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by Robert Maxwell

## **Profit Through Technology – Transforming the Political Process**

He who invests in the power of technology shall, through it, profit greatly and shall increase, manifold, his lot upon this earth! If the current President of the United States of America (USA), Barack Obama, were to write the new testament of his political truth, his gospel might start with that acclamation.

For in 2008, the (then) Senator Barack Hussein Obama strategically leveraged information technology in unprecedented ways to claim, in an historic victory, the Presidency of the United States of America. Obama's political campaigns (for both the Democratic Party's nomination as well as for the Presidential election race) rode high on a potent strategic elixir that effectively combined new age Internet technology with well-organized, community-level field operations. With the use of technology, Obama empowered and mobilized a grassroots nation...and he transformed the face of the popular American vote.

The effectiveness of traditional (off-line) campaign strategies – i.e. door-knocking, telephone-canvassing, media-blitzing – were augmented, enhanced and enabled by web-based technology that delivered a staggering political profit for Obama:

- **more money** raised (fundraising);
- **wider market-reach** (potential voters) at **less expense per capita**;
- **more timely, consistent, reliable** and **seamless** two-way **communication** (information sharing);
- a **more expansive organization** (on-line recruitment);
- a **greatly enhanced capacity** to **collaborate, manage** and **organize** activities (community-level organization);
- **more options** to facilitate **training** of Precinct Captains and field teams (on-line meetings, seminars/workshops);
- a **more efficiently developed database** (data capture, storage and distribution); and
- a **greater level of tactical flexibility/manoeuvrability** (faster response time to environmental factors that influenced the campaign).

By **integrating on-line technologies** and engaging virtually with **social networking and video tools** that did not previously exist in their advanced form, Obama's campaign machinery, essentially, **rebalanced the marketing mix** (price, product, place, promotion plus packaging) to his competitive advantage. That competitive advantage, beyond Obama's obvious appeal as a compelling political proposition, was **speed, reach, resources and flexibility**.

...And Obama's competition felt that advantage. He out-resourced and out-paced Hilary Clinton, his major competitor for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. He then out-reached and out-flexed John McCain, his competition from the Republican Party in the presidential election race. When Clinton's campaign was suffering from under-capitalization (lack of campaign funds) with limited capacity to raise and redistribute funds quickly, the Obama campaign was rapidly capitalizing his operation, raising/accessing new money from donors through its on-line presence. While McCain leaned considerably on the top-down, command-and-control mass-media model to help him reach potential voters and manoeuvre his way through political set-backs, Obama especially employed a bottom-up, community-organized model that leveraged his **social networking website, my.barackobama.com**, and other innovative **web-based collaboration tools** to connect community organizers; repackage and redistribute information quickly; and generally empower his foot-soldiers to respond in the field without micro-managing the process.

When the votes were counted, it was not only evident that the on-line voices that screamed, "Obama! Yes we can!", had been triumphantly refaced off-line to "X"s at the polls, but the transformational power of technology, too, had reached a victorious crescendo in the democratic process of the United States of America.

The **profit of technology** to Barack Hussein Obama was both **strategic and political**. *Through it*, he rallied citizenship engagement in the democratic process to new heights. *With it*, he transformed the way elections would be run in the USA in the future - perhaps, even, the way government would be administered under his watch. *Because of it*, he has beckoned change to America - change in more ways than "won"!

*This article was written by Robert Maxwell, CEO of TGT Solutions Inc., a Company that thrives on helping Organizations to profit through the use of technology. Robert welcomes comments and suggestions. Robert can be reached at [robert.maxwell@tgtsolutions.com](mailto:robert.maxwell@tgtsolutions.com)*