

GETTING OUT THE VOTE (GOTV)

IN THIS CHAPTER

- *The Essentials*
- *Identifying Your Voters: Voter ID*
- *Last-Minute Efforts to Persuade Voters*
- *Poll Watching*
- *Phoning*
- *The Absentee Ballot and Early Vote*
- *Vote By Mail*
- *Organizing the GOTV Effort*
- *Push Polls*

Make no mistake; everything you have done up to this point is about the GOTV effort. Everything. You've canvassed, mailed, advertised, phoned, raised money, and delivered your message again and again and again. Why? To move voters and activate your base for support on election day. But voters get busy: Kids get sick, cars break down, food boils over, an old friend calls. . . . In short, life gets in the way, and somehow 8:00 P.M. rolls around and best intentions to vote are out the window. Now, after months of campaigning, your job, your one and only job, is to remind, remove obstacles, and motivate your support to do their civic duty.

While canvassing is about activating people who you *think* will vote favorably, a GOTV effort is about activating voters who you *know* will support

"[Push polls] breed cynicism about politics, and we believe they contribute to declining response rates for polls."

—Michael Traugott,
American Association for
Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)

your cause. With your base you know because of registration, neighborhood, and historical voting patterns. With everyone else, you know because your

campaign has personally contacted them and has been told. Identifying how the swing and undecided voter will vote is called voter ID. Getting your support out on election day is called GOTV.

“One thing the world needs is popular government at popular prices.”

—George Barker

Whether voter ID is conducted while canvassing or during phone bank calling,

the campaign must keep track of voter intentions (supportive, somewhat supportive, undecided, somewhat opposed, opposed) and secure a current phone number for election night.

The Essentials

Activating Your Base

Regardless of whether your campaign conducts voter ID, you must activate your base to increase voter turnout. Although your base vote has not received the same level of attention as potential swing voters, they have not been neglected either. Your base support, that is,

“Persistence in the face of adversity is what wins an election.”

—Patricia Schifferle, former Assistant to the Speaker, California

party loyalists, have received some direct mail, have lawn signs, and have seen and heard your ads. In some cases, they have even been canvassed. When it comes to the GOTV, this group is extraordinarily important. Your precinct analysis has

told you who among your base will vote with very little effort from the campaign and who needs to be reminded before election day.

Those who need a little prodding can actually be quite different depending upon their context. With these voters there are generally two groups. The first are those who live in areas of equal or slight registration advantage (up to 10 points) but are disengaged. The second group is also disengaged, but they are embedded in neighborhoods where their party (and that of the candidate) is greatly outnumbered.

For our purposes, you will have three strategies for your base:

1. Your hard-core voters, those who traditionally have high turnout rates, will need little effort from the campaign. Although it is a good idea to canvass them with a drop piece on election day, if time, money, volunteers, and logistics are a problem, this activity could be

dropped. However, it will be important to track the returns from these precincts, because you are really counting on them. If it looks as though their turnout will be down, the campaign should be ready to activate them with GOTV phone calls.

2. For your lazy yet loyal voter (high support/low to medium turnout) your campaign has canvassed, mailed, called, and canvassed them again. Now you need to stay on them like a fly on compost. If you're in a state that doesn't use vote by mail, your GOTV team will closely watch the polls and absentee lists to make sure these voters do their duty. If they don't, you will need to call them. These are the voters you must continue to activate in the days leading up to the election; remind them that voting early helps your volunteer efforts, and emphasize that their vote and their vote alone will make the difference in a win. For the precincts that are loaded with lazy voters, organize canvass teams to go in and rattle their cage on election day. In vote-by-mail elections, send canvassers in to pick up ballots and return them to the drop boxes for the voter.
3. The third group is a little trickier. Voters registered in your party who live behind enemy lines will need very specific attention, as they are often the most difficult to activate. These voters should be treated like swing voters: They must get direct mail from the campaign, and they should be canvassed by the candidate. It is critical that these voters be part of your voter ID effort, as they are the least predictable of your entire party. Your swing analysis will tell you what percent will always vote party. Voter ID will tell you, by name, whom you can count upon. I recently worked on a campaign for a Democrat where nearly all the support was in areas of heavy Republican registration. During the GOTV, all party voters were called, but more than a third of them said, “Why are you calling me? I'm a registered Republican and always vote Republican.” Since we were working from county registration lists that clearly indicated that their registration was Democrat, it was a little disorienting. The good thing about this group is that if you identify them as supporting your opponent and then do not contact them again, they tend to be nonvoters.

Swing Voters

The next group of voters your campaign will identify are those who live in precincts with high numbers of swing voters. Recall that the precinct analysis has told you exactly which precincts they live in and how many of them you need to win. Because the campaign must have a clear reading of who will be supporting you, who is undecided, and who will not move, use the

candidate, volunteers registered in the opposing party, and your best canvassers to knock in these areas. Your campaign must keep track of the voters who say they will support you and send persuasion mail to the undecided. After the persuasion piece has been mailed, the campaign should follow up with a phone call to determine whether the voter's support can be counted on. If the answer is yes, two questions are asked: (1) Will you take a lawn sign? And (2) Can we use your name on an endorsement ad?

You want the swing voter to go public. These two simple and inexpensive "public" contributions to the campaign will guarantee a vote. Depending on the reason, if the voter says no to both of these questions, you should assume that on the issue of support, you have been told what you want to hear rather than given a guarantee.

The Pleasure of Your Company

It's always a good idea to be aware of other ballot issues that may affect your turnout or that of the opposition. If no other campaign is conducting a strong GOTV that will help you, do not let anything keep you from running a comprehensive one for your campaign. In a close election a GOTV is the difference between winning and losing.

If you're involved in an election where a controversial measure is also on the ballot, there may be a high voter turnout that significantly affects your efforts. For example, a few years back I was working for a progressive Democrat who was on the ballot with two ballot measures intended to limit the rights of a targeted minority. Our campaign had a well-organized GOTV, and we had conducted voter ID from September through November. The committee working in opposition to the two ballot measures also had a great GOTV effort, which helped ours even more. The state Democratic caucus was running tracking polls, and we knew we were neck and neck with our opponent. We also knew from polling that the two ballot measures were going down statewide. What we had not anticipated was the precincts of the sinners turning out in huge numbers to vote yes on these ballot measures, and, as long as they were there, they voted against our candidate as well.

