

Broadcasting Yourself (and Others): How YouTube and Blogging have Changed the Rules of the Campaign

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INTRODUCTION

In 2004, a new medium, unregulated and unchecked by federal election laws, rocked the political landscape, forever changing the tactics of the campaign. “Blogging” grabbed the attention of voters across the nation, as online diaries and forums influenced the election like no one could have predicted. In 2006, a new term was added to the campaign manager’s list: YouTube. YouTube and blogging have changed the rules of campaigning, and provided constituents and onlookers alike with access to information and actions that otherwise may have gone overlooked or undetected in the past.

This paper examines the changes that political campaigns have undergone since the advent of blogging and YouTube through an examination of history, political events and contemporary rhetoric. This article aims to demonstrate that methods of communication that were effectively used in political campaigns prior to the advent of blogging and YouTube are now insufficient to reach most politicians’ intended audiences and constituents and consequently, that rules of political campaigns in general have changed.

THE OLD RULES OF THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN

Political campaigns have not changed much since the proliferation of television into the American home. However, with the addition of blogs and YouTube to the campaign tool-box, the old rules of campaigning have changed. Because of the nature of blogging, ordinary people are able to make a big impact on the outcome of elections. Elections become citizen-led, not necessarily candidate-led.

One of the biggest changes is how much more easily candidates are able to reach, influence constituents, and, consequently, raise campaign funds from constituents. Blogs and YouTube provide candidates with an open playing field – because of the minimal cost involved, often even Third Party candidates are able to get the same amount of information to the public. Voters can organize in massive numbers online, and in turn, transform “netroots” efforts into real, grassroots organization. Candidates are also able to raise massive

amounts of campaign contributions online, and do so much more cost efficiently than the traditional way of phone banking or postal mail-outs.

Candidates are also able to reach massive amounts of voters – voters that they might not have gotten to meet with personally while on the campaign trail – through the utilization of blogs and YouTube videos. Candidates are able to put out a message, sometimes even personal facts about themselves, in a controlled manner while reaching a broad spectrum of voters. And, what could possibly be of even greater value to candidates, they are able to get a response back that is extremely candid and to the point. That can work greatly in the candidate’s favor.

There is a flip-side to this kind of exposure. Perhaps of greatest loss is the ability of a candidate to “road test” their message – that is, trying out their message on a group of voters, and then tweaking it for the better before giving it again to the next group. Candidates have to be rehearsed, ready, and on-point from the start. However, this also means that they have to be more authentic, direct, honest and frank. They are now forced to stay on message and be accountable.

Blogs and YouTube have put the heart of politics back into the hands of the voters – away from the media hype and political insiders. Instead of announcing their candidacy through large media outlets, more and more candidates are announcing their intentions to run through blogging and YouTube videos. Questions posed by bloggers have even sparked mainstream media attention and led investigations into incidents, stories and actions that may have otherwise gone overlooked or undetected by the utilization of individuals armed with video cameras and laptop computers.

BLOGGING

One of the most unique and attractive qualities of blogging is that a person does not have to be famous, scholarly, or affluent to make an impact. Blogging allows ordinary people to actively engage in politics, influence the process, and perhaps even bring about change. In September 2004, Scott Johnson received national attention for his role in helping torpedo a story about President Bush’s military records that blew up in

the faces of CBS executives and their anchorman, Dan Rather. Almost immediately after the broadcast, Johnson, who co-wrote PowerLineBlog.com, was among those who began questioning the authenticity of documents the network had used to question Bush's military record. The night of the broadcast, bloggers on the conservative web site FreeRepublic.com immediately questioned the documents. The next morning, Johnson posted the Free Republic story on his blog. The Drudge Report linked to it, and by the end of the day, Power Line had received more than 250,000 hits (von Sternberg, 2004). The mainstream media quickly followed the bloggers' lead, and two weeks later, CBS publicly repudiated the documents.

Bloggers were also among the harshest critics of Sinclair Broadcasting Group, which planned to air large segments of a documentary critical of Senator John Kerry. The documentary, called "Stolen Honor," claimed that Kerry's anti-Vietnam activities hurt American prisoners of war. Bloggers organized boycotts and letter writing campaigns, and Sinclair decided to air only portions of the documentary. In the wake of the controversy, Sinclair's stock fell more than fifteen percent (Seper, 2004).

