A Review in Political Marketing: Lessons from Recent Presidential Elections

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Introduction

For years, politicians have relied on basic marketing skills - campaign buttons, posters, political rallies and campaign speeches to familiarize voters with a name, a party, and a platform.   Going back to Franklin D. Roosevelt, all modern day presidents have relied on marketing to a greater or lesser degree to communicate their message to the American people (Newman 1994).

The same principles that operate in the commercial marketplace hold true in the political marketplace: successful companies have a market orientation and are constantly engaged in creating value for their customers. In other words, marketers must anticipate their customers' needs, and then constantly develop innovative products and services to keep their customers satisfied. Politicians have a similar orientation and are constantly trying to create value for their constituents by improving the quality of life, and creating the most benefit at the smallest cost (Kotler and Kotler 1981, 1999).

Political marketing can be defined as, "..the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by various individuals and organizations. The procedures involved include the analysis, development, execution, and management of strategic campaigns by candidates, political parties, governments, lobbyists and interest groups that seek to drive public opinion, advance their own ideologies, win elections, and pass legislation and referenda in response to the needs and wants of selected people and groups in a society" (Newman, 1999, p. xiii).

It has literally become impossible not to incorporate a marketing orientation when running for office, or for that matter, when running the country. Politics today is increasingly being influenced by marketing, and the same advanced technological methods used by corporate America to market products are being used by politicians to market themselves and their ideas. The modern day president must rely on marketing not only to win the election, but to be successful as a leader after entering the White House (Newman 1981; Sabato 1981; Nimmo & Rivers 198 1; Altschuler 1982; Greenfield 1982; Mauser 1983; Goldenberg & Traugott 1984; Alexander 1984; Graber 1984a; Nieburg 1984; Polsby & Wildavsky 1984; Diamond & Bates 1984; Newman & Sheth 1985a, 1985b, 1986; Luntz, 1988; Jamieson 1992; Wring 1999; and Butler & Collins 1999; Perloff 1999).

The politician's unique service obligations

The politician is in effect a service provider who must view the voter/citizen as a consumer in the political marketplace. Similar to other service providers, the politician is dealing in a competitive marketplace, and as such needs to rely on similar approaches as do other service providers who have unique service obligations in their respective marketplaces. However, there are three situations that set the politician apart from other service providers like doctors and lawyers Newman (1988).

First of all, the politician is faced by situations that are both controllable and uncontrollable. As opposed to other service providers like doctors or lawyers, politicians

must react constantly to forces within the environment which are difficult to control. For example, when campaigning for office, there may be events which the candidate did not expect to happen, such as stock market crashes, military invasions, the death of another politician, accusations by a rival candidate, and others. These events are uncontrollable by the candidate and can only be dealt with by having an organization which is flexible enough to respond. Politicians can, however, control the course of events by establishing policies which are proactive rather than reactive.

A second dimension which sets politicians apart from other service providers is the dual roles played by politicians as both a campaigner and policy-maker. As a campaigner, the politician is in the business of trying to win enough votes to get put into office. Careful scrutiny of his constituency and competition is necessary to identify voter needs and capture competitive niches in the marketplace. This often calls for the use of volunteers who are hired on a temporary basis to carry out grass roots activities. As a policy-maker, the politician relies on a permanent staff workers who help him carry out his functions. The critical point to be made here is that the range of activities and resultant strategies very much depend on the role which the politician is playing.

The third distinction lies with the type and level of communication used by the politician and his organization. Unlike other service providers, politicians rarely can meet in person with all of their customers (or electorate), and instead must rely on the use of mass media communications, public appearances and direct mail procedures to make contact with their constituencies. In many cases, the politician's organization is responsible for making the contact. However, with respect to competition, politicians usually have more face-to-face contact than we find in most other service industries. You rarely see doctors in head-to-head televised debates on who provides better service.

The voter as a consumer

Marketers work very hard at shaping the expectations of their customers. Expectations of customers are often influenced by the gaps in thinking that exist between their own perceptions and those of the service provider. For example, Intel would like every computer user to think that they need to constantly upgrade their computer with their newest software products when they come out. Computer users, on the other hand, may not think it is worth it to them to pay hundreds of dollars for these upgrades if they are able to continue to operate their computer without it. Voters experience similar gaps in politics:[1]

1. One gap exists between the expectation of the consumer and management's perceptions of those expectations. For example, some restaurants go out of business because they fail to keep service levels consistently high, an expectation of patrons that may not have been not. In politics, this may be difficult to measure because candidates shape their perceptions of the electorate after a pollster has told them what their constituency expects. In other words, we have a case of the chicken and the egg. Particularly during presidential primaries, candidates often change policies and promises to align themselves with each state's electorate, even though their congressional voting record suggests a different opinion altogether.