Unfortunately, we realized too late that we spent far too much time identifying and getting out the vote where the proponents of the two ballot measures were also working. Had we left this portion of the electorate to the other campaign, more volunteer time and energy could have been freed up for voter ID and GOTV of our persuadables.

Disorganized and uncoordinated GOTV efforts can enrage hard-core voters. In Ashland, largely because of the statewide passage of the double-majority requirement in 1997, we have had a GOTV machine that rivals any

in the state. Voters are conditioned to vote early if they do not want to be bothered with activation calls during the week leading up to the election. However, in the 2000 general election, other well-meaning campaigns, specifically those working for candidates running for state and federal office, duplicated the efforts of hundreds of volunteers working on our campaign. Making matters worse, a local teacher, anxious to involve students in the electoral process, conducted yet another GOTV effort. As a result, voters were called three or more times in a single evening. It was ugly.

This kind of voter harassment must be minimized if at all possible. To avoid it, conduct cooperative GOTV efforts with other campaigns, or, at the very least, call and see what other campaigns intend to do. Call all campaigns that may inadvertently duplicate your efforts and carve up the county so that there is no overlap in calling areas. Contact high schools and let leadership and government teachers know how, when, and where their students can help.

Identifying Your Voters: Voter ID

Whether identifying voters by phone or by canvassing, you will need walking lists. These lists can be generated from the CD-ROM of registered voters you bought from the county, directly from the county itself, from a voter contact service, or from an organization that is endorsing your efforts.

No matter where you get your walking lists, you must first conduct a precinct analysis to know where to focus your voter ID efforts. Since you do not want to waste time on households where registered voters do not participate, prepare your lists so that only the two out of four voters—those who voted in two (or more) of the past four elections—are listed. These lists will need to be organized by precinct and then by street and street number.

The lists should be prepared so that streets are separated by page. Across the top of each page have: "Supporting," "Leaning support," "Undecided," "Leaning no support," and "Not supporting," or use a number rating system correlated with these categories from one to five that corresponds to the categories from "supporting" to "not supporting."

Once you have the walking lists, you will ID voters by canvassing, phoning, or both.

Canvassing for Voter ID

If you intend to ID voters while canvassing, you need to organize the walking lists to coincide with and match your canvassing maps. This is a lot more work than you might imagine. *Do not let just anyone help you with this task!* If you do, you'll spend days undoing and redoing. Once you match a walking list to a canvassing map, place the list *inside* the canvassing envelope.

If you are canvassing to ID voters, you will need twice the number of canvassers normally required, *or more*. At the door, each of your canvassers must ascertain whether the house will be in favor, opposed, undecided, or leaning in some way. If voters are leaning toward support or undecided, your campaign

“There is no knowledge that is not power.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

should be ready to follow up with literature or a phone call to bring them into your camp. If no one is home, you must have clean-up teams going out to re-knock or do the voter ID at phone banks to determine how people intend to vote.

The idea here is to identify individual voters who support your candidate and compile a list of these supporters so that your campaign can track them on election day and remind them to vote if it looks like they might be a no-show.

Voter ID by Phone

Although it puts a heavy burden on the phone bank team, I tend to prefer voter ID by phone, for a number of reasons:

1. For some canvassed areas, only 40 percent of the households have anyone at home during the canvass. That means that the remaining homes have to be re-canvassed or called anyway.
2. It is generally easier to get phone volunteers than canvass volunteers, and canvassing for voter ID eats up people.
3. Although canvassers can read body language and facial expressions to determine voter intent, voters are often more forthcoming on the phone about their support, especially if they support your candidate or issue-based campaign. It's sometimes hard for voters to tell candidates or volunteers face-to-face that they will be supporting the opposition.
4. Voter ID by canvass will sometimes net individuals who are not registered to vote.

Whether by phone or canvass, your goal should be to target 10–15 percent of the total number of votes you need to win. As the area and voting population increases, your voter ID efforts must also expand. Always start with the precincts that will give you the most return for the effort. For voter ID, that means going into swing voter precincts

“Winners never quit and quitters never win.”

—Bob Zuppke,
Illinois football coach

to look for swing voters and calling your embedded party registration living behind enemy lines.

If you are conducting voter ID by phone, you can use walking lists. Be sure to include phone numbers if it is your intention to use the same lists for both types of voter ID. Should you decide to identify all voters by phone and use canvassing only for activation and persuasion, you might as well prepare your calling lists in a format that will work best at the phone banks.

Pull precincts where you want to ID voters and sort by last name alphabetically and by phone number. If you sort only alphabetically, you risk repeating calls to households where people have different last names. If you sort by name and phone number, you improve your chances of catching and organizing duplicates in a way to prevent repeat calls.

To identify your supporters, systematically call every registered voter in the identified precincts. Remember, you are first calling areas that have a high swing voter tendency, so you will be calling as many voters as you can reach. Often, county lists do not have all of the phone numbers listed, so you may need to set up clerical sessions to look up phone numbers before your phone banks begin. Don't forget to check Web directory services. Phone banking to identify supporters goes much quicker than canvassing.

In your first round of phone calls, your campaign has a couple of choices: You can conduct blind calls or persuasion calls. In a blind call, volunteers ask questions about the candidates or issues but do not reveal for whom they are working. In a persuasion call, the caller immediately lets the voter know which organization is behind the calling effort. I prefer the persuasion call simply because it saves time by eliminating one step. If you start with a blind call and the voter is undecided or has a question about one of the candidates, your volunteer cannot field the question or attempt to persuade. Your campaign must be ready to follow that call with direct mail or another call from the campaign to try to persuade the voter.

If the first call is a persuasion call and your volunteer finds an undecided voter, he or she can immediately provide information that may help move the voter to support your candidate or cause. A campaign can also use an endorsement group to draw voters in a persuasion call, such

as the National Rifle Association, a clean air coalition, teachers, nurses, and so forth. You can also use people from within a particular precinct to call their neighbors: “Hello, is this George? Hi, I'm Shirley Smith, I live just down the street from you. . . .” Indirect supporters can be very persuasive.

“To do great and important tasks, two things are necessary: a plan and not quite enough time.”

