

# 20 TIPS

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ARE YOU SURE YOU  
SHOULD RUN FOR  
OFFICE?



# 1

## IDENTIFY YOUR THREE WHYS

Why me?

Why now?

Why this office?

Before you even run, you should be able to answer these three questions. You need to believe you are truly the best person for the job.

Write your answers down: be as wordy as you want. Then, pick the points you believe are most persuasive and sharpen them into:

- a concise, 30-second answer – this is your “elevator speech”
- a 5-minute appeal
- a 10-minute speech

**If you cannot easily answer the three whys, STOP! You should not run for office.**

# 2

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## FAMILY SUPPORT IS CRITICAL

The support of your spouse and children is absolutely essential.

Your life will be consumed with your campaign, making you unavailable to your family most nights and weekends for a year or more.

Make sure you sit down and talk with them about what to expect before you even think about running.

**If they aren't behind you 100%, STOP! Either your campaign or marriage (or both!) will fail.**

# 3

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A CAMPAIGN IS NOT  
RUN ON BANKER'S  
HOURS

Campaigning is similar to taking on a new part- or full-time job.

Conduct an audit of your current schedule and obligations. Once you've taken this inventory, decide what you can cut out or rearrange to meet the new demands.

Expect an adjustment period as you learn how to juggle competing responsibilities.

Talk to your family and boss as you go through this process. Their buy-in is EXTREMELY important.

**If you cannot commit the time required to win, STOP!  
You should not run for office.**

# 4

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## DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE CAMPAIGN COSTS

Each year, well-meaning Christians run for large offices they are not prepared to be financially competitive in and lose by a large margin.

Are you considering running in a solidly partisan district? You will spend the lions share of your resources in the primary to unseat the incumbent.

Are you running in a swing district? You will face a competitor in the general. A simple state representative race in a swing district could, and has, run over *\$1 million*.

Research the previous amounts spent for re-election in the district you are considering. The numbers will likely shock you, but you must be realistic. There are very few races small enough that mailings are not required. Countywide races in larger counties could run into the *tens or hundreds of thousands*.

**If you do not have the financial resources needed to win, perhaps you should consider running for a smaller office.**

# 5

WORK HARDER &  
SMARTER THAN  
YOUR OPPONENT

Working harder = PLANNING

Working smarter = EXECUTING

Do not develop a plan and fail to execute – it's a waste of time (one of your most valuable resources!).

Do not engage in activities that have not been well thought out - also a waste of time.

Constantly balance planning with activity. Planning ensures that the activity is purposeful, effective and moves the needle in your favor.

Make sure your activity level is consistently high, as this sets the tone for how hard your volunteers will work.

**If you cannot commit to outworking and outsmarting your opponent, STOP! You should not run for office.**

# 6

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INFUSE EVERY  
ELEMENT OF YOUR  
CAMPAIGN WITH  
URGENCY

Urgency = INTENTIONALITY &  
PURPOSE

Urgency does not necessarily mean “speed”.

Speed is effective when you do things right, but you need to practice at a slower rate first to ensure you aren't flying through an activity without thought or purpose.

**If you don't perform well under pressure, STOP! Maybe you should not run for office.**

# 7

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## CAMPAIGN SUCCESS DEPENDS ON YOUR SUPPORT TEAM

Family, activists, volunteers and donors are the backbone of your campaign.

You will need all the time and treasure you can get. And you must find ways to show how much you value their support.

- Be intentional and meaningful when expressing gratitude.
- Set aside time to send personal hand-written thank you cards or make thank you calls to campaign team members.
- Recognize that some team members may appreciate gifts or public recognition!

**If you do not have a dedicated support group to tap into for time and treasure, STOP! You should not run for office.**



# 8

DELEGATE,  
DELEGATE,  
DELEGATE!

Surround yourself with a core team that is “smarter” than you!

Define for team members the decisions they can make without your input. Micro-managing every detail will inevitably lead to burn out.

Ask your core team to give you critical feedback:

- Consistently identify and inform you of your “blind spots”
- Regularly advise you on what they see/hear/think is missing as you campaign, so you can quickly make course corrections as needed.

**Are you a micro-manager that needs to have a say in every detail? STOP! You should not run for office.**

# 9

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FREE INTERNS ARE  
AWESOME – MAKE  
SURE YOU USE THEM!

Often interns are left with nothing to do.

Before hiring an intern:

- Identify tasks that you can delegate to them.
- Decide who will monitor them and how.
- Communicate with them and provide steady direction. Remember, for them this is a fantastic learning experience, and they are willing to obtain it for free. You can mutually benefit each other using this dynamic.

**If you (or your campaign manager) do not have team building and management skills, STOP! You should not run for office.**

# 10

## PREPARE FOR “CAMPAIGN DEAFNESS”

You will talk to so many people, have so many questions thrown at you, media and polls stating “news” about you, that it’s natural to begin tuning things out.

Pick a core group of people who you commit to *listening* to regularly. This core group can serve as filters for what information *must* get to you.

With your core team, define information that is “important and immediate” versus “smaller and can be saved for later”. Designate a time and day of the week for the team to present the “smaller and can be saved for later” information to you. Then, trust your team to properly categorize the information they relay to you.

**If you struggle with separating the signal from the noise and find yourself getting sucked down every rabbit hole, STOP! Maybe you should not run for office.**

# 11

## DO OPPOSITION RESEARCH – ON YOURSELF!

What are your weaknesses?