Blogs not only help break controversial stories and add fuel to the fire of ones already in progress – they can also become a major fund-raising tool. In 2000, Senator John McCain raised \$7.5 million on the internet for his White House bid. Just four years later, Senator Kerry raised \$82 million online for his presidential run (Barabak, 2006). "[Political parties] understand that as activists, bloggers are increasing because of the ability to raise money," said Markos Moulitsas Zuniga, author of DailyKos. In 2004, Zuniga reported that he had raised \$400,000 for the Democratic Party and candidates from the nearly 4 million unique visits his site gets monthly (Manuel, 2004).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLOGGING

In July 2003, *The Boston Globe* ran a story that predicted that blogs were "harbingers of a new, interactive culture that will change the way democracy works, turning voters into active participants rather than passive consumers, limiting the traditional media's role as gatekeeper, and giving the rank-and-file voter unparalleled influence" (Weiss, 2003). A blog (short for web log) is an online journal that anyone can set up and can potentially be accessed by all internet users. The first political blog was started in 1994 by Matt Drudge, and is perhaps most famous for breaking the news of the Monica Lewinsky scandal to the public. However, most political blogs did not emerge until 2001. In 2002, one of the most widely read political blogs, DailyKos, appeared. DailyKos, a liberal blog whose contributors include Senators Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, Barack Obama, Harry Reid, Bill Richardson, Jim Webb, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Governors Brian Schweitzer and Tom Vilsack, Former President Jimmy Carter, Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson and political activist

Cindy Sheehan among others, reports about 500,000 unique visits to its site every day.

Blogs remained off the political radar until December 2002, when former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) spoke at the 100th birthday party of the late Senator Strom Thurmond. During his speech, Lott referred to Thurmond's presidential run on the segregationist Dixiecrat Party ticket in a way that made it seem as if he missed the days of Jim Crow (Manuel, 2004). Bloggers immediately picked up the story. Three days later, details of the episode hit "Meet the Press." Lott apologized, but two weeks later he resigned his position as majority leader. The event proved that bloggers were a force to be reckoned with, and paved the way for the evolution of internet and blog use in the 2004 Presidential Election.

BLOGGING² – DEMOCRATS GO BLOG "CRAZY"

Campaign blogging was taken to a whole new level by Howard Dean in 2004. John McIntyre of RealClearPolitics.com, the website of a conservative blog, commented on the blogosphere surge created by Howard Dean: "What you saw in the Dean campaign was how effective the internet can be in raising money, spreading the message and creating buzz" (Manuel, 2004). Dean's campaign set up an official blog, blogforamerica.com, plus dozens of unofficial sites dedicated to his candidacy. His campaign even hired some well-known bloggers as technical advisors. Others soon followed Dean's example, and the web quickly filled with unofficial blogs in support of John Kerry, Richard Gephardt, President Bush and others. Additionally, the movement to draft retired Army General Wesley Clark for a run at the presidency was primarily spearheaded by blogs. Even so, no candidate even came close to utilizing the power of the blog like the Dean campaign.

Dean's savvy utilization of the web was well-planned and well-executed. The campaign hired Joe Trippi as its campaign manager; he helped bring the Dean movement to life online, in part through the campaign's massive community blog, which connected "Deaniacs" all over the country, helped them organize and became the access point for the \$40 million that fueled Dean's campaign. The Dean phenomenon drew many new people to the grass roots (or "netroots," as the Dean bloggers called them) of presidential politics (Klam, 2004). Despite Dean's eventual withdrawal from the Democratic Presidential Primary, his campaign blazed the trail for the shrewd use of the internet to raise funds and motivate supporters in elections to come.

In June 2006, the importance politicians are putting on bloggers could be plainly seen. Nearly a thousand bloggers from all across the nation gathered in Las Vegas at what would become the first YearlyKos Convention. The convention, organized by readers and writers of DailyKos, consisted of panels, roundtable discussion groups, and gatherings of activists, members of the media, and elected officials. Many of the panels were broadcast on C-SPAN. "I see you guys as agents of

advocacy – that’s why I’m here,” said Governor Bill Richardson (D-NM), who subsequently launched and abandoned a presidential campaign. Bloggers, Richardson acknowledged, “are a major voice in American politics” (Nagourney, 2006).

Several other prominent Democrats also appeared at the convention, including Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), who delivered the keynote speech. “I do believe that each day, [bloggers] have more impact.” He also added, “One of the reasons I so admire [bloggers] is they have the ability to spread the truth like no entities I’ve dealt with in recent years. We could never have won the battle to stop privatization of Social Security without them” (Nagourney, 2006).

Also in attendance was another prominent Democrat, Mark Warner, who threw a reception at the Stratosphere Hotel Casino. Warner, the former governor of Virginia, was, at the time, rumored to be planning a 2008 presidential run. However, he announced in October 2006 that he would not, citing a desire not to disrupt his family life. He and Howard Dean, who is now Chair of the Democratic National Committee, spoke at the convention. General Wesley Clark held a reception for the bloggers at the Hard Rock Hotel Casino (Nagourney, 2006). However, despite the large number of prominent Democratic elected officials and potential presidential candidates, not a single Republican elected official or candidate was present at the convention. In fact, very few conservative bloggers were registered for the convention at all. It can be said that in the world of blogging, Democrats were the first out of the gate, and continue lead the blogging “race.”

REPUBLICANS ARE CATCHING UP

Although Republicans have been slower to utilize the powers of the web than their Democratic counterparts, but they are beginning to catch up. One Republican who refuses to let the power of the blogosphere slip through his fingers is former Congressman Tom Delay. Six months after he resigned from the House of Representatives in the wake of a lobbying scandal, and one month after the nation’s voters dismantled what was left of his political machine on Capitol Hill, he began his comeback on the web.