—Anonymous

Last-Minute Efforts to Persuade Voters

1. Mail or walk a door hanger to your high-priority precincts reminding them to vote.
2. To swing precincts, mail or walk a persuasion piece that features an individual or group that normally would not support your cause or candidate (validators) to encourage voters to split their ballots.
3. Mail pieces designed to give information to the voters such as polling places, how to mark a ballot for your write-in candidate, whom to call if a ballot needs to be picked up, or whom to call for a ride to the polls. These are very effective and often rise above other direct mail clogging mailboxes in the last week.
4. While mail is easier, showing that your campaign is rich with volunteers can be far more effective, especially given the huge amounts of political mail seen in the last days of a campaign. Any big canvassing effort is bound to draw positive attention.
5. The night before election day, move lawn signs from one location to another. People get desensitized to lawn signs, but if a new one goes up in a neighborhood or, better yet, ten new ones appear, voters will notice.
6. Attach helium-filled balloons to lawn signs located on busy streets.
7. Hand paint specialty signs for a specific neighborhood and place them the day before the election. "Elect Mayor Daniels for a central bike path." "For more parks, elect Daniels." You want a personalized message for just that neighborhood that will present the look of an upwelling of new support. (I have used the reverse side of old lawn sign stock for this.)
8. Have the local paper place a 3-inch-by-5-inch Post-it note on the front page of the paper reminding people to vote for your candidate or cause. Use a yellow Post-it, red ink, and a style and size of font that looks like handwriting yet is very easy to read. Our local paper has done this from time to time for local businesses—usually for oil changes. The first time I saw one, I could not believe how it popped out at me as I unfolded the paper in the morning. So we did one for a GOTV on a double-majority issue-based campaign in the 2003 primary. Although the Post-its must be printed somewhere else, our local paper will do the insert for \$142 per thousand. It is very effective.
9. Some local papers that place the daily in a plastic bag will sell advertising space on the bags. Like the Post-it note inside the folded paper,

this "message on a bag" goes to people who subscribe to and presumably read the newspaper—some of the more likely voters. Check with the newspaper to see if it can use different messages for different cities or areas within your voting district.

Avoid Untargeted Activities

A GOTV effort is most effective in elections where there is voter apathy and low voter turnout is expected. Through the GOTV, you bring up the turnout of one segment of the population while leaving the support for the opposing camp alone. Still, every candidate I have worked for has wanted to stand at the entrance of the county fair, set up a table on the plaza in the heart of the community, wave signs at commuters, or hand out flyers in front of a grocery store. Unless you are conducting an untargeted activity such as this in a community where your candidate has overwhelming support, it can actually work against your GOTV effort. Remember, getting-out-the-vote is about getting *your* voters to the polls, not all voters. Unless it is a double-majority election, reminding *everyone* that they need to vote is counterproductive.

One might also argue that there are far better ways to use the candidate's time than standing on a corner during rush hour. Personally, I like to keep the candidate busy and out of my hair on election eve and election day. It's a great time to have him or her on the phone for GOTV or canvassing a high-priority precinct. It is also an excellent time for the candidate to call and thank supporters for their donations and volunteers for their time.

The GOTV: A Raft in a Hurricane

There comes a point in a campaign where you and your team have done everything you could possibly do. You have run a tight, well-organized campaign and raised enough money to get a clear, resonating message across to the voters. You may have been outspent by an opposition that had better television ads, brochures, press, and direct mail. But as the election draws near and you prepare for the GOTV, remember that both your campaign and your opponent's are headed into the same storm. If your efforts have placed you within striking distance, the GOTV is a great equalizer, often making the difference between a win and a loss. In the end, the odds are best for the team that is better prepared.

Although there are many who would disagree, I have found that by the final three weeks of a campaign most voters have made up their minds.

"Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal. My strength lies solely in my tenacity."

—Louis Pasteur

While campaigns send copious amounts of direct mail, especially toward the end, if you have not made your case by then, no amount of money or direct mail is going to change that. Don't misunderstand: There will still be voters struggling with the decision of whom to vote for, which is one reason a comparative piece is best left until last. However, by the end of a campaign, the effort is really about who can rally the most troops out of the bunker, regardless of how many happen to be in there. Effective last-minute direct mail pieces are more about relocking your base and rallying your troops to get out and vote than about moving voters from one bunker to another. Although there may be last-minute revelations that will swing campaigns twenty points, those are the exception, not the rule.

After the recall of Governor Gray Davis in California, voters were surveyed and asked (among other things) what impact the last-minute allegations of sexual harassment charges had on their support of Arnold Schwarzenegger. The surveys "showed that more than two-thirds of the voters had made up their minds more than a month before the election. As a result, the intense publicity in the last week of the campaign about accusations of Mr. Schwarzenegger's unwanted sexual advances appeared to have had little effect on how women—and others—voted" (Katherine Seelye and Marjorie Connelly, "Signaling Voter Unrest, Schwarzenegger Cut Deep into the Democrats' Base," *New York Times*, October 9, 2003).

In the last month before the 2000 presidential election, polling numbers showed Gore and Bush bouncing in and out of the lead. At the time this was attributed to voter whim. However, after analyzing fifty-two polls conducted by seven polling firms, Donald Green and Alan Gerber found that the "preferences toward the candidates changed little" and that "the failure of certain polls to predict the closeness of the actual vote reflects sampling bias, not the electorate's capricious preferences" (Green and Gerber, "What Causes Polls to Fluctuate?" Yale University, August 2001).

After the 2002 general election in Oregon, one political consultant attributed Democratic losses in house seats with close registration numbers to insufficient direct mail and a general unwillingness among Democrats to send hit pieces. However, on closer examination of the eleven close house races, only four of the winning races sent more direct mail pieces, and only five of the winning races sent more negative pieces than the opposition (data gathered from the political consultants involved in house races for both Democrats and Republicans, and the Oregon secretary of state).

While each race has its unique signature requiring specific action, the overriding features of losing campaigns are that they (1) did not communicate a clear message and (2) did not give due attention to the GOTV among last-minute campaign demands.

From day 1, all communication with the voter should be about two things: getting your base to care enough to vote, and moving swing voters and undecided voters to your camp. Keeping track of who moves (voter ID) and getting your base plus those who have moved to the polls (GOTV) is what wins elections, not copious direct mail.