What are your strengths?

Determining the strengths and weaknesses of your opponent is essential, but YOUR strengths and weaknesses must also be identified!

You WILL be attacked at some point.

You (the candidate) should not identify your own weaknesses and strengths...let an objective, trusted participant within your campaign do this for you!

**Are you super defensive about your weaknesses? Or lack confidence about your strengths? STOP! Maybe you should not run for office.**

# 12

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## REVEAL THE SKELETONS IN YOUR CLOSET

You must be 100% honest with yourself and your core team about the bad things you've done during your lifetime.

Even if something happened decades ago or you're a completely different person than you were "back then", anything and everything you've done can be weaponized by your opponent.

Not being prepared with a response, or at least braced for the publicizing of potentially embarrassing information ahead of time, can be damaging both to your campaign and to you and your family.

Make sure you write it all down, decide on proper responses, and be prepared for opposition from the moment you announce.

**Are you unprepared for all your "sins of the past" to be publicized? STOP! You should not run for office.**

# 13

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## YOUR GREATEST ENEMY IS YOUR EGO

### Be humble and accountable.

Surround yourself with people who will call you out and get your attention when it seems that your ego is taking over.

### Take YOU out of the equation.

**YOU are not the product; the change/mission you are offering is.**

Keep this in mind not only when people are throwing stones at you, but also when you are asking people for money.

Your campaign has nothing to do with YOU personally, it has everything to do with you being the agent of change for specific, shared outcomes.

**Still think it's about you? STOP! Please do not run for office.**

# 14

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A GOOD MESSAGE  
WITHOUT REPETITION  
IS WASTED AIR

You will have to reach a lot of voters each day, and the only way to do so is by getting your message out REPEATEDLY using a variety of different touch points:

- Door Knocking
- Social media
- Phone Calls
- Mailers
- Billboards (larger campaigns)
- TV (larger campaigns)

For a message to truly resonate with voters and catalyze them into action, it must be repeated over and over again.

Adjust speeches to target audiences, but always drive home the key message wherever you go!

**Do you struggle with public speaking or staying on point in your communications? STOP! You should probably not run for office.**

# 15

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU  
SAY. IT'S WHAT  
THEY HEAR.

You own whatever happens when you open your mouth – not just what you say, but how you present it – your tone, your body language, your apparel, etc.

It's not about what you mean, but what your audience is receiving as you put that message out. The better you know your audience, the better you can pre-plan how to address them.

If you are struggling to get the desired voter response, consider ways to reach them more effectively:

- Different or more tailored approach
- Simpler speech
- Better clarify how your stance provides value to the voters – so much value that they will flock to the polls for you!

**Do you struggle to “put yourself in another’s shoes”?  
STOP! You should probably not run for office.**



# 16

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DON'T  
COMPROMISE YOUR  
PRINCIPLES FOR  
“LIKES”

Not everyone's going to like you - even those who share the same values.

You **MUST** be okay with people saying hurtful things about you.

Candidates who expect affirmation from their constituents often compromise their principles to make everyone happy and be “liked.” This goes against everything you should be running for.

**If you are emotionally sensitive or insecure, STOP!**  
**Running for office may not be the best choice for you.**

# 17

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## PROJECTING ENTHUSIASM IS CRITICAL

### Always smile!

Optimism needs to ooze out of you.

Even if you're polling low, keep projecting a positive attitude. Polls aren't always accurate; don't let them influence your outlook.

Rejection is inevitable on the campaign trail. When it happens, dust yourself off and get back on the horse. If you allow it to get to you, it will result in failure.

**Are you a pessimist? STOP! Running for office may not be the best choice for you.**

# 18

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BE CLEAR &  
CONCISE!

Speaking for a long time does not make you sound smart.

Short, tight, well-crafted remarks will leave the most lasting impact on your audience.

**Do you get “long in the tooth”? STOP! If you can’t stick to the 30-second elevator speech, 5-minute appeal or 10-minute speech (dependent on audience) that you crafted from your “three whys”, you will be shooting yourself in the foot!**

# 19

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## BE CAREFUL!

Never say or write anything you don't want on BuzzFeed.

Once you say or write something that is captured electronically, you can never get rid of it. Be VERY mindful of what you say – and how you say it!

**Do not provide your opposition the opportunity to selectively edit and twist your words against you!**

No embellishments.

Don't round up your GPA, pad the number of lawsuits you won, or exaggerate anything about yourself that cannot be proven.

Never use an endorsement that isn't in writing. Period. You don't want to be accused of misleading voters.

**Are you a natural storyteller that sometimes embellishes for effect? STOP! This habit of yours could be your campaign's undoing.**

# 20

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## DON'T BREAK CAMPAIGN LAWS

You will get caught.

Pay attention to the law, no matter how insignificant it may seem.

Document and store all your campaign files in a secure, yet accessible place.

**Are you tempted to forego the hassle of soliciting legal or financial advice? STOP! Always ask the experts.**

Has this reinforced your conviction that you are the right candidate for the job?

Awesome! You are ready for the next training course: **10 Steps to Develop Your Campaign Strategy**

Would you make a better critical assistant?

Contact a faithful gatekeeper (or two!) and introduce yourself. Let them know what your talents and availability are and ask them to plug you in!



Credit: My Campaign Coach Podcast Episodes 28 & 66, YouTube @mycampaigncoach336