

Case study
Digital Relationship Marketing (RM) Academy
Extending the consumer journey with RM
The Obama Campaign: Moving message – changing the beliefs and engagement of a generation of Americans

## **Contents**

- On the campaign trail
  Building engagement and moving message through relationship marketing and social media; creating participation and delivering the direct message
- Social media
   Platforms at the heart of the campaign; building discussion, activism and engagement
- After election
   How the campaign continued when the Obama administration took office

### Further resources

This case study is built from extensive interviews Digital Strategy held with the Obama campaign team – for more information including detailed interviews and our analysis on the communication content and messaging strategy contact TheTeam@DigitalStrategyConsulting.com



## **Donations and buzz**

- Building connections
- · Building 'the brand'
- Building discussion
- Adding depth to the proposition
- Changing the 'sender' built a buzz throughout the campaign in the run-up to the election
- In political terms this campaign was the first to 'move message' in US politics through the web

Friend --

There's nothing like being on the campaign trail with Barack -- right at the heart of the largest and most inspiring grassroots movement in the history of politics.

From: Michelle Obama

[mailto:info@barackobama.com] **Sent:** 18 October 2008 02:29

To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

**Subject:** Midnight deadline: Double your impact

Our team put together a video that captures that energy, and I had to share it with you.

See what this movement is all about, then make your first donation of \$5 or more before it's too late to make a difference.

### Error! Filename not specified.

It's taken a lot of hard work to get this far, but we still have millions of voters to contact in a very short time.

This week alone, we need to grow this movement by 100,000 new donors -- but we're almost there.

If you make your first donation before tonight's deadline, a previous donor will match your donation and double your impact.

Please watch this short video and make a matched donation of \$5 or more for the change we need:

#### https://donate.barackobama.com/match

Barack will be the underdog until he's in the White House, so keep working, keep talking to your friends and neighbors, and together we can change the world.

Thank you for your commitment, passion, and hard work,

Michelle



## **New reasons to donate**

From: Barack Obama
[mailto:info@barackobama.com]
Sent: 20 October 2008 22:56
To Danny Mondows Klue @ Digital

To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

**Subject:** You decide

- This message comes 2 days later...
- Feel the authenticity in the language; this is a rallying cry to the troops but 6 months into the campaign for many of them
- In interview, their campaign director told Digital: "We had to carry on asking them for more: more energy, more support, more donations"

#### Friend --

Right now, we have one last chance to strengthen our field operation and expand our reach even further.

This Friday, we're making the very last, hard decisions about allocating our resources. And it will all come down to where we stand financially on Thursday at midnight.

We need to make decisions about strengthening our efforts in key battleground states -- and identify opportunities for expansion.

You can decide where we fight -- and how strong our team will be. Please make a donation of \$5 or more before the deadline.

I know it's been a long campaign. And I know you've been asked to do a lot.

I hear you.

But right now, I'm asking you to remember what's at stake for our country.

After 20 months of fighting to bring the change we need, we cannot hold back now. We need to dig deep because what we do -- or don't do -- between now and Election Day will make all the difference.

Please make a donation of \$5 or more before the deadline to expand the final map of battleground states and strengthen our field operation:

#### https://donate.barackobama.com/finaldeadline

I'd like to fight for votes in every corner of the country. But the reality is that we need to focus and redouble our efforts for the final push.

Thank you for making sure this campaign has the resources to compete in as many states as possible,

Barack

PLEASE DONATE



# **Taking part**

- This tactic combines revenue generation with discussion generation – and it gets people taking the message out onto the streets.
- In a market where advertising is key to moving opinion, car magnets and bumper stickers were shifted in their millions; prompting front of mind awareness and keeping the debate going in shops, bars and streets across North America.



From: Obama for America

[mailto:info@barackobama.com] **Sent:** 21 October 2008 20:40

To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

Subject: Deadline: Limited edition car magnet



Dear Friend,

Election Day is exactly two weeks from today.

But right now, we're facing an urgent deadline that will determine exactly where we can compete -- and how fiercely -- in the final push.

On Friday morning, we have to make the final, hard decisions about deploying our resources. That means your support by Thursday at midnight is absolutely vital.

Your first donation of \$10 or more will provide resources urgently needed before the deadline. And vou'll receive a limited edition Obama-Biden car magnet.



Your support will determine how hard we can fight in key battleground states -- and if we can expand our operation into some newly-competitive states during the final days.