2. A second gap exists between quality specifications and service delivery. In other

words, there may be constraints which prohibit the candidate from delivering what he/she perceives to be of vital importance to the voter. For example, candidates may realize that voters in their constituency have complaints about services rendered, but may be incapable of delivering them. Politicians are much more vulnerable to this gap than other service industries as a result of the unexpected situations to which politicians must always respond.

3. There also exists a gap between management perceptions and service quality specifications. For example, when McDonalds Corporation decided in early 1998 to institute a new campaign to customize food orders because of their perception of the need for this in the marketplace, a very different challenge that faced them was getting the franchisees to adopt the new service specifications. Situational influences (like the Senate shifting from a republican to democractic majority as it did recently) make it more difficult for a sitting president like George W. Bush to set agendas which are responsive to citizens' needs. Additionally, as opposed to other service industries, politicians do not always have complete control over staffing, since civil servants are often in positions not affected by changes in elected officials.

4. Finally, a fourth gap exists between the service delivery and external communications. In other words, promises made in advertisements and commercials which don't materialize in tangible results create problems for the service provider. This is especially important for the politician who often campaigns on a platform of promises which don't materialize into policy when they get into office because of the bureaucracy in government or puffery on the part of the candidate as a means of getting into office.

Anticipating voter needs

Success in marketing goes beyond the simple identification of the needs of consumers, but also includes the ability to forecast what those needs will be in the future.   Marketers must not only be able to measure and identify the needs and wants of their customers', but they must also have a vision which enables them to anticipate what those needs will be.   Whether it is a candidate, issue or product, marketing is a critical component to understanding what voters, citizens or consumers want and need. Needs may be driven by both emotion and rationality, resulting in people desiring the same product or candidate for different reasons (Newman 1994, 1999b).

Marketing is a needs assessment approach to product innovation which relies on information from the marketplace to help guide research and development. This means that the most successful products are molded around the findings from needs assessment studies. Just as a smart marketer makes sure that there is a need for his product before he distributes it around the country, so must a politician be sure that voters are concerned with an issue before he decides to advocate it. For example, George W. Bush was convinced in 2000 that the American people wanted a change in the policies of the prior eight years of Democratic leadership. Although he identified the correct motivation on the part of many voters, the reason he won the election was due to the fact that he was able to convince the American people that he was the right leader to bring about the change they desired.

Marketing research in politics

The importance of doing research rests with the notion that not all products can be sold to all consumers. Companies use marketing research to determine what to stress to different consumer groups. Take the case of the Disney Corporation seeking to build its clientele. People who take Disney vacations
fall into different demographic groups. Some are young couples with no children looking for a relaxing vacation, while others are parents with children looking for a vacation with activities all day long to keep the kids occupied. Politicians are no different. Marketing research and polling are of course not new to the field of politics (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; Eldersveld 1951; Campbell & Kahn 1952; Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1954; Pool and Abelson 1961; Tullock 1967; Macrae 1970; Herndon & Bernd 1972; Alker et al. 1973; Markus 1982; Tom W. Smith 1982; Bachman & O'Malley 1984; Mitofsky 1998; Mitchell and Daves 1999)

There are many different types of polls that candidates rely upon, including benchmark surveys (usually conducted after a candidate has decided to seek office to provide a baseline of information); trial heat surveys (used to group candidates together in hypothetical match-ups early in the campaign); tracking polls (conducted on a daily basis near election day to monitor any late shifts in support); cross-sectional and panel surveys (conducted by the major polling firms over time to provide a picture of where the electorate stands at different points during a campaign); and exit polls (carried out immediately after the voter casts his or her ballot)(Asher 1998). In addition to polling, candidates rely on focus groups, small numbers of people brought together in a room to discuss either the candidates or their ideas. As the group discussion goes on, campaign strategists sit behind a two-way mirror and watch in an effort to get new insights into ways of altering their campaign strategy.[2]

Opinion polls have become one of the most important tools of the modern president. Going back to Jimmy Carter's administration, candidates have relied extensively on marketing research to direct their campaign strategy. During the 1992, 1996 and 2000 campaigns, each of the candidates created a war room (originally developed by Clinton in 1992) as the nerve center to direct and monitor these activities in the Clinton organization.

One of the prerequisites to running a successful political campaign these days is the incorporation of opposition research into the candidate's campaign organization. The people who carry out this work are called in to find out anything they can on a candidate's opponents. Unfortunately, these people are often used to dig up dirt that eventually finds its way into a political spot on television or radio, or in a lead to the press. This is not a new activity. It is not unusual for a candidate to hire a firm to audit their own personal past looking for any vulnerable spots they need to be protected. Here the goal is to anticipate up front what a rival might say about you[3].