The centerpiece for Delay’s return to the capital is his website, tomdelay.com, which went online in December 2006. It also serves as his newest fund-raising vehicle. Delay drew early attention to the blog with his prediction that Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton would be elected president in 2008, choosing Senator Barack Obama as her running mate. Delay also commented on the use of the power of the internet by Democrats, suggesting that Clinton would owe her victory to liberal groups that had moved faster than conservatives to harness the power of the internet. Further, Delay says

The blogosphere needs more conservatives. My goal is to push the conservative cause and conservative thought. We need to use all media available to us. One of the major reasons the

Republicans lost the last elections was communications, and that’s why I’m looking to improve communications

(Shenon, 2006).

Republicans are beginning to understand the invaluable power of the web and beginning to capitalize on its immeasurable potential. Mitt Romney has made the most successful attempt to do so thus far.

In December 2006, Romney made his presidential pitch not to the mainstream media, but to two influential Nashville bloggers: Bill Hobbes and Nathan Moore. That Romney contacted Hobbes and Moore illustrated a growing effort by Romney and his political team to cultivate a relationship with the conservative blogosphere as he prepared to enter the Republican primary.

In an interview with the conservative magazine *Human Events*, Romney explained his view on blogs, saying, “Particularly in a primary kind of setting, you want to be very closely connected to the online world, to the blog world, and make sure your perspectives are being understood, and that the misperceptions, which inevitably creep up, are being nipped in the bud” (Helman, 2006).

The importance Romney placed on developing a rapport with bloggers reflects not only the pivotal role the internet now plays in American politics, but also recognition by Republicans that Republicans have not been as aggressive as Democrats in using the web to grow their political and economic capital.

Hugh Hewitt, a popular conservative radio host and Romney-friendly blogger, applauded him in late December 2006 for his attempts at trying to seize the power of the internet. Hewitt wrote, “Romney is setting the standard, and this is a crucial precedent for him to set: the GOP must have a standard bearer willing and ready to use the new media environment to push not just his candidacy but the ideas that bind the party together” (Helman, 2006).

Like Romney, Senator John McCain is also looking to operate on the web. McCain’s campaign has a paid blogger on staff – Patrick Hynes - who routinely defends McCain and slams Romney on his site, anklebitingpundits.com. Michael Turk, who ran online operations for Bush’s reelection campaign, pointed out that, unlike Democrats, whose 2004 primary was colored by bloggers, Republicans in 2008 will have their first-ever contested presidential primary where the blogosphere is a major political force. GOP candidates, he said, will be judged on how well they’ve mobilized bloggers, and how much money that they have raised online. Looking back on the 2008 election after its completion, it is likely that we will find that the blogosphere had the greatest influence on the primaries, because blogs appealed in large part to the political junkies and party activists who decided primary races (Helman, 2006).

McCain in particular has long faced hostility from some conservative bloggers, many of whom also blast the relatively

liberal social views of former New York Mayor and 2008 presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani. Hobbes, one of the Nashville bloggers, says it's valuable for candidates, especially early in races, to see how their words and deeds are being perceived online. His write-up of the aforementioned Romney event, he said, provided a robust online discussion in the area about Romney's viability as a candidate, including whether he was socially conservative enough and whether his membership in the Latter-Day Saint (Mormon) religion posed an obstacle. "The political blogosphere is not just a big convention for political junkies," Hobbes said. "It's a giant, self-directed focus group on politics" (Helman, 2006).

THE IMPACT OF BLOGS

Bloggers have made such an impact in the political world that the mainstream media has also begun paying more attention to them and trying to capitalize on their popularity. In 2006, CNN tried to incorporate bloggers directly into its news coverage of the midterm elections by inviting them to an "Election Nite Blog Party," an event aimed at corralling some of the top online bloggers into one place to provide instant reaction as the results came in. "Bloggers are leading the conversation," said David Bohman, CNN's Washington bureau chief. "You could argue that most of the political dialogue in this country is happening online, so if you don't incorporate that into your coverage, you're missing a major element" (Gold, 2006).

TROUBLE WITH BLOGS

However, all is not always well in the world of blogging. During the 2006 midterm elections, Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), proved that with every leap forward in the passionate world of online communication, there is a step back. A junior staffer on his election campaign was fired for maintaining an online diary about her experiences in the trenches of a U.S. Senate race. Her postings vented her frustration with a working environment that she described as "hypersensitive about any issue that related to race," and described her discomfort in being a "sex object" for Cardin's Jewish friends. She further went on to describe them by using racial and ethnic slurs. Cardin responded by firing her, saying: "I am deeply offended and disgusted by the blog's racial and anti-Semitic overtones. The staff person responsible was promptly dismissed and will have nothing to do with this campaign" (Mosk, 2006). Cardin did go on to win that race, but the incident proved just how invasive blogging can be, and provided a model for another similar incident that would occur during the race for the Whitehouse.