What began in Springfield, Illinois, more than 20 months ago will reach its peak on Tuesday, November 4th

We know what we need to do to win. But it's up to you if we have the resources to fight hard and expand our reach

Make a \$10 donation to support this campaign before Thursday at midnight and receive a limited edition Obama-Biden car magnet:

https://donate.barackobama.com/deadlinemagnet

Thanks,

Obama for America



# **Involving the team**

- Involvement of the campaign team gives new messages to connect with their target audience
- The deadline and clear call to action ask for immediate response
- Each message has one single goal
- In spite of diverse 'senders' the language stays 'on-brand' and authentic
- The promotional Tshirts and other mechanics are driving discussion, building the reach of the message and increasing the loyalty of the voter

From: Jon Carson [mailto:info@barackobama.com]

**Sent:** 22 October 2008 20:54

To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

**Subject:** Deadline Tomorrow: Your Car Magnet

#### riend ---

I can tell you right now who's going to win this election -- the campaign that steps up its ground game in the final days,

The race is deadlocked in a number of crucial battleground states, including Ohio, Missouri, and Indiana. And we're neck-and-neck in Florida, North Carolina, and Nevada.

We have to make our final, tough decisions about where to fight and how strong we can make our team. And those choices will depend on the financial resources we have tomorrow at midnight.

If you make a donation of \$10 or more before the deadline, you'll receive a limited edition Obama-Biden car magnet.

#### You can also receive an Obama-Biden T-shirt with a donation of \$30 or more.

The margins of victory in this election will be slim, and it's going to be decided in the field.

We're up against the Republicans' proven get out the vote push -- which delivered victories for George Bush in 2000 and 2004.

We can't fall short. There's too much at stake in this election.

This campaign has contacted 11 million voters since the convention. But to hit our targets, we need to contact three times that number of voters between now and Election Day.

The more resources we have on hand, the more voters we can reach.

From the start, our field program has been in your hands. It depends on your time, your energy -- and your generosity.

You decide how big we can go.

The deadline is midnight tomorrow, October 23rd. Please make a donation of \$10 or more right now and receive your Obama-Biden car magnet:

#### https://donate.barackobama.com/deadlinemagnet

With your support, Barack could win in a number of closely contested battleground states.

We need to do everything we can to extend our reach -- we can't afford to look back on November 5th and say we could have done more.

Thanks for your commitment to building the best field program in the history of presidential politics,

Jon

Jon Carson National Field Director Obama for America



# Frequency: Permission to re-contact

- Every day there's a new message
- Every day it feels relevant
- Every day the campaign team have to find a reason that gives them permission to recontact
- Remember: It's about what the recipient wants and expects, not what you want to say

From: Barack Obama

[mailto:info@barackobama.com] **Sent:** 24 October 2008 03:28

To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

**Subject:** Deadline: midnight

Friend --

We can't afford to spend the next four years wishing we had done more in the final push of this campaign.

Your support -- by midnight tonight -- will decide how strong our team is and how far we can extend our reach between now and Election Day.

### Please make a donation of \$5 or more before the deadline.

Change never comes without a fight. And the status quo is not going to go quietly.

The McCain campaign and the RNC have been stepping up their hateful "robocalls" and attack mailings -- they're throwing the kitchen sink of false, negative attacks.

The margins of victory in crucial battleground states will be small. And your support today can make all the difference.

We can't risk coming up short. The stakes are just too high.

Your donation of \$5 or more will have a bigger impact now than at any other time:

### https://donate.barackobama.com/finalfight

Thank you for everything you're doing,

Barack

PLEASE DONATE



# **Explaining the situation**

- This mailing uses news as the permission to recontact, and creates a story – sending it to participants and encouraging them to take the message further
- News announcements and news about the project are the key drivers in much of this communication, they give a flow of energy and discussion throughout the communication programmes and keep people up to speed with what they are interested in

[mailto:info@barackobama.com]

Sent: 25 October 2008 01:40

To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

Subject: Last Call: this weekend

From: Nicole Aro, BarackObama.com

Dear Friend.

In crucial battleground states like Ohio, Florida, and Virginia, the race is neck-and-neck.

This weekend, you can help Barack get ahead.

In every corner of the country, friends and neighbors are coming together for Last Call for Change phonebanks to call potential supporters in battleground states.

There's one right near you. All you need to do is bring a cell phone -- and some friends -- and we'll take care of the rest.

Find your local Last Call for Change phonebank and make a difference this weekend.

With Election Day just around the corner, swing voters are getting bombarded with the McCain campaign's lies and distortions

It's more important than ever that supporters like you reach out and share the truth about Barack one-on-one. You can also let voters in battleground states know about important early voting opportunities.

x Last Call for Change -- Get Involved

It's a great opportunity to get together with friends and fellow supporters and, at the same time, make a difference in a crucial state.

Find a phonebank near you and sign up today.

Together, we can reach millions of voters, generate historic turnout, and win this election.

Thanks.