In effect, the campaign is the time during which ideas are researched, promises are made and then tested in the marketplace, something which is referred to as a "test market." This is in principle the same procedure a cigarette manufacturer uses to determine if a new cigarette should be marketed nationwide. The manufacturer will pick a few test cities, pass out sample packages of his product and then get peoples reactions to insure the likelihood of success. This is something that McDonalds does when it comes up with a new product offering. Prior to national distribution of the

product, McDonalds will put their products into selected stores and monitor customer demand and satisfaction with the product. In effect, the test market is a "simulated" marketplace that serves as a way of forecasting the behavior of the consumer.

Market segmentation and targeting

In business, market segmentation and targeting are used to identify those groups of customers who the marketer directs his product and promotional campaign towards. It is used by many companies who choose not to sell their product or service to every potential customer, but only those who are likely to buy it.

In politics, market segmentation has been traditionally used by each of the political parties to choose which segments of citizens they target with their appeals (Baines 1999). For example, Al Gore realized early on in the 2000 campaign that one very large market segment, the middle class, was ripe for targeting. The critical decision was finding the right message to appeal to this segment with. Because of the importance that economic issues play in a presidential campaign, Gore decided to use the promises of more jobs and better wages to appeal to this segment. Likewise, the baby-boomers were another important market segment identified by the Gore campaign. Various appeals were also targeted to this segment. In 2000, George W. Bush effectively used a market segmentation strategy to differentiate himself from Al Gore by referring to Gore as a "liberal". By doing this, Bush was appealing to voters who wanted to support a "conservative" candidate.

Candidate Positioning

Once the multiple voter segments have been identified, the candidate has to position himself in the marketplace. Positioning is multi-stage process that begins with the candidate assessing both his own and his opponents' strengths and weaknesses. Positioning is the vehicle which allows the candidate to convey his image to voters in the best light possible (Johnson 1971; Patton and Kaericher 1980; Maddox 1980; Campbell 1983; Nimmo 1970; Nimmo 1973; Elster 1972; Wildman and Wildman 1976; Mauser 1980; Goggin 1984; West 1984; Nimmo & Rivers 1981). The image is crafted through the media by emphasizing certain personality traits of the candidate, as well as stressing various issues. For example, George W. Bush realized that as a perceived outsider to Washington, he was in a good position to criticize the system which Bill Clinton and Al Gore had governed for the past eight years. Using that general theme to define his campaign, Bush then successfully positioned himself as the candidate who was able to fix the problems he attached to the Clinton/Gore tenure.

Image management

Going back to Franklin D. Roosevelt, we have witnessed successive presidential administrations using sophisticated marketing technology to manufacture an image of themselves that they were convinced they could sell to the electorate (Newman 1999b). Roosevelt used a technology during his time which allowed him to go direct to the American electorate after he entered office in 1932. Relying on radio, Roosevelt would

have fireside chats with the American people. Another popular marketing tool, imagery management, was relied upon extensively by Roosevelt and his advisors to convince voters that he was able to walk, when in fact he was crippled. Utilizing a technique that took him many years to master, he would lean on the muscular arm of his son, and use a cane in the other hand to give the illusion that he was walking, when in fact he really wasn't. There are only four seconds of recorded film of Roosevelt shown walking in this manner. In an effort to convince the American people that he was not crippled, Roosevelt had the braces on his legs painted black, and always wore black pants that went down to his shoes so the braces could not be seen (Newman 1994).

More interestingly, in close to 50,000 pictures of Roosevelt at his summer home in New York, only two have him sitting in a wheel chair. In fact, at the time, Americans knew that he had contracted polio, but many did not know that he was crippled from it. It was not until his last speech to Congress after the Yalta Conference, the first time he gave a speech to Congress sitting down, that he admitted to wearing ten pounds of steel to keep him supported while he was standing. Elaborate schemes were devised for every public appearance he would make, with the Secret Service building ramps to enable him to drive up in his car to the podium. Then careful attention to detail would include decisions such as the placement of his chair, and most importantly, how he would ascend and descend from the podium.

The image management process has also been used by political parties to manufacture "new and improved" images that more accurately align them with their changing constituencies. Along with this process has come a constant shifting back and forth of people from one party to another and a blurring of the definition of ideology in this country. In marketing terms, ideology is a "labeling" process, almost similar in nature to the use of branding for products. People have historically used ideology as a way of labeling both themselves and politicians, and then making a connection between themselves and the candidate and/or political party through the use of this label. These labels are no different then the ones we see on products, as well as attached to services offered by a whole host of professionals who advertise in the hope of creating an image which defines who and what they stand for in the minds of consumers (Schweiger & Adami 1999). As a result of this change, ideology is now driven less by party affiliation and more by marketing, and the latest poll results indicting the mood of the electorate. Today, the labels liberal and conservative in politics are no longer defined by the political parties, but by the candidates themselves and the images their consultants craft for them. Along with this change has come a dramatic shift in power from the political party to the consultants.

Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy is a plan of action that is used to implement a series of activities that will insure success in the marketplace. Specifically, a marketing strategy is the integration of several "tools" the marketer relies on to reinforce the position he has created for his product. A successful marketing strategy in politics begins with the recruitment of viable candidates (Rosenzweig (1957; DiRenzo 1967; Clarke and Donovan 1980; Jacob 1972; Spadaro 1976; Jewell and Olson 1982; Wittman 1983; Pomper 1963; Nice 1980; Marshall 1981; Aldrich 1980; Foley 1980; Bums 1984; The

League of Women Voters Education Fund 1984).

After the right candidate is recruited, a candidate's "position" is established and then reinforced through multiple channels. Similar to the tools used in the development of a marketing strategy for a car, the candidate also has tools at his fingertips to help establish his marketing strategy. First of all, the product in politics is the policies and image of the candidate. To be successful, a candidate not only has to market himself, but his campaign platform as well. The campaign platform evolves over the course of the political campaign. It is influenced by several sources, including the candidate himself, the people in his organization, the party, and especially by the voters (Newman 1994).

After the campaign platform is developed, there are two information channels through which the candidate can promote himself. One channel is labeled push marketing, and the second is labeled pull marketing. Push marketing is synonymous with the distribution concept we discussed preciously. Just as a product is distributed from a manufacturer to a wholesaler to a retailer before it gets to the consumer, so is the candidate's message about his political platform.   One way of getting the message out is through traditional "grass roots efforts", relying upon local and state party mechanisms. Presidential candidates like F.D.R. and those before him were forced to rely on this method of campaigning to get their message out because television had not been invented yet. Additionally, the candidate must rely on these same people to get the vote out on election day. In the primaries and the general election, it is imperative that a candidate have an effective volunteer network to win.

But let's not forget that Ross Perot in 1992 relied on this same method of campaigning, but in a high tech manner. Perot used an "800" telephone exchange that he flashed on Larry King's CNN show to solicit volunteers to join his independent organization. In 1996, Bob Dole flashed his Website when he appeared on Larry King's CNN show to solicit volunteers, and both Al Gore and George W. Bush did the same in 2000. But the candidate who relied on his Website and the Internet to solicit a volunteer network that ultimately brought him victory was Jesse Ventura who ran and won the Gubanatorial race in Minnesota in 1998 (Newman 1999b).

Pull marketing is the second information channel, and centers on the use of the mass media to get the candidate's message out to the voters. Political advertising is, of course, only one component in the development of a marketing strategy for a candidate, but is widely regarded as the most important marketing component in any campaign (Chaffee 1980; Kaid 1981; Black 1982; Arterton 1984; Diamond & Bates 1984; Graber 1984a; Kaid 1999). The importance of advertising and its role in politics has been well documented in elections that have taken place over the past several decades (Katz (1957/58; Mullen (1963; McGinnis 1968; Dawson and Zinser 1971; Sheinkopf et al. 1972; Evarts & Stempel 1974; Steinberg 1976; Graber 1976; Rothschild 1978; Swinyard and Coney 1978; Bohn 1980; Chaffee and Choe 1980; Fant 1980; Chaffee et al. 1980; Patterson 1980; Wattenberg 1982; Soley & Reid 1982; Graber 1984a; Rust et al. 1984; Reid & Soley 1984; Garramone 1984; Newman 1984, 1985b; Jamieson 1992; O'Shaughnessy 1990: Morris 1997; Sherman 1999; Kraus 1999; Newman 1999b; Perloff 1999).   There are several options available to a candidate, including the television, radio, newspapers, and even e-mail on computers. The last three presidential campaigns were unique in American history because the candidates

relied on very unorthodox promotional vehicles (in addition to the more traditional ones) to get their message out. In a word, the candidates took a more direct route to the voter, and in so doing, bypassed the traditional media outlets. This meant that candidates spent less time on network news programs and more time on cable programs (Newman 1994, Newman 1999b; Newman 2001a).

A Marketing Formula for Political Success

The formula for successful product development follows some basic rules.[4] Successful companies spend a lot of time studying the needs of target customers and getting their reactions and suggestions as the product moves through development. Second, they make the customer part of the development team. Third, successful companies get the support of a high company officer and advocate. Fourth, successful companies spend a lot of time announcing the new product, not leaving this step to chance. Finally, successful new product development requires the company to establish an effective organization for managing the new product development process.

Success in a presidential campaign is subject to a similar set of rules, but in a much more condensed time period. In fact, if we can look back at some of the most recent presidential campaigns, the successes and failures of well known political leaders can be explained by taking a critical look at the marketing strategies each one followed. Let's take a closer look at some winning and losing political campaign strategies during the past two decades.

