

So, you've decided to run for office. You assemble your team, you define a campaign strategy (for incumbents, stay the course; for challengers, we need change!), and then you need volunteers.

Before you go any farther though, I want you to log on to the internet and play a free trial of World of Warcraft. I'm serious, or go read an epic fantasy story like Lord of the Rings. You won't regret either, and they'll help you win.

What if I told you that stories like The Lord of the Rings or games like World of Warcraft teach you what you need to know about consistently winning political campaigns?

Don't laugh, stories and games hold the key to your victory.

Stories and games have three main characteristics that prove themselves invaluable to anyone seeking election:

1. They incorporate epic purpose and a great goal
2. They rely on collaboration to achieve that goal
3. They show the steps and provide feedback on realizing that goal

Here's how you can successfully make those three principles a reality in your next campaign for office:

## **1) Find a better story that leads to an epic purpose**

This is the most important step. Without a better story with an epic purpose, you have nothing to set yourself apart.

But how do you create an epic purpose?

If the 2008 presidential election taught us anything it's that idealistic purpose trumps ideology. Obama ran on the platform of positive change, and made people believe that electing him would be each of them a part of that change.

The problem with the Republican candidates this year is that they don't have any bigger purpose. Either their focus is on regression, in other words going back to our founding ideals or they just want to "do better" than the other guy. Neither of these stories have *mass* appeal since they don't mean much to most people.

Ask yourself, does a good story go backwards? Of course not. They always move forward and tackle bigger and better challenges. Good stories, just like good games, inspire people. The main character always moves forward trying to vanquish the great evil.

What's your great evil that you want to vanquish?

Find the great evil that you will lead everyone to conquer, offering voters a clear way to move forward. Then you will have an epic purpose for everyone involved, both volunteers and voters.

On a national level, Obama focused on 'Change' and the 'Hope' that things will get better. Details as to how that would happen were inconsequential to the overall purpose. People simply agreed with the greater purpose.

## 2) Rally the volunteers and engage them with games

Once you have identified your great purpose, you need to get your team energized and motivated to seeing that purpose achieved. A major problem with volunteering is that many times it feels like a burden, not a fun, collaborative opportunity to achieve something great.

You need to make it more fun and interesting.

Make a list of all the necessary skills and steps to spread the message, which is the purpose of your campaign. You probably can think of a bunch right now; doorbell ringing, sign-waving, letter writing, putting up signs, helping out at events, internet promotions. Now make that list not-boring.

Not boring?

Yup, jazz up the names wherever you can. So door knockers become “roaming evangelists” and people who are influencers online become part of the “Social Media Corps of Engineers”. Think of some names that relate to your purpose and the personality of your campaign. But make it fun.

Then set up an online sign up form for volunteers.

Start by allowing the new volunteers to pick from the list those things that they excel at. If the names you came up with are too unfamiliar, you might have to describe them, that’s okay.

Then have each volunteer choose a secret identity based on their skills. I know this may sound cheesy but everyone is good at something and you need to allow them to embrace those differences and use them to help achieve the epic purpose. Giving them a new name, a campaign name, will help with that.

Set up a secret lair as a base of operations.

Everyone has fond memories of the clubhouse of their youth, and every adult longs for that experience again. Give that to them offline and online. “Campaign Headquarters” is too boring and common. Give them someplace of their own to congregate that makes them feel special and surrounds them with the sense they are not alone in accomplishing this amazing purpose you have set forth. You can do this with a physical location and also with a website.

You also have to allow them the opportunity to share and collaborate.

Setting up an online chat or forum is a good first step, but hiring someone to create an total social experience would be the best. You don’t have to get someone to create a Facebook or anything, but you do need a place where people can share stories, get ideas, and see that they are making a difference. [Something like Ning.com](#) would do nicely.

It’s crucial that you tie everything into the bigger story and have a clear epic win.

Every activity your volunteers engage in must directly relate to the great purpose you all have together. A story only moves forward when the main characters do something tied to advancing the story. Make sure they know that what they do is having an effect on the overall purpose.

That's why you set goals and levels that give feedback to volunteers that they are accomplishing the goals you set forth. Within this social sphere you create, make sure to set up measurable goals that allow people to see that they are actually making a difference in achieving the purpose. If someone hangs 100 door hangers, then they get a badge or some accolade. If someone signs up 100 voters to pledge themselves to vote or to agree with your bigger purpose, they get a new level. People love these types of rewards.

Make the whole process of volunteering seem more like a fun game, not a dutiful obligation.

### **3) Include the voters using games**

You can't pay people to vote for you, *but* you can make it rewarding to vote for your purpose.

Instead of just going out and asking people to vote for you, why not create a system that engages people instead? If you tie it into the main goal, the greater, epic purpose, your efforts will be rewarded.

Ask voters to sign a pledge that they agree with the bigger idea, sign on paper and online. Now they are tied to that purpose and part of something bigger.

Then, on a website that you set up, once they agree with your bigger purpose, they have the option of being a volunteer or a collaborator. Each level has different tasks and duties that they have to perform. Maybe they aren't ready to volunteer but if they agree that your epic purpose is good, then help them spread that. Use similar systems as above.

Then leading up to the big vote, set up specific challenges and achievements that engage them in the campaign and its epic purpose.

Also, set up a related website for voters that makes it fun to share their voting experience on election day. Help them to share their achievements and stories along with instant feedback from the campaign.

### **This is *your* mission**

Obviously there is a lot of work to be done within each area, but it's not impossible. In fact, that's your epic goal, to craft a system that inspires and engages a large enough group of people to get elected.

So get to it, the fate of the world rests in your hands.

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