



move it  CHRISTIAN

BUILD YOUR PUBLIC IMAGE

CAMPAIGN MESSAGING

11 WAYS

TO BUILD YOUR PUBLIC IMAGE

- 1 Be a Leader**
- 2 Prioritize Name Recognition**
- 3 Choose a Messaging Strategy**
- 4 Refine Your Messaging Strategy**
- 5 Diversify Methods of Messaging**
- 6 Differentiate Yourself**
- 7 Know the Issues**
- 8 Respond Properly to Attacks**
- 9 Strategically Handle Negativity**
- 10 Develop a Social Media Strategy**
- 11 Collect Endorsements**

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BE A LEADER

Leaders are honest. Voters set higher expectations of honesty from candidates than they do from the general public.

Leaders are fair. Know where your ethical “red line” is and do not cross it. At some point, every candidate or elected official will be “tempted” to do something unethical.

Know the rules, follow the rules, and consider the optics.

There’s a clear legal line not to cross, but before you reach that legal line, there is an ethical line. Because campaign ethics are often a gray area, you must set your own standards. Always seek perspective from a personal circle of trusted people, manage your emotions, be self aware of your own weaknesses.

Leaders are likeable. Be approachable, warm and relatable.

The top things voters look for in a leader (in order of importance):

1. Honest
2. Gets things done
3. High ethical standards
4. Clear vision
5. Cares about people “like me”
6. Strong and passionate about the issues
7. Makes people feel secure
8. Gives people peace of mind
9. Has new ideas
10. Stands for personal independence
11. Thinks like me

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PRIORITIZE NAME RECOGNITION

Name ID. Name ID. Name ID. In all types of voter contact - in person, by mail, over the phone, yard sign, texts, parade, social media etc. - every effort should be made to help the voter remember your name! Between now and election day, you are always campaigning - at the grocery store, getting a hair cut, etc. Prepare to be nicer than usual: assume you will be running into or speaking with a voter everywhere you go. At every door you knock on, ask if they'd be open to having your sign in their yard. Attend parades or public events. Get on the radio if you can. The more you can get your name in public for people to see and hear, the better.

Be Likable and Credible. When it comes to governing, policy is important: when it comes to winning elections, the most important thing is how a voter feels about you. Making the voter like you, believe you can do the job and remember your name is often more impactful than policy (when it comes to winning an election).

Challenging An Incumbent? If you are challenging an incumbent, they've got a leg up on you. You need to work extra hard to get your name in front of voters!

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CHOOSE A MESSAGING STRATEGY

Nine Classic Time-Tested Strategies

Not every strategy will work, and those you use should be tailored to your district and strengths. It is recommended to choose 4-6 of these:

1. Target the conservative base plus independent voters (focusing on an issue that can resonate beyond party politics. Example: "Parent's rights" is good strategy for a swing district.
2. Project a clear difference between yourself and your opponent.
3. Divide voters along ideological lines: liberal vs conservative. This strategy is best in a hard red district, NOT a swing district.
4. Run an issues - based campaign.
5. Build a diverse coalition around a single issue.
6. Create a likeable, positive image, and be a person of action.
7. Prove the opponent is bad or unsuitable.
8. Build a large organization of volunteers capable of delivering significant voter numbers.
9. Overwhelm your opponent with campaign activity (name recognition and getting your voters to the polls).

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REFINE YOUR MESSAGING STRATEGY

After identifying your preferred messaging strategies, draft a one-paragraph strategy statement. Then, expand on it: outline the specifics on paper that, when implemented, will accomplish the win.

Important Considerations When Refining Messaging

- Never underestimate the intelligence of the voters.
- Never OVER-estimate the interest of the voters. They won't spend a lot of time researching or reading up on the race. Name recognition and key issues will often be the biggest takeaway from fliers or posts. This is not an indication of voter intelligence, just how they prioritize their time and interests.
- Elections are about simple choices and definitions.
- Less is more, key phrases, etc.
- Understand what is important and effective: stay focused on that.

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DIVERSIFY METHODS OF MESSAGING

Messaging Methods

- Door Knocking
- Phone Banking
- Social Media
- Campaign Apparel
- Parades & Community Events
- Yard Signs
- Bumper Stickers
- Fliers / Mailers
- Billboards
- Radio
- Television

Utilize as many of the messaging methods as your time and resources allow. Be creative: consider mailing a letter to the doors you plan to knock on a week ahead of time letting them know who you are (with a picture), and that you or a campaign volunteer will be stopping by!

