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## **The “New Media” Campaign The Role of Social Networking and Online Tools in Political Campaigning**

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The “New Media” Campaign  
The Role of Social Networking and Online Tools in Political Campaigning

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## **Abstract**

This thesis will examine the use of new media in political campaigns. New media, as generally understood, is any media that involves the use of the Internet to enable or enhance communication. I will both examine the exact definition of new media as well as its use in political campaigning, specifically in presidential campaigns in 2000, 2004 and 2008. I will also examine the 2010 Senate campaigns in order to determine how new media is being used currently in smaller campaigns. I will attempt to determine if these increased abilities to communicate and organize have become integral to political campaigns, and have changed the way that campaigns operate. I will also use the data gathered on 2010 Senate campaigns in order to determine what problems are faced in using new media for campaigning, as well as to determine the future direction of new media in campaigning.

## **Introduction**

This thesis will examine the use of new media in political campaigns. New media is a nebulous concept, centered on the Internet as a device for enabling or enhancing our ability to communicate and connect with each other. New media, since 2000, has been a part of the majority of political campaigns in the United States (Bimber and Davis, 2003). I will attempt to determine if new media, in enhancing politicians ability to communicate, organize and fund a campaign have changed the way that campaigns are run, with new media as a truly integral part of all aspects of campaigning.

New media serves many roles in campaigning, from increasing campaigns abilities to communicate with supporters to allowing campaigns to more easily fundraise and disseminate information. I will examine the past use of new media in these roles, primarily in presidential campaigns. I will focus on three campaigns in particular, due to their notable use of new media. These campaigns are the McCain campaign from 2000, the Dean campaign from 2004 and the Obama campaign from 2008.

I will examine the way that these campaigns have used new media to determine how the use of new media in campaigning has advanced, to determine what may be expected of campaigns today. I will attempt to define the tools of new media used by campaigns by their impact on communications, through the ideas of

social networking, required participation and self-publishing (Wharton, 2006; Jenkins, 2006; Shirky, 2008).

I will use these presidential campaigns to determine an expectation for new media usage, and will then examine 2010 Senate campaigns to determine if they meet these expectations. I will examine the exact new media tools each campaign uses, in addition to how they are using them, in order to determine how new media is generally being used in campaigns today. Through this, I will determine if new media has become truly integral in campaign planning on a smaller level, and if it has truly changed the way campaigns are run.

### **What is New Media?**

The question “what is new media” is not easily answered. New media has no set definition, no set of hard and fast guidelines to determine what falls into the group labeled “new” and what does not.

Typically the terms new media is used in conjunction with one of a series of other terms, like social networking or self-publishing. These are things that new media lets people do more easily, and are a simple way for people to express what they think new media is, without providing a concrete definition. The easiest way to define what new media is, and to then determine its use to a political campaign, is to define several things associated with new media. These may be things new media facilitates, like social networking, or a characteristic ascribed to new media, like a culture of participation. Whether a use or a characteristic, these are some of the things that determine new media’s use both in society and to political campaigns.

## **New Media and Social Networking**

The most common phrase that one comes across when researching new media is social networking in fact, it seems as though the two terms are at times interchangeable.

Social networking, as most people would understand it, is simply getting to know those around you. This is true online, as well, but that is not the focus of new media. Certainly, new media makes it easier to communicate, but its main purpose is to shorten the connecting links between people; to provide new avenues of connection.

To understand this, it is helpful to look at social networking not as interpersonal communication, but as a series of connections. Social networking, as defined by the Wharton School of Business, is an “offshoot of graph theory in mathematics” wherein each person is represented by a dot, and that person’s interaction with the rest of the world by a series of lines linking those dots (Wharton, 2006, p.1).

This concept is rather complex, but it can be understood by examining a series of scenarios. If there are only two people in a system, then there only needs to be one connection for them to be in touch with every other person in the system. However, if the system suddenly grows, say to five people, then there needs to be ten connections for the same level of connectivity. If the system grows yet again, to fifteen, then 105 connections are required. Obviously, as the number of people in a

system grows, then the number and complexity of the connections grows as well, at a rate greater than the growth of the population (Shirky, 2008).

This may seem as though it has more to do with math than communication, but it is this exponential growth in the complexity of a communication system that creates the need for new media. In the past, each person's social network was limited to the people that that person could reach out to via mail, personal communication, or the telephone. For social networks to pass this threshold of complexity imposed by traditional media there needs to be a growth in the number of ways that we can communicate. That is, there needs to be a new way to draw the lines between the points on our graph.

This, then, is a function of new media, and knowing this, it becomes easier to define. New media is any medium that allows for increased communication between people; that makes it easier for people to converse with each other. These media are not limited to any one technology, though the majority are accessed through the internet. This creates a situation where new media has become synonymous with the Internet, and further defines the concept of what is and what is not part of the new media.

### **New Media Organizing**

This concept of new media as communication facilitated by the Internet does narrow the idea of new media, however it does not completely define it. The best, and shortest, way to further narrow the concept is given by Clay Shirky's subtitle to his book *Here Comes Everybody: the Power of Organizing Without Organizations*. This

statement, on first blush, seems to make no sense, like driving with no car or reading with no book. One would, it seems, either have an organization to organize people in or around, or create an organization by the simple act of organizing people. Yet in this world of new media, organization is no longer a rigidly defining structure but a fluid construct, malleable to the current situation.

Shirky, in *Here Comes Everybody*, illustrates this concept with the story of a lost (or rather stolen, depending on one's view) phone. This phone was left in a taxi in New York, and was found by a teenage girl. The phone had the capability to upload content to a central source, and through this ability the phone's owner located the girl who found it. The girl refused to give it back, prompting a friend of the owner to use his website and a forum to expose what he considered the theft of the phone. This was eventually successful, and resulted in a huge amount of attention, with the friend receiving "ten emails a minute." The people sending these emails were able to offer information, like the address of the person who now had the phone, in addition to her and her brother's contact information. They also were able to give legal advice and advise the phone's owner on how to proceed in her dealings with the police (Shirky, 2008).

This story further adds to the definition of new media. A group of people organized around a cause, without any outside group managing the organization. They were drawn to a forum that grew only in response to their involvement by nothing more than curiosity. Through this, they were organized, but they did it on their own, not as part of a formal organization.

### **New Media and Required Participation**



The website that was created to find the lost phone, while featured on traditional media soon after the story broke, was at first not available to those who did not seek out the information. A story that reaches a large enough group, or that has some news value, will eventually reach traditional media, but this is not guaranteed. For many stories or trends that begin and are developed through new media, the only way to find them is to be an active participant in new media. As Henry Jenkins (2006), puts it “the circulation of media content... depends heavily on consumers’ active participation” (Jenkins, 2006, p.3)

This entails things like having an email address or visiting social networking sites. This may seem at first like a limiting factor, but this barrier also serves as a way for an audience to self- select the most interested or vocal people to become part of the group. In Jenkins’ book, he refers to this as *participatory culture*, where a person can no longer sit idly and receive the complete picture of any issue from passive media sources (Jenkins, 2006).

For example, while a Twitter update may be visible to anyone with an Internet connection, it is not going to be broadcast into a home like a TV show would be. People who see the update, or the vast majority of people who see it, will have sought it out. They will have either through followed the updater on twitter or found the tweet through an outside link. This applies to other new media, with social networking sites or sites like YouTube providing content to users who either seek it out or make themselves available to receive it. As Lance Bennett (2003) points out in Contrasting Media Power, the Internet and other media (he refers specifically to activists seeking change) “offer capacities for change if people are

motivated by various conditions in their environments to exploit those capacities”  
(Bennett, Couldry and Curran, 2003, p.5)

This requirement that people actively use new media in order to benefit from it means that new media essentially forces people to interact. By putting forth effort to be involved, a person by default is interacting, making new media two-way channels instead of the one-way of traditional media. As Bennett (2003) points out, this means people are now “likely to become producers and transmitters [of information]” (Bennett, Couldry and Curran, 2003, p.33).

As we each become both receivers and transmitters for news and information, we become a vital part of the transmission of information; we can either impede or enhance the spread of knowledge. People must now seek out new information on a topic, while at the same time spreading what they have learned, in order to be considered well informed on the goings on in the world. Jenkins calls this *collective intelligence*, where everyone contributes his or her small piece of the puzzle to create the whole picture (Jenkins, 2006).

This collective intelligence is illustrated well by Shirky’s story of the lost phone. While many people likely knew the basics of the story, especially after the television reports, not many knew much else. But one person knew how to find the girl who had the phone, and another knew her brother, while yet another knew how to deal with the police. By collecting and combining their small pieces, they were able to not only find the girl, but also help see the phone returned. This process, as Shirky notes, is a vital part of new media; each person used the tools provided to them not only to learn more but contribute to the story itself.

## **The Meeting of New and Old**

As Shirky noted in his story of the lost phone, once an ad-hoc group grows to a certain point, it begins to attract the attention of the traditional media, which then draws even more attention to it. He claims that this outside attention allows the group to grow much more quickly, and to expand its focus much more than it would have been able to without traditional media exposure (Shirky, 2008).

Instead of being evidence that new media is only piggybacking off of established media sources, this becomes evidence of the power that new media has. At some point, the graph grows large enough to either include, or draw the attention of, someone who can access the closed world of traditional media, bringing the story to the attention of an even larger group. The fact that new media can connect anyone to almost anyone else makes it inevitable that stories will spread to other media.

