

VII. Voter Contact Campaign:

A good campaign will systematically contact the voter seven times before election day.

Elections are simply about persuading people to vote for the party. Therefore contact with the voter is the core of the campaign. How does a party contact voters? Simply, directly and personally. Voter contact includes going door to door; telephoning voters; mail-both hand delivered and through the post; the use of posters, advertising; media-both earned and paid.

The campaign plan should employ different combinations of voter contact to reach voters. It is always effective to have candidates and campaign volunteers going door-to-door talking to voters, combined with a direct mail campaign to convey the same message to the same voters again. Following a direct mail program, the campaign can set up telephone banks to call all the potential voters to identify who supports the party and remind committed and undecided voters to go vote. The party can set up street stalls on Saturday mornings at the market places to greet voters, party candidates can appear at bus stations or tram stops to meet voters during the busy times of the day.

To develop the voter contact plan a simple approach is needed:

1. Map the district

First find detailed maps of the electoral district. Using the last election poll stations, divide the district into polls. A poll would be comprised of the voters within a defined geographic area who would vote at a specific polling station. If this information is not available, then divide your district into local neighborhoods along natural geographic boundaries.

2. Create poll kits

Using the lists of polling stations from above create a separate folder for each polling station. Inside the folder there should be a detailed map of the area surrounding the polling station, a list of the voters, the name and address of the polling station and a voter log. Ideally a party worker who lives in the area of the polling station should be responsible for working in the area surrounding their own polling station. All contacts with the voter should be recorded on the voter log in the poll kit. The voters log should indicate whether the voter is supporting the party, undecided or not supporting the party.

Poll kits

Everyone going door to door should receive a poll kit, which contains the following:

- a map of the area;
- written instructions and a suggested script;

- ▶ a voter log to record the doors called on; names; phone numbers and additional voter comments,
- ▶ volunteer and membership forms;
- ▶ name tag to identify caller and party.

3. Find or create the voters list

Find detailed lists of voters in the electoral district from official voter lists-if they are available or use telephone books of the electoral district, utility lists, HP lists, party lists or any lists that may help the party to systematically identify the voters the party can count on or persuade to vote. Although official voter lists may not be available in many areas, going door to door allows the party to develop a party parallel voter list which is essential for the party's GET OUT THE VOTE effort in the last two to three weeks of the campaign.

The advantage of systematically mapping out the territory with the poll kits is that the campaign can monitor the process of the voter contact campaign on the maps in the campaign office. For example; which doors have been knocked on, where the campaign literature has been delivered etc. More importantly, the campaign team can measure how many contacts each voter has had with the campaign.

How to do a Door to Door Canvas:

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✓ Training

Anyone who is going door to door for the party needs to be trained. Organize training sessions for all volunteers before each door to door canvass. All volunteers, even experienced ones should attend. It is important for people to understand the purpose of the door to door canvass and have an opportunity to ask questions and relate prior experiences. There should also be a role play so volunteers have a sense of what to expect. It is important that people go in teams of two and it is always preferable to team experienced volunteers with new recruits.

✓ Pre canvas preparation

The best time to canvass during the week is between 6PM and 9PM. Do not go later than 9PM. Ask your volunteers to arrive at the campaign office at 5:30PM so they can review their poll kits and determine where it is they will go. Since there is a great deal of walking involved, everyone should wear comfortable shoes and if it is dark carry a flashlight so as to read and make notes on the voter log.

✓ At the doors

As a general rule, canvassers should always go to the front of the house, and should avoid being drawn into long conversations or being enticed into prolonged visits. Use the side walk or driveway-never walk across the grass. Volunteers should always use the script that has been provided. Remember, always be courteous and concise. If

no one is a home leave a questionnaire with "sorry I missed you" note on it. Remember always be polite even if the citizens are rude to you. If they do not want to talk, be polite and move on. If they're interested in the party, always remember to invite them to become volunteers or to join the party.

