

Article brought to you by: Catholic Online (www.catholic.org)



Obama has a big secret edge in 2012

By Catholic Online (NEWS CONSORTIUM)

10/11/2011

Catholic Online (www.catholic.org)

Marketing used to be considered an art but today it's much more science. Marketing a political figure, or an entire agenda, is not really much different than marketing the latest gadget or hot new must-have item. Of course, there are key differences between winners and losers in marketing campaigns. The first being vision, understanding one's values, what one is about, and being able to communicate that vision to others--that matters. (For an example, check out Apple Inc.) The second element is much more subtle, but it's of monumental importance--information.

LOS ANGELES, CA (Catholic Online) - The presidential election of 2012 is still more than a year away, but based on the laws of marketing the winner may already be decided. And unless Republicans catch up to their Democratic contenders, they're going to be the ones shrugging their shoulders around the Thanksgiving dinner table in 2012.

The reason is simple. Using modern database technology, Obama's reelection campaign has been quietly collecting data, processing that data, and is preparing to use it to specifically target its message all the way down to individual users. It may seem somewhat Orwellian, but it's how big businesses who are serious about sales have operated for years.

Politicians are just now catching on.

Campaigns are about resource management. The product is the vision, but that vision cannot be packaged and sold to the voters unless the group with the vision has the means to deliver it. And delivering those messages can be very, very expensive. Airtime on national television can easily cost millions of dollars just for a single ad. Having billboards placed, mailing out campaign flyers, and all the classic staples of politicking in the 20th century costs an awful lot of money.

The problem with those outdated methodologies is they don't deliver the value that tight campaigns require. In a political campaign, outcomes can sometimes be decided by a tiny handful of votes. The smallest margins can mean the difference between success and ruin. So it is crucial that a campaign spends its dollars in the most effective way. Traditional, broad-spectrum politicking covers a lot of people but often with only a single message that may not resonate with most of the people exposed to it. And of course, it's expensive.

That's why Obama's campaign has updated itself with the latest technology. Obama's campaign is collecting

an immense volume of personal data. It goes beyond names and e-mails, but often includes critical data like gender, birth date, address, religion, and political views. Visitors supply the information willingly, likely in the hopes they can hear more about the issues that concern them, and less about those that don't. Now, if President Obama wants to send someone a note wishing them a happy birthday, in an effort to build political goodwill, and to keep his name in front of supporters, a friendly e-mail is just a volunteer's mouse click away.

And of course, all this is integrated across the social networks, which is standard (and cheap) fare for today and marketers ignore at the peril of their careers.

More importantly, Obama's campaign can tailor very specific messages and share those messages with chosen individuals. Currently, most e-mail marketing campaigns don't customize the message beyond the recipient's first name in the header. Now, information gathered from across the Internet can allow a political campaign to send a specific message to a subset of voters.

Now, instead of receiving a vague, general e-mail that basically says, "I'm better than the other guy so send me a donation," e-mails can be generated that speak directly to the voter and the issues that matter most to them. They can be more effective, like, "Your issue is my issue and here's what I plan to do about it. Will you join me?" This saves time, money, and it's far more effective than the old political e-mails that have been the staple of campaigns for well over a decade.

The secret behind Obama's growing success is their website and technology. The Obama 2012 - Are You in? website collects all of this data from users. And there's every indication that the Obama campaign will use this data to powerful effect.

President Obama may be slipping in the polls, but he is far from being a down-and-out president. When the campaign heats up in the spring, and the Republican contender has been settled, the Obama camp will have all of the information, and technical capability that it needs to reach and impress voters.

Certainly, the Republicans have a strong vision for the future. But the Democrats have a vision as well, and so far they are poised to deliver that vision to the individual much more effectively than the Republicans. And in marketing, this is the difference between life and death.

Unless his Republican rivals get serious about collecting data and in putting it to good use, they can expect to be effectively schooled in the next election, regardless of how great they feel their vision for America is.

© 2011, Catholic Online. Distributed by NEWS CONSORTIUM.

Article brought to you by: Catholic Online (www.catholic.org)