In fact, one needs only look at CNN's current programming, with features like iReport and the new media segment of the Situation Room to see that the opposite may now be true. Instead of new media getting a boost from old media coverage traditional media often covers stories first broken by new media sources. Jenkins calls this coming together the "theory of convergence." This theory says that while new media may be providing new, separate tools of communication, the nature of those tools means that they will eventually converge with traditional media, strengthening both (Jenkins, 2006).

The best example of this would be the recent unrest in Iran, following that country's contested elections. As news of the election results came in, the population of the country, primarily in Tehran, began to protest the results. These protests were not covered by Iranian state-run media, and were violently countered by government security forces. A great deal of the coverage that these protests received came from the website Twitter, which allowed individual Iranians to make pictures and information available to a huge number of Internet users. These live, amateur streams of information became a primary source for traditional media in the west, who had no other effective way to report what was actually happening. (Batty, 2009).

### **New Media and Opinion Leaders**

New media does not treat all equally in this equation, however, as the larger your group, the greater your impact. This is the effect of the basic concept of social networking, in that with a larger personal group, anything you say to that group will reach a larger number of people as it is passed out into your 2<sup>nd</sup> degree contacts.

One needs only look at Twitter or Facebook to see that celebrities and politicians draw a bigger crowd than regular people. The disproportionate impact these people have on the flow of information may be attributed to their role as *opinion leaders*-the people who are on the edge of any new issue. Ronald Burt (1999) notes that these opinion leaders "are more precisely opinion brokers who carry information across the social boundaries between groups" (Burt, 1999). Returning to Jenkins' concept of collective intelligence, a person who is able to

converge information that has been compiled by two separate groups has a huge amount of power. In Shirky's story, this would have been the people who knew the location of the phone and those who knew how to deal with the police.

They are indispensable to new media, because despite the increased ability of people to connect, choke points will always develop in our social networks (Clemitt, 2006). These points at which there are few connections between groups will turn the people at those points into powerful conduits of information (Burt, 1999).

### **That's What It Does, But What Makes It Up?**

The defining characteristics of new media are derived from the things which make up new media. These characteristics are the ability to reach almost anyone, the requirement that people be involved with the flow of information, the large amount of influence that a person can acquire and the convergence of media. These take various forms, from websites to new uses of phones. Websites like Facebook and Twitter reign over social networking. Sites like YouTube and Flickr allow the flow of video and pictures through social networks. Blogs allow people to project their thoughts or other information into social networks, while allowing others to comment on them. Text messaging, while still tied to the old media, has emerged as a vital part of the new media, gives people and organizations instant contact to their networks.

The use of Facebook and Twitter are familiar to most today, with each site promising slightly different versions of a similar concept. Facebook describes itself

as a way for people to make connections with “friends and others who work, study and live around them.”<sup>1</sup> These connections include photos, notes, games and status updates. Twitter takes a similar concept- connecting you to your social network and giving you a way to communicate with them- and narrows its focus.

Twitter describes itself as “a real-time information network powered by people all around the world that lets you share and discover what’s happening now.”<sup>2</sup> This service consists of small updates, along the lines of Facebook’s status updates, and pictures (through sister site Twitpic). Together, these two services have become the predominate social networking tools in the US, with Facebook and Twitter both experiencing triple digit increases in their site traffic over the last several years, according to web tracking service Hitwise (Long, 2009).

Sites like YouTube and Flickr, while useful as part of social networking, function differently. They, like blogs, do not exist to connect people, but rather exist as a way to share information such as pictures and video. These services, like blogs, have become a way for people to self publish information that would not otherwise be available. This allows a greater amount and variety of information to be transmitted, and is what gives regular people their power in the world of new media (Hewitt, 2005).

Combining the ability this gives people to publish information with the ability social networking gives to disseminate that information sites like YouTube and Flickr can be very powerful. Shirky provides an example of this power in his book, using Trent Lott’s remarks at Strom Thurmond’s hundredth birthday party.

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<sup>1</sup> See < <http://www.facebook.com/about.php?pwstdfy=5e75d13b36da44914a2259f704152c53>>.

<sup>2</sup> See< <http://twitter.com/about>>

Lott made remarks at the event that seemed to support segregation, saying that had Thurmond (a pro-segregation candidate) won the presidency in 1948, “we wouldn’t have had all these problems over the years”(Shirky, 2008).

Shirky points out that because the event was not political, there was not a great deal of attention paid to the remarks in the traditional media. There was, however, a good deal of coverage by various political blogs. These blogs pointed out that Lott’s remarks showed, at best, a high degree of insensitivity and, at worst, were characteristic of deep-seated racism. Shirky relates the story of Lott’s comment to the story of the lost phone by comparing the actions of those who helped find the phone to the actions of Ed Sebesta. Sebesta was a historian who related information to bloggers showing Lott had a pattern of expressing such views. Shirky makes the connection that just as the people who helped find the phone came forward of their own volition, so did Sebesta, and just as they contributed to the greater community’s knowledge, so did Sebesta (Shirky, 2008). This illustrates two ideas discussed earlier, the requirement of involvement and collective intelligence.

Just as with the case of the lost phone, this story also eventually crossed over to the mainstream media, and just as the phone story grew until it had an effect, so did this, eventually causing Lott to step down as Senate Majority leader. This growth was very quick, escalating the story from a small social interest piece to a political firestorm that merited hundreds of articles here in the US and abroad.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> see < <http://www.lexisnexis.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/hottopics/lnacademic/>>

## **The Internet Becomes A Vital Part Of Campaigns**

As the coverage of Trent Lott's comment shows, new media can exert a great force in politics. This is true both of incumbent politicians and candidates for office. New media, in the form of web sites, was first used by political campaigns in the 1994 Senate election, by Diane Feinstein's campaign. That site was basic compared to today; coming as it did only months after the first commercial web sites went live (Cornfield, 2004).

After being introduced, more campaigns began to use websites, with the 1996 presidential election featuring websites for every mainstream candidate, but these went "widely unnoticed" (Cornfield, 2004). By the late 1990s, however, more Americans were using the Internet, creating more possibilities for online campaigning. The first campaign that received traditional media attention was Jesse Ventura, in his 1998 gubernatorial run in Minnesota. Ventura ran a more complex online campaign than had been run before, helping him win as a third-party candidate. Regarding Ventura's use of the Internet, *Newsweek* said that the Internet had become a necessity (Cornfield, 2004).

Following Ventura's successful run, online campaigning continued to increase in importance, culminating in unprecedented online activity during the 2000 presidential election. Bruce Bimber and Richard Davis note this increase in online activity for the 2000 election, saying that "[2000] was the year in which campaigning through the internet became de rigeur" with 1140 candidates for the U.S. house using the web (Bimber and Davis, 2003).



2000 also marked the point at which over 50% of the United States was online, growing from just 26% in 1998, creating a situation in which politicians could reach a substantial number of mainstream voters through online appeals. In addition, 2000 marked the beginning of widespread broadband service, giving users the ability to stream video and other content (Stanton, 2004). This greater audience and expanded capability moved the Internet away from being a service with a limited audience and toward being the conduit of new media it is today.

### **What New Media Offers Campaigns**

New media, as Bennett contends in his chapter for *New Media Power: Internet and Global Activism*, is the perfect tool for grassroots movements (Bennett, Couldry and Curran, 2003). New media lets these groups connect with supporters and organize them into volunteers, it lets them disseminate information to them through blogs, pictures and video and it lets the movement appeal to its supporters for instant funding. Political campaigns, at least recently, love nothing more than to describe themselves as grassroots- even David Plouffe, manager of the wealthiest campaign to date, described Obama's campaign as a grassroots movement (Plouffe, 2009).

This is partially down to marketing, and partially down to truth. Political campaigns build their support by appealing to people who may share general beliefs and then by convincing these people to support one specific candidate. They rely on these people for funding, either through large single donations or through a series of smaller ones, and they use these supporters to enlist other supporters through phonebanking or going door to door. A political campaign, then, operates similarly

to a grassroots movement, even if it does not fit the traditional definition in terms of funding.

New media, then, is useful to political campaigns in the same way that it is to grassroots movements. Just as grassroots movements can connect with a great number of supporters, and use those supporters to pass messages through their social networks, so can political campaigns. Political campaigns can also take advantage of the ability new media gives them to organize supporters into groups. These groups can then knock on doors or make phone calls, or perform other volunteer activities. In addition, campaigns can use new media to produce and disseminate messages that would not be carried by traditional media. Finally, campaigns can get instant funding by asking their supporters to give money to the campaign online.

New media's effectiveness to campaigns can be broken down into three main categories. First, new media lets campaigns appeal to and organize supporters, in addition to giving those supporters the ability to contribute and comment on the campaign. Second, new media lets fundraise by appealing to their supporters. Third, new media lets campaigns publish information instantly that would not have been accessible through traditional media.

Beside these tangible benefits, new media offers another, less obvious benefit. Joe Trippi makes the point that as late as 2004, new media still carried the "whiff of rebellion" of something new (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2008). This is an important consideration, as the three most new media intensive presidential candidates of the last ten years- John McCain in 2000, Howard Dean in 2004 and

Barack Obama in 2008- were described as “outsiders.” Joe Trippi says that McCain’s use of small online donations allowed him to “run as an outsider by aligning himself with campaign finance reform” (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008, p.103). Trippi goes further, describing the Dean campaign as “the opening salvo in a revolution, the sound of thousands of Americans... embracing the only form of technology that has allowed them to be involved again” (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008, introduction). David Plouffe describes Obama’s campaign as “ragtag militia to compete against her [Clinton’s] regular army” (Plouffe, 2009 p.20-21).