The Great Communicator: Ronald Reagan[5]

In 1980, Richard Wirthlin, Ronald Reagan's pollster, believed three pivotal tactical decisions in the campaign turned it around for Reagan: Running a six-week series of advertisements on Reagan's record as Governor; having Reagan avoid personal criticism of Carter; and having Reagan debate Carter. Wirthlin also believed Carter's personal attacks on Reagan damaged Carter's own image more than they hurt Reagan's. Carter wound up manufacturing an image of himself as mean-spirited.
One of Carter's big failures was letting the challenger look more "presidential" than the President. This happened to Carter towards the end of the campaign. As Reagan came closer to the election, it was obvious that the role he was preparing for started to look as if he were actually playing it for many years. An actor is supposed to be able to "become" the person he or she is playing. Reagan's many years of acting were definitely an asset. At the same time, Carter's frustration with the Iranian hostage crisis was clearly wearing on him, dragging him down emotionally.
Reagan effectively made Jimmy Carter's record the issue. Carter's problem was that he never resolved what it was he wanted to say about his administration; he didn't have a vision for the next four years.
Of course, one cannot dismiss the fact that public dissatisfaction with the economy probably hurt Carter more than any other single issue. The pocketbook issue in politics is the lens that all citizens look through to evaluate a presidential candidate. If the economy is not strong, and people are hurting financially, the incumbent is seen in a

much more negative light than the challenger.

Reagan's Re-election Strategy[6]

Reagan's re-election campaign in 1984 was successful for a number of reasons. One of the main factors behind his success was the coordinating mechanism between the White House and the campaign structure, which was set up early. That group consisted of Jim Baker, Mike Deaver, Dick Darman and Margaret Tutwiler, all of whom got along very well. Later called the campaign strategy group, the four met an average of four hours per week throughout the campaign. Ed Rollins was the bridge between them and the campaign structure. Rollins and Lee Atwater moved out of the White House to run the campaign operation. Jim Baker was the conduit between the outside organization and the White House. Campaign organization was one of the key elements behind Reagan's successful marketing strategy.

The Reagan people used the primaries to build up a grass roots organization and extensive voter list, targeting specific demographic groups in every state. Chief of Staff Jim Baker was the linchpin that connected the President to any activity during the campaign. Every effort was made to ensure that the economy was robust and America was at peace during the time of the general election. Remember, a world at peace and a strong economy make it very easy for a sitting president to manufacture a winning image. Reagan reinforced that image with an add campaign built around the theme, "Its morning in America again."

At the same time, Mondale's campaign failed because of the inability of the candidate to communicate with his audience over television. Mondale's commercials were confusing and difficult to follow. Unlike Reagan's simple and easy to follow themes of patriotism, Mondale's themes seem to center on tax and spend issues. Perhaps Mondale's biggest failure was in his inability to convey an image of the person as he was in real life. In person, Mondale was said to be easy-going and fun to be around. However, over television, he came across stiff and uptight. Unfortunately for Mr. Mondale, the television age had already hit politics, and his inability to use it to his advantage killed his image and ultimately his campaign.

Beginning of the Bush Era[7]

In 1988 Bush made Dukakis "the issue" of the campaign. The general election campaign started in May 1988. Lee Atwater was put in charge of the opposition research department. Roger Ailes was given control over delivery of Bush's "message", which included speeches, interviews and advertising. Bush's themes were simple and few ("Read my lips," and "A kinder, gentler nation"), allowing him to manufacture an image that was consistent with the desire on the part of the electorate not to have their taxes raised. Ailes demanded -- and received -- direct access to Bush anytime, and had the authority to sit in on any meetings. In a campaign there can be only one media guru. Bush had Ailes. Dukakis on the other hand never had just one guru and this hurt him badly. Bush empowered his people and let his handlers do their jobs; Dukakis did not.

Bush's organization chart had clearly defined responsibilities. There would be control

over the state parties, enlisting them to go only as far as the organization wanted them to go. The Willie Horton issue was taken too far by the state parties, ostensibly pushed by "independent committees," but at the same time terribly effective in shaping Dukakis's image.

The opposition research department headed by Atwater generated 125,000 quotes from 436 different sources. The Bush people identified five or six issues by mid-May, put on a 3 x 5 card, and carried around by all the top staffers. A second card generated from the research centered on 5 or 6 issues about the challenger. The Bush people assumed that the American people voted in cycles, and that if Reagan Democrats didn't see a difference between Bush and Dukakis, they would switch back to Dukakis, so they worked hard to define those differences. Bush exploited and used the power of the Reagan presidency by having Reagan stump for him and postpone unpopular decisions until after the campaign was over. Bush did make some mistakes in this campaign. His handlers had him in interview situations for which he was either too tired or ill prepared.

By contrast, Dukakis never understood the importance of firing right back when your opponent attacks you with a negative commercial. From the very beginning, Dukakis decided to turn his cheek to the attacks that Bush hit him with over and over again. In the process, Dukakis was labeled as weak and ineffective. In effect, Dukakis lost control over the manufacturing of his own image. At the same time, Bush re-engineered his own image, and in the process, eliminating the "wimp" label he was fighting for a long time. As a result, Bush looked to be the stronger leader of the two candidates.

