

Campaign Outreach Ideas

As a candidate, your goal is to not just become known in the community, but to reach those who are likely to vote. It is important to remember that your likely voters are not necessarily representative of the community as a whole. Until you are elected, it is best to focus the bulk of your energy and resources on reaching likely voters with your message. Smartly targeting voters through a variety of methods is the most effective, and cost-efficient way to reach voters.

1. Direct Mail

What is Direct Mail?

Direct mail is exactly as it sounds- mail sent directly to a voters' home through the postal service. Since the per-piece cost of printing materials decreases as the quantity increases, you can save money by creating a mail piece that is general enough to print and send to your entire list as one batch. Campaigns can contract a print or mail house to do a mailing, or do a mailing themselves. If you decide to do your own mailing, make sure to contact the post office to verify any postal restrictions and inquire if you are eligible for reduced rates on postage (bulk mail). You can also decide to do smaller mailings which are personalized based upon zip code, gender, or a particular demographic.

Benefits of Direct Mail

Direct mail puts the candidate's message in the hands of the voter. While voters might walk away from a television ad or flip past a newspaper ad, they will eventually open their mailbox. Candidates can highlight their platform as narrowly or broadly as they want.

Additional things to consider

Another way to save money is to create a mailing that can also be used as a hand-out. This will allow you to save time and money on design, as well as get you discounts for printing higher quantities.

2. Canvassing

What is Canvassing?

Canvassing is the process by which candidates and/or volunteers go door-to-door and talk with constituents. Canvassing with a walk-list of registered voters is the best way to ensure you can track who you have spoken with and if they are a registered voter in your party. Your campaign can decide if it's worth the energy to target individuals who have been identified as independent or swing voters.

Benefits of Canvassing

If using a walk list, canvassing is the most controlled field-outreach your campaign can do. The advantage to canvassing is that it allows face-to-face contact between a voter and the campaign. You can answer specific questions about the candidate and, possibly, recruit more

volunteers. If the campaign has enough staff and volunteers, it is best to send canvassers out in teams of two.

Additional things to consider

Canvassing is also the best way to get signatures for your petitions. By using your walk list, you can then verify the person signing is in fact a registered voter of your party before asking them to sign. This allows you to maintain control over the petitions, and the validity of each signature. You should still use this time to make voters aware of the candidate and his or her platform. Some campaigns have door-hangers to leave at houses when voters are not home. Others leave hand written notes.

3. Robo-calls

What are Robo- calls?

Robo-calls are automated calls that use both a computerized auto dialer and a computer-delivered pre-recorded message. These are mass calls that can be made at once, and are generally inexpensive. They are best to maintain contact with likely supporters rather than trying to win over voters. Robo calls are most effective when you are giving the voter information or reminders. For example, if you have an event scheduled, you can do a robo call the night before to remind people of the event details.

Benefits of Robo- Calls

Robo calls are a quick, cheap and easy way for candidates to reach targeted constituencies. With robo calls, candidates are able to send different targeted messages to different groups of people -- aimed specifically at issues that need to be addressed to each group. People are more likely to listen to the message if they recognize the person calling or if they think they are getting valuable information.

Additional things to consider

Be creative- robo call technologies allows you to do many things and the more innovative you are with the technology, the more likely your voters will listen to the message and remember your name. For example, you can do a call that says "press 2 to be connected to our campaign office" and the call can then forward to a designated number. Or, "press 3 if you would like a ride to the polls" and then a record of that number would be made and your campaign can follow up to arrange a ride to the polls.

4. Polling

What is Polling?

Polling is the best way to get a survey of the public opinion by asking a sample of the population. The sample that is polled must be representative of the overall population that is voting.

Benefits of Polling

Polling is a good way for a campaign to assess how they are doing among voters. As a race becomes closer, or while a campaign is evaluating it's platform, getting input from constituents can be helpful. However, it is important to note that polling is not completely accurate, and the best way to insure a low margin of error is to poll a large and diverse sample of voters.

Additional things to consider

You do not want to release or reference the results of a poll unless you are certain that the sample size and methodology are valid. If you do publically cite a poll that you conducted, the NYS Board of Elections outlines additionally procedures you must follow.