The tangible benefits of this effect are debatable, but it is interesting to note the effectiveness that new media has in lending even the most well-funded efforts the feel of an outsider challenge to D.C. politics.

### **Gore and Bush in 2000- Basic Online Organizing**

Basic organizing in this instance is using the power of new media to organize supporter meetings and activities in the real world that benefit the campaign. These could be anything, from knocking on doors to making calls. The 2000 election was really the beginning of new media campaigning, and these tactics are basic, but still effective, today.

The 2000 campaign also saw the rise of a “new media” candidate. The new media candidate’s use of new media was demonstrably greater and more effective than that of his competitors. In 2000, that candidate was John McCain, who was

acknowledged to have a more in-depth and more complex online strategy than his peers (Bimber and Davis, 2003).

This does not mean that either Bush or Gore was not engaged in online organizing. Both used various tactics, involving one-way communication to their supporters. These were used mainly to organize the volunteer activities of their supporters (Cornfield, 2004 and Bimber and Davis, 2003).

The Bush campaign was very concerned in 2000 about negative portrayals both online and in the traditional media. Cornfield goes so far as to call the campaign “thin skinned” about negative coverage (Cornfield, 2004, p.61).

Cornfield uses the term thin skinned to describe the Bush campaign’s response to a series of parody websites, which they tried to have taken down (Cornfield, 2004). This was not the only case of the Bush team actively searching for negative coverage in order to counter it. Bimber and Davis (2003) use an example wherein campaign emails from Bush included a phone number that supporters were asked to call if they received negative information about Bush (Bimber and Davis, 2003). Supporters would call the number, and provide detail, so that the Bush campaign could counter it.

The Bush and Gore teams also used their email networks to overcome a typical hurdle for campaigns: that it is hard to get printed flyers and leaflets distributed. They both used email to streamline this process, mailing out templates that supporters were able to print out and distribute (Bimber and Davis, 2003). This removed the middle step of collecting leaflets, then distributing them to supporters, who would then distribute them further.

### **McCain in 2000- Leading the Way In Online Organizing**

While it took Bush and Gore until the actual election campaign to begin to use the Internet as a tool for organization, the McCain campaign was using it early in the primary race. At the beginning of the Republican primary, George W. Bush held a large advantage in fundraising and national media coverage over his opponents, making it difficult for them to mount an effective challenge. McCain did not have the funding to go head to head with Bush, and so was one of the first candidates to turn to large-scale online campaigning (Cornfield, 2004).

This turn to online campaigning to make up for a deficit in funding fits with the idea that Bennett (2003) explains in his chapter of *Contesting Media Power*- that Internet usage can reduce the complexity and cost of communicating with a large group (Bennett and Couldry and Curran, 2003). This was certainly a consideration for the McCain camp, and they quickly structured their online operation as a “virtual headquarters” for the campaign (Cornfield, 2004).

As part of this virtual headquarters, the McCain campaign had structured its online effort to not only provide information, but also with dedicated sites that allowed the campaign to ask for specific things. This was very similar to what the Bush and Gore campaigns would do later, but featured one of the more inventive uses of volunteers yet.

During the Republican primary, the McCain campaign was unable to afford phone banks filled with paid staffers, and so was forced to turn to volunteers. The

campaign used one of its sites to ask volunteers to make calls to voters, who were pulled from a list and emailed to volunteers. This type of virtual phone bank had not been used before, and was one of the first instances of supporters being organized through the Internet to work together. The campaign was able to recruit 1100 volunteers to do this, creating a phone bank at no cost to the campaign (Cornfield, 2004).

### **Dean 2004- The Meetup Revolution**

Howard Dean, like McCain in 2004, was quick to embrace new media as an integral part of his strategy, making it the backbone of its campaign (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008). Joe Trippi, Dean's campaign manager, explained that the early adoption of new media as part of the Dean campaign was vital to overcome their lack of size and funding. Trippi's idea for overcoming these challenges was to "decentralize" the campaign, in effect "turning the campaign over to them out there, giving them the tools and the support" (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008, p. 85).

Compared to McCain, Bush and Gore's use of online organizing, this was a revolution. Instead of allowing supporters to access things like a call list, the Dean campaign was asking the supporters to come up with the call list, and then use it. That the Dean campaign would do something that many today would still regard as dangerously cutting edge, and do it in 2004, mark Dean and Trippi as a new media pioneers.

The heart of Dean's online organizing was a website called Meetup, a site that allows users to connect with each other and schedule meetings at public locations,

and which claimed in 2005 that 400,000 people had used its service to attend a politically motivated event (Connors, 2005). The Dean campaign first began using about Dean supporters using Meetup on their own to organize meetings in various cities. Soon after this, the Dean campaign linked to Meetup on its own site, calling it Get Local (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008).

Dean supporters using Meetup functioned as individual arms of the campaign, building support for Dean in their hometowns and counties. Trippi explains that the first 432 Dean supporters to sign up for Meetup functioned as “432 individual campaign managers,” enlisting support and organizing meetings for volunteers (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2008, p.87).

This is an interesting concept, and is described by Gary Wolf in *Wired* as “Letting the ants do the work” or more kindly “allowing supporters to build their own nodes” (Wolf, 2004, p.3). This ties organizing back to the social networking aspect of new media, specifically the mathematic theory explained by the Wharton School of Business. In this model, each person in a social network is represented by a point on a graph, connected to other points by social connections, represented by lines (Wharton, 2006).

The 2000 campaigns used a very simple version of this, wherein one point or node, the campaign, used individual connections to organize its supporters. The graph here would look like a starburst, with one center node being connected to a series of periphery nodes via single stands of connection. The Dean campaign allowed each supporter to build his or her own node, thus becoming the surrogate for the campaign. Each node, then, functioned just like the campaign, organizing

volunteers around a specific task. The graph here would be much more complex, with the campaign still at the center, but with various other nodes gathering supporters, and those supporters connecting to other supporters and back to the campaign in a vast spider web of connections.

Even more surprising than the fact that the campaign was able to create this network was that it worked. Trippi recounts that the first Meetup event attended by Dean, who was a surprise guest, overfilled its 550 capacity venue, with hundreds of people lined up around the block. These events quickly grew, and eventually the campaign had 190,000 people using Meetup to organize themselves. The campaign eventually created its own specialized version of Meetup to facilitate supporter meetings, with 170,000 people using that service (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2008). Wolf charts the number of meetings that supporters actually organized, saying that in February 2003, 11 meetings were organized, with that number growing to over 800 by the late fall (Wolf, 2004).

These meetings were not simply social gatherings; they were opportunities for people to volunteer their time and effort to building support for Dean. Wolf uses polling data from Iowa and New Hampshire to show the effectiveness of the Meetups. He points out that following the tens of thousands of letters mailed from each Meetup, Dean moved to the top of the polls in each state (Wolf, 2004).

The Dean campaign's use of Meetup and Get Local allowed the campaign to organize its supporters across the nation into effective groups of volunteers that could change the course of the election. Wolf points to *Emergence*, by Steven Johnson, to explain the effectiveness of these groups. Johnson says that it is "swarms



that drive the story, not the queen ant,” bringing back the idea that the ants should do the work. The idea is simple, that singular supporters, the ants, can organize around a node created by a supporter and then act as a swarm, all working independently to achieve a common goal (Wolf, 2004 and Johnson 2002).

### **Dean in 2004, The “Open Source Campaign”**

Besides playing a larger role in organizing volunteer efforts, Dean supporters played a larger role in organizing the actual campaign. Joe Trippi calls chapter 8 of his book *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* “the open source campaign” (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008). Open source here refers to the outsourcing of development- in software terms, the ability of a user to modify software for personal use.<sup>4</sup>

The original software is still the base, but people can take it and expand on what it provides, as Trippi put it, “take the energy of Dean for America and spread it around their communities” (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008, p. 148). Basically, by giving people the power to organize themselves, the campaign moved the power away from the center and towards the supporters themselves. By December of 2003, Samantha Shapiro calculated that there were over 900 independent Dean groups, working to support the candidate without direct control of the campaign (Shapiro, 2003).

These Dean supporters did more than create groups; they contributed to the campaign itself. Most of this came through the campaign blog, Blog for America. This blog included posts from the campaign staff and updates on fundraising, and

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<sup>4</sup> See < <http://www.opensource.org/osd.html> >

allowed supporters to post entries on their own (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008, Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005; Rice, 2003). At its peak, the blog received nearly 100,000 hits per day, although this number was only sustained for a short time (Grossman, 2004).

The posts from supporters on Blog for America became a feedback loop for the campaign, with suggestions for new fundraising ideas and suggestions that helped to create Dean's public image (Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005; Bloom and Kerbel, 2005). Trippi acknowledges that it was the supporters on the blog who came up with the idea for a live feed of Dean eating a turkey sandwich to be put up at the same time that Cheney was hosting a fundraising luncheon, which inspired \$500,000 in donations (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008).

