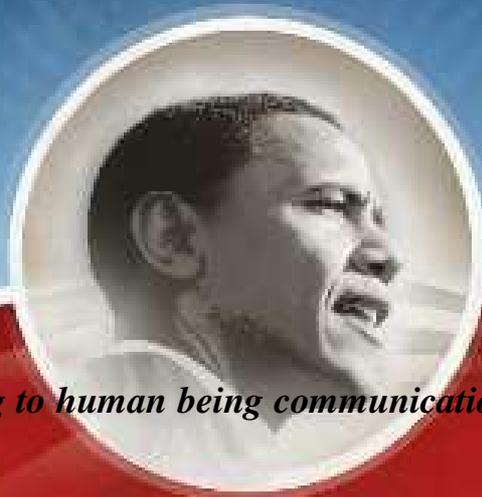


## *Obama Web-based Campaign Strategy*

**CHANGE**  
WE CAN BELIEVE IN



*“We believed in human being to human being communication.” - David Plouffe, Obama’s campaign manager*

*“Content should come from the bottom up, not from the top down.” - Jalali Hartman, “Obamanomics”*

**OBAMA'08**

*“Some people only go to MySpace. It's where they're on all day. Some only go to LinkedIn. Our goal is to make sure that each supporter online, regardless of where they are, has a connection with Obama.” - Scott Goodstein Obama’s campaign advisor*

On Tuesday November 4th, 2008, Barack Hussein Obama has been elected 44th president of the United States of America.

“Yes, you can”. Who on earth has not heard this phrase? The campaign motto of elected president Barack Obama has been widespread all over the world during his campaign. More than ever before, the 2008 US electoral campaign has been covered by all media. However, compared to the 2004 campaign, one medium took a new place in the democratic candidate strategies. Indeed, the Internet has wielded more influence than ever over the campaign. How did Barack Obama web-based strategy reveal the power of this mass media?

To tackle such an issue, I will first focus on his web-based actions and then, I will remind his results and the lessons that could be learned from his campaign.

## I. His web-based actions

### I.1 - He chose the best e-force

Giving a huge importance to its Internet strategy, Barack Obama had to gather around him the best people in this field. That is why he recruited the best e-force a candidate had ever recruited. Even in 2004, when Howard Dean tried to use the Internet for political fundraising using Meetup.com, he had a less experimented web team.

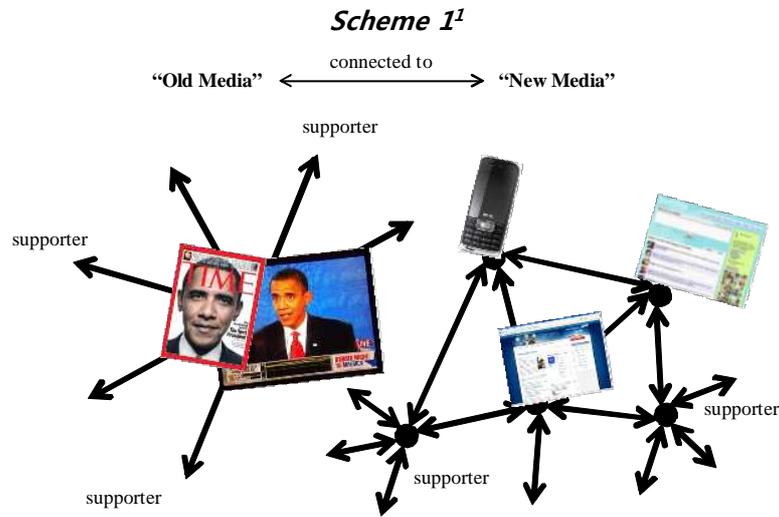
His team was made of 30 people with a core online team made of 11 people. This team has been a key factor in Barack Obama success as it integrated social media into every aspect of the campaign.

To prove such a point, let's focus on some member of the Barack Obama e-force: Chris Hughes was one of the co-founders of Facebook (so he knows little things about social networking!); Kevin Malover, was one of the co-founder of online travel agency Orbitz; Google CEO Eric Schmidt; Craig's List founder Craig Newmark. These Internet whiz brought a lot of experience and consistency to Barack Obama web based strategy and to its message.

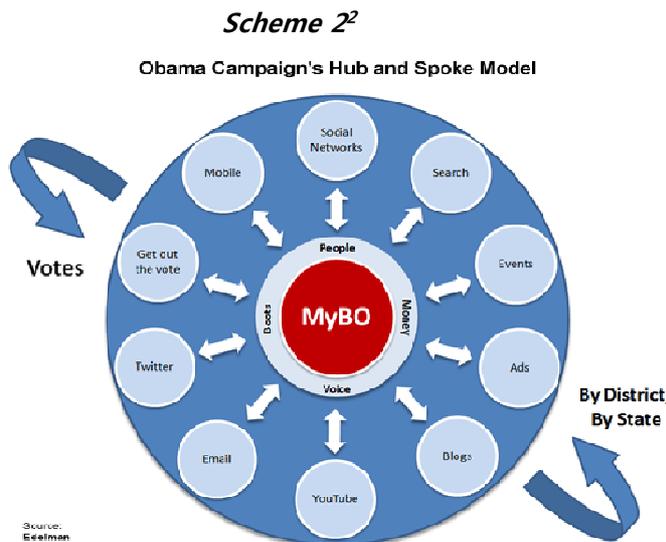
### I.2 - His message was everywhere

The web based strategy of Barack Obama was successful because its e force made his message easy to find (on every website) and easy to understand (“yes we can”, “believe in

change”). Barack Obama succeeded in connecting old and new media thanks to the web and thanks to its supporters:



Barack Obama delivered its messages where people were.



