

Libertarian Strategy Gazette

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Building Strong Parties From the Ground Up

How should a pro-Liberty party advance by developing candidates? I'll refer to the Libertarian Party, since I am a Libertarian, and I'll refer to my campaign, since I have actually run for office, but most of what I am saying works equally well for the Reform, Green, Conservative,... Parties as well.

First of all, membership recruitment, party registration, candidate development, and active campaigns must all go hand in hand. You can't do one of these things in isolation from the others. In particular, you must have local campaigns to run local candidates for local and state office. **A national effort to recruit huge numbers of members, in order to support a Presidential candidate, without also running local candidates, is foredoomed to fail.** You can hide the difficulties for a while by throwing money at the problem, but in the long run a party that tries to operate purely at the Presidential level will not succeed. As you develop local active candidates, you should also begin to run people strategically, to affect the political situation in your state.

The hard part of this process is developing and running candidates. Few people run for office because they decide on their own to do it. **For the most part, people run for office because someone persuaded them to run.**

Now, we have had some limited success at finding candidates simply by announcing that we are urging people to run, but that success is substantially limited to long-term party activists. If you want to move from running two dozen candidates to running two hundred candidates, a more systematic approach is needed.

I would suggest several directions for the larger effort: First, there should be a systematic effort to telephone all of the people who are dues-paying libertarians. In 1997, that was about 500 or 600 people for the Libertarian Association of Massachusetts, a number now greatly reduced. These people should be vigorously prospected. A simple opening theme for your phone call is "Do Libertarians believe that there are free lunches?"

Most Libertarians won't know what you mean; a good explanatory example is "is something free if the government pays for it, so you don't have to?" At roughly this point, most Libertarians will understand what you meant, and say that Libertarians do not believe that free lunches exist. It's not that we're against free lunches, it is that there is no such thing as a free lunch. Free lunches are all smoke and mirrors, with someone paying in the end.

[Party Building] (Continued on page 2)

Precinct Walking

Timothy Crowley

Walking should be a major activity of the campaign, especially in evenings and on weekends. It is easy, can be fun, and it is the most productive way you can spend your time early in the campaign. The best way to reach a voter is through personal contact. Repeatedly, candidates have succeeded when they have walked door-to-door, talking with each voter and distributing literature.

Precinct walking is the single best campaign technique for overcoming the built-in advantages of the older parties. It is not costly, but it is time-consuming.

The importance of personal contact can't be overemphasized. Think about it: Most voters have been conditioned to think of third-parties and their candidates as extremists or lunatics.

Libertarians must counteract and overcome this conditioning, and the best way to do that is to personally demonstrate to each voter that Libertarians are perfectly normal people who happen to believe strongly in their political viewpoint. That's why it's so important to establish non-threatening neighborhood visibility wherever and whenever possible.

Your entire campaign must be aimed at the truly undecided voters. Most campaigns do not do this. Think about this: Most campaign hoopla is aimed at voters who have already decided.

The people who hear you speak are already with you or against you. The people who attend coffees and small meetings are people you probably would have won anyway.

It is fun to preach to the choir, but you will pick up very few votes. Also, the people who attend political speeches, debates and rallies are highly partisan people. Truly undecided voters are precisely those who are not partisan and who are not especially interested in speeches or political events. But their votes count just the same. Far and away the best place to meet these people is at their homes.

Precinct walking is the key to meeting undecided voters. Targeting allows you to walk those precincts that have the highest number of truly undecided voters. By knowing the number of ticket splitters in previous elections, we can predict with great accuracy the number each precinct will have in the future. There will be precincts where 40% of all voters are undecided and others where less than 10% will be decided. You will obviously work hard in the areas where 40% of the votes are up for grabs and waste little effort where less than 10% of the votes can be won by you.

[Campaign Essays] (Continued on page 2)

Once you have readied the prospective candidate, tell her or him that there is one unfortunate exception to the free lunch rule. All too many Libertarians believe that there is a free lunch at the ballot box. They believe that there will be candidates on the ballot, waiting for their vote, when they have done nothing to become a candidate or get someone else on the ballot as a candidate. This is not a good thing, and it is time for Libertarians to stop believing that there are free lunches on election day.

Second, for larger groups one should at least try a mailing. This should not be a fundraiser mailing! We are asking people for something they prize far more than money, namely their time and their privacy. Don't let them by themselves out of running. I suggest emphasizing the same theme in the letter: most Libertarians do not expect a free lunch -- except on election day, when they expect a completely free lunch at the ballot box. On election day, they expect someone else will have done the work needed to run for office, so that they can get out and spend a few moments voting. It's time to end the free lunch attitude at the ballot box.