The supporters' independence allowed them to function without the direct guidance of the campaign staff, increasing the effectiveness of the campaign and becoming a vital part of the national effort (Bloom and Kerbel, 2005). Their ability to connect with each other allowed them to put together large events and movements, again without any direct effort from the campaign staff. This turned supporters into field directors, without any cost to the campaign. By outsourcing much of the actual campaigning, Dean and Trippi created a campaign that was able to adeptly move with the issues and use its supporters as independent parts of the campaign, strengthening the whole (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Bloom and Kerbel, 2005; Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005).

### **McCain and Dean, Online Fundraising to the Rescue**

Both the 2000 McCain campaign and the 2004 Dean campaign were kept in the race through successful online fundraising. McCain was saved with a huge influx of cash following his unexpected victory in New Hampshire, and much of that came through his donation tool on the campaign website (Bimber and Davis, 2003). Dean was saved from an even bleaker fate by what many called his “monster quarter” in which he raised \$7.2 million early in the race, far exceeding anyone’s expectations (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008).

There is no great complexity to online fundraising, being successful at it is simply a matter of getting a “donate now” button seen by as many people as possible. This ties into two of the defining characteristics of new media- social networking and the requirement to be involved. First, the idea that any information shared with any part of a social network can be spread to any other part of that network means that a request for funding can be seen by everyone in the network (Clemitt, 2006). Second, the idea of required participation means that anyone who is receiving the messages will likely be a motivated supporter, and will be more likely to donate or otherwise become involved (Jenkins, 2006).

This does not mean that the campaign should simply let fundraising happen as it may; indeed, the Dean campaign was very careful to promote and encourage online donation. Blog for America featured a goal for each period of fundraising, with a baseball bat that would slowly fill with red as money came in, fully filling

once the goal had been reached. Several times goals (Trippi refers to them as bats, representing the individual bat images that each goal was associated with) would be created for special circumstances. One of these was the Cheney luncheon parody that supporters on the blog developed, which raised \$500,000. Dean also acknowledged the success of the fundraising, appearing in public with a red bat after a particular goal had been reached (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Baker and Stromer-Galley, 2004).

This type of encouragement makes fundraising more effective, by drawing attention to it. This encourages all supporters to try to help out, even those who can only give small amounts, and is how Dean raised such a large amount (Zeleny, 2003, Landreville, Martin and Postelnicu, 2004). Dean rewarded his supporters by referencing the fundraising, like carrying the red bat on television. Trippi acknowledges would mean nothing to most people, but would hold significance for the supporters and make them feel part of the campaign (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Baker and Stromer-Galley, 2004).

Dean was not, of course, the only candidate to use new media. Both Kerry and Bush had active supporter organization tools on their websites, and certainly worked diligently at online fundraising (Landreville, Martin and Postelnicu, 2004). Indeed, over the course of the 2004 election, Bush raised \$14 million, or 5% of his funding, and Kerry \$89 million, or 33%. Dean, however, in the primaries alone, raised 40% of his funding, or over \$20 million, from online donations (Landreville, Martin and Postelnicu, 2004). Dean was also involved with new media sooner and to a much greater extent than his competitors, making him the most new media

intensive candidate of the 2004 election (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Baker and Stromer-Galley, 2004).

### **Obama in 2008, New Media Becomes Integrated**

If 2000 was the year that online campaigning came of age, and 2004 was the year it became truly vital, then 2008 was the year it became integral to every part of the campaign (Hayes and Pitts, 2009).

In 2008, Barack Obama's campaign showed what a well-funded political campaign, like Bush or Kerry, could do if new media was an integrated into every part of the campaign. True, Obama did not begin as a well-funded candidate, but by the mid point of the election, he had more money than any of his competitors, and by the end had raised over \$750,000,000, with an estimated \$500,000,000 through his online fundraising (Vargas, 2008; Plouffe, 2009; Boekelman and Dupuis, 2008).

The Obama new media effort began in earnest shortly after the decision was made to run, in early 2007. The first major new media event was Obama's announcement video, which would set the tone for the remainder of the campaign. This short clip was intended from the very beginning to be used mainly on Youtube and Obama's own website, not on network TV (Lillington, 2007; Plouffe, 2009).

This video created a great deal of attention for Obama in the traditional news cycles, closing the coverage gap with Clinton (Cillizza, Murray, 2007). The popularity of the video also served a second purpose: driving people to the Obama campaign website, where they would be encouraged to give, volunteer and recommend the campaign to others (Plouffe, 2009).

Shortly after the success of the announcement video and accompanying growth of the grassroots style movement, the Obama campaign began to expand and define its new media arm. This arm would serve four main functions: to organize volunteers, to solicit donations, to encourage dialogue and to control message.

### **Obama's Fundraising**

The first quarter of the primary for Obama cemented his status as a real contender, due in no small part to online fundraising. The campaign raised \$32.5 million in the first quarter, with over \$10 million coming from online donations. This effort surpassed even Howard Dean's "monster" quarter, which raised \$7.4 million and put him into contention for the nomination in 2004 (Plouffe, 2009).

Besides being evidence of the overall success of the new media effort, the online donations revealed evidence of the basic soundness of the campaign strategy. This strategy was reliant not on single large donors, but on a large network of smaller donors who would also volunteer. Overall, by the end of the first quarter, there were over 1 million sign ups on the website, with 250,000 of these becoming donors (Plouffe, 2009). In addition, the majority of donors at that time were bringing in "relatively small amounts-\$100, \$500, \$1000" through the donation tool on the website (Plouffe, 2009, p.50).

The Obama team was able to raise even more than Clinton in large part through an online, small donor approach. This money propelled Obama into the campaign and gave him credibility heading into the early primary states. This was vital in Iowa, which was central to the campaign strategy. Plouffe said that the early

strategy was “all about Iowa” and this record fundraising early on gave them the funding to eventually win the state (Plouffe, 2009 p.51; Hayes and Pitts, 2009).

The success in online fundraising continued, becoming an even larger part of fundraising overall. In January 2008, the month before Super Tuesday, the campaign received \$32 million total, \$28 million of it online. This amount allowed Obama to enter Super Tuesday, as he had Iowa, with enough money to seriously contend with Clinton. The online number for this period also reflects the increasing success of the new media strategy; the campaign gained 170,000 new donors in January 2008 alone (Plouffe, 2009; Vogel, 2009; Boekelman and Dupuis, 2008).

The success of this fundraising continued until the end of the election. In September 2008, the campaign raised over \$150 million, with over \$100 million of that online. This amount was only possible because of “massive performance from existing grassroots donors” and constant growth, with a total of 2.3 million supporters added in September alone (Plouffe, 2009 p.326,327). Perhaps the most telling statistic that demonstrates the success of the online donation effort was that at point in that period the campaign was raising “\$500,000 an hour” (Plouffe, 2009 p.327). Overall, the Obama campaign raised over \$750 million outside of federal funding, and a great percentage of that was due to small individual donors (Vogel, 2009; Boekelman and Dupuis, 2008).

### **MyBo**

While online fundraising was obviously successful for Obama, his campaign also focused on creating supporter interaction, both with the campaign and with

each other. To do this, the campaign launched its own social networking site, MyBarackObama.com, or MyBo. The advantage of this new site was the ability for supporters to not only talk to and receive messages from the campaign, but each other as well. This site combined the effectiveness of Dean's Meetup/Get local service with the ease of online networking afforded by Facebook.

The campaign allowed supporters to use this ability to organize themselves, with Hughes telling the supporters "get busy on your own. Take the campaign into your own hands" (Plouffe, 2009 p.92). This effort was central to the campaign strategy, which emphasized volunteer support to make up the expected shortfalls in both money and established networks of local supporters.

The result of this emphasis on volunteer organizing was that the campaign was able to use volunteers more effectively than the other campaigns. This increased the effectiveness of the campaign, allowing them to target states like North Carolina and Indiana. These states would not have been winnable without utilizing the "engorged group of supporters" that the new media strategy produced (Plouffe, 2009 p.255, 256). Evidence of the strategy's success was the over 3 million phone calls made by supporters using the MyBo site's built in phone bank in the four days prior to the general election (Talbot, 2009).

To keep supporters involved, and to keep new people signing up, the campaign needed to reward those who were active. This was done by giving those who did become involved, either through signing up or through actively using the tools, access to inside information. This almost wasn't done, as in the beginning



Plouffe believed that supporters “wouldn’t be interested in inside baseball” like internal memos (Plouffe, 2009 p.81-84).

An example of this type of reward was the early announcement of the vice presidential pick. The decision of a vice presidential candidate is always an overblown moment for a campaign, the “most overcovered event in presidential politics” (Plouffe, 2009, p.284). In consideration of this, the Obama campaign decided to use the announcement of a vice presidential pick to build up registration for its text messaging campaign, run by Scott Goodstein. They did this by sending a text message revealing the choice to those supporters who signed up for text alerts from the campaign before the public announcement.

This text alerts system was a two-way street, with supporters being encouraged to text their email addresses and other information to the campaign at rallies and events, building the supporter database. Once people were in the text alert database, they could be mobilized quickly to create groups of supporters at public events such as debates (Vargas, 2008; Plouffe, 2009).

In addition to allowing supporters to connect with campaign organizers, the MyBo site also became “a home” for supporters to discuss the events in the campaign and the direction it was taking. This did not always work out perfectly for Obama, particularly in the case of the FISA (a bill allowing federal agencies increased freedom to wiretap) legislation that Obama decided to support. At the time that he made his decision, there were over one million registered users of MyBo. Soon after Obama announced his support, a group of them organized into a 14000 strong movement urging him to change his mind. At the time, this was the

largest group on the site (Risen, 2008; Sifry, 2008). The Obama campaign responded by allowing the discussion to continue, which raised public opinion and generated positive press coverage (Sifry, 2008).