John Edwards learned the hard way in early February 2007 the perils of the blogosphere. On February 8, he announced that he would keep on his campaign staff two liberal feminist bloggers with long cybertrails of incendiary comments on sex, religion and politics. Deliberations over the fate of the two bloggers created a crisis in the Edwards presidential

camp and illuminated the treacherous road ahead, as candidates of both parties try to harness the growing power of the online world (Broder, 2007).

Edwards faced a tough decision in whether to keep the two women on his staff. Keeping them would mean having to answer for the sometimes vulgar and offensive writings posted on their personal blogs before he hired them. On the other hand, dismissing them could possibly cause a revolt in the liberal blogosphere, which not only has been playing an increasingly influential role in Democratic politics, but could also be especially important to his populist campaign. Some bloggers speculated that the controversy was manufactured solely by conservative groups eager to see Edwards out of the race.

Edwards tried to distance himself from the two bloggers' most inflammatory statements, which, he said, "personally offended me." He also said that he would not allow his campaign be "hijacked" by religious conservatives who had pointed out the bloggers' most provocative comments and demanded their dismissal. In some of their online writings, the bloggers used vulgar language to characterize religious conservatives and Roman Catholic teachings on birth control, homosexuality and the virgin birth. William A. Donohue, the president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, called for Edwards to dismiss the women. When he found out that he did not, he stated that "the bloggers are now no longer the problem. Edwards is the problem" (Broder, 2007). Edwards did retain the two bloggers, but demanded they publicly apologize for some of their work and promise to maintain a civil tone while in his employ.

Edwards may have been the first 2008 presidential candidate this cycle to stumble into a blogging minefield, but many of the other candidates could face similar problems. Integrating the passionate, provocative and freewheeling political discourse that flourishes on the internet into more tightly controlled means of traditional campaigning is virgin territory. "This is all being made up as we go along," said Simon Rosenberg of the New Democrat Network, a political action organization that tries to serve as a bridge between traditional politics and the Wild West world of the internet. "It is difficult to apply the old ways campaigns were run in the late 20th Century to this new wide-open, citizen-led politics" (Broder, 2007).

Problems with bloggers have not just haunted Democratic campaigns. During the summer of 2006, Senator McCain's conservative blogger and political consultant, Patrick Hynes, quickly ran afoul of fellow bloggers by initially concealing his relationship to the McCain campaign while writing critically about other Republicans. He then came under fire for declaring that the United States was a "Christian nation" in a book and television appearances that preceded his work for McCain. In November 2006, while employed by the McCain campaign, he posted on his personal blog a picture of Representative Henry A. Waxman (D-CA), and invited readers to submit nicknames, some of which

were anti-Semitic. In an interview, Hynes said the internet was a place where overheated language and vicious personal attacks were often tolerated, even encouraged. But, he said, "I would caution against holding candidates responsible for what their bloggers and blog consultants have said in the past. The blogosphere is a conversation; it's not reportage. We're all trying to figure out, what does this mean for the convergence of all these media? It's a Pandora's box and no one knows where it's going to end up"

(Broder, 2007).

YOUTUBE

In 2005, the political campaign world was transformed again, this time perhaps even more drastically than before. YouTube, the popular and now infamous video-sharing website, was launched and immediately exploded. YouTube allows users to upload, view, and share videos, either homemade or from other outlets. Currently, over 100 million clips are viewed daily on the site, with an estimated additional 65,000 new videos uploaded every day. This popular website can be a politician's dream come true, but it can also be their worst nightmare.

"YouTube is a campaign game-changer, shifting the dynamics of how to reach voters and build intimate relationships," said Julie Supan, senior marketing director for the California-based firm, which by one measure runs the 39th most popular website – it has almost 20 million visitors each month. "YouTube levels the playing field, allowing well-backed and less-known candidates to reach the same audience and share the same stage" (Kurtz, 2006). Uploading and viewing videos on the website is free. Although candidates can use it to spread their message, it is most often used to sling mud at an opponent.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF YOUTUBE

YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. YouTube was launched on February 15, 2005, the brain-child of three former PayPal employees. The San Bruno-based service started out of a makeshift office in a garage, and uses Adobe Flash technology to display a wide variety of video content, including movie clips, TV clips and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos. By June 2006, YouTube was ranked the fifth most popular website, outpacing even MySpace.com. In October 2006, Google Inc. announced that it had reached a deal to acquire the company for US\$1.65 billion in Google stock. The deal closed on November 13, 2006.

While it is unsure exactly how YouTube became involved in politics (or, for that matter, how politics became involved in YouTube), one thing is for certain: YouTube has become a major resource for candidates looking to share their message with voters, and can also act as a major catalyst for those not-so-flattering campaign slip-ups. Political candidates can use

YouTube as an outlet for advertising, and in turn voters can view candidate statements and make videos supporting (or opposing) the candidates. But what makes YouTube so unique is that it is a level playing field; since posting videos on YouTube is free, Third Party candidates have as much access to it as more main-stream candidates. Libertarian Steve Kubby's campaign debuted a short animated film, featuring the faces and voices of campaign contributors who financed its production, on YouTube on September 29th, 2007. Political commentators such as James Kotecki have also joined the YouTube world of politics. Many commentators make videos on YouTube critiquing a presidential candidate's YouTube videos, or simply using YouTube as a medium to get their opinions heard.

