – now people had a greater investment in how Dean did
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- The Dean blog and Meetup illustrate effectiveness of networks – taking advantage of offline and online networks, combined with digital technology, to circulate messages and organize events.

- Dean campaign altered structures of donations. Campaigns used to organize elaborate fundraisers (e.g., dinners, coffees) that targeted a few, large donations. – Dean campaign largely changed this.

- Resulting in change of composition of campaign donations – large sums of money raised from small donations of a lot of supporters – so more democratic.

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- Obama was coined “King of Social Media” for his campaign’s ability to engage voters across a variety of social media.
- Voters could become bloggers – campaign websites provided technological infrastructure for voters to start their own blogs about candidates – deepening engagement.
- MyBO.com facilitated creation of supporters’ blogs.
- Obama campaign compiled an impressive email list of over 13 million addresses.
- Developed sophisticated database of information about potential voters – from website/social media, merged with demographic, neighborhood, lifestyle data.
- Created portraits of issue priorities for different voters and devised unique communication strategies for each one.
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