In allowing supporters to continue a discussion on MyBo that was not entirely approving of the candidate, the Obama campaign demonstrated the importance of trust in new media. The campaign could easily have pulled this discussion off the site, and banned those who led it, but this would have destroyed the relationship between the campaign and the supporters. Without this relationship, without a certain level of trust between the supporters and the campaign, the new media approach becomes worthless.

The importance of trust hinges on the idea of required participation. If you do not trust something, be it an organization or an individual, you will not likely want to be involved with that group or person. Had the Obama campaign destroyed that trust by stifling the conversation, supporters would not have actively participated, and the appeal of the new media aspect of Obama's campaign would have been lost.

Trust is a two way street, however, and as much as supporters must trust the campaign, the campaign must also trust its supporters. The Obama supporters, by not deserting the campaign over a single issue, instead allowing Obama the chance to respond, proved to the campaign that they were worthy of trust. The ability that a campaign has to judge the trustworthiness of a supporter is rather limited, but in this instance, the Obama supporters were able to prove themselves worthy of that trust.

## **Obama's Use of Self Publishing**

The last aspect of new media that the Obama campaign used to great effect was the ability to self publish. This was done mainly through videos. This included a channel on Youtube, a standalone site with all of the video content produced by the campaign and a link on the campaign's main site (Boekelman and Dupuis, 2008).

The biggest test of the campaign's ability to confront an issue came when tapes came to light showing Jeremiah Wright making racist comments. These comments easily had the power to destroy Obama's campaign, and in order to respond to them, the campaign had to move in a decisive manner.

In order to correct the oversight in not addressing the Wright issue earlier in the campaign, Obama decided to make a comprehensive speech concerning not only Wright, but the overall issue of race in the campaign. The speech was very well received, and it also marked a new approach to coverage. The speech was watched primarily online, through video channels managed by the campaign or on other news sites, and not heavily on TV. Eventually "tens of millions" saw the speech, through various outlets. The speech's dissemination through new media channels allowed the campaign to use it to control coverage of the issue (Plouffe, 2009 p.214; Boekelman and Dupuis, 2008).

## **New Media in Campaigning Today**

Today, it is easier than ever for candidates to use new media as an integral part of their campaign strategy. Candidates have access to tools that can expand the

effectiveness of their new media strategy at little or no cost. These tools include Facebook and Twitter, which are now ubiquitous tools for social networking and organization (Dougherty, 2010; Long, 2009; Abruzzese, 2009; Krueger, 2008).

These sites now form the core of online social networking in the United States, and are two of the most visited sites (Dougherty, 2010; Long, 2009). These sites provide candidates with most of the abilities of Obama's MyBo site, without the costs involved in creating a proprietary social networking site.

Facebook, in particular, has become a vital part of political campaigns, coming to prominence in the 2006 election cycle (Gulati and Williams, 2007). The benefits of Facebook are clear, as it provides a simple, cost-effective, and efficient way to link to an ever-increasing social network. Facebook provides candidates the abilities laid out by Clemitt, namely the ability to lessen the degrees of separation between the campaign and potential supporters (Clemitt, 2006).

Twitter, the other major social networking tool in the US, has also become vital in political campaigning, beginning largely with the 2008 presidential election (Plouffe, 2009; Abruzzese, 2009). Twitter was used in the 2008 election, and is used today, to both organize and to quickly respond to issues by providing links to news stories and blogs that support the candidate's position (Boekelman, Dupuis, 2009; Abruzzese, 2009).

In addition to the social networking and organizational capabilities provided to candidates by Facebook and Twitter, candidates now have an increased ability to self-publish through sites like Youtube (Plouffe, 2009; MacAskill, 2007). Youtube, in particular, has been effective as a self-publishing tool due to the amount of

information that campaigns can post- from speeches to videos explaining complex issue positions. These are presented in a manner that is appealing and accessible to supporters, increasing the effectiveness of Youtube. It has become such a large part of campaigning that many campaigns now maintain Youtube “channels” that provide an easily accessed library of campaign material (MacAskill, 2007; Gueorguieva, 2007; Hayes, Pitts, 2009).

Combined with a campaign website, these new media sites provide a relatively level playing field for political candidates, as any candidate can use these sites with the only costs being the salary of staff paid to update and produce content. Excluding presidential campaigns, which have the money and number of supporters to warrant proprietary social networking tools, most campaigns rely on the same technologies (Plouffe, 2009; Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Herrnson, Hindman, Stokes-Brown, 2007). Therefore, the capability to use new media is somewhat equal for comparable campaigns.

Examining four current Senate campaigns, Barbara Boxer’s, Marco Rubio’s, David Vitter’s and Blanche Lincoln’s show, that in the broadest sense, each candidate is using new media to a similar degree. The campaigns were examined by observing their main sites and Facebook sites for one week at the beginning and end of the period from 4/19 to 6/7, in order to determine the tools the campaign was using. Each candidate’s Twitter feed was also examined weekly over the course of the month to determine the average rate of tweets and general rate of usage.

This is not to say that each is using it in the same way, or that each is taking full advantage of it, but in terms of new media outlets used each candidate is roughly at the same level of involvement<sup>5</sup>.

However, upon closer examination, each candidate's use differs in the amount of material uploaded, the number of supporters, and the type of material that each candidate has chosen to upload. The difference is largely attributable to personal choice on the part of the candidate and campaign manager, or to the effectiveness of different tools with individual groups of supporters.

### **Barbara Boxer**

Barbara Boxer is running for re-election as a Democratic senator from California. She has been in Washington since 1992, and has received strong opposition this year (Mehta, 2010).

Boxer's main website is typical of the 2010 candidates,<sup>6</sup> and features links for her blog, her stance on issues, as well as donation and volunteering tools. Her volunteering tools are rather traditional, and ask for phone numbers and email addresses in order to allow the campaign to organize volunteer efforts. Her volunteer tool does not have the same supporter-driven aspect of Dean's Meetup/Getlocal tools or of Obama's MyBo site (Plouffe, 2009; Talbot, 2009; Wolf, 2004). She also includes links to her Facebook campaign page, her Twitter feed, and her Youtube and Flickr channels.

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix B

She has also, at certain times in her campaign, included a separate page, which loads before her main page, which requests donations to achieve a specific goal.<sup>7</sup> This page includes all information required for a new donor, and appears to be intended to appeal to those who had not yet used the donation feature of her site.

Her blog appears to be similarly focused on fundraising, with requests for funding ending most, if not every, post.<sup>8</sup> This blog does not have the user-generated content that made Dean's Blog for America a success in supporter organizing and appeal (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005; Bloom and Kerbel, 2005).

Boxer's Facebook page is more interactive, and features regular updates on issues concerning Boxer, mainly from her staff. She also includes her Flickr photos, and provides a link to her Youtube, essentially allowing her Facebook page to function as a surrogate campaign website, with all of her main self-publishing tools available.<sup>9</sup>

Boxer's Facebook page, like all others, serves not simply to appeal to supporters but also to connect them to the campaign and each other. They are connected back to the campaign through their ability to comment, much as supporters were able to on Dean's blog, providing personal opinions on the posts from Boxer's staff and suggestions (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005; Bloom and Kerbel, 2005).<sup>10</sup> Boxer's page is also notable for having a

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix C

<sup>8</sup> See appendix E

<sup>9</sup> See appendix F

<sup>10</sup> See appendix F

feature not every candidate uses- discussion threads for fans.<sup>11</sup> These are broadly similar to the threads that made MyBo a success in fostering discussion and enthusiasm among Obama's supporters and Dean's blog a success in outsourcing the fieldwork of campaigning (Plouffe, 2009; Risen, 2008; Sifry, 2008; Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005; Bloom and Kerbel, 2005; Grossman, 2004). Many of these threads tell Boxer what her supporters think of various issues, even if they do not support her stated opinion, like the FISA thread on MyBo (Sifry, 2008). The most readily available example would be healthcare, which has both a pro-reform and pro-repeal thread active on her site. Overall, her Facebook page has attracted quite a bit of traffic, and currently features 29679 fans, all of whom can receive direct messages and updates from Boxer's campaign.

Boxer's Youtube channel features 31 uploaded videos, with a total of 38679 views. Her most popular video has over 12,000 views; with most videos view counts remaining in the hundreds.<sup>12</sup> Her videos focus primarily on issues, mainly on her speaking directly into the camera, as Obama did in videos leading up to the 2008 election (MacAskill, 2007; Plouffe, 2009).

Boxer's Twitter feed seems to be slightly out of sync with the rest of her involved new media strategy. She has a large number of followers, at 21016, but a relatively low number of tweets, at 278, with only 27 tweets during the observed period.<sup>13</sup> This seems at odds with her high number of supporters, and her higher frequency of updates on Facebook.

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<sup>11</sup> See appendix G

<sup>12</sup> See appendix H

<sup>13</sup> See appendix D



## **Blanche Lincoln**

Blanche Lincoln is running for re-election to a Senate seat from Arkansas, as a Democrat. Lincoln is facing a great deal of opposition because of her support for some of President Obama's policies (Cummings, 2009). Despite this, she has so far won the primary election and remains the Democratic choice.