Given that 60% of adults in the US have a social network profile, Barack Obama had to belong to their network in order to reach them. That is why Barack Obama had profiles on more than 15 SNS: Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, AsianAve.com (Asian American SNS), MiGente.com (Hispanic American SNS), BlackPlanet.com (African American SNS).

In a word, Barack Obama was almost on every SNS, and thanks to its presence on these SNS, he gathered a lot of people on MyBO.com, a kind of “network hub” to engage the people, empower the voices, raise the money and get the boots on the ground.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/MaryCJoyce/winning-with-new-media-the-obama-campaign-experience-afppanel-theobamaway-090422105422-phpapp01>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/lukerobinson/obama-20>

He also used mobile phones to mobilize voters, sending them text messages every week knowing that more than 85% of Americans are within a couple of feet of their cell phones 24 hours a day.

Barack Obama’s web presence by number:

*Scheme 3<sup>3</sup>*

Communication Strategy	Result
E-mail	13 million people on the e-mail list Received 7,000 variations of more than 1 billion e-mails
Social networks	5 million "friends" on more than 15 social networking sites 3 million friends on Facebook alone
Web site	3.5 million monthly visitors to MyBarackObama.com 2 million user profiles with 400,000 blog posts 35,000 volunteer groups that held 200,000 offline events 70,000 fundraising hubs that raised \$30 million
Video	Nearly 2,000 official YouTube videos Watched more than 80 million times, with 135,000 subscribers 442,000 user-generated videos on YouTube
Mobile	3 million people signed up for the text messaging program Received five to 20 messages per month
Phone calls	3 million personal phone calls placed in the last 4 days of the campaign

I.3 - He empowered users and created engagement

All the Barack Obama profiles and the MyBO.com website carried videos, speeches, photos, and guides to explain users how to create their personalized supporting message (so that they could then forward it).

Empower self-service



<sup>3</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/lukerobinson/obama-20>

As shown in the part I.2, there were 2 000 official videos on Youtube, watched by 80 million people (representing a \$47 million broadcast value!). What is extraordinary is that these 2 000 videos represented only 0,5% of Obama's video on Youtube (other ex: Obama girl and Will.i.am). Besides, more than 400 000 blog posts were written by 2 million users registered on MyBO.com.



Giving users the freedom to create and share message all over the Internet has been a good way to create engagement: that is called the Laddering Support through tiers of engagement:



People get more and more committed thanks to the tools that are given to them. Barack Obama gave them the maximum tools so that they could (i) be personally committed (SNS friends, text, donations...), (ii) be socially committed (SNS posts and groups, blog posts...), and (iii) become advocates of Barack Obama (Recruitment of other people to donate, group creation, event hosting...).

#### I.4 - He benefited from Republican lack of web strategy

When it comes to web based campaign, it cannot be gainsaid that Barack Obama has been a lot better than its rival John Mc Cain. Indeed, Barack Obama overwhelmed the Internet compared to the republican candidate. Barack Obama website had 2x more users than John Mc Cain's, he had 4x more Youtube viewers, he had 5x more Facebook friends, and he had 10x more online staff.

On Twitter, Obama had 109,892 followers, compared to the 4,402 followers of McCain. Here are the Facebook and Youtube statistics:

*Scheme 4<sup>4</sup>*

Official	Obama	McCain
Members/Supporters in largest group	5,066,446	583.518
Number of Wall posts	572,383	none
Special features of profile page**	Videos, find out where to vote, register to vote	none

*Scheme 5<sup>4</sup>*

	Obama	McCain
Videos	1,827	330
Views	120,479,084	25,995,773
Subscribers	149,258	28,343
Special features of YouTube page	Contribute to campaign via Google Checkout; link to YouTube page on barackobama.com	Find events; host events

More than figures, the Republican ticket had the image of the past compared to the image conveyed by Barack Obama. Sarah Palin and John Mc Cain have been much more smearing targeted on the web than Barack Obama (ex: when Sarah Palin Yahoo account had been cracked).

### I.5 - He succeeded in fundraising

Thanks to its web based strategy (“give money” button and widget, e-mailing, presence on SNS...), Barack Obama raised a large amount of funds for its campaign. Indeed, he had 3 million contributors, he gathered 6,5 million online donations (\$80 average online donation), so he raised \$300 million online.



## II. Results and lessons to learn

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.slideshare.net/socialmedia8/case-study-the-barack-obama-strategy>

Thanks to its campaign, including its web campaign, Barack Obama won the election with over 9 million votes ahead of his republican opponent John McCain. The percentage of registered voters hit a record with 63%. The success was both in terms of electoral representatives' votes (365 to 173) and in terms of popular vote (52.9% to 45.6%).

In addition to his success in Ohio and Florida, Barack Obama took over traditional Republican bastions like Indiana and he has even obtained the votes of two former confederate states: Virginia and North Carolina.

To conclude, here are the most important lessons to draw from Barack Obama web based campaign: (i) choosing the best team, (ii) gaining support through engagement, (iii) empowering users giving them materials for UGC, and (iv) going where the people you need are, using websites and tools they are familiar with.

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