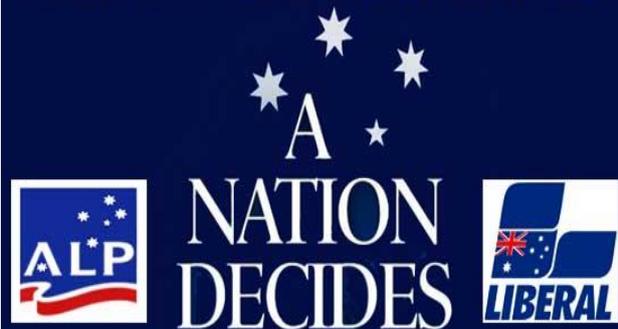


AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN  
TECHNIQUES & ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS



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Abalinx - Peter Adamis - 25 July 2016

**Background.** It is fair to say that whether political campaign strategists like it or not, campaigning has become a science unto itself.

Having said that the reader should be aware that the campaign techniques described within this article were originally designed and trialed on behalf of friend contemplating a bid for the 2018 State election. However since the member has declined to become involved due to unforeseen circumstances this research paper is null and void and the campaign, techniques may be utilised elsewhere.

A number of the campaign techniques were trialed during the recent 2016 Federal Election on a small scale. There was insufficient funds to complete all of the techniques, but what was achieved was enough to gather material for further study. Other campaign techniques mention within are yet to be trialed and are at the concept drawing board stage.

**Campaign techniques trialed.** It is important to note that a number of new concepts and methodologies of reaching targeted audiences and the public were considered. On the cessation of the trial period, it was clearly identified from the small samples taken, that campaign techniques based on technology alone was not as effective as human interaction. That is to say human meeting human. If the candidate is unable to meet with most of his electorate over a six week period, employment of volunteers is therefore a must to gain the edge over a political opponent.

On the other hand the fusion of the two concepts was found to be just as effective during the small Scullin trial. This was further confirmed during the Deakin trial by Michael Sukkar and his team on a larger scale. Stifling creative and innovative ideas and concepts at the local level is like arming the candidate with a rifle and giving him no ammunition. More can be gained by tapping into local Australian talent rather than travelling overseas and returning with ideas alien to the Australian cultural environment. This is not a criticism of current practices and methodologies but merely pointing out the waste of tax payers funds.

**Central Campaign Office.** To undertake such campaign techniques, suitable office arrangements need to be identified that can support such an enterprise. The project need to be concealed from the public and on a need to know basis. Computer equipment, data bases, developers, Social media experts, political strategists, campaign team leaders, meeting rooms, storage rooms, campaign survey teams are but some of those who would be involved during the campaign. Head Office should be the policy and coordinating centre where strategic advice on policy can be provided while the assets and manpower resources be retained at the electorate campaign office.

**North American concepts.** I am of the belief that using American campaign formats is not the way to go. In the first place, the main reason is that voters in the USA need to be registered to vote and that it is not compulsory. This means that the many voters decline to vote citing the constitution and therefore a true indication of whether the right candidate has been elected.

In the second place emphasis is placed upon the potential leader and every campaign effort is on what they believe is the way forward for the USA. Thirdly, vast sums of money are raised to pay for such campaigns and in the end the money spent is no indication on how effective the techniques used were unless there is a clear winner.

**The Prime Minister versus the candidate.** Modern political campaigns it would appear tend to gravitate towards focussing on the Prime Minister as it is evident in the recent 2016 Federal election. In this case I am of the belief that it erodes the effectiveness of a local run campaign being conducted by a candidate who has been doing the hard yards six months out from an election.

The long Federal Election campaign was a disaster of quantitative for the Liberal Party as it gave the opposition time to gather and unite against Malcolm Turnbull. This became evident in the closing stages of the election campaign where public opinion began to sway towards Labor and the Greens as well as focussing on minor and independent candidates.

**Campaign concepts.** Those who have worn the uniform and talked the talk now full well that there is nothing better than troops on the ground and that an electorate has not been won over until a candidate has visited the electorate the old fashion way. However with new technologies emerging, political campaigns are using more technological concepts than before. A number of those methodologies and concepts are described below:

**Human to human interface.** Traditional methods such as meeting and greeting members of the public at shopping centres, train stations, community centres, pre-poll, individuals, candidates backyard, schools, educational institutions, Vic Roads, Centrelink and other areas of public interest are also fair game as long as the material is within a reasonable distance from the building. Michael Sukkar was brilliant in Deakin and one should credit where it is due. The Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser appearing on the steps of Victorian Parliament was another campaign highlight, standing solidly behind the CFA volunteers. This was pure magic and those responsible should be congratulated, but somewhere along the line the message trickled down to water the message and thus the magic was lost.

**Telephone calling.** Mass coverage of the electorate via telephone was not considered due to the costs involved and that closing the gap was not high on the agenda other than to hold the line against the national trend.

**Mobile devices.** Mobile were used effectively as a means of communication and distributing messages to any member of the public once their mobile number was known. This had potential for the future and should not be underestimated. The messages were beamed to the public from the campaign Office by the campaign manager.

**Email messaging.** Mass email messaging can be made possible after human surveys have been taken and entered onto the database. This is time consuming and requires at least twelve months in advance to be collected, analysed and targeted accordingly.

**Postal Votes.** This is a good source of gathering information and feedback if handled with care and sensitivity using pre-designed messages that are not intrusive.

**USB Devices.** USB with coalition campaign messages, complete with videos recorded by the Prime Minister, were trialled by the Scullin campaign team with considerable success. This can be of enormous value to any future campaign.

**Subliminal messages.** Subliminal messages using the Prime Ministers profile was also trialled using website techniques and the link being distributed using emails, social media, twitter accounts, Pin Interest and Linked in resources?

**Electronic Business cards.** Electronic business cards that can hold political message and or shaped to be plugged into a laptop or computer is a desirable method of providing target or potential new members.

**Interactive fridge magnets.** Simple messages that may be turned on and off, using movement sensors as switching mechanisms.

**Mobile Teams.** Mobile teams can be utilised six months prior to an election visiting targeted suburban areas and meeting with community leaders. If for example there are 35 polling booths, then it is advisable that those 35 polling booths be allocated to booth captains and that these same booth captains make up the mobile teams, operating within a five kilometer radius of the polling booth. The advantage of this concept is that on polling day, the booth captains will be able to recognise, meet and greet many of the voters that came into contact with during the six month prior to the election.

**Social Media.** Extensive use of social media was trialed by the Scullin campaign team during the 2013 Federal election campaign with considerable success against opposition from Head office who felt it a waste of time and effort. How wrong they were. Again. Social media in this case involves websites, blogs and other electronic forums. During the 2016 Federal election, attempts were made to emulate the 2013 campaign with less success as it was controlled by the candidate. I am of the opinion that the social media aspect should be controlled by Head Office to ensure uniformity of messages and any change in political campaign strategies.

**Facebook.** This is one of the most intrusive forms of communication that has been misused and abused and as such its effectiveness has been eroded by far too many controls. Far too many controls are in place, posts are removed by administrators and the discussions not open for public comment. In many cases it is like preaching to the converted. The preferred option is create a where it is open to the public and no matter who commented, the information would be of enormous value as intelligence gathering.

**Podcasts.** If these are pre-recorded and distributed, the danger lies in the political dynamics of the day and they need to be record again. Live podcasts are useful for the dissemination to groups across the nation unable to meet at one given location.

**YouTube.** This is probably one of the most inexpensive methods of effectively using social media to get the message across. Not only can it be linked to gateways such as Facebook, Myspace, websites, blogs, but also linked within articles and by email. As mentioned above, pre-recorded podcasts and video messages can be utilised effectively to spread the message to the public.

**Radio and Mainstream news media.** Prior to the introduction of the internet, radio was considered the most effective means of getting a political message out to the public, this was followed up by the mainstream media printing vast block of political Material. All of which individuals could hear or read to and from going to work. Today their effectiveness has not waned but has been reduced as people now rely on digital material beamed directly to their watches, mobile devices and tablets. Therefore the radio and print media have a niche market and a place on the campaign trail.

**Election Day messages.** There should be one consistent message given to voters by the volunteers and not the generic one such as “vote Joe Citizen for the Liberal Party”, but rather “Good government, jobs, heath and economic security”. Consideration should also be given to what messages can be provided at pre-polling booths.

**Corflutes.** A time honoured method that was once effective but are now prone to being defaced if left out for prolonged periods as was the case in Chisholm. Corflutes are best installed on days prior to an election in dead red seats.

**Banners.** If used correctly and located in deal places can be effective as the message remains static during the length of the political campaign. But these are also deemed expensive and may not be worth the costs involved.

**Key ring interactive objects.** Simple Key like objects that can be fitted along the key rings with messages displayed when key is used.

**Political mobile Applications.** Applications which are simple to be downloaded and used with time pieces and/or as tones

**Taxi Cab messages.** Taxi cabs and transport vehicles be fitted with electronic marquee message boards. They may also contain on the front and back seats campaign material that passengers can read. Approval of the Taxi associated peak bodies will be required.

**A Frame with interactive screen messages.** This is within the realms of possibilities and thus save thousands of dollar for the Victorian Division. These interactive A Frame message boards can be changed if they are remotely controlled from a central point. Imagine sending out the Prime Minister's message according to opportunities that may arise during the campaign.

**Peer and community colleagues.** The appearance of utilising peer group support is similar to the tactics used by the Labor back in the Fifties and sixties where New Australians were targeted as they were coming of the boat so to speak and advised that the labor party was for the worker. This peer group support was further enhanced within the manufacturing and factory based regions of employment.

**Bumper stickers.** This method of distributing political messages across an electorate is best carried out by targeting specific communities and sports organisations.

**Drones.** The use drones as a means of delivering voices messages to remote areas or target an audience. This technology has yet to be used politically and its potential uses should not be overlooked. The use of drones in a built up area is not considered suitable for obvious reasons although it is not an unreasonable concept.

**Opinion Polls.** Not all opinion polls are correct. However it is important to follow the trend to identify issues and matters of public concern. Newspoll was the only opinion poll to put things into perspective and correctly identify the Federal election outcome. The Medicare, superannuation and Negative gearing were identified early but were not made major issues until the last few days of the campaign.

**Vehicles.** Campaign vehicles driven constantly around the electorate a reminder and can be embedded in people's minds the simple messages. Cost is the major factor using such vehicles.

**Community Bill boards.** Bill boards out of reach of human intervention that contain simple messages are very effective. Interactive bill boards above bridges, walkways, buildings and community centres are also attractive and desirable as long as the messages being displayed are consistent with the main theme.

**Fragmented suburban targets.** The concept of fragmentation is to target selected suburbs by visiting every second or third house by the candidate and their group of volunteers over a six month campaign. The messages must be simple and feedback entered onto the campaign data base.

**Statistical data.** All of the above techniques can be converted into statistical data using a simple excel spread sheet and applying algorithms that can mimic voter behaviour. The mimicking of voter behaviour will depend on the question technique and the answers converted onto a data base using markers voter intention. This is not as easy as it may seem and it may take considerable time, money and effort to get the program to operate effectively. Alternatively such programmes can be purchased off the shelf or developed by programmers to suit the electorate.

**Swinging voters.** Swinging voters are a prize for any candidate as they are also a barometer on how effective the campaign was in the distribution and reaching out to those swing voters. The messages must appeal to these voters in order influence and convert the uncertainty to a positive vote and make them feel that their contribution meant something. Behavioural political scientists are better qualified at devising such messages to attract the swinging voter.

**Coffee and chats.** These coffee and chats are merely conversion tactics designed to attract local influencers within target areas. The target individuals feel important that the local member has invited them and as a result feel special. It's not hard to see the importance of such informal chats. Coffee chats can be conducted anywhere and they are a reminder of the workplace tool box meetings concepts used by the construction industry to distribute occupational health and safety ideas.

These coffee and chats have been around for quite some time and are proving to be very effective. They are also used to monitor behaviour and individuals potential for manipulation during campaigns. Many young and aspiring political hopefuls have inevitably fallen into the trap of helping a local candidate with little or no acknowledgement.

**Events and functions.** Events and functions includes lectures, presentations and discussions groups, most of which are designed to raise funds. The stronger an electorate the easier it is to attract individuals to the function, especially when the guest is a very high profile figure of political persuasion or a captain of industry. Occasionally a sports individual, well known journalist or academic is invited given the occasion is invited. Funds are always in short demand and unfortunately it is funds that attracts the political hierarchy to making promises they otherwise would not consider to aspiring political candidates.

**Heart to heart chats with community leaders.** Candidates serious about winning an election could well do with identifying community leaders and influencers and have what is called a heart to heart chat and convincing them that the cause of the candidate is the way to go. It would also be an opportunity for the community leader to give their point of view across and what support they need. Community leaders could be parish priests, sports managers, diverse cultural communities, the local CFA, focus groups, old age homes, paramilitary organisations, scout groups and a myriad of other likeminded organisations.

One candidate who has been a long time survivor is canny enough to have cottoned onto this some many years ago and distributes funds according to the needs of the community leaders. It is a given that these community leaders will influence their members. After all is it not in their interests to vote for the candidate if potential funds have been dangled in front of them. This certainly an offer too good to refuse would you not say.

**Volunteers.** Volunteers are the backbone of any successful campaign. Whether they are paid or not is immaterial. The concept of being able to draw upon a reservoir of manpower is the key to any successful campaign and many a campaign has faltered on Election Day because it lacked sufficient volunteers to man the polling booths. What is the use of conducting a flawless well run campaign if on the day of the election a candidate does not have the manpower? Volunteers are required at least six months prior to any election and must be delegated with tasks commensurate with their skills and abilities.

**Conclusion.** Campaigning is always difficult and to say otherwise is an understatement. To win any election you require the services of a well-seasoned and experienced campaign manager who can work with all stakeholders involved while at the same time look after interests of the candidate as his first priority rather than the interests of external influences and forces.

In short, a pre-selected candidate without a committed campaign manager and a dedicated team is not going places; unless the candidate is willing to listen and work within the frameworks of an agreed campaign strategy. Leadership, unity and hard work are the keys to winning elections.

Therefore by working as a united and a cohesive group, much can be achieved, even the impossible. Just ask Julie Banks in Chisholm. Head Office are not always the fountain of knowledge when it comes to campaign techniques and concepts. They can be found right our own doorstep. Seek and ye shall find.

As always, my apologies for the poor grammar, punctuation and savagery of the Aussie English language. All that I can say is that it is great to be alive and one does not give up in the face of adversity.



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