

# GROUND GAME WINS ELECTIONS

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DOOR TO DOOR VOTER CONTACT

A close-up photograph of a hand in a white shirt sleeve knocking on a silver door handle. The background is a light-colored door with vertical panels.

# WHY DOOR KNOCKING MATTERS

## **Human Contact**

You cannot win an election using social media and mailers only. While communication platforms grow every day, a person's need for human contact has never changed. Shaking someone's hand, looking them in the eye, asking them questions and listening to their answers; no other form of communication can rival personal interaction.

## **Less Expensive**

It is not only more effective than any other type of campaign strategy, but door knocking costs far less money than other forms of communication.

## **Show Voters The Real You**

If your challenger attacks you or your campaign publicly, door knocking provides an opportunity to show voters who you really are. By talking with people personally, they may find that you are nothing like what your opponent has accused you of. This not only leaves voters with a better outlook on you, but it also makes your opponent look untrustworthy (since voters will feel lied to by him or her).

# WHY ESTABLISHING THE GROUND GAME MATTERS

Time is one asset that you cannot get more of, so you must use it wisely. Grassroots candidates in particular have limited resources, so you must create a very clear target to invest your time and money on.

Many campaigns make the mistake of focusing their efforts on the infrastructure of their campaigns (such as website, social media site, etc.). While this is important, it is a useless endeavor if you don't identify your target audience first. Every message you put out - whether it be verbal, online, or in print - MUST cater to the specific audience you are targeting (in this case, the undecided voters).

# 7 STEPS

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## ESTABLISH THE GROUND GAME

- 1** Obtain Voter Data
- 2** Filter Voter Data
- 3** Identify Target Voters: Primary Election
- 4** Identify Target Voters: General Election
- 5** Perform Specific Time Assessment
- 6** Create Walklists
- 7** Empower Your Volunteers

# 1

## OBTAIN VOTER DATA

**Accurate voter data is vital for creating two different lists: a door-knocking list and a mailing list.** The size of your door-knocking list will be limited by the amount of time you and your volunteers have. The size of your mailing list will be limited by money.

Local clerks can provide data from Michigan's Qualified Voter File (QVF). This is a great start: it can help you identify which voters participated in recent primary and general elections.

**Voters do not register by party in Michigan.** Therefore, demographic and partisan voter data that shows "likely party affiliation" must be purchased from data vendors. *The cost may range from \$.10 to \$.20 per record depending on the data points you request.*

Vet prospective data vendors to be sure they can provide the **current and quality data** points you need to establish "likely party affiliation".

# 2

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## FILTER VOTER DATA

### **Filter by Propensity**

During primary election season, the campaign must focus on voters who have a history of voting in primaries, with the highest emphasis being that they voted in the most recent primary. Don't waste time or money on individuals who likely won't vote!

The same concept is true for general elections.

### **Filter by Affinity or “Likely to Support”**

Filter your voter data into three categories: those you are fairly certain will vote for you, those who will *not* vote for you, and those who are “undecided” or independent.

### **Filter by Absentee vs. In-Person**

The day absentee ballots are mailed out to the voters is essentially another “election day”. Campaign efforts prior to absentee ballots being mailed must be focused on absentee voters. After absentee ballots are mailed, the campaign must shift its focus to the in-person voters!

# 3

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## IDENTIFY TARGET VOTERS: PRIMARY ELECTION

### **During the Primary**

Focus on the people who...

- have a history of voting in primaries, with the highest emphasis being that they voted in the most recent primary.
- have the same “likely party affiliation” as you.

Separate these voters into two groups: absentee voters and in-person voters.

# 4

## IDENTIFY TARGET VOTERS: GENERAL ELECTION

### During the General

Focus on the people who...

- have a history of voting in general elections, with the highest emphasis being that they voted in the most recent primary.
- are “undecided” or independent.

Separate these voters into two groups: absentee voters and in-person voters.

Knocking on the doors of people who you know are very unlikely to vote for you is a waste of time. Knocking on doors of those who are very likely to vote for you isn't necessarily a waste, but when limited in time, money and volunteers, the best people to focus on are those who have yet to be persuaded either way.

**Have the undecideds spoken to by those in whom they have the most confidence.**



# 5

## PERFORM SPECIFIC TIME ASSESSMENT

Figure out *specifically* how many hours per week you can allocate to door-knocking. Then, determine how many voters you can reach door to door in one week.

EXAMPLE: You can hit approximately 20 homes in an hour, which reaches approximately 1.5 voters per door, so that's 30 voters/hour, which comes to 360 voters a week if you knock 2 hours/day, 6 days/week.

For both primary and general election campaign season, your door knocking list should be limited to the number of voters you and your volunteers can reasonably reach in the time you can dedicate to door-knocking for two different time periods:

- before absentee ballots are mailed (absentee voters)
- after absentee ballots are mailed (in-person voters)

# 6

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## CREATE WALKLISTS

### **Obtain District Map**

Match your door-knocking list with the district map. Identify the doors you want to knock on.

### **Establish Door-Knocking Routes**

Map out efficient walking routes or “walklists” that will allow you and your volunteers to reach doors in the most productive manner.

# 7

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## EMPOWER YOUR VOLUNTEERS

**Provide volunteers with all the information they need prior to door knocking.**

Door knocking can be intimidating for a volunteer, so providing them all the tools they need will go a long way in having a committed team willing to put themselves in an uncomfortable position: scripts, what to wear, handouts, maps of where to go, etc.

move it  CHRISTIAN

Credit: My Campaign Coach Podcast Episodes 33 & 95, YouTube @mycampaigncoach336