In the run up to the 2008 Presidential elections, CNN aired a debate in which candidates fielded questions selected from a pool submitted by users of YouTube. Because of the use of technology to aggregate questions from a wide range of constituents, the forum has been referred to as "most democratic Presidential Debate ever" (O'Brien, 2008). Historically, candidates do not like audience participation, because they are not able to control the environment. Audience members can ask frank, straight-forward, and potentially embarrassing questions that puts candidates on the spot. If they don't answer the question, they appear to be avoiding the issue either because their view on such is unpopular, or because they don't know what to say. If they do answer the question, they risk offending potential voters because they have not rehearsed answers, and can sometimes slip up under pressure. Often times, these slip-ups (or trying to inject humor into the question) can do major damage to a candidate, especially when media outlets such as YouTube exist.

YOUTUBE IN CAMPAIGNS

During the 2006 midterm elections, there were at least three races where YouTube played a major part in the defeat of an incumbent Senator. The first was in Missouri, where Democratic Senator Claire McCaskill beat incumbent Republican Jim Talent. McCaskill has even publicly credited the internet – specifically YouTube – with aiding her victory.

In October 2006, Michael J. Fox appeared in a series of ads supporting stem cell research and voicing his support for Democratic candidates who supported the same, including McCaskill. Fox also stated in the ad that Talent wanted to criminalize both tax-payer and privately-funded embryonic stem cell research. Appearing on the ballot at the time was proposed Constitutional Amendment 2, which amended Missouri's state constitution to allow, in line with federal law, stem cell research and treatment. Talent was also opposed to that ballot initiative, which went on to pass. The Fox ad was quickly posted on YouTube, where it was viewed not only by Missouri voters, but by the whole of the nation as well. In response to the ad, Talent was forced to run his own explaining his opposition to some types of embryonic stem cell

research. YouTube was the first to air Talent's ad.

The Fox ad did not only spark controversy in Missouri, though. In the ad, Fox was visibly shaking, a side effect of the medicines that help stem some of the symptoms of Parkinson's disease, which the actor has. Conservative radio talk show personality Rush Limbaugh commented on the ad, speculating that Fox either may have intentionally not have been taking his medication or acting in order to make his symptoms of Parkinson's disease seem worse than they actually were. The Limbaugh clip was promptly posted on YouTube, and over 1.1 million people viewed the video, where a ranting Limbaugh attacked Fox. The debate sparked national attention, and helped swing the vote in McCaskill's favor. In a race that was decided by 20,000 swing votes, Limbaugh may have been trying to rally his base, but he may have offended crucial independent voters. YouTube was responsible for the spread of these videos, and the national attention they received.

The other races that YouTube influenced were campaigns that used "trackers" – individuals who follow an opposing candidate and make notes on what they say and do. The hope is that the candidate will say or do something inappropriate or unintelligent, giving the opposing campaign ammunition. In past elections, these trackers have also been armed with video cameras to properly record events and report them to the mainstream media, with the hopes of having these incidents picked up. In 2006, trackers were armed with a brand-new weapon – YouTube.

The second Senate race that YouTube played a role in was the highly contested race in Montana, where Democratic Senator Jon Tester narrowly defeated Republican incumbent Conrad Burns. Had it not been for YouTube, certain incidents almost certainly would not have made it into the mainstream media. In June 2006, Burns was making a political speech to a group of constituents about his tough stand on illegal immigration. During that speech, he joked that the roofers on his house might be illegal. Then in August 2006, during another rally, he halted mid-speech to take a call on his cell phone from the "nice little Guatemalan man" painting his house (Verhovek, 2006). Both of these incidents were caught on video, uploaded onto YouTube, and eventually attracted national attention. Burns apologized for his use of racial epithets, however, his comments were perhaps a factor in the razor-thin margin Tester was able to squeak out in that race: Tester won by fewer than 3,000 votes.

The third Senate race, and perhaps most notorious, was the Virginia race that pitted Democratic Senator Jim Webb against Republican incumbent, and highly favored, George Allen. In April 2006, Allen held a twenty percentage point lead on Webb. But by August, that lead had shrunk to just five points (Nevius, 2006). The event that was undoubtedly responsible for this huge reduction in poll numbers was what has become known as the "Macaca Incident."