As the final week before the election approaches, everything about the campaign should shift so that attention can be directed to the GOTV effort. That does not mean media, direct mail, or solicitation stops; however, everyone on the team must be focused on filling the phone banks. Like fundraising, GOTV should have its own team leader and timeline. To run a successful GOTV, a campaign must:

1. Have 10–15 percent of the registered voters identified, including, hopefully, most of those outside of the party base in identified precincts of swing voters.
2. Have enough volunteers and phone lines to contact both identified voters and base party voters living in precincts with high support and low and medium turnout.
3. Have a well-organized data system, with someone other than the GOTV coordinator or the campaign manager supplying the campaign with calling lists generated from registration rolls. In vote-by-mail states, this person would also be responsible for getting daily updates from the clerk's office of inactive voters (those who have not yet returned a ballot) for the week leading up to the election.

Once you have identified your supporters, your campaign must track them to see if they've voted. Tracking for vote-by-mail elections, early voting, or absentees can be done electronically. If you are tracking voters at the polls you have a couple of choices: One is poll watching and the other is working your list by phone and asking voters if they have cast a ballot.

"I wanted to look nice if we won, and if we lost this would be nice to be buried in."

—Bob Borkowski, assistant coach,
on why he showed up for a
game in a black pinstriped suit

Poll Watching

Poll watching is a labor-intensive campaign activity that requires plenty of preparation. It cannot be put together at the last minute, so prepare ahead of time. Find someone who will oversee this activity, and support that person with your volunteer base. Each poll watcher will need lists of people who have been identified as supporters sorted alphabetically and by precinct. Ideally you would use a list of all members of the

candidate's party, with supporters highlighted, although a list that includes only your identified supporters is fine.

Things to Do for a Successful Poll Watching Effort

1. Before the election, ask your county clerk or election official what is required of poll watchers. Are there forms that must be filled out and returned? Does the clerk require training conducted by his or her staff? In my area, before the introduction of vote by mail, it was legal for poll watchers to review the poll book, as long as they didn't interfere with the work of the election board. However, in some areas poll watchers can only listen for names as they are being called out.
2. Provide poll watchers with an alphabetical list, a clipboard, pencils with good erasers, and a cell phone. It is also a nice touch to send them out with a folding chair or stool. It's a good idea to provide each poll watcher with more than one list so that when volunteers come to retrieve the list to start calling no-shows, time isn't burned transferring names.
3. Place your poll watchers in high-priority precincts (that is, where high numbers of your supporters have been identified), and direct them to note which of your ID'd supporters have voted throughout the day.
4. As the name of the voter is called out, the poll watcher will check the list of supporters to see whether that individual is among those who have been positively identified.
5. Relay this information back to phone banks, and approximately four hours before the polls close, supporters who have not yet voted get a call from a volunteer urging them to get down to the polls.
6. Regardless of what you think about the outcome of the election, tell the phone bank volunteers to impress upon the voters how important it is that they get to the polls, that you predict a *very* close election, and that every vote will count. The supporter who hasn't yet voted must have a sense of urgency to get to the polls and vote.
7. Offer rides to get supporters to and from the polls. If there is a sleeping baby or child, a volunteer may offer to stay in the voter's home while the parent votes.

"It's not so important who starts the game, but who finishes it."

—John Wooden, former UCLA
basketball coach

With the poll watcher, the phone bank, and the transportation effort, you will have a lot of people involved, and you may find that the best hope for pulling it off is to combine efforts with other campaigns.

Format for Poll Watching

There are two basic steps for the poll watching process:

1. Volunteers observe the voters all day—from the time the polls open to two hours before they close—in selected precincts to see who votes. Those who vote are marked off the list.
2. Two hours before the polls close, the final poll watcher of the day takes the precinct list to preassigned phone banks. There, callers divide up the sheets and call all identified supporters who have not yet voted and urge them to get to the polls before they close.

Note: If your poll watcher wants to stay at the polls longer, he or she can call in names by cell phone to the phone banks.

Precinct Captains

Each precinct where poll watching is to take place must have a precinct captain who is responsible for the precinct team. Each captain has three specific duties:

1. Before election day, phone numbers must be looked up and written on the precinct lists, and your identified voters must be highlighted on the lists. It is best to assemble a clerical team for this activity. If the voters' phone numbers cannot be found, run a line through their names as though they had already voted.
"The important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle."
—Pierre de Coubertin
2. If your campaign has not identified supporters before election day and the intent of your poll watching is to call all supporters in your highest-priority precincts, then be sure to put a line through the names of those who have voted absentee.
In the process of writing phone numbers, be sure not to separate the precinct sheets. This task should be completed no later than the Friday before the election.
2. The captain is responsible for recruiting four poll watchers and one standby. These five people need to be certified, trained, and supervised. Poll watchers should meet with their team captain the weekend

before the election. Signed certificates for each poll watcher should be provided to the precinct captains at that time. Your county clerk or county elections office will supply you with all the information and forms you may need.

3. The captain must be present at his or her precinct when it opens at 8:00 A.M. and supervise the precinct on and off throughout the day.

Poll Watcher Responsibilities

1. Arrive a few minutes early at the polling place.
2. Give your signed certificate to the election judge, who is a member of the polling board.
3. Do not engage in conversation with the election board. You may, of course, answer questions, but do not discuss other topics with the board.
4. As voters arrive and give their names to the board, listen for the name and then cross it out on your list as they are voting.
5. Two hours before polls close, the final poll watcher should take the precinct list to the designated phone bank.

In close elections, the poll watchers and phone banks that follow will often supply the margin of votes needed for a win on election day. However, because of the amount of organization required and the labor-intensive demands of

this activity, few campaigns conduct poll watching anymore. *If at all possible, do it. Voter ID, poll watching, and GOTV make the difference between winning and losing in a close race.*

"Anything worth doing is worth doing frantically."

—Jane Tower

Regulation of Persons At the Polls

As in all aspects of a campaign, it is important to know the law; however, in poll watching, it is imperative. The polling place has special regulations that cover everything from how close individuals may stand to the polls if they are not voting and are not certified poll watchers to what topics may be discussed by those present. The campaign manager should contact the county clerk well beforehand and get the regulatory information to the precinct captains in written form.