Studies have shown that you need to make contact with a voter 3 times minimum (6-7 voter touches preferred).

For this reason, 2-3 mailings to less voters, is better than 1 mailing to more voters! The size of those mailings will be determined by your resources.

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DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF

Identify something you have to offer that the opponent does not.

- What areas are you skilled in that can distinguish you from your opponent?
- What is your career/trade, and can that bring something to the table that the opponent can't?
- If you don't have a trade/career, distinguish yourself in other ways. For example, are you a parent with kids in the public school system who's personally experienced the hardships that have resulted from current official(s)?
- Are you new to politics or younger in age? Reframe this to your advantage by pointing out that you will provide a fresh, new perspective and energy that established political officials may no longer have.

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KNOW THE ISSUES

Incumbents may be out of touch with the voters: so, make sure you position yourself as a candidate who cares about their constituents by listening to and addressing the concerns they have *right now*.

Knock on LOTS of doors and ask everyone you meet what issues are most important to them.

Ask yourself, how is the incumbent handling these issues (or planning to)? How will I be different? Use that in your speeches/personal interactions.

Have quality interactions with the people you talk to. Make someone feel like they didn't just "meet" you, but that they "know" you. Share your views on issues in a way that creates relationships that incumbents may have let slide due to their already being in an elected position.

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RESPOND PROPERLY TO ATTACKS

Be strategic in everything you do, especially if responding to an accusation or attack from your opponent.

It's very easy to be reactive when attacks happen. However, thoughtfully consider the accusation being made, how damaging it might be, and determine if a response would be more harmful than helpful to your campaign. Some attacks are best left ignored. If not, be very mindful about how you respond.

Building relationships while door knocking or attending events can also serve you well in the event of an attack. A voter will likely consider their personal interaction with you (and their opinion of your character during that interaction) when an attack happens. They are far more likely to write it off as not credible or "typical political bashing" if they've met (and like) you.

Make sure if you attack your opponent, you do so based on their record, not their character. Objective evidence-based information is always more effective than subjective (opinion-based) information.

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STRATEGICALLY HANDLE NEGATIVITY

When responding to criticism, remember...

- If you are explaining, you are losing.
- Your main campaign issues must remain at the forefront of all responses.

SIX OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO NEGATIVITY:

1. **Ignore the criticism.** Though hard, this is the right choice most of the time. When criticism is not factual and few voters are reached by it, a response may only encourage your attackers.
2. **Respond to a damaging, but false criticism.** If an untrue accusation is reaching your voters in a damaging way, respond quickly with proof it's false, show righteous indignation, pivot to degrading your opponent's message, and remind voters of your message and issues.
3. **Respond to a defensible criticism.** If your opponents are twisting or negatively reframing something factual about you that is not morally wrong or a big deal...defend it, link it to something positive and pivot back to your message.
4. **Respond to a diminishable criticism.** Laugh it off.
5. **Respond to a serious factual charge.** Immediately confess to the actual facts, articulate your wrongdoing, commit to not repeating it and seek forgiveness.
6. **Ignore and change the subject.** When criticism will result in some damage, but there's not much you can do to defend yourself and a defense may exacerbate the problem...take the hit, count on your other positive to outweigh the criticism and stick to your message and the issues.

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DEVELOP A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Things to Consider When Posting

- **Timing:** Have key posts and reminders for your voters ahead of important dates.
- **Strategic messaging:** Messaging should be short, easy to remember, and issues-based.
- **Call to action:** Give voters an action item when they see your post. Share? Donate? Attend? Vote?
- **Be relevant:** You have issues you care about. Your voters have issues they care about. Your social media posts should focus only on the issues both you and your voters are passionate about. Don't post or pretend to care about issues that you have no interest in - that's "pandering".
- **Leverage social media "influencers":** Develop partnerships and cultivate relationships with social media accounts that have your voters among their following.

DO post photos that illustrate the story of you and the issues you're running on - candid, upbeat photo posts of campaign activity: meeting voters, door-knocking, holding yard signs, etc.

DO post videos that are short, landscape orientation, captions turned on, and having a strong start in the first four seconds.

DON'T go live on Facebook constantly. It loses its value and viewership goes down. Only make a video or go live for a clear reason. And if you do have an important message or announcement, tease the video in advance.

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COLLECT ENDORSEMENTS

Endorsements are very powerful, especially when they come from an individual well-respected in your district.

With any endorsement you receive or solicit, get a quote *in writing*. You don't need the most endorsements, but make sure the ones on your list include quotes.



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Credit: Leadership Institute, leadershipinstitute.org