✓ ***Paperwork***

It is absolutely important that a record is kept of where the volunteers went and all the people that have been spoken to. Addresses of all doors knocked on should be recorded, together with the names [check the door name plates] telephone numbers, and any other information about the voter's interest in issues or parties. See attached sample log.

✓ ***After the Door to Door Canvass***

It is always good to have people return to the office after they have finished their canvass to determine what was accomplished, share stories and thank volunteers. This time can be made part of a social occasion by all the volunteers retiring to the neighborhood cafe for a beer or coffee after they have reported on their canvass for the night.

✓ ***Remember to always thank your volunteers each time they return from going door to door.***

Telephoning:

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The telephone is an effective tool for direct contact with voters. The party can use the telephone to persuade voters to vote for the party; identify supporters and remind those supporters to go vote on election day. Each of the above should be separate telephone calls made throughout the campaign. Most often the telephone is used to identify supporters and turnout the vote. All telephone calls should be scripted and volunteers should be trained with the scripts. All calls should be relatively short and friendly.

Telephone calls can be made either from volunteers' homes, mobile telephones or from a central location with a number of telephones. These central locations, called phone banks, can be either businesses or organizations with a number of separate phone lines already in place, which would allow the campaign to use the telephones after business hours to call voters. Extra telephone lines could be installed in the headquarters for just this purpose.

Telephone banks have a number of advantages over volunteers making the calls from their homes or using mobile telephones. First, the campaign can supervise the phone calls at a phone bank and make sure that the calls are being made. Second, the

volunteers gain support from other volunteers making the calls. It is often important to share the experience, either good or bad, of the last phone call. Finally, the campaign has immediate control over the process, can deal with problems immediately, answer questions and receive instant feedback. Sometimes the script the volunteers are using when they talk to voters does not work and must be changed. Or sometimes the campaign may want to shift from phoning one neighbourhood to another quickly. This can be more easily done at a phone bank.

When using a telephone, mobile or having volunteers call from home, on behalf of the campaign, it is important to have clear written instructions for the volunteers. The instructions should provide the purpose for making the calls and an easy to follow script of what to say on the phone when talking to voters. It may also be important to explain what not to do, such as argue with voters. Volunteers should understand that it is important to make as many calls as possible, as quickly as possible and that arguing with voters will only slow them down and is unlikely to change the voter's mind.

Mail:

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Mail can be an effective way to target the party's voters, particularly if it done in concert with the door to door campaign. For example, if an undecided voter has identified a concern about education, then the party can send a personally addressed letter to that voter outlining the party's program in regards to education. All positive or undecided voters greeted at the doors should receive a follow up letter. These letters can be hand delivered the next day by volunteers to save on postage. Also, for voters who were not at home when a party volunteer knocked on the door, a followup letter about the party's program can be delivered.

Sending campaign literature to voters through the mail can be very effective at delivering the party's message and persuading them to vote for the party. The party could use its parallel voters' list or official voters list to target its voters and issues which interest them. The purpose of the mail is to reinforce and emphasize the party's message to the voters. For example, the party could send a letter outlining its policy on one issue to senior citizens and send a different letter outlining its policy on a different issue to young people.

**The Use of Campaign Newsletters:
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Direct communication with the voters is the best way to keep in touch with them and develop a loyalty in the party. A newsletter is a very useful method for communicating with the electorate. Newsletters prepared and delivered regularly in the election district are a simple and relatively inexpensive way to ensure the party's message is consistently and regularly communicated.

The purpose of the campaign newsletter is to inform the voters about all the issues which impact on the upcoming election, share the campaign activities of your party and to ask people to get involved as volunteers and encourage people to vote.

Newsletters should not look like election propaganda. It should not contain the typical "headshot" of the local party politician nor should it read like a party policy statement. The party's audience is wider than party activists. Its purpose is to influence undecided, apathetic voters and reach out to new voters.

