

Lessons Learned in the Campaign Trenches

A 10-Part Series Leading Up to Election Day

Lesson #5:

Microtargeting is difficult. Do it anyway.

In what year were you born? Do you have any children age 18 or under living in your home whom you are responsible for raising? Do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent or something else? These are just some of the demographic questions that pollsters ask when testing support for a possible referendum.

Demographic information—when coupled with answers to key polling questions and voter data—is extremely useful in crafting campaign messaging and strategies. This information allows campaigns

to answer many important questions, including: Who are the swing voters? To what extent do the key arguments in support of the tax proposal resonate with voters who do not have school-age children? Are any parts of the funding proposal strongly supported by seniors? The list of important questions that can be answered with public opinion research is significant.

Rather than every voter receiving the exact same campaign mailer, door hanger and phone banking message, imagine if they were customized based on public opinion research.

Weld County School District RE-3J, CO

Customizing a campaign's message for certain segments of the electorate is not easy, but when properly executed, it delivers big. This is precisely what *Funding Our Future* did in 2016 when advocating for funding proposals to address Weld RE-3J's districtwide operating needs and capital improvements in the Colorado towns of Hudson, Keenesburg and Lochbuie.

Each campaign mailer was customized by location. For example, voters in Keenesburg received campaign mailers

that were focused on STEM upgrades at their local middle school. Lochbuie mailers showcased a new elementary school that would be built in that community. And efforts to protect and improve Hudson Elementary School took center stage in campaign mailers sent to Hudson voters.



Hudson Elementary School Addition

While each campaign mailer addressed districtwide improvements, the order of the messaging, quotes from community opinion shapers, and the photos and illustrations that were used were customized across communities. In the end, both the mill levy override and bond proposal received voter approval.

That's what microtargeting is all about. It's about dialing in the optimum message for key segments of the electorate. Coupled with customized messaging, microtargeting also takes the form of unique photos, endorsers and the timing of certain campaign strategies.

Microtargeting is more complicated, more labor intensive and more expensive than blanket canvassing strategies. However, assuming time, resources and data are available, it's worth it.



This 10-part series brings together some of the most important campaign lessons that members of the Beyond Your Base team have learned throughout the past 28 years. We also provide a behind-the-scenes look at strategies employed by citizen-led campaign committees that were highly successful.

Beyond Your Base (BYB) is a public affairs and pre-referendum consulting group of Wight & Company that develops and implements comprehensive public engagement programs that incorporate voter analytics, public opinion research and strategic communications.

BYB's focus is on engaging taxpayers and other stakeholders to deliver capital improvement projects that are truly community-driven.

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