On August 15, 2006, Allen was giving a speech to a

group of about 100 constituents in the southwestern town of Breaks, Virginia when he repeatedly referred to S.R. Sidarth, a twenty-year-old tracker who was volunteering for the Webb campaign, as "Macaca, or whatever his name is." He went on to say, "Welcome to America and the real world of Virginia," as the crowd laughed. Sidarth, who was born in Virginia to Indian parents, promptly turned the video to the Webb campaign, which posted it on YouTube. The controversy quickly became one of the most blogged-about topics on the internet, according to the Technorati web site, which tracks entries on 51.3 million blogs. "If I had been there and not had a camera with me, absolutely no one would have believed my side of the story," Sidarth said (Shear, 2006).

The word "macaca" has various meanings – it is the genus for macaque monkeys and is also a European racial slur against African immigrants. Allen said he had no idea what "macaca" meant when he said it, triggering speculation as to how he came to use the term at all. The campaign's official explanation was that it was a version of "mohawk," the nickname campaign workers had come up for Sidarth, based on his hairstyle. Allen's camp issued a statement to the media a few days later in which he apologized "to anyone who may have been offended by the misinterpretation of my remarks." He also met with Indian American political leaders to mend fences (Feldmann, 2006). However, no amount of apologizing could make up for the insensitive statement – Allen not only lost the Senate race to Webb, but his rumored intention to seek the 2008 Republican presidential nomination was permanently shattered.

THE TROUBLE WITH YOUTUBE

Allen's widely publicized misstep has warned politicians that they can never let their guard down, even when speaking to a group they consider "safe." "We've always known the power of video, but now everybody in the world with a cell phone or a small high-res camera and broadband" can get in the act, says Michael Cornfield, an expert on the internet and politics who teaches at George Washington University. "YouTube is the last link in the system, which is, now 'I can go find it.'" For several years, political advisers have been instructing their clients to Google themselves and check their Wikipedia entries. "Now the third station of the cross is you've got to YouTube yourself," said Cornfield. "You have to know just what you look like and how many people are hitting on and redistribution your video. There's nothing in our world that seems to have the immediate impact of seeming to convey the whole truth and watching something come out of somebody's mouth, [with] your own eyes" (Feldmann, 2006). As the saying goes, if a picture can tell a thousand words, a video can tell ten thousand. Simply logging on to YouTube and typing the words "George Allen" produces over 530 results, with clips ranging from the infamous macaca video; to news appearances and apologies made by Allen after; to parodies and spoofs made by individuals and groups aimed at steamrolling

the former Senator. None of these clips are particularly flattering to Allen, and it is probably safe to say that all were posted to tarnish Allen's already contentious reputation.

Mitt Romney's quest for the 2008 Republican nomination for president was also scarred by YouTube. In late January 2007, a video appeared on the video sharing site that spliced clips from Romney's 1994 debate with Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA). In it, Romney, then running for the Senate in a losing campaign against Kennedy, voiced support for abortion and gay rights – positions he has since renounced. Romney's political inner circle, alerted to the threat, decided to strike back. "In a viral information age, a distortion of the record can quickly sink in as fact," said Kevin Madden, a communications handler for Romney (Balz, 2007). Less than eight hours after the debate video appeared, a video of Romney rebutting the charges was sent to his supporters and to Republican blogs.

TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICS

Technology is constantly advancing. Moore's Law, the notion that computing power double about every 18 months, applies to politics as well. Every election brings about some heralded innovation that transforms the way campaigns are fought. "Most people thought we were out of our minds," said Joe Trippi (of Howard Dean's 2004 campaign). "Now I can't think of a single congressional campaign that doesn't have one [blog]" (Barabak, 2006).

The use of the internet by politicians is advancing every day. Presidential candidates are not only using the power of the web to raise funds, motivate constituents, and further their message; they are now also announcing their intentions to run in the first place on the web as well. Democratic Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton both announced they were running for president on their websites, following the lead of John Edwards and Tom Vilsack (who has since dropped out of the race because of lack of financial support). Politicians are beginning to understand the pervasiveness of the internet – in 2004, an estimated twenty percent of voters relied primarily on the web to get their political news. In 2008, that number is expected to soar (Balz, 2007).

Candidates have also been using all sorts of innovative, web-based techniques to reach voters on a personal level. Edwards posts frequent video messages to supporters on his website, and Obama has a regular podcast that fans can download and listen to on their iPods. Popular social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook seem to have been designed with the goal of promoting politicians in mind. On Edwards' MySpace page, voters can find out that he likes Bruce Springsteen and his heroes are his wife and the American people. Edwards, Clinton, and Obama all have popular Facebook pages. New software allows candidates to measure the level of activity of their volunteers and reward them with official campaign merchandise. Clinton's new campaign website is one of the most sophisticated attempts to exploit the power of the web – it urges fans to guest blog, organize their

friends and become a "Hillraiser" to launch their own fundraising efforts (Kennedy, 2007). Senator Clinton also participated in three online chats on her website that started on Saturday, January 27, 2007. These chats were aimed to be a rapid-fire follow-up to the announcement of her presidential ambitions just a week earlier. The campaign solicited questions in advance, and then Clinton responded on her website.