Nicole

Nicole Aro National Phonebank Coordinator Obama for America



# House parties: the spark

- Email is used as a communication channel but the energy in the campaign is at grass roots level in the house parties across America
- These created discussion and drove local engagement, building support and reaching out to new stakeholders
- The model had only been tried on a tiny scale before

From: Jon Carson, BarackObama.com [mailto:info@barackobama.com]
Sent: 26 October 2008 01:15
To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital
Subject: How you can change America

Dear Friend,

Election Day is just days away, but you still have plenty of opportunities to make a difference for Barack.

Change never comes without a fight -- and it won't come at all unless each of us does our part.

Will you browse the list of activities below and see what you can fit into your schedule?

### WEDNESDAY October 29th

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### **Last Call for Change House Parties**

Supporters are coming together on Wednesday, October 29th, to watch Barack's national TV appearance and call voters in battleground states. Talking one-on-one with potential fellow voters is one of the easiest and most effective ways for you to make an impact in this election.

Find a Last Call for Change house party near you or sign up to host one.

### SATURDAY & SUNDAY November 1st & 2nd

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### Last Call for Change Phonebanks

There are hundreds of phonebanks being organized in towns and cities across the country -- and there's one right near you. You can come together with fellow supporters and reach out to voters in battleground states. Your call could be the one to get a supporter to the polls or help an undecided voter make up their mind. Find your local Last Call for Change phonebank and sign up now to make a difference.

EVERY DAY through Election Day

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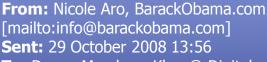
### Drive for Change -- Nevada

If you can get out of town for a day or two, will you sign up to drive to Nevada? Face-to-face contact is the most powerful way to get out the vote or persuade



# Member-get-member

- Email being used to spread a message about engagement and participation
- The goal is to recruit people into campaign operations, mobilising tens of thousands of loyal supporters
- Operationally this is a separate division with its own activities running within the business unit



To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

Subject: Help Barack win battleground states



#### Friend ---

You can play an important role in deciding this election in key battleground states.

Supporters like you are gathering at Last Call for Change phonebanks across the country, calling voters in swing states to tell them where their polling location is.

Find a Last Call for Change phonebank near you and make a difference this weekend.

There are only 6 days left to bring the change we need.

Barack is counting on your incredibly important phone calls. You can make sure Obama supporters know where to vote on Tuesday. Their polling location may have changed, or they may have never voted before.

No experience is required. You'll have a script to work from, and our staff will help you every step of the way.

Get together with fellow supporters in your community and attend a Last Call for Change phonebank near you this weekend.

Thanks.

Nicole

Nicole Aro National Phonebank Coordinator Obama for America

P.S. — Can you travel to Nevada this weekend, or in the final days before Election Day? There's a volunteer shift with your name on it, and campaign staff are waiting for you.

Sign up for a trip to Nevada and help get out the vote:

http://my.barackobama.com/cometoNV





PLEASE DONATE

# **Election day**

- The moment it happened
- "Go vote today and make sure you take your friends and family with you"
- The year of motivation and energy builds into this moment; engaged supporters who'd never been involved in politics before drove in cars through their neighbourhoods to bring people out to vote
- "We're counting on you to get us there today"

...and this was one of several messages in the final 24 hours from The Candidate, former presidents and campaign directors Friend --

Today is Election Day.

The opportunity to set our country on a new path has never felt more real than it does right now.

The polls are open in most places, and people are already making their voices heard for change.

There's just one thing left to do -- vote and make sure everyone you know votes, too.

You can find or verify your polling location by looking up your most recent registration address at VoteForChange.com.

From: Michelle Obama

**Subject:** Vote today

[mailto:info@barackobama.com] **Sent:** 04 November 2008 09:20

To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

Go vote today, and make sure you take your friends and family with you.

This is the day when we have to commit to doing everything we can. We can't afford not to -- for our families, our communities, and our future.

Once you vote, you can do more than just wait as the returns come in.

You can help get every last vote for Barack by volunteering in your community or making calls from home. Help put us over the top today:

#### http://my.barackobama.com/november

It's not too late to knock on doors, make calls, and make sure that every one of our supporters gets to the polls today.

Change is within our reach. We're counting on you to get us there today.

Thank you for everything you're doing,

Michelle

P.S. -- If anyone you know hasn't yet made up their mind, please invite them to learn more about Barack's positions on important issues:

http://www.barackobama.com/issues

LAST CHANCE TO DONATE

Look up your polling location



# It's over? Think again

- The election is won, but the campaign's energy continues
- The Tshirts confirmed people's participation – a physical example of their involvement
- There are more funds to raise for campaigns once inside government so this campaign continued in a way not seen in previous elections



From: Obama for America [mailto:info@barackobama.com]
Sent: 10 November 2008 21:58
To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital Subject: Your Victory T-shirt



#### Friend ---

In the months and years ahead, we're going to accomplish amazing things together. