

Developing a Campaign Platform/Message

Once you have decided to run for office, you need to think about your platform/message. It tells the voters why you are running for this office and why they should choose you over your opponents for the same office. You know who your voters are; you need to decide what you will say to persuade them to vote for you.

In deciding on your platform you need to think about several things

- A. Your Campaign theme.
- B. The several issues you will run on
- C. Events to highlight your issues
- D. The issues that you will have to address – debates, questions in paper etc.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD PLATFORM/MESSAGE

There are a number of criteria that make up a strong platform.

IT MUST BE SHORT

Voters have very little patience for listening to long-winded politicians. If you cannot effectively deliver your message to a voter in less than one minute, then you will probably lose that voter's attention and maybe even their vote.

IT MUST BE TRUTHFUL AND CREDIBLE

The message needs to come from your values, practices, policies and history. In addition, your message should be believable. Voters must believe what you say, both about yourself and what you will do, is true. It is important to backup your statements with evidence of experience or knowledge from your personal past. Saying you understand a problem or issue without demonstrating why or how you understand it doesn't convince voters.

A MESSAGE MUST BE PERSUASIVE AND IMPORTANT TO VOTERS

You must talk about topics that are important to your voters. These will often be problems that voters face every day in their lives, not issues that politicians think are important to public policy. Voters are more likely to support candidates that

talk to them about their jobs, caribou hunting, housing issues then a candidate that talks about the budget, even though the budget may deal with all of these things. Remember you are trying to convince the voter that you are the best candidate to represent them and persuade them to vote for you.

A MESSAGE MUST SHOW CONTRAST

Voters must make a choice between you and other candidates. You want to show the voters how you are different from the other candidates by contrasting yourself with them. If every candidate stands for economic development and social security, then voters will have no way of making a clear choice.

A MESSAGE MUST BE CLEAR AND SPEAK TO THE HEART

Your message must be delivered in language the voters use and understand easily. Too often politicians want to impress the voters with how smart they are, using technical words that either the voters do not understand or have no real meaning for them.

Talk about people, things and real life situations to describe abstract ideas, such as "economic policy." You want to tie your campaign message to the basic values of your voters and make it clear that you understand the problems they face every day.

A MESSAGE MUST BE REPEATED AGAIN AND AGAIN

Once your campaign determines what message will persuade your target voters to vote for your candidate, then you must repeat that same message at every opportunity. For your message to register with the voters, they have to hear the same message many times in many different ways. So, if you change your message, you are only confusing the voters.

WORKSHEET: WHY ARE YOU RUNNING FOR THIS OFFICE?

1. Make a list of all the reasons why voters should vote for you/your candidate.
2. Now, choosing the best reasons from above, write a brief statement about you/your candidate. This should be the answer to the question "why are you running for this office?" or "why should I support you?"

3. Now, read the statement aloud and time yourself. You must be able to complete the statement in less than one minute. If you go over a minute, try to trim your message. Takeout any long phrases or explanations. Remember that most voters will not be paying attention to all of your ten-minute speech.

4. Grade your message against the following criteria:

- a. Is it credible and truthful?
- b. Do you backup your statements with personal experience from your past?
Storytelling is a northern tradition.
- c. Are you talking about things that will be important to your voters?
- d. If you are running over one minute, then there are probably a lot of extra words and phrases that you can get rid of.
- e. Do you offer a clear choice between your candidate and your major opponents?

5. Now rewrite your statement, taking into account those things you missed the first time. You still must try to keep your message less than one minute. As you write and rewrite this statement, as you begin using it as you talk to voters, it will get better and more comfortable.

ISSUES AND THE CAMPAIGN MESSAGE

Your campaign message SHOULD NOT be your program or the list of issues you will address. Still, your campaign should address the issues that are important to your voters.

You may think of your campaign's message as the trunk of a large tree, strong, stable and well rooted in your values and personal experience. The campaign issues that you need to deal with are the tree branches, covering a wide area but connected to your message tree trunk.

STAY ON MESSAGE

Once you have developed a clear, concise, persuadable message it is important that you use that message at every opportunity and don't change it throughout the campaign. This is called "staying on message."

VISIBLE NAME WITH MESSAGE

Make sure your name is visible and clear to read on all materials. It is your last name that voters have to know – make sure it is visible.

NEXT STEP -

How will you communicate your message to voters

You can communicate directly with voters by:

1. Door to door – do NOT go alone, set up buddy system and timetable.
2. Setting yourself up in a public place e.g. post office. Northmart to connect with voters
3. Using the Internet to connect with voters.

You can communicate indirectly with voters by;

1. Yard signs & larger signs
2. Community radio messages
3. Television/cable messages
4. Internet (both indirect and direct)

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