I'd suggest several themes in a mailing to your largest lists:

Money:

The Federal budget grows faster under Republicans than under Democrats. With a Democratic congress, the Budget grew faster under Bush than under Clinton. Under Clinton, the budget grew faster with the new Republican Congress than with the older Democratic Congress.

Freedom

Clinton was the worst President in 120 years on Civil Liberties -- that's an approximation to the correct quote, from the Executive Director of the ACLU. Note the Internet censorship bill, the V-chip, gun control, institution of internal passport requirements at airports via secret directives to airlines (unfortunately, I am not making this up)... Bush is even worse.

Vanishing Freedoms

You may want to tone down slightly: The Federal government is increasing contemptuous of the lives and freedoms of its citizens, as witness the FBI sniper team at Ruby Ridge, the Davidian Massacre, Secret Service effort to suppress book publication by Steve Jackson Games (they tried to seize all copies of a manuscript, the technique used by the KGB against Solzhenitsyn), mandatory minimums, civil forfeiture, telephones pre-wired for bugging, citizens tossed into Federal Gulags without trial.

In conclusion: Now more than ever, we need the one political party that is 100% for the whole Bill of Rights. 3 or 6 years ago, you might have hoped that things would get better by themselves, that the pendulum would swing the other way, but the pendulum is not swinging back.

As a summary statement, anyone who shows the least sign of interest in being a candidate should be telephoned by several people.

I call your attention to the progress made a decade ago by the Pennsylvania LP. A few years ago, they had a couple of people on the ballot. They had more than 45 people on the ballot as LP candidates in '97, including a Philadelphia District Attorney candidate who has received daily coverage. By the way, that's 45 candidates, and much of PA lacks elections in which one could run this year. Furthermore, many of them won.

Party Registration, membership recruitment, and activist development go hand in hand with running candidates. People will take your party at least somewhat seriously if they see it is trying to do the things they expect of a political party. If it is flailing, not advancing, or not doing anything at all, people will not take your organization seriously, and will not come on board. **You have to do all these activities at the same time**, and be patient, or nothing will happen.

Note that I did not mention petition drives for referendums as a form of party building. Petition drives are a way to develop contacts, but they do not build the party. Even if you get a referendum on the ballot, there is an election, the referendum passes or fails, and no matter what the referendum fades from popular memory leaving no party organization behind.

Historical Outcome: LAMA did not take this advice. Several dozen people were available to run for State Legislature in 1998, but LAMA (I was at the meeting where the decision was made) refused through various channels to support them, instead wasting its resources on a slate of candidates for state-wide office.

The worst part about the statewide campaign was that if it succeeded in its goal -- it did -- it made it far harder for Libertarian candidates to get on the ballot in future years. The policy of non-support of candidates from outside the eastern Massachusetts Libertarian establishment was continued through 2002, when it ran out of steam. There were a dozen open state house seats in special elections. The eastern establishment did not contest even one of them. Only the Pioneer Valley Libertarian Association contested for open seats (the one in their district); the PVLA received not a dime's worth of support from the State Party.

(Continued from page 1) [**Precinct Walking**]

Precinct walking is one of the few things you can do early in your campaign that will have enough impact to win votes that stay yours until November. If you just give someone a card at a shopping center during the summer, it is extremely unlikely that he will remember you on election day. However, if you visit the family at home, they will remember you for years.

Learn to love door-to-door campaigning. Your campaign must be built around this form of personal contact. If your friends insist on showing you off at coffees, schedule them after your evening walks. If people want to help you, have them go with you on walks.

You should be walking four, five or six times a week. If you

really want to win, this is what you do. No campaign was ever won by people hanging around a headquarters gabbing. You win votes one at a time by going where the people are and meeting them straight on. If you do absolutely nothing in your campaign except walking precincts you will have a good campaign.

"I was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives by literally walking in. Between April and November 1992 I personally contacted 15,000 individuals through door-to-door campaigning.

For nearly a year before the August '92 primary, family members and volunteers assembled lists of registered voters in the district. After announcing my candidacy, I began a routine of knocking on doors Mondays through Saturdays from noon to 9pm. Mornings were reserved for fund raising appointments, and Sundays were set aside for family. I was able to campaign full time because I had budgeted enough personal wealth to pay the bills.

Door-to-door campaigning is grass roots politics in action. Every candidate has their own message; mine was "Hello, my name is Greg Kaza. I am here personally to seek your vote on election day.