Authorized poll watches are allowed in the polling place and must sign a specific section of the front cover of the poll book. Only as many poll watchers are allowed as will *not* interfere with the work of the election board.

Poll watchers must have written authorization from one of the following:

1. For the purpose of challenging electors at the polling place, either from the county clerk or a political party
2. For the purpose of observing the receiving and counting of votes, from a candidate

Poll watchers *may*:

- Take notes
- Have access to poll books, so long as it does not interfere with the work of the board
- Challenge persons offering to vote at the poll
- Challenge entries in poll book
- Wear campaign buttons

"The only thing that hasn't changed is our ability to think differently."

—Albert Einstein

Poll watchers *may not*:

- Campaign in any way
- Circulate any cards, handbills, questionnaires, or petitions
- Fail to follow the instructions of the election board
- Take poll books off tables

All members of the poll watching effort should familiarize themselves with the specific election law violations.

Phoning

Let's suppose that you do not have enough people to watch the polling places all day. Don't worry. I recently worked on a campaign where we came up with an approach that was very effective and less labor intensive than poll watching.

For this process you will need a good precinct analysis. Remember, your precinct analysis will tell you where your support is and show you where people have voted for candidates or causes similar to yours in the past. Your precinct analysis will also tell you where people

live who will *never* vote for your cause or candidate. If it is clear that a precinct has traditionally voted against campaigns such as the one you are working on, don't canvass them, don't call them, don't activate them. Forget

"Democracy is a contact sport."

—Ray McNally of McNally Temple Associates Inc., in Sacramento, California

them for the GOTV effort. Instead, look for precincts that have been split: those that have narrowly supported or narrowly defeated past campaigns similar to yours. These are the precincts you should call to ID voters. Then on election day call only the *identified* yes voters, even though they may have already voted (figure 11.1).

As for those remaining precincts that have overwhelmingly supported past campaigns similar to yours, it is not so necessary to ID the voter. You know they will tend to vote your way.

On election day, while your people are going down the list of supporters in the marginal precincts calling the *identified* yes votes, they can call *all* of the voters in the high-priority precincts for an issue-based campaign, and for a candidate race, all who are registered in your party. If your campaign has time before election day, you may want to ID the voters in the high-priority

ELECTION DAY PHONE SCRIPT

Hello, this is _____.

I am a volunteer worker for (*name of the campaign*).

I am calling to remind you that the polls will remain open until 8 P.M., and also to encourage you to vote. This will be a very close election, and we really need your support for (*name of person or ballot measure*) to win.

Your polling place is located at _____.

Will you need transportation to the polls?

If transportation is needed,
they can call the following numbers:

Figure 11.1 Election Day Phone Script

precincts as well, but this is not as important. Look at the phone calling on the day of the election as your one last canvass in high-priority precincts. If your precinct analysis is accurate, you will turn out strong support that might have stayed home otherwise. *Remember, here you are not changing minds, just the turnout.*

When a caller reaches someone who has already voted, that person's name should be crossed off the list so that he or she will not be called again. For those who have not voted, it is up to you to decide whether you want to call them again later. If the election is close, you may want to urge them one more time to get down to the polls. However, in general, more than one call a day is an annoyance and is counterproductive.

One important note: *Don't duplicate calling lists for phone banks.* Each phone bank caller or phone station needs a separate and unique calling list.

The Absentee Ballot and Early Vote

Voting absentee used to be a service to the voter who was temporarily out of the area or unable to get to the polls. However, in many states, it has now become the vote of convenience. As ballots become longer and more complex, the busy and conscientious voter is choosing to vote absentee. In a recent California election, it took some voters more than an hour to complete their twelve-card ballot.

"If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail."

—Abraham Maslow

With long, complicated ballots, you run the risk of voter fatigue. Voter fatigue occurs when voters actually lose interest in voting as they spend more and more time working through their ballot. Because local elections are at the end of ballots, down-ballot candidates and issues are often overlooked. If your candidate or measure is way down on a ballot, encouraging voters to register and vote absentee at home may help minimize the undervote for those races.

There are a number of reasons it is to your advantage to register as many of your supporters as possible to vote absentee or early:

1. Often campaigns don't heat up and get nasty until the final three weeks. As voters are becoming more and more disillusioned with negative campaigning, their response is to stay home on election day rather than vote against the candidate slinging mud. If a candidate or party has a huge percentage of the turnout locked in before things get nasty, they're at a decided advantage.

2. If you know who will vote absentee or by early vote, then your campaign can concentrate on these voters well before election day, closer to when they actually will vote.
3. Nasty weather can affect voter turnout on election day.

In the 1998 midterm election, nearly half of the registered voters in Oregon requested absentee ballots. Of those who requested them, 73 percent returned them (see table 7.1). Of those who did not request absentee ballots, only 41 percent turned out to vote. The absentee ballot represented over 58 percent of the total voter turnout.

Although in the 1998 general election Oregon voters approved vote by mail for all elections, they could already register as permanent absentee voters

in 1997. The lists of absentee voters were available from the county clerk for a small charge, and about 40 percent of the names also had phone numbers listed.

"Vote early and vote often."

—Al Capone

Having lists of those who will make up nearly 60 percent of the overall voter turnout is very helpful and means that with a little effort any campaign can reach a large group of likely votes, ID whom they intend to support in the election, send persuasion mail to the undecideds, and make sure that those supporting your efforts return their ballots by election day.

In many states the option to register absentee is open to anyone for the asking up to the day before the election. Those who request absentee ballots within the three weeks before an election are the most likely to actually vote. Your county elections office may be able to provide updated lists of those requesting absentee ballots as the election draws near. When someone makes the request, that voter should be immediately contacted by the campaign.

Most states that have absentee voting require that the voter make that request before each election, although in some states, such as California, a voter who has a permanent disability can register to vote absentee always, unless they miss an election. Some states require that a reason for the absentee ballot be given before each election.

Some states have "early vote." With early vote, the registered voter may go to a designated polling place between certain hours and vote just as though it were election day. Depending on the state, it can take place anywhere from four to forty days before an election. As with absentee voting, early vote gives a campaign an opportunity to lock in votes before the election. However, it does require that a campaign peak twice: once for the early vote and/or ab-

sentees and once for election day. Direct mail, advertising, canvassing, and everything else must happen earlier for these voters.