Lincoln's new media strategy is not obviously different from other candidates; she maintains an effective homepage, and uses Facebook, Youtube and Twitter. Her main page is less involved than Boxer's, reposting twitter updates as campaign news, and using press releases to fill her blog entries.<sup>1415</sup> This suggests that Lincoln does not have the staff to create as much original content for posting on the campaign site, or that she is not using the staff that she has to do this.

Lincoln, like many of the other candidates, has made fundraising a central point on her site, with donate now buttons and a specific fundraising screen which at various times in the campaign loads before the main site.<sup>16</sup> Lincoln's blog, linked from her main site, does not contain the specific fundraising appeals, or any real supporter specific information. As mentioned, Lincoln's blog focuses on posting press releases, and does not have the supporter appeals of Boxers or the organizational capacity of Deans's (Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005; Bloom and Kerbel, 2005; Grossman, 2004).

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<sup>14</sup> see appendix B

<sup>15</sup> see appendix E

<sup>16</sup> see appendix C

Lincoln's Facebook page, like her main site page, appears at first glance to be similarly arraigned to the other candidates, with posts from the staff and supporters, and links to video and photos from the campaign.<sup>17</sup> However, Lincoln does not use her Facebook page as a surrogate campaign site, as Boxer does, with her Facebook page lacking links to her Youtube channel and supporter discussion threads. Examining the content on Lincoln's page, it becomes evident that, like her main page, the areas where other candidates use new media to provide supporter generated or interactive content, Lincoln does not. Instead she offers links to more traditional campaign resources.

Lincoln's Youtube and Twitter pages seem to go against the trend that her Main site and Facebook page set. Her twitter follower count is much lower than Boxer, at 1324, yet her rate of Tweets far outstrips boxer, with a total of 977, with 499 of those coming during the observed period.<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Lincoln's Youtube channel is much more active than Boxer's. Lincoln has a total of 110 uploads, with over 115,000 upload views.<sup>19</sup> This greatly outstrips Boxer's total uploads and views, and leads to an interesting comparison to her less advanced use of her main website and Facebook page.

### **David Vitter**

David Vitter's main website appears different from both Blanch Lincoln and Barbara Boxer. His site appears immediately more negative and adversarial than

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<sup>17</sup> see appendix F

<sup>18</sup> see appendix D

<sup>19</sup> see appendix H

either of their sites. He includes more overt attacks on his opponent, with negative messages appearing regularly on the main page of the site.<sup>20</sup>

This more negative tone does not change what tools he uses, as links to Facebook, Youtube and Twitter are all present. What this negative tone does is effect the way that Vitter uses these tools, particularly in the way he uses them to engage his supporters.

Examining Vitter's main page it is apparent that he is attempting to encourage supporter participation, with several links to "get engaged" and a blog that reads similarly to Deans, with a focus on personal-sounding entries (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008).<sup>21</sup> Most of these entries mention Vitter's opposition either to Obama or Washington Democrats, and fit with the more negative tone of his main site. Supporters do not appear to have become involved, with none of Vitter's blog entries having received a comment.

Vitter's Facebook page is more effective at promoting supporter involvement. He does not have threads like Boxer, but his regular updates on his main page receive a good deal of supporter feedback from his 35389 fans.<sup>22</sup> Beyond this, Vitter's Facebook page appears devoted, like Lincoln's, to providing things like news articles and basic video. The only area on Vitter's Facebook page that appears to encourage supporter feedback are his main posts.

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<sup>20</sup> see appendix B

<sup>21</sup> see appendix E

<sup>22</sup> see appendix F

Vitter uses Twitter more than Boxer, but less than Lincoln, with 197 tweets during the observed period and a total of 776 tweets with 6756 followers.<sup>23</sup> This fits with his Facebook and blog usage, with a relatively high number of updates. These updates seem, across all three mediums, to be more effective at communicating to supporters rather than with them.

### **Marco Rubio**

Marco Rubio's main site, like David Vitter's, appears different than Boxer or Lincoln's. He includes more updates than the other candidates, and has laid out his site differently, making social networking updates- Facebook and Twitter- available on his home page.<sup>24</sup>

Rubio also provides the most interactive volunteer tools, with an entire page of links to sign up to volunteer, materials like brochures and fact sheets and how-to sheets for things like hosting an event. Most interesting, though is the link to Ning, Rubio's tool for connecting and creating supporter groups.<sup>25</sup> Ning appears to be similar to Meetup, in that you can create a profile and then be linked to other groups.<sup>26</sup> Rubio has 772 members on Ning, far fewer than the hundreds of thousands that Dean had on Meetup (Trippi, 2004 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Wolf, 2004).

Ning is a for-profit social networking service, and offers to "create social networks" on its site, with several pricing plans- Ning Mini, Ning Plus and Ning

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<sup>23</sup> see appendix D

<sup>24</sup> see appendix B

<sup>25</sup> see appendix I

<sup>26</sup> see appendix J

Pro.<sup>27</sup> These are accessible to anyone willing to pay, and are not hugely expensive, with the most expensive plan, Ning Pro, charging \$49.95 per month.<sup>28</sup>

Rubio's use of Ning is hard to pin down; there are several groups, and several hundred members, but there is no way yet to measure the effectiveness of these Ning groups. With a greater number of people involved, Ning would be comparable to Meetup, but even with 772, the service has some organizational value.

Rubio's Facebook use is in line with Vitter's, which is to say that the majority of the posts are basic information, and the most direct supporter involvement is through comments on the main page.<sup>29</sup> Rubio has 90071 fans, making his Facebook page a potentially powerful organizational tool. To this end, he provides the same links to get involved as his main page, as well as a link to donate.

Rubio is also active on Twitter, with 12765 followers, and a total of 689 tweets, 40 of which came during the observed period.<sup>30</sup> He, like Boxer, is active, but has a low frequency of Tweets and a high number of followers. It would appear that the majority of Rubio's effort goes toward his main site and his Facebook page, updating both regularly.

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<sup>27</sup> see < <http://about.ning.com>>

<sup>28</sup> see < <http://about.ning.com/announcement>>

<sup>29</sup> see appendix F

<sup>30</sup> see appendix D

## Conclusion Of Observation

These campaigns all use the same tools of new media. They each use a main website, a Facebook page, a Twitter feed and either a Youtube channel or video blog. Each of these tools is accessible to any campaign; the only barriers are paying for development and hosting of the website, and paying staff to upload content to Twitter, Facebook and Youtube. Facebook, Twitter and Youtube all make their services available to candidates at no cost.<sup>31 32 33</sup>

It is fair to say, then, that these campaigns all use new media to roughly the same extent. Some use certain tools in more complex ways than others, for example Marco Rubio's more complex volunteering tool, but all use basically the same new media tools as part of their campaigns.

It is not apparent the exact benefit that each candidate will receive from these tools; the exact figures raised online and the support generated or organized will not be known until the end of the campaign. What is apparent is that some groups of supporters seem to be attracted to different aspects of each candidate's new media strategy.

One easily measured indicator of current new media success is each candidate's number of Twitter followers. This is comparable to each other candidates by calculating what percentage of the possible followers they have

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<sup>31</sup> see < <http://www.box.net/shared/lki7vvnvj5>> (Facebook public person information)

<sup>32</sup> see < <http://twitter.com/about>>

<sup>33</sup> see < <http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=72851>>

attracted. This gives a feel for the success of each campaign currently, without having to wait on fundraising numbers or supporter numbers.

Pew research reports that nationally 19% of online adults use Twitter (Fox, Smith and Zickuhr, 2009). Further, Pew reports that the percentage of adults online is tied to household income, with 60% of adults in a household making less than \$30,000 online, 76% in households between \$30,001 and \$49,999 and 83% in households between \$50,000 and \$74,999 (Rainie, 2010). These figures are representative of a perfect world, where access to the Internet and inclination to use it are equal across the nation. This does not mean that these numbers cannot still be of use, they simply provide a more hypothetical view of the current success of each candidate's online campaign. They also provide a general sense of what percentage of each state's population is being reached by new media. This in turn demonstrates the effectiveness of new media by showing its general appeal to the population.

Louisiana and Arkansas have the lowest average household incomes, at \$42,634 and \$39,127, respectively. Florida is the next highest, at \$48,637, and California is the highest, at \$61,154.<sup>34</sup> Correlated to the Pew data, this would indicate that 76% of adults in Louisiana, Arkansas and Florida are online, and that 83% of adults in California are online.

The adult population of Louisiana is 3,364,564, the adult population of Florida is 14,496,691, the adult population of California is 29,771,439 and the adult population of Arkansas is 2,178,645 (all state adult population calculated as total

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<sup>34</sup> see < [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=01000US&-\\_box\\_head\\_nbr=GCT1901&-ds\\_name=ACS\\_2008\\_3YR\\_G00\\_&-\\_lang=en&-mt\\_name=ACS\\_2008\\_3YR\\_G00\\_GCT1901\\_US9T&-format=US-9T](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-_box_head_nbr=GCT1901&-ds_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_&-_lang=en&-mt_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_GCT1901_US9T&-format=US-9T) >

population minus population under 18).<sup>35</sup> Applying the Pew data, we see that the online population of Louisiana is 2,557,068, the online population of Florida is 11,017,485, the online population of California is 24,710,294 and the online population of Arkansas is 1,655,770 (all populations calculated as online percentage based on media income multiplied by total adult population). Applying the 19% Twitter use rate calculated by Pew, the Twitter population of Louisiana is 485,842, the Twitter population of Florida is 2,093,322, the Twitter population of California is 4,694,955 and the Twitter population of Arkansas is 314,596 (all calculated as online population multiplied by .19). These numbers are not exact, as the rate of Twitter usage is a national, not regional, average, but these numbers do show that all candidates are reaching roughly 1% of the theoretically available audience. In short, even with fluctuation between states and regions, the impact of a well-run Twitter campaign is still relatively small.