The Master Marketer: Bill Clinton[8]

In 1992 the Republican Convention was planned largely by party officials outside the control of the campaign. As a result, millions of voters were alienated from the right-wing oratory in what should have been a major sales pitch for Bush. Lessons learned: Maintain tight control over the convention from within the campaign organization; make sure every speech is read before it gets the green light (Buchanan's speech was not, and went on to criticize policies that Bush was advocating).   The Bush campaign was operating without help from the White House. The Bush White House was so disorganized that political directions changed daily, and it took seven months to hire a speech writer for the president.

With eleven weeks until Election Day, Bush still had $40 million to spend on commercials, a week-long convention, debates on the horizon, and he had just persuaded Jim Baker to return to impose order on chaos. But Baker brought neither purpose nor focus to the campaign. Basically, the Bush campaign organization had no strategy. One of the biggest "mechanical breakdowns" in the campaign organization was not demanding censorship rights over any convention speech. While party loyalists played at the Astrodome, Bush's top campaign advisers closeted themselves at the suburban Doubletree Hotel -- a serious mistake.

The relationship between the campaign organization and the advertising people was horrible. Bob Teeter lured Madison Avenue's top talent to a new advertising agency dubbed "The November Company," whose sole task was to create Bush's television commercials. But an entire summer was wasted on debate over whether the advertising executives or the campaign should be in charge of what to say. The ad

executives complained that the campaign people didn't know what they wanted to say, and the campaign people never liked anything the ad executives gave them. This resulted in focus groups deciding what would run -- a huge mistake. Focus groups, while an effective marketing tool at generating ideas for issues, images, etc. are not a random representation of the population at large, and should always be followed up with a full blown marketing research study on a random selection of the electorate.

From a strategic point of view, Clinton's success as a candidate can be attributed to the flexibility he maintained throughout the campaign, beginning with a message of change which resonated well in the ears of voters throughout the primary season. However, once he entered the convention stage, Clinton re-positioned his theme of change around the economy. Bush on the other hand was trying to re-position his image from the time he won the war in Iraq. He seemed to be fixated on the image of himself as the leader of the Western world, and the one candidate who could be relied upon in the case of a crisis.

During the campaign, Clinton was focused on two things, the economy and change. A sign hung in the war room which read, "It's The Economy Stupid," a message that the whole campaign organization never forgot. This message worked to Clinton's advantage, as he was able to use it as the glue between all dimensions of his marketing strategy, including speeches, commercials, support by other politicians, etc.

The Gingrich Revolution

The 1994 election found the country yearning for more change, similar to the "mantra" Americans voiced in the 1992 election. There was a desire for less government and both parties campaigned on this platform. There was a wholesale slaughter of Democratic Congressmen in the 1994 mid-term election. Waiting patiently as a back-bencher in Congress for over 15 years, Newt Gingrich rose to the top in 1994. Relying on pollster Frank Luntz to carry out marketing research that identified the wording of the Contract with America, Gingrich and his army of Republicans dominated the airwaves and responded to voters' needs with a very effective marketing. With a carefully orchestrated campaign, chock-full of hype and media sensationalism, the Republican Party took control of the House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years.

In one of the latest technological advances in the 1994 campaign, Republicans put a little movie magic called "morfing" into their marketing efforts. The technique was mastered in the movie, The Terminator. In a 5- to 10-second period, Arnold Schwarzenegger changes from man to machine, making it seem as if Schwarzenegger and The Terminator are the same person.   Republican candidates capitalized on Clinton's ebb in the polls, and "morfed" their Democratic opponents into Bill Clinton. The impact of this imagery was felt by the Democrats, who went down in defeat in the Republican Revolution of 1994.

In September 1994, soon after Republican Newt Gingrich announced the Contract with America, the Republican National Committee lined up nearly 300 talk-radio interviews through the Virginia Contract Information Center. The network has 500 radio talk show on its fax network, and hosts of these shows were sent pro-Contract press clippings and talking points for the Contract. Many of the radio show hosts read the

clippings verbatim. The success of the Contract was due in large part to this marketing effort.

Many people who voted for the Contract did so without fully understanding the implications of some of its amendments. People didn't care about specifics when they voted to throw the Democrats out of Congress. Voters, the middle class in particular, just wanted more and more change. And the polls revealed an electorate totally distrusting of Bill Clinton, and more importantly, fed up with his inability to keep his promises, particularly the one calling for a middle class tax cut. These same people were willing to buy the Contract that promised more and better change.

The Republicans victory in 1994 was capitalized on by using the Contract as a "post-election" marketing tool. In response to the successful marketing of the Contract after the election, the president introduced his Middle Class Bill of Rights, a "new and improved" version of the Republican's Contract. Each of these efforts reflected a move towards the political center, where the most votes could be attracted.