Voters love the convenience of absentee and early vote, and those who use these options tend to be among the most likely of the likely voters. For example, in 1996, early vote represented 40 percent of the voter turnout in some districts in Texas.

Whether your state or county has early vote or absentee voting:

1. Check past elections to determine the number who requested or took advantage of this option. For those who requested absentee ballots, look at the percentage who returned their ballot and determine what proportion of the overall voter turnout these voters constituted. Note that this information may already be on the secretary of state's Web site, so check there first. (Web addresses for all elections departments can be found in the appendix of this handbook.)
2. See whether a list of those who requested absentee ballots is available to your campaign through the county clerk or election office.
3. Inquire about updated lists of those who actually vote absentee or early as the election draws near. That way you will not be continually contacting those who have already returned their ballots, burning up campaign money and time.
4. If the lists of absentee voters do not include phone numbers, set up a clerical team to look them up.
5. If you are in a state that offers early vote, hound your supporters to vote early.

"Poll" Watching for Absentee Ballot Requests

Absentee ballots present some unique challenges to the grassroots campaign. Here is an inexpensive way to deal with absentee ballots if lists are not available from the county elections official.

Assign the task of the absentee voters to a team. One person must be willing to go the county clerk's office on a daily basis to find out who has requested absentee ballots. This person keeps a running list. The requests must be checked on a regular basis because voters who request absentee ballots will often fill it out and return it within a very short time frame. Once you know which voters request an absentee ballot, you must try to persuade

"You may be disappointed if you fail but you are doomed if you don't try."

—Beverly Sills

them to vote for your candidate or cause. Forget the precinct analysis for absentee voters. For this group, you are not hoping that those who don't support you will *not* be voting. You know for a fact that most *will* vote. To persuade these voters, you have a number of choices.

1. Use direct mail to persuade.
2. Send volunteers or the candidate out to canvass these voters at home.
3. Have the candidate, a friend, or a prominent citizen call.
4. Send a personalized letter from the candidate or from a well-known, well-respected local leader of the same party affiliation as the voter.
5. Use some combination of all these techniques.

Vote By Mail

Currently seventeen states are either using or considering using vote-by-mail elections. Vote by mail was originally introduced to Oregonians in 1981, and by 1987 most counties in Oregon conducted vote-by-mail elections for local elections. The cost savings to taxpayers and the increased voter turnout are the two most tangible benefits of vote by mail. According to the Oregon secretary of state's office, the cost savings of the 2000 vote-by-mail primary election over the 1998 primary precinct election was nearly \$600,000. "In general, the cost of conducting all-mail elections is one-third to one-half of the amount required for polling place elections" (Priscilla Southwell, "Five Years Later: A Re-Assessment of Oregon's Vote By Mail Electoral Process," 2003).

The principal argument against vote by mail is the potential for voter fraud. However, after more than a decade of using vote by mail, Oregon has had only four cases of fraud resulting in prosecution. One that I personally know about occurred when a husband signed his wife's ballot because she was in the hospital. Getting people to vote at all in America is more an issue than voters committing a felony by voting twice for a candidate they support.

Real voter fraud, the kind that can have tangible results, is far more effective when placed in the hands of those who know what they're doing; a husband signing a ballot for his hospitalized wife is not in this category. The 2000 general election in Florida, where impediments seemed to have been contrived to prevent voter participation, represents the kind of election that needs attention more than vote by mail.

Black voters in Florida and around the country turned out in record numbers on November 7. Since then, many have complained

that Florida election officials removed large numbers of minorities from state voting rolls, wrongly classifying them as convicted felons—and accused Florida officials of using police to intimidate voters in some areas. [Jesse] Jackson cited the reports of students from historically black colleges in Florida, who have said they went to the polls carrying voter identification cards and were told they were not on the voter rolls.

The Florida Supreme Court had ordered a hand recount of all ballots where mechanical counts had registered no vote for president. Many of those "undervotes" came from majority-black precincts, heavily Democratic, where aging punch-card ballots failed to record votes for president in mechanical counts. (CNN.com, "Black Democrats Angered by Supreme Court Ruling," December 13, 2000)

With little evidence of fraud, opponents are now claiming that vote by mail represents one more step in the progression of isolation in American society. Although this view is certainly understandable, and isolation is indeed cause for concern, a better solution might be to ban drive-up windows (as we did in Ashland for the same reason) than to come after vote by mail.

Although higher turnout and huge savings to the taxpayer are strong endorsements for vote by mail, vote by mail also increases voter turnout among minorities, single parents, students, people who are paid by the hour, independents, young voters, and people who have moved within the last two years—all segments of society that are underrepresented for various reasons (Priscilla Southwell, "Survey of Vote-by-Mail Senate Election," April 1996).

Vote by mail also makes life easier for the GOTV effort for candidates and issue-based campaigns, which in turn helps communities secure funding for schools, parks, libraries, and needed improvements for government buildings. For state and local governments to provide the option of both absentee and poll voting with tax dollars is a costly luxury we should relinquish.

In mail-in elections, as with absentee voters, the county mails all ballots to the homes of registered voters within a specific voting district. In order to give voters ample time to review the ballot items, ballots are mailed about three weeks before the final election date when they must be at the county clerk's office for tabulation.

"Trust in Allah, but tie your camel."

—Arab proverb

For the purposes of your campaign team, the difference between a mail-in and poll voting lies primarily in the timing of your election and the mechanics of a GOTV. In a conventional election, canvassing continues up until election

day, and nearly all of your ads appear in the three weeks before the election. With a mail-in election, the campaign must peak when the ballots are mailed, not the day they are due back. This means that all canvassing should be completed by the weekend following the Friday that ballots are mailed, and ads must start to run at least a week before the ballots leave the county clerk and peak during the first week voters receive them.

"It's far easier to start something than to finish it."

—Amelia Earhart

Even though many voters will return their ballots immediately, your campaign should maintain a presence in the media until the day the ballots are due. You must be prepared to spend more money on ads to span the period from before the ballots are mailed to the voters up to election day.

GOTV and Voter ID

A GOTV effort for a mail-in election is remarkably easy and painless. With vote by mail, counties keep track of who has returned their ballots as they're received, and for a nominal charge they will print or e-mail a list of those who have voted (activity list) or those who haven't voted (inactivity list). For a GOTV effort, you want to know who has *not* voted. Some county elections departments, however, are not equipped to separate the active and inactive lists. For these counties, your data person will have to remove the active voters from the lists as they come in from the county.