The newsletter should have a local focus. If it deals with local news, people who may not be sympathetic to your party may find it of interest. The hope is as they read the newsletter on a regular basis, it will persuade them to vote for the party because of the party's demonstrated commitment to the local community.

The format of the newsletter can be as simple as a double-sided sheet of paper. It can be designed by a computer, using either a word-processing program or a desktop publishing system, or alternatively using the more basic cut and paste method. The newsletter can be reproduced either through a printer, photocopier or duplicator. Campaigns should not go to much expense in producing them; black and white design is sufficient.

The key of course, is regular distribution of the newsletter. During an election, in a large urban area, party volunteers should plan to deliver at least three to four newsletters. In smaller areas, two newsletters per campaign. Information and Action-these are the key elements to a successful newsletter. People will read your newsletter if it is interesting and has information which may not be available elsewhere.

VIII. Creating Campaign Literature:

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When creating literature for a political campaign, it must be remembered that most voters will not read it as carefully as the party would like them to. It is important that the party make it easy for the voters to understand the message in the short time that it takes them to decide to throw the literature away.

It is therefore important to quickly get the voters attention and just as quickly convey the message. In other words, the campaign literature must be simple and dramatic. It should tell a story about the party and why voters should vote for it. There are a few techniques that can be used to grab the voter's attention and quickly deliver a message.

SINGLE TOPIC

In order to keep the message simple and make sure that it is grasped quickly, it is important that the party does not try to convey any more than one idea in a piece of literature.

ACTION PHOTOS

Portraits of the candidates do not convey any information about who they are. Photos should show the candidates, talking to someone or doing something. Other action photos can both grab the voter's attention and convey a message quicker than words. Pictures of children in school can help convey an education message, and pictures of closed businesses or people begging on the streets can convey a message of economic problems that will be addressed. Also, all photos should be black and white.

HEADLINES

After looking at the photos, people will next read the headlines. The whole message should be understood in the headlines, a brief statement or two in large type. Too often the headlines are only headings and the voter is expected to read on to understand the point. Therefore it is important not to waste the headlines with useless statements that do not say anything.

BULLETED POINTS

When listing a program, a biography or any other series of information, bullet the text rather than put it in paragraph form. This makes it clear that there are five reasons to support the political party or six things the party will do to improve the economy.

BREVITY

In campaign literature, less is more. Say whatever you want to say in as few words as possible. Between one hundred and three hundred words total should be the maximum in a single piece of literature.

COMMON LANGUAGE

Use language that simply and clearly states what the party wants to convey. It is less important to impress voters with big words than it is to get your message across in language all voters will understand.

STAY ON MESSAGE

All campaign literature, no matter what the issue being discussed, should stick to the basic theme of the campaign. It is important that the same message be reinforced over and over, no matter what the issue. The campaign may even want to use the same phrases or slogans on all the literature to bring the point home to voters.

IX. Media Campaign:

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A media campaign is one vehicle through which the campaign communicates its message to the voters. The problem of access to the media in Croatia is real so in planning the media campaign it is important to honestly determine what if any media space the party has access to in each electoral district. If there is no realistic possibility of getting television time, accept that fact and move on. Look to other media within the electoral district such as local radio, newspapers and local television.

Planning your event to get Media attention

Media likes to tell stories. They need to fill the pages of a newspaper with photographs and text, radio with sound, and television with pictures. If the campaign can supply the stories that will fill the space or the time, then it is more likely to receive media attention.

People follow the news especially when they have a stake in it or when it touches them personally. An event will make the news if the media believes it will reach out to their audiences. *Remember that the opinions of the party or its candidates alone are not news.*

Telling the story

People think and remember in images, in sounds, and in feelings rather than in words. Give the media images they can use for television, the sound clips that will work on radio, and events with photographs, that newspaper reporters can write about.