Clinton's Re-election Strategy

Bill Clinton successfully re-positioned himself for the 1996 presidential election by drawing a comparison between himself, the leader of the Democratic Party, and Newt Gingrich, the unannointed leader of the Republican Party. The contrast in images turned out to be startling to the American people. In fact, the Republicans' successful marketing of the Contract with America turned into a contract on the very life of the Republican Party two years after many claimed their victory to be a revolution. If it was a revolution, it was a very short lived one. President Clinton re-positioned himself from a Washington insider to an outsider. This was due in part to the Triangulation strategy recommended to him by Dick Morris. With this strategy, Clinton positioned himself at the apex of a triangle, juxtaposed against the two political parties. In other words, Clinton successfully re-positioned himself as a leader of the free world, and not as either a Democrat or Republican, and at the same time adopted issues and policies of both parties so as not to be labeled either conservative or liberal. During this same period, the image that was cast of the President changed dramatically, from being shown in his jogging shorts eating at McDonald's, to sitting in the Rose Garden, looking statesmanlike, and signing documents with leaders from around the world.

Dole was potentially a strong candidate, but the Republicans still lost. The mistakes by Dole were numerous, from leaving the Senate to campaign full time, to advocating a 15 percent tax cut that in the depths of his heart he himself clearly didn't believe. His main message, the 15 percent tax cut, was one he voted against earlier in his career. Dole tried unsuccessfully to position himself as the outsider by leaving the Senate, wearing leisure suits, and trying to play down his insider role. Unfortunately, images of him built up over a 30-year career as a professional politician were not easily forgotten by the American people. In the end, his campaign seemed disingenuous, and one that was marketing a false image of the man.

If there is one lesson to learn from Dole's mistake in this campaign, it is that a marketing strategy must match the product. Dole was the ultimate insider to the American people, an image which could have been played on more successfully if his handlers had carried out their marketing research differently. As an insider, Dole could

have been positioned as the one politician who with his understanding of the inner-workings of Congress would be able to put an end to future gridlock in Washington D.C.

The marketing strategies of the two major candidates differed significantly. Clinton pushed to restore the American Dream for the children of America. He pushed education as a way up the ladder for the middle class citizen. His message was positive and constructive. Clinton focused on voters' concerns, not his concerns. Clinton did not have a intra-party fight, especially from Jesse Jackson during the primaries, something that the democratic party had to cope with in recent elections prior to this one. This helped Clinton to consolidate his base. Unfortunately for Dole, the grueling primary that pushed him to the right to win over the ultra-conservative Christian Coalition support hurt his moderate image badly during the general election. A lesson to be learned here is that images can be re-manufactured, but it takes time.

Dole attempted to appeal to the American people with a message of fear and unrealistic hope that a 15 percent tax cut would make all their problems go away. Dole's message was simply not believable. Dole thought Jack Kemp would add a sustainable boost to his candidacy. Unfortunately, the boost was only temporary. Furthermore, Dole constantly was changing campaign staff which left his organization disjointed and disillusioned.

The Bush Era Continues

The 2000 presidential race found two candidates who were both successful in their respective strategies, but one lost because of structural issues beyond the control of marketing (Newman 2001a, 2001b). Mr. Bush successfully marketed himself as a candidate who would bring respect back to the White House. This was done by presenting himself as a "softer and kinder" Republican, the Un-Cola of the Republican Party. Put in other words, Bush was successful in separating himself from the mean-spirited image of the party that Newt Gringrich helped to create before he left politics. At the same time, Mr. Bush was able to take a series of verbal blunders on the part of Mr. Gore and turn them into an image that was reinforced in the minds of the voters. The blunders dealt with repeated exaggerations made by the Vice-President that Mr. Bush packaged into a message that led many voters to believe that he was a liar. By manufacturing an image of Mr. Gore as a liar, Bush successfully linked him to the scandals of the Clinton tenure in the White House.

Mr. Gore at the same time was successful at first in separating himself from the "Clinton Fatigue" in the country by choosing Joseph Lieberman as his running mate. Mr. Lieberman was one of the most vocal critics of Mr. Clinton and proved to be a very strong asset as a running mate. Mr. Gore showed with the choice of Lieberman that he was able to make a bold decision if necessary. Unfortunately for Mr. Gore, the image that Mr. Bush manufactured in the minds of the American voters stuck and worked to undo the image that he tried to create that was centered around hard work and a "can-do" attitude. As we all now know, the campaign proved to be the longest and most exciting campaign in many decades in the United States.

Lessons to be learned

There are several key strategic lessons to learn from the recent elections that shed an important light on the use and misuse of marketing strategies (Newman 1999b). Strategic thinking should be seen as an opportunity to transform an organization and change the rules of an industry to its advantage. There is no room for incremental change. Don't try to position products and businesses within an industry. Create tomorrow's industry. This is something that the Republicans and Newt Gingrich did well in 1994, the Democrats and Bill Clinton did well in 1992, and George W. Bush succeeded in doing in 2000.