Although you want to conduct voter ID throughout the campaign, as the election draws near your team will have to buckle down and make sure that all supporters within targeted precincts are identified.

Here is what you do:

1. Print a list of registered voters in your high-priority/swing precincts (you determined these when you did your precinct analysis).
2. Have a clerical team look up phone numbers. Don't forget to check Internet sources for local phone directories.
3. Find phone bank locations and set up phone banks to begin calling the voters in your favorable precincts to ID them for support of your candidate or ballot measure.
4. If the voter is undecided and needs persuasion, this is the time to do it.
5. Follow up all undecided voters with direct mail and phone calls from friends, colleagues, co-workers, the candidate, or prominent citizens. Stay on the undecided voters until you know where they stand.

6. ID voters who should be supportive of your candidate or cause in lower-priority precincts based on party affiliation, age, income, and education. Be sure to keep track of whether their support is yes, no, or maybe.
7. Follow up maybe's in the lower-priority precincts and leave the no's alone everywhere.

It's in the Mail

Once ballots are mailed, all campaign efforts shift to the GOTV. Hopefully the GOTV coordinator and the field director or volunteer coordinator has a pretty full roster for each night of the phone banks.

If not, it is now the campaign committee's responsibility to help get people to the phones. All of my committee members work at least one evening of phone banks, and I train them to supervise the activity. Although some consultants believe that phone banks should begin when the ballots are mailed to the voters, I like to give voters a chance to get their ballot in without a phone call. Although calling during the first week after ballots have been mailed will give you an initial spike on your ballots received list, any benefits that are realized by phoning early equalize by election day. More important, calling the first week after ballots are mailed puts a campaign at risk of running out of volunteers and steam when you really need them—in the last week. This can be disastrous in a double-majority election, where 50 percent of all registered voters must return a ballot before ballots are counted. In terms of a GOTV effort, the last week is the most important, so fill those volunteer seats first.

Ten days before the ballots are due to the clerk, order an inactivity list (alphabetically by precinct) either from the county or from your data person. Again, if your county does not separate those who have and have not voted and no one on your team can remove those who have voted from the lists, line up a clerical team to highlight which ones have not yet voted; this will make calling a little easier for your phone bank team.

Set up another clerical team to look for voters who have said they will be supporting your candidate or cause and have not yet returned their ballot.

"The people who win elections are those with the guts to keep on running when nobody else gives them a prayer."

—Christopher Matthews,
San Francisco Examiner

"The wise don't expect to find a life worth living; they make it that way."

—Anonymous

This is also a good time to transfer the looked-up phone numbers from the first list you were calling.

Set up phone banks to call and activate supporters who have not yet returned their ballots.

At this point your GOTV effort is two-pronged; not only will you call voters who have been identified as supporting you, but also you will make the calls to turn out your base.

To do this, print out lists of the voters in precincts where the base is supporting but not reliable on turnout. These voters will be called first. Precincts with a voting history of high support and high turnout are called next, to give them a chance to get their ballot in, thereby saving your campaign time. Finally, come back in for a second pass on the lazy base voters.

Each caller can contact fifty voters in a ninety-minute shift. Because you know how many callers you have for each night and how many inactive voters are in each precinct, it is not necessary to print all inactive voters in all precincts—you will need just enough of them to keep your banks busy each night. The next night, you can print out lists for new precincts with that day's active voters already removed. Remember, call only base and identified supporters.

In an Oregon House race I worked on in 2000, forty volunteers called 2,000 registered voters each night for seven nights straight. Still, those 14,000 phone calls did not reflect even half of the 35,000 registered voters, and many voters were called two and three times. While a GOTV effort in a state without vote by mail will focus primarily on support that has been identified, vote by mail allows your campaign to begin its efforts in precincts where your party historically underperforms and to continue all the way to those precincts of high support/high turnout before going back in to work the high-support/low- to medium-turnout precincts. By working through precincts, campaign work is really cut to an efficient level.

For your base voters who are located in low-support/low-turnout precincts, if you have not ID'd them before the GOTV, you can sometimes conduct GOTV and voter ID in the same phone call.

First, you must determine whether the voter on the other end of the phone is supportive. I do this by simply asking. If the voter is not supporting, get off the phone. Don't worry about activating no votes. For those called who say they are supporting your cause but, for whatever reason, still have their ballots, offer to pick them up. In this case, ask the voter to tape the ballot to the screen door or tuck it into the doorjamb, so a volunteer can quickly pick it up without knocking. I've found that most people don't want you to pick up their ballot. Nearly three-quarters of the people we call who

are supportive and still have their ballots, instead say that they'll drive it immediately to a drop-off box. Because I can never be sure that a voter's good intentions will be enough, I push the voter just a bit more and say, "Hey, we have someone driving right by your house to get another ballot, let us save you the trip." If they say, "No, I'll do it," then I let it go.

"Spend the time to make the foundation right or you will pay in time and money all the way to the roof."

—Tony Nunes, builder

For the final two nights, Monday until 9:00 P.M. and Tuesday until 6:00 P.M., have phone banks going full tilt, and have runners lined up. More runners are needed for Tuesday than for Monday night. Runners are people whose sole job is to go out and pick up ballots as phone banks turn them up. It's best to use two runners per car so the driver doesn't have to park. The driver stops, the passenger hops out and retrieves the ballot from the screen door or the doorjamb, and off they go. Use runners efficiently: Divide the voting district into logical areas so that runners don't wind up spending an hour to pick up four ballots. As soon as a phone volunteer has a ballot to pick up, put the address and name on a card or piece of paper and route them. Continue to do this until a driver returns and there are enough ballots to pick up in another area. It is best for runners to have cell phones so that ballot locations can be called to the car as they come in.

"Out of the strain of the Doing, Into the peace of the Done."

—Julia Louise Woodruff

On election night, with the polls closing at 8:00, pack it in at 6:00 or 7:00, depending on how many ballots need to be picked up. At this time, all callers become runners. The phones shut down and everyone goes out to pick up the last of the ballots.