TECHNOLOGY IN USE IN THE 2008 ELECTION

Peter Dao, the Clinton campaign's internet strategist, who worked on the 2004 campaign of Senator Kerry, said the team hopes to make her campaign as interactive as possible and said the opportunities are far advanced over just a few years ago. "I remember in 2003 and 2004 when you said 'blog,' most people didn't know what you meant or the significance of it," Dao said, adding that with the growth of blogs and social networking sites, "the ubiquity of it is so amazing...the sky's the limit" (Balz, 2007).

Clinton's campaign has already shown that it is determined to use every new media tool available to advance her carefully developed image as a centrist, and to re-introduce her to Americans as warmer, more relaxed and confident. "Probably more than anyone else in the field, Hillary Clinton is burdened with certain assumptions that people are making about her politics and her personality," said Paul Maslin, Dean's pollster in the 2004 campaign. "The upside is that she will have chances to knock down those assumptions and win people over. Part of the challenge is finding the best media formats to do that in" (Healy, 2007). The web is indeed proving to be a perfect stage for such obstacles – candidates are able to put out a controlled message, it is relatively inexpensive, and most importantly, it reaches a wide spectrum of voters across many different demographics.

"The evolution of the Internet as a means of organizing has been something that's grown exponentially," said David Axelrod, a media consultant for Senator Obama. "McCain in 2000 spawned a lot of contributions on the internet. The Howard Dean campaign in 2004 certainly was a quantum leap. As more and more people become wired to the internet and fluent in it, it becomes a greater and greater tool for organizing the grass roots and the democratization of politics. It's not just a tool for delivering messages to people but a tool for people to deliver messages to you" (Balz, 2007). One of the greatest traits of the use of the internet and blogging is that not only is a candidate able to put out a specific message, but they are also able to get a response that is extremely candid, by voters that are often motivated by the desire to change the American political system for the better.

E-EXPANSION

The reach of blogs and web-based videos are now extending past the campaign, and appearing in other places where they have the potential to influence politics. The Republican Conference, the party's message center on Capitol Hill, now videotapes news conferences and other appearances by GOP

leaders, making them available for downloading. With very little publicity, nearly 50,000 people have subscribed to the free podcasts, most from outside Washington (Barabak, 2006).

One of the Democratic Party's biggest sections of their website – www.dnc.org – is devoted to blogging. "It's about building...an ongoing community," Karen Finney, a Democratic Party spokeswoman, said of the dialogue promoted on her party's website. "We hope to accomplish buzz," added Josh McConaha, the party's internet director (a job that, two years ago, didn't exist) (Barabak, 2006). The site also links to various state party blogs, as well as a host of other liberal blogs.

HOW THE RULES OF THE CAMPAIGN HAVE CHANGED, EVEN AT THE STATE LEVEL

YouTube and blogging are not just affecting national politics, but state politics as well. Upset that Republicans are killing bills without recording the vote, a Democratic operative in the Virginia General Assembly has been trolling the halls of the State Capitol with a video camera to put Republicans on the defensive. The videos are then uploaded onto YouTube. On January 25, 2007, when House Republicans killed several proposals to increase the state's minimum wage in an unrecorded vote, furious Democrats put up a video of the proceedings on www.assemblyaccess.com, a party blog (Craig, 2007). Many of the videos have also been uploaded onto YouTube.

Virginia House Democrats are taking their cue from the 2006 Senate race. "We saw last election how [video] can be a powerful tool, so now we are helping bring sunshine and openness to the General Assembly," said Mark Bergman, a state Democratic Party spokesperson (Craig, 2007). GOP leaders have had to warn their colleagues to be on their best behavior around the camera, which is very small and not always easy to detect.

The use of blogs and YouTube in campaigns has left some wondering if this type of Big Brother Society has perverted the political process. Some experts see a future where politicians are more vapid and risk adverse than ever. Matthew Dowd, a longtime strategist for President Bush who is now a partner in a social networking internet venue, looks at the YouTube-ization of politics and sees the death of spontaneity. "Politicians can't experiment with messages," Dowd said. "They can't get voter response. Seventy or eighty years ago, politicians could go give a speech in Des Moines and road-test some ideas and then refine it and the test it again in Milwaukee." He sees a future where candidates must be camera-ready before they hit the road, rather than be a work in progress. "What's happened is that politicians not have to be perfect from Day 1," he said. "It's taken some richness out of the political discourse" (Lizza, 2006).

Howard Wolfson, a senior advisor to Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, agrees. "It is a continuation of a trend in which politicians have to assume they are on live TV all the

time. You can't get away with making an offensive or dumb remark and assume it won't get out." These rules have long applied to White House contenders, but the dynamics are getting stronger and moving down the ballot. "It used to be the kind of thing that was only true for presidents," Wolfson said. "Now with the proliferation of technology, it is increasingly true for many other politicians." But Wolfson does believe the trend has one advantage. "It does create more accountability and more democratization of information in the process," he said (Lizza, 2006).