The Press Release

Your press release must answer five basic questions:

1. **WHO** is staging the event? Make sure you include a contact name and phone number for the campaign office if the media want more information.
2. **WHY** the event is happening? This is tied to the message the party is trying to deliver. It is crucial that the campaign use this part of the press release wisely. Keep it simple, direct, and to the point.
3. **WHAT** will happen at the event - is it a press conference, public forum, etc? A campaign can also send a press release out after an event to let the media know what happened, how many people attended, and what everyone had to say.

4. **WHEN?** The time and date of the event must be clear.
5. **WHERE** the event is going to happen. Give directions if you feel it is necessary.

Keep press releases to one page. The media like to see all the necessary information at a glance. Remember the campaign wants to inform as many people in the media as possible regardless of whether they will attend the event. The campaign should also send its press releases to other people or organizations in addition to the usual journalists. Consider sending it to business people, local cultural organizations, other community leaders, NGO's and Trade Unions. The campaign should use its press release as a tool to inform the wider community of the party's activities.

In terms of designing a press release, keep the writing simple, to the point and avoid jargon and rhetoric. Be creative in writing the press release because many people in the media may simply use the campaign's press release or headline as theirs. The layout should also be simple with sufficient white space, adequate margins and with a large font. It should be easy to read. Use bigger, bold type for headlines.

Follow-up: After the press release is sent out, call the media to make sure it was received and to ask them if they will be attending. As a rule it is more difficult for them to actually say 'no' to a person directly. Therefore it is important to maintain a comprehensive, current list of all media contacts, which includes: names, phone numbers, and addresses. Maintain a list of not only local media but national and international media as well.

The Press Conference:

Press conferences should not always be held in a room with a panel of people at the front speaking. The campaign should consider holding its conferences away from the headquarters or party offices. Think of a location which depicts the message the party wishes to convey. For example, for a press conference on health-choose the front door of the local health clinic or hospital; a beach clean-up-go to the beach, etc. Think of places which would give the media an opportunity to tell the story in pictures. This will make the event stand out from other press conferences in the area.

Everywhere in Croatia there are unique landmarks which speak to the individual character of each region. Use these as backdrops for press conferences. People will recognize the venue. It will serve to link the campaign event to the people, place and issue at hand within the electoral district.

If the campaign holds a press conference in the more traditional setting, ensure that the room has adequate lighting and suitable sound characteristics (big rooms have too much echo). Wherever the press conference is held, ensure that the party

takes pictures or even a video for the use of the campaign. These pictures may be used later for a newsletter or other forms of publicity.

If you have a document or questionnaire that you will be referring to at the press conference, make sure there is a copy for everyone and a copy you can hold up for a photographer or television camera.

And finally, media like to be fed and watered. It does not hurt to let them know coffee and croissants will be served.

Building Media relations

Believe it or not, media are people too. Get to know them whenever possible. Invite them for coffee, talk to them when they come to the press conference, or call them on the phone occasionally to let them know what the campaign is doing.

There is no guarantee that the media will carry the campaign message or cover the party's event, but they will never cover an event if they do not get called. It is a good idea to send out notification for the press conference well in advance, then a reminder a few days before the actual press conference.

Damage Control: What to do if you or your party are accused of something

Sometime other parties, organizations, or individuals may accuse the party or candidates of doing something wrong. If they are right and the party or candidates DID do something wrong, the campaign owes it to its members, supporters and voters to tell the truth. If the party or candidates did NOT do what they are accused of, then the campaign must clear things up in the public eye. Either way, remember some of the basic rules about press conferences, press releases, and media relations, then consider taking the following steps **IMMEDIATELY**:

- ✓ Express the campaign or party's concern about what **MAY** have happened;
- ✓ Promise to look into it and suggest a general timetable for the investigation;
- ✓ Promise to release details of the investigation;
- ✓ Point out the accusation may be false;
- ✓ Promise to review the final investigation report and say you will set things right if the allegations are bore out.
- ✓ Report back to the media/public the results of the investigation.