Organizing the GOTV Effort

Although phone-bank systems are described in Chapter 3, some repetition would not be amiss here. The importance of having fully staffed phone banks on a GOTV effort cannot be overemphasized. In the example above of three phone banks going each night (one had two shifts of ten and two had one shift of ten), if each shift were short just one caller each night, that would amount to 200 calls per night or 1,400 calls over the course of the GOTV effort. To give you an idea of the impact this can have on the outcome of a race, consider that of seven close house races in Oregon's 2002 general election, all were won or lost by 2,700 *combined*, out of 280,000 voters. Even if you think

you will win big, organize a strong GOTV effort. Remember, it is not enough to win; you want to shove the win down the opposition's throat. While George W. Bush proved you do not need a voter mandate to do what you want once in office, that is not the case for down-ballot candidates. For these candidates, a big win means power after the oath and the potential of scaring away opponents in the next election. For issue-based campaigns, a decisive win will tend to dissuade opposition from referring the measure back out to the voters.

Make a spreadsheet listing all volunteers for the GOTV phone bank. The first column contains their names, and the next, their phone numbers. Then have a smaller column with "CB?" (for "called backed?") as the column header; later, a check mark is placed in this column on the printout after a volunteer has been called back and confirmed that he or she will be there for the next day's phone bank. Next are seven columns with dates, one for each night of phone banking. Each phone bank will have its own spreadsheet, listing only the volunteers who will be calling from that location.

Below the dates I list the starting times of the phone banks. For example, the first bank usually runs from 6:00 to 7:30 P.M. and the second from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M. (figure 11.2).

The names on the spreadsheet are kept in alphabetical order. If your lists are short, this detail is less important, but in the example of the phone bank with two shifts of ten for seven nights, the campaign will have 140 volunteers working the GOTV in one location alone. As volunteers let the campaign know if they can do the early or late shift, the time slot is circled in red so that the lead or supervisor can easily see it. It is a good idea to include a blank sheet for people who volunteer to call after the GOTV begins. Each night of calling must have a lead person or a supervisor. The lead's duties are as follows:

1. Arrive a few minutes early and open the phone banks.
2. Have paper cups for water and red pens for marking precinct lists.

NAME	NAME (LAST)	Place lead names here for each night		LEAD NAME		Wed. 11/1		Thur. 11/2		Fri. 11/3		Sat. 11/4		Sun. 11/5		Mon. 11/6	
		PHONE #	CB?	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30
				6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30
				6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30
				6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30	6:00	7:30

Figure 11.2 Example of a GOTV Phone Bank Spreadsheet

3. Bring enough phone bank instructions so that each caller in each shift will have a set.
4. Bring targeted precinct lists with inactive voters—this is provided by the campaign
5. Have the master copy of all volunteers participating in the GOTV. (I have a satchel with cups, pens, and the GOTV master calling list inside. I secure the precinct calling lists before the phone banks start and either deliver the lists to the leads or have the leads pick them up, at which time the satchel is passed off as well. In outlying phone banks, I have the GOTV coordinator organize everything except the voter lists to call. These are e-mailed to the coordinator early enough for him or her to print them before the phone banks start.)
6. Welcome the volunteers and give instructions (provided by the campaign).
7. Have callers begin, and then circulate and answer questions.
8. Fill water cups and distribute one to each volunteer, refilling if necessary.
9. Once questions subside, call ALL volunteers for the next evening's phone banks, using the master lists for the GOTV phone bank and checking off the CB column for each confirmation. Afterward, look over the CB column; any last-minute cancellations must be communicated to the campaign as soon as possible so the spot can be filled.
10. The next shift arrives fifteen minutes early for training. Begin anew, providing instructions to the next team.
11. At exactly 7:30, the next crew pulls the first shift off the phones and takes over at their desk, continuing to call down the sheets provided for the first shift.
12. Again, circulate, answer questions, pick up old water cups and distribute new ones, and be available for as long as necessary.
13. Once questions subside, get on the phone and make GOTV calls until 9:00 P.M., when the banks close.
14. Clean up all remnants of the work crews: cups, pens, lists, and so on. The pens and the master call list are returned to the satchel along with any unused cups.
15. Lock up and get the satchel to the next lead or back to campaign headquarters.

A couple of years back, I ran GOTV for an issue-based campaign where the system was set up as outlined above. On the third night of phone banks my lead called and told me that three callers had not showed up for the first

shift and four for the second. As this had never happened before, I contacted the lead from the previous night's phone banks and found that she had become busy with personal business and never made the calls to remind the next evening's volunteers as instructed. GOTV calling—especially on a double-majority election—is so tight that we had to set up a separate phone bank to make up for the seven callers we lost on that one evening. It is important always to call your volunteers and remind them of the location and time; if a lead does not get to the job, he or she must let the campaign know so that someone else can do it in time to ensure a full contingent at the next day's phone banks.

One other GOTV war story: In 2000 I was running a campaign for a candidate for the Oregon House. We had phone banks set up at a real estate office we had used for many campaigns. However, just before the GOTV, we were informed that the campaign needed to find another location. It turned out that the local Board of Realtors had endorsed our opponent, and we were out. It's always a good idea to have a backup location just in case.

Push Polls

"Push Polls" are nothing more than a telemarketing technique disguised as a real poll to fool the voter. They are used primarily as a tool for a GOTV effort. They are called push polls because they are designed to push a voter away from one candidate and toward another. With push polling, specific voters are targeted and given false and intentionally damaging information under the guise of a legitimate poll; of course, there is no intent to conduct real research. Do not confuse push polls with push questions, covered in Chapter 2. Unlike push questions, where candidates are equally tested for negative and positive campaign issues and themes, push polling questions are biased and designed to have a negative impact on only one of the candidates. They hurt the industry and legitimate polling firms.

Whereas a benchmark or tracking poll selects voters randomly, a push poll targets undecided or swing voters. As Karl Feld, of Western Wats Opinion Research Center, describes them, "Questions used in push polls often sound similar to those used as push questions to test campaign messages in legitimate polls. This is done intentionally to camouflage the true nature of the push poll" (*Campaigns & Elections*, May 2000, p. 63).

Should your campaign be the victim of a push polling effort by the opposition, call the media immediately for a press conference. Calling attention to this kind of misleading and underhanded campaigning is your best defense.