Others say the idea that blogging and YouTube will hurt the political process is nonsense. "This will be better for democracy," says Steve Scully, political editor for C-SPAN, which pioneered the idea of airing raw footage of candidates. "It is impossible for the candidate to be scripted all the time. Your personality is going to come through" (Nevius, 2006). With trackers following candidates' every move and the ability they have to upload the clips onto a site that reaches millions of people, this couldn't be more true.

Dan Schnur, a California political consultant who also ran John McCain's 2000 presidential campaign, has a simple rule that politicians need to remember: "If you don't want to be caught on videotape saying something stupid, don't say stupid things." He continues, "One of a politician's favorite tricks is to say one thing to one audience and another thing to another audience. That's why this is a great thing. Candidates from both sides are going to be accountable" (Nevius, 2006).

Some political analysts say that YouTube could force candidates to stop being so artificial, since they know their true personalities will come out anyway. "It will favor a kind of authenticity and directness and honesty that is frankly going to be good," said Carter Eskew, a media consultant who worked for Senator Joe Lieberman's primary campaign. "People will say what they really think rather than what they think people want to hear" (Lizza, 2006). This has the potential to be great for the political process. Instead of candidates spouting off rhetoric and a set of campaign promises to one group and then changing their focus to a completely different agenda for another group, candidates will now be forced to adhere to one coherent message. They will be forced to be truthful, honest, and straightforward.

TECHNOLOGY AS A MEANS OF DIALOGUE

Candidates approach political issues taking historically through one of two ways: either direct or indirect dialogue. Direct dialogue engages politicians through explicit reference (e.g., "unlike my opponent, I will not take your gun away"). Indirect dialogue is not as up-front. In this form of dialogue, candidates offer comments or statements on the same issue(s) as their opponents, enabling voters to compare the candidates on those issues. Position taking and direct and indirect dialogue serve as the principal ways that candidates transmit policy-relevant information about themselves to the electorate, enabling voters to make informed decisions (Foot, 171).

Online installations of position taking and issue dialogue take a variety of forms. Consider the online position taking and dialogue seen in the South Dakota Senatorial race between Tim Johnson and John Thune. Position taking could be easily identified on Johnson's site, which provided visitors with a statement of his advocacy of lowering prescription drug costs for senior citizens, as well as information on the Rx Relief for Seniors Act, a bill he introduced in the U.S. Senate. Johnson also posted information about his positions on other political issues such as agriculture and national defense. John Thune, Johnson's opponent, used his site to take positions on various issues, including some of the issues raised on the Johnson site. Thune also provided a two-column table directly comparing his position with Johnson's on taxes, defense, (right to) life, gun owners' rights, and seniors (Foot, 2005).

In 2000, Michael Margolis and David Resnick penned a book entitled *Politics as Usual: the Cyberspace Revolution*. In it, they introduce their "normalization thesis." This thesis contends that contrary to predictions that the internet would revolutionize everyday lives, expansion of the Web has done little more than provide a new medium through which established patterns in all aspects of social life (e.g., commerce and social interaction), and by deduction political life, can be and are merely recreated in virtual form with little change. They believe that the spread of the Web will reinforce rather than reinvent traditional patterns of social and political life (Foot, 2005). If this theory is correct, patterns in online candidate position taking and issue dialogue in the online world should be similar to those reported in more traditional forms of campaigning.

In 2002 another study was performed on how Web communication has influenced candidate direct and indirect dialogue. This study found that, as campaign intensity increases, candidates engage in more frequent online position taking. Also, contrary to what one might expect given what is known about how incumbents typically campaign offline, in the online environment, incumbents appear to be drawn into policy discussion regularly, something which they typically shy away from in offline politics. Lastly, the genre of web campaigning may force the dilution of agenda-setting effects created by strategic timing of paid advertising and other communication (Foot, 2005). The online environment now provides voters with opportunities not only to organize themselves both on and offline, through both physical and online attendance at rallies and fundraising events, but also by providing a forum by which to chat, discuss, share, question, and/or donate to a specific candidate or group.

CONCLUSION: WHAT BLOGGING AND YOUTUBE HOLD FOR THE 2008 ELECTIONS

With the approach of the wide-open 2008 Presidential Election, campaign insiders and voters all across the country

are going to see firsthand the calculated effects of new media devices. The 2008 campaign is "totally going to be on steroids this time in terms of what a candidate can do," says Joe Trippi. "You're going to see reality, and you're going to see savvy manipulation under the guise of something that's authentic and real" (Kurtz, 2007).

In 2004, blogs were introduced to the political campaign. In 2006, YouTube made its mark. In 2008, the elections will likely be remembered as the point where Web video became central to the communication strategy of every serious presidential candidate. And playing defense will only be part of web-use strategy; candidates now see web-based video as an inexpensive and potentially quite significant tool for telling their story. YouTube, which less than a year after it was created was bought by Google for \$1.65 billion, has revolutionized the transfer of information via video and forced candidates to recalibrate choices, from their announcement strategy to their staffing decisions. The use of YouTube and blogging has truly changed the rules of the political campaign.

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