This lack of a huge audience for some aspects of new media is why David Plouffe made it a point on the Obama campaign to run a successful traditional media campaign as his main approach. While new media was vital in Obama's campaign, it was not the main tool for appealing to likely voters, with traditional media remaining the backbone of Obama's strategy (Plouffe, 2009). This is still the case; campaigns must use new media in order to be successful, but they cannot be successful due to new media. For the time being, new media is still secondary to traditional media in terms of supporter appeal, but its usefulness is increasing. Right

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<sup>35</sup> see < [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=01000US&-\\_box\\_head\\_nbr=GCT1901&-ds\\_name=ACS\\_2008\\_3YR\\_G00\\_&-\\_lang=en&-mt\\_name=ACS\\_2008\\_3YR\\_G00\\_GCT1901\\_US9T&-format=US-9T](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GCTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-_box_head_nbr=GCT1901&-ds_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_&-_lang=en&-mt_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_GCT1901_US9T&-format=US-9T) >



now, the costs of new media are equal for candidates, but the ability of their supporters to access new media are not.

The Pew study showed not only the rate of usage for Twitter, but also its rate of growth. This number may be more important, as in less than a year Twitter nearly doubled in size. From April to September of 2009, its use grew from 11% to 19% of the online adult population (Fox, Smith and Zickuhr, 2009). Examining the rate of Twitter usage, then, it could be said that Twitter played a fringe role in 2008, when it appealed to less than 10% of the online population, and is now playing more of a role as its usage grows.

This illustrates one main limiting factor for new media: supporter adoption rate. In a situation where candidates are relatively equal in their ability to use new media, or access it, the factor differentiating one from another is the ability of the targeted supporters to use the same new media tools. The current state of new media is an interesting one, then, where candidates whose supporters who are more active in new media receive more effect from their use of new media, while candidates whose supporters are not as new media savvy receive less effect from the same tools. This likely influences the use of new media tools, and may account for some of the varying degrees of complexity in the new media strategies of the 2010 candidates.

Each candidate used new media in some capacity to fundraise, organize and communicate with supporters and self publish. Some used special fundraising pages that loaded ahead of the main page, some used fundraising appeals on the main page, some linked to fundraising through Facebook and some appealed through

their blog.<sup>36</sup> Each of the candidates had some capacity for supporter organization on their main site, with Marco Rubio coming the closest to the Dean level of organization.<sup>37</sup> Each candidate also engaged their supporters, through Facebook, which is interactive by its very nature, and sometimes through a blog that invited feedback. Finally, each candidate had a large capacity to self publish. They could post updates to Facebook, updates to their main site, blog entries, press releases and finally they could produce videos uploaded on Youtube or their own site.<sup>38</sup>

While each candidate used it differently, new media is certainly a vital part of candidate's communication with supporters, fundraising and its ability to self publish. Unlike Barack Obama, candidates in the 2010 Senate election are not using proprietary new media tools; they all are using the same tools. This does not mean that they are not as advanced, but rather that new media has grown to meet their needs with tools that already exist. Candidates today can use new media with the same ease as they use television; they do not have to build their own station to broadcast, they can simply use an existing station. Similarly, a candidate today does not necessarily have to build a new social networking site to connect supporters, when Facebook and others already exist, and work well. The candidates used these technologies differently, but this difference is mainly due to personality, not to any barrier to entry or of use. They may each be reluctant to use these technologies because of a desire to keep control over all aspects of the campaign to themselves,

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<sup>36</sup> see appendices B C E F

<sup>37</sup> see appendix J

<sup>38</sup> see appendix H

or they may feel their supporters will not respond to new media, but they all have equal opportunity to use new media.

New media has lost the last vestiges of what Trippi called the “whiff of rebellion,” eradicated by Barack Obama’s win and its growing ubiquity in everyday life (Trippi, 2004 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008). New media is certainly not only a vital part of a campaign, but now is also standard, like television or print. A candidate is not only expected to use new media today, but can be expected to use a main website, a Facebook page, a Youtube channel and a Twitter. As more and more supporters begin to feel comfortable using these tools to the same level as the candidates, then candidates will be able to use them in more complex ways. In several years, Rubio might not be notable for having a complex volunteering tool on his site and Boxer may not be notable for having discussion threads on her Facebook page.

The biggest capability of new media that does not seem to be present in the 2010 campaigns is the use of supporter-generated content. The campaigns do encourage supporter involvement, but unlike the Dean campaign, they do not seem to encourage supporter generated videos or blog posts. There is no obvious reason for this; it may be due to personal choice or the lack of material being produced. As shown by the Dean campaign, this user-generated content has the capability to greatly benefit a campaign, and it would seem that it would benefit these Senate campaigns as well (Trippi, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008; Bloom and Kerbel, 2005; Lawson-Borders and Kirk, 2005).

Lance Bennett, in an interview, explained that his view of the future of new media was that it would become a way to “democratize campaign communication”

letting supporters communicate not only with the campaign, but also on its behalf. This will happen, he adds, when “conventional consultants... discover how to develop loose relationships with quasi independent content producers” (Bennett interview, 2010).

New media is now a vital and established tool for campaigns to converse with and organize their supporters, as well as a tool for fundraising and self-publishing. They have not yet become the dominant method of communication for campaigns, but are rapidly increasing in importance and in the size of the audience they are able to reach. The future of new media lies with the supporters, the “quasi-independent content producers.” It is not immediately apparent what this will do for campaigning, but one thing is apparent: the new media tools used in the 2010 campaign are here to stay.

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## Appendix A

	Social Networking	Self Publishing	Fundraising
David Vitter	Facebook, Twitter	Blog, Youtube, Videos on site	Main site
Barbara Boxer	Facebook, Twitter	Blog, Youtube, Videos on site	Main site, Blog, Secondary Site
Blanche Lincoln	Facebook, Twitter	Blog, Youtube, Videos on site	Main Site, Blog, Secondary Site
Marco Rubio	Facebook, Twitter, Ning	Blog, Youtube, Videos on site	



## Appendix B

### Barbara Boxer 4/19



### Barbara Boxer 6/3



Appendix B *cont.*

Blanche Lincoln 4/19



Blanche Lincoln 6/3



## Appendix B cont.

### David Vitter 4/19



### David Vitter 6/3





## Appendix B cont.

### Marco Rubio 4/19



### Rubio 6/3



## Appendix C

### Blanche Lincoln Fundraising Special Page



### David Vitter Message Special Page



## Appendix C cont.

### Marco Rubio Fundraising Special Page

Marco Rubio for U.S. Senate

<https://www.marcorubio.com/where-will-he-sit/>

Apple Yahoo! Google Maps YouTube Wikipedia News Popular Bayou Buzznews - P SOS Election Hall Other Bookmarks

**IF HE CAN'T TAKE A STAND, WHERE WILL HE SIT?**

Charlie Crist has called himself many things over his political career: a Reagan Republican, a closet Democrat, a Jeb Bush Republican and now an "Independent". The only thing Charlie has been consistently is a politician. Today, with issues like Cap-and-Trade, health care mandates and our economy hanging in the balance, America can't afford another politician in Washington who doesn't know where he stands.

Donate today to Marco Rubio and help elect a principled conservative who is not only honest about where he stands, but also leaves no doubt as to where he'll sit.

**marco2010**

**Online contribution for Marco Rubio for US Senate**

I would like to make a secure online contribution.

**Donation Amount**

Please select one of the following donation amounts, or enter your own.

☐ \$24 ☐ \$240 ☐ \$2,400

Other Amount

**Payment Details**

Please enter your credit card details. The red indicates required fields.