Just as companies need to partner with each to be effective, so do politicians. A candidate must get all partners to share vision of future. The focus should be on what can be, not what is. One must never lose sight of your customer. President Clinton was very effective at empowering the American people and getting them to buy into his vision for the country. George W. Bush was equally successful in the most recent presidential election.

Extensive consumer research must be collected on a regular basis. It is a well known fact the Clinton campaign teams of 1992 and 1996 collected data on a regular basis to frame their political communications to the American people, and were very successful because of it. Of course, along with the reliance on research and advertising will be the necessity to continue to raise huge sums of money to pay for the marketing campaign (Asher 1998; Gould 1999; Wray 1999).

In the same way that companies have to constantly innovate to stay competitive in their markets, political candidates must always be thinking about how they can make the government work in more efficient ways to ensure that the electorate views them as agents of change for the people as opposed to self-centered opportunists who are in politics to get rich. One of the best lessons that American marketers have learned in the last decade is that new product development has to be a continuous process. Tom Peters, the management guru suggests that a company should be producing at least a dozen new ideas each month on how to improve each of its product lines Peters 1994). The process is one whereby everyone in the company is constantly thinking of ways to make minor improvements to the product or service. Given the intense competition in most markets today, companies that fail to develop new products expose themselves to great risk. Existing products are vulnerable to changing consumer needs and tastes, new technologies, shortened product life cycles, and increased competition. At the same time, new product development is risky.

Bob Dole lost the 1996 election because of his failure to take the risk of changing in response to voter needs and wants in the marketplace. At the same time, political candidates will continue to win elections and succeed in office because they re-position their policies and images in response to the changing needs and wants of voters following the same marketing formula that works for corporations. Al Gore altered his position in the polls because he took the bold move of being the first presidential candidate in the history of the United States to invite a Jewish person, Joseph Lieberman, to be his running-mate.   Unfortunately for politicians today, we have entered a period in this country where there is an information overload in politics. Candidates are bent on running negative campaigns, and the media is pressured to provide news that entertains and keeps people's attention, resulting in information that has a sensational slant. This makes the marketing job of image manufacturing that

much more difficult for politicians. A presidential campaign is all about making promises and shaping people's expectations. Control of information centers on having an organized staff, empowered to carry out the strategic initiatives that will be consistent with the image that is manufactured for the candidate.

Most critical to the marketing success of a political candidate after he enters office is that he have a vision which is not subject to the vacillations of the public's reactions to his ideas or to his standings in the polls- a tall order! The need for flexibility in a rapidly changing political environment calls for a constant monitoring of information, and a chain of command that can implement strategic decisions quickly and immediately. New product development in politics is not housed in a Research and Development department, but in the simulated "war rooms" surrounded by computers, facsimiles and television monitors where flexibility hinges on the ability of a political organization to re-manufacture a candidate's image, in some cases overnight. Both Mr. Bush and Mr. Gore did the same in 2000.

But perhaps the most important lesson of all is the need to rely on these same methods and techniques after a candidate has entered office. Without the reliance on a permanent campaign, being run by the same consultants that put a candidate into office, a politician elected to office will find himself without the marketing machinery necessary to keep poll ratings high and citizens happy (McGinnis 1969; Nimmo 1970; Blumenthal 1980; O'Shaughnessy 1990; Maarek 1995; Nimmo 1996; Nimmo 1999; Newman 1999a, 1999b; Johnson 1999, 2001).

Conclusion

Success in politics is measured by the ability of a leader to move public opinion in the direction he or she wants it to move in. This is a short term measure of success, but it is also the one barometer which everyone will look at on election day before the results come in. Moving public opinion in a desired direction is the marketing challenge to leaders in all democracies.

It is critical for a president to know which part of the electorate to listen to, and to whom to target his appeals to. A serious issue to the health of our democracy is the ever-prevailing battle to do what is right for the country, even at the expense of losing popularity in the polls, and possibly hurting the president's chances at getting re-elected.

In the future, we can expect technological advances to continue to have a profound effect on political marketing. Advances in the telecommunications industry, especially interactive technology, have the potential to transform the electoral process as we know it today to a more direct democracy (Johnson 1999). For example, it may become possible for citizens to vote from their own homes on their computers. This change brings with it the potential for substantially increasing the level of participation in presidential elections.

Marketing has played a key role in reshaping political ideology in this country. Political ideology is being driven by marketing, not by party affiliation. In earlier presidential campaigns, ideology was based on fundamental differences in the way in which government was run. Today, the issues at the top of everyone's polls determine what leaders in both parties advocate. Presidential campaign themes are based on focus groups and polls. Political images are crafted with the same sophistication as leading products are. The packaging, labeling, image-building and advertising power is so great

today that almost anyone can be made to look and sound politically appealing even to the most scrutinizing citizen. The application of marketing techniques and strategies to the political marketplace is a paradigm shift that will continue to change politics as we know it today.

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