The overwhelming majority of people told me I was the first candidate to ever knock on their door. Some did not believe I was a candidate until I showed them my identification. Several invited me into their homes for dinner. Only two expressed hostility: both told me that they were finished with politics and politicians."

Greg Kaza, Liberty magazine, Vol.7 number 1

The candidate who walks door-to-door can expect a lot of time spent in conversation and discussions. He should stay in the highest priority precincts. His volunteers, however, need do nothing more than walk from door to door saying,

"Hello, I'm a volunteer for Hal Smith, the Libertarian candidate for Assembly in this district. I'd like to give you this brochure, and I hope you'll have a chance to read it." About one in every 100 people will want to talk. The rest will be surprised and relieved that you're not subjecting them to a long harangue, will smile, and thank you.

But you will have accomplished a key objective: you've proven to the voters you meet that Libertarians are normal, friendly people instead of a vague threat.

A far less effective technique -- but still one to be used in low-priority precincts -- is the "literature drop" without the personal contact. This is acceptable, but, again, doesn't allow the personal contact which is so necessary in breaking down voters' allegiance to the traditional political system.

Time Considerations

Because neighborhood visibility is so important, you must

work out a Time Budget before you start walking. Precincts differ, and you will need to adjust the budget after you have walked a few.

A standard rule-of-thumb is that four man-hours are required to walk one average precinct of 300-400 voters. That is, a team of four can do it in one hour, two in two hours, etc. -- including talking to the voters who wish to talk.

If you have 20 top-priority precincts, then, you may need 80 man-hours. Make sure you and/or your volunteers have the time to walk these precincts before Election Day.

In general, weekend afternoons are good times to walk, as are weekday evenings (except Friday) before 9 p.m. Early morning is not a good time.

A Typical Walk

You have assembled a group of 20 people for a Sunday afternoon precinct walk, and have identified your top-priority precincts and decided on the message you will use.

You have obtained precinct maps (the Election Department can help you find these), cut them out, and posted them on sheets of cardboard. You then assign one or two precincts to teams of two volunteers for the afternoon, arm them with a map and an adequate supply of brochures, and turn them loose.

Each team of two should divide the precinct, starting at opposite ends and working toward each other. Each person should ring every doorbell in his division, and have prepared some introductory statement like: "Hello, I'm visiting this neighborhood on behalf of Lacy Fare, the Libertarian candidate for Assembly." Depending upon the level of evangelism, the volunteers might mention something else about the candidate and her opinions on one or two relevant issues.

The voter should be handed the brochure, asked to vote for the candidate, and thanked. Always be courteous and pleasant, and remember to smile.

Where no one is at home, leave a brochure on the doorstep and move on.

It's always good to have one of your supporters walking in his or her own neighborhood, and sending personal letters to friends. Assuming this person is known and liked, his influence and solicitation is likely to carry more weight than the standard candidate's letter.

Coffees and Public Appearances

"Coffees" are hallowed political institutions which may or may not fit into your campaign. They are very effective when organized properly.

To set up a coffee, enlist a supporter to open his or her home and invite the entire neighborhood to come meet you at a

particular time. Your friend should provide coffee and goodies (no booze).

Everyone in the neighborhood should be invited, because only a small percentage will actually show up. Invitations should be printed and distributed in mail boxes. If you plan several coffees, print invitation forms to be filled in with time, place, etc. The invitation should state the purpose of the event: to meet the candidate.

The host or hostess should always follow up invitations with personal phone calls or visits to neighbors. This will increase the turnout. Typically, 10-30 people will attend.

Format: There will be a period of introductions, then you will speak for 10 to 15 minutes, and a question-and-answer period will follow. A coffee should be a relaxed, personal event, not a formal presentation.

Candidate's Nights and Speaking Engagements There are always Candidate's Nights, and you should make it a point to attend. The format will vary according to the situation. If you are a candidate and receive an invitation to speak, accept it and attend. Nothing looks worse than an empty chair where you should be.

Parenthetically, it is just as bad not to respond to Candidate Questionnaires submitted by groups or newspapers. Always respond.

You should, of course, be finding speaking engagements on your own, without waiting for an invitation. Various service clubs, homeowners associations, interest groups, etc., should be contacted and asked to provide a forum for you. Ask your friends to get an invitation for you from groups where they are members. Most such groups need speakers desperately, and will be glad to have you. If not, the worst they can do is refuse.

As always, communicating briefly, intelligibly, and specifically applies to speaking as well as to writing or advertising. Stick to the issues.