Name on Card

Card Type

Card Number

## Appendix D

	<b>Followers</b>	<b>Tweets</b>
<b>Barbara Boxer</b>	4/19-20,083 6/3-20,598 current- 21,081	4/19- 189 6/3- 218 current- 241
<b>Blanche Lincoln</b>	4/19-1,058 6/3-1,236 current-1,331	4/19-382 6/3- 834 current- 992
<b>David Vitter</b>	4/19-5,740 6/3-6,324 current- 5,531	4/19-518 6/3- 699 current-785
<b>Marco Rubio</b>	4/19- 11,300 6/3- 12,380 current- 12,812	4/19-621 6/3-657 current-693

## Appendix E

### Barbara Boxer



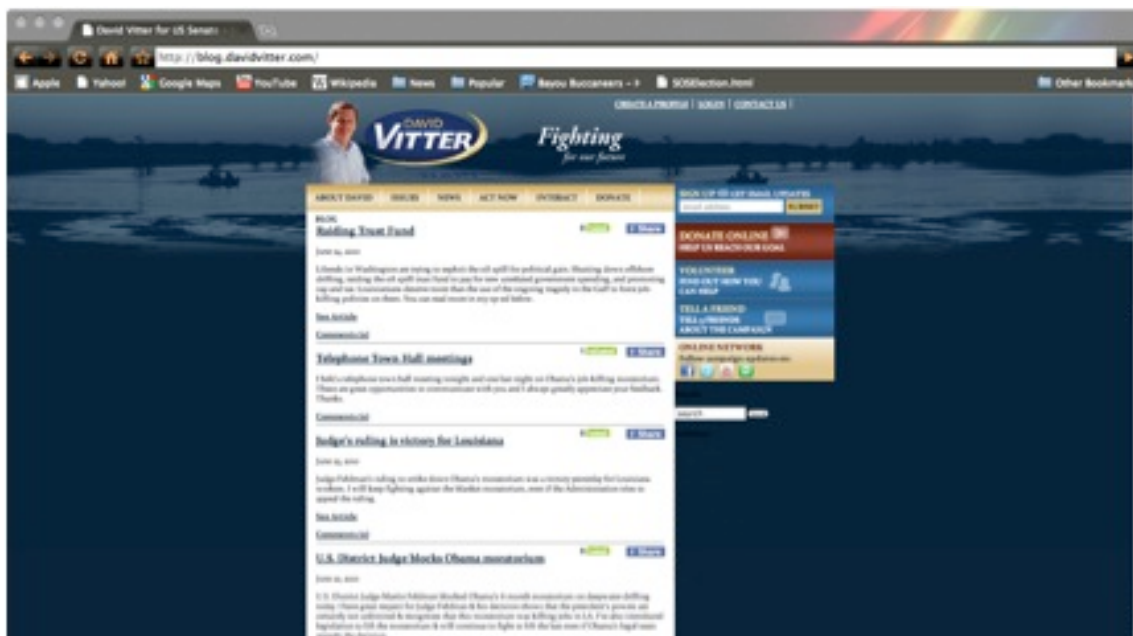
### Blanche Lincoln





## Appendix E cont.

### David Vitter



### Marco Rubio



## Appendix F

### Barbara Boxer



### Blanche Lincoln



## Appendix F cont.

### David Vitter



### Marco Rubio



## Appendix G

### Barbara Boxer Facebook Discussion Threads

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Facebook discussion thread for Barbara Boxer. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.facebook.com/barbaraboxer/fb?board.php?uid=6887788786>. The Facebook header includes the search bar and navigation links. The discussion thread is titled "Barbara Boxer Discussions" and is part of a board. It lists several discussion topics with their respective post counts and creation dates. The topics include "Enrollments", "There is no such thing as a free lunch", "Misuse of California Court Apparatus for Extortion and Civil Rights Violations", "CA WILL STAND WITH THE OTHER STATES AGAINST THE RECON. BILL, EVEN IF OUR LEADERSHIP WILL NOT...", "STOP Obama Care!! Write Your Congress Person, NOW!! I Did!", "Should firemen bring using their fire trucks to gang walk targets of CONTELPRO?", "In Coercion of Congress Responsible for the Stand in America?", "Is Our Government Engaging in Child Abuse?", and "Bullying - It isn't just happening to children". Each topic has a "Latest post by" field indicating the most recent post and its date. On the right side of the page, there are advertisements for "Action Range Pop Cans", "Play Superhero City", and "Westworld".

Barbara Boxer Discussions

Sort by: Newest

Showing topics 1 - 10 out of 44.

Topic	Latest post by	Posted
Enrollments	Dena Campbell	Posted 23 hours ago
There is no such thing as a free lunch	Leah Smith	Posted on May 10, 2012 at 5:00pm
Misuse of California Court Apparatus for Extortion and Civil Rights Violations	Steven Nathan	Posted on April 29, 2012 at 11:00am
CA WILL STAND WITH THE OTHER STATES AGAINST THE RECON. BILL, EVEN IF OUR LEADERSHIP WILL NOT...	Leah Smith	Posted on April 21, 2012 at 4:22pm
STOP Obama Care!! Write Your Congress Person, NOW!! I Did!	Leah Smith	Posted on April 20, 2012 at 11:00am
Should firemen bring using their fire trucks to gang walk targets of CONTELPRO?	Bonnie Calogno	Posted on April 9, 2012 at 11:00am
In Coercion of Congress Responsible for the Stand in America?	Bonnie Calogno	Posted on April 9, 2012 at 9:00am
Is Our Government Engaging in Child Abuse?	Bonnie Calogno	Posted on April 9, 2012 at 12:43pm
Bullying - It isn't just happening to children	Bonnie Calogno	Posted on April 1, 2012 at 12:00pm

Facebook 100 connections likes to Barbara Boxer Discussions Board 44

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Create an Ad

Action Range Pop Cans

Apex now in our Action Range locations. We show you how to play video games for a living.

47 Likes

Play Superhero City

Could this possibly be the most addictive game on Facebook?

47 Likes

Westworld 100

You'll want your own in Fresnoville, where the wildest west never sleeps.

17 Likes

## Appendix H

### Barbara Boxer



### Blanche Lincoln





Appendix H *cont.*

David Vitter



Marco Rubio



## Appendix I

### Marco Rubio Volunteer Page

TWITTER | YOUTUBE | FLICKR | NING | RSS FEEDS  
FACEBOOK |

Search for:  (Search)

HOME | PRESS | MARCO 101 | M-TV | BLOG | GET THE FACTS | **ISSUES**

#### VOLUNTEER NOW

Get started today in helping Marco win the August Primary! No matter the amount of time you have available, you too can make a positive impact on the campaign. From simply spreading the word among your network to organizing or joining volunteer teams, there are plenty of activities you can be doing now! As always, the campaign is here to serve and assist you in any endeavor. The following is just a list to get you started:

- [Sign Up As A Volunteer Here](#)
- Win Your Network**

We all influence those around us. Whether at church, school or work, Marco needs you to be bold and help spread the word among them! You can accomplish this two ways: [Marco100.com](#) website and materials

  - Print off materials from this site to distribute
  - Send a "Why I support Marco Rubio" email to your contacts

The campaign is here to assist you in answering the questions you are asked. Feel free to email Luis Valdez directly at [Luis@marcorubio.com](mailto:Luis@marcorubio.com) he will ensure a quick response.
- MATERIALS**

Fliers and guides are important to win new votes. Feel free to use the following to get the job done! Check back often for new ones.

  - [Download the Brochure \(pdf\)](#)
  - [Second Amendment Fact Sheet](#)
- TEAMWORK!**

Create or join a team of volunteers for Marco. We have coalitions and groups throughout the state eager for new recruits to help spread the word. Start a group at your workplace, school or with your neighbors. Working with others you will be amazed at what can be accomplished! Visit our [blog](#) site for a list of groups or create your own today!
- EVENT PRESENCE**

In large and small communities, there are many events throughout the state where prospective voters congregate. From Strawberry Festivals to parades, if there is an upcoming event in your community, please don't wait—use the ["Volunteer How To"](#) to sign-up supporters and have a presence. Want to work with other volunteers? Send Anthony Bustamante an email ([anthony@marcorubio.com](mailto:anthony@marcorubio.com)) and we'll send it out to teams in your area.

  - [How to organizing successful outreach at an area event](#)
  - [Marco Rubio Flyer](#)
  - [Supporter Sign-up Form](#)

#### MARCO'S PHOTOS



I encourage you to share stories, photos of your activities and reflections on why you are proud to stand with my campaign, so I can post them on my website's new blog at [www.MarcoRubio.com/blog](http://www.MarcoRubio.com/blog)

GET A BUMPER STICKER

LATEST BLOG POSTS

VOLUNTEER ACTION CENTER  
All you need to get started

#### MARCO ON FACEBOOK

**Marco Rubio on Facebook**

Like

Marco Rubio has 91,912 fans





## Appendix J

### Marco Rubio Ning Page

co.ning.com/

Tube Wikipedia News Popular Bayou Buccaneers - > SOSElection.html

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Stand with Marco Rubio for Florida's Future

WELCOME | MY PAGE | VOLUNTEER ACTION CENTER | DONATE | GROUPS | VIDEOS | MARCORUBIO.COM

We need a young, energetic and principled leader like Marco Rubio to represent us in Washington.

**MEMBERS**



[View All](#)

**STAND WITH MARCO**

Ning is a platform that allows you to build your own social network. Our campaign has joined Ning and we have created our own social network called Stand with Marco Rubio. It is the personal social network for Marco Rubio's 2010 campaign for U.S. Senate. As a supporter, you can create your own Ning profile and join our social network. By doing this, you will be an interactive member of our network. This will provide you with the ability to add pictures from events, make comments, ask questions about the campaign, as well as donate to our efforts, all on Ning.

You will also be able to discuss issues on forums as well as be able to post videos of Marco's appearances in your area. Ning also allows people to friend and message each other. You will be able to see other people who also support Marco. Please join us as we continue on our road to victory!

**GROUPS**

-  **POLK COUNTY FLORIDA FOR...**  
1 member
-  **CENTRAL FLORIDA**  
4 members
-  **SARASOTA FOR RUBIO**

**LATEST ACTIVITY**

-  **The Conservative Lady and Matthew Weick** joined Stand with Marco Rubio on Friday
-  **Patti Barone, Julio A. Rodriguez, Hollye Merton and 2 more** joined Stand with Marco Rubio June 18

Welcome to Stand with Marco Rubio

[Sign Up](#) or [Sign In](#)