Phone Banks

Phone banks and door to door work are your primary means of canvassing the voters. Canvassing is the process of asking the voter who they are committed to. Those definitely for the opponent are not thought about any longer, and are dropped from all future mailings and calling. Those definitely in our favor are targeted for the Get Out The Vote effort, but are also dropped from the mailing list for persuasion pieces. The undecided voters are where you placeurces. Your goal is to ontact all of your targeted voters by phone or at home by election day.

Try to secure a donation of a place for a phone bank early in the campaign. Any office building with several lines will do. Voter lists with phone numbers included are available from most political list brokers, usually for about 2 cents per voter. This is a much more efficient use of resources than

having volunteers look up the numbers out of the book. You will also get other valuable information when you purchase your voter file from a broker, such as voting history and census data.

Your phone bank script should be very simple. "Hi, I'm calling for the Lacy Fare to State House campaign. Is _____ home? Hi, _____, Do you have a minute to answer a few questions? Good. In the race for state assembly, will you be voting for Lacy Fare or Sammy Statist?" If they indicate an opponent, record the answer, thank them for their time and end the call. If they indicate your candidate, record that as well, and you may wish to ask if they will volunteer, make a contribution, or at least put up a yard sign. If they are undecided, read them a list of your main issues, and ask them which is most important to them.

Close by asking that they consider voting for Lacy. Then follow up by sending them a piece of relevant literature, and target them for further mailings and phone calls.

Paid Media

Repetition of your message is the name of your advertising game. It will take at least three impressions for the voter just to begin to remember what you are trying to tell him.

When you have heard your basic message so many times that you are sick of it, the voter is just beginning to be aware of it.

You will get more votes by sending the same impression three times to one hundred voters than you will by sending the message once to three hundred voters. If you can't repeat your message at least three times to each voter, target further, cut down on the number of voters you are trying to reach until you can get the necessary repetition.

When comparing cost between different types of media, ask for the "cost per thousand" or CPM. This is simply the ad rate expressed in terms of what it will cost for the ad to have the potential to be seen 1000 times. In general, TV will have the lowest CPM, radio next, then newspapers, then direct mail. CPM is not the only factor to consider when planning your advertising budget. While TV has a lower CPM, radio can be targeted to a more defined audience. And though mail has the highest CPM, it can be the most closely targeted, and can convey large amounts of information where a TV ad cannot.

Newspapers

Most advertising departments of newspapers are equipped to help you decide the size, frequency, cost, and even the appearance of your newspaper ad. Costs vary enormously and should be determined ahead of time in your budget

For a typical display ad of significant size, such as a quarter page, follow many of the same rules as for brochures. That is, use an attractive layout with plenty of white space, setting off each point you make. Use an appropriate photograph. Don't try to rewrite the Statement of Principles, but instead

identify yourself, your party, and office you seek, and three or four of your main issues.

Newspaper ads establish legitimacy as much as they send a message. Keep them clear, clean and simple.

The "endorsement" ad -- with a long list of names of people who support you -- is quite effective, especially in local papers. If you have a firm list of supporters (they should sign an endorsement card), use this list in a newspaper ad. People spend hours reading through these lists, looking for people they know. Strange but true.

Radio

Radio advertising, if done right, can be worth every penny of what you spend. Be prepared, however, to spend quite a bit for maximum effectiveness.

Costs vary considerably depending upon the station, the listenership, the time of day or night, the frequency, and the length of the commercial. Each station can supply this information and can tell you what kind of person listens, when, and even where.

Go back to your voting analysis. Determine which areas might respond to a libertarian message, and what kind of message. Compare this data to the information you have about the radio station. For example, if there is a high stu-

dent population in precincts with libertarian potential, choose a station within your budget that students listen to.

The key to successful radio advertising is repetition. The more time you buy, the better. Be sure to reserve time early, since many stations sell out their paid political time. The time you buy should be near Election Day. (Some stations refuse to sell political time; you should find that out, too.)

The safest format for a radio spot is for the candidate or a supporter to deliver a simple, clear, strong, comprehensible message. Always ask for the vote, and always state the name of the candidate as many times as will fit into the message logically -- certainly at the beginning and at the end.

The best approach is a personalized one-to-one appeal from someone who is perceived to be a real person, not a studio creation. Ask the listener questions to grab their attention, with the answer being your campaign message. One good trick is to write the script as if you are talking directly to your opponent, ("Shame on you Sammy Statist for voting for that property tax increase that is robbing our senior citizens of their homes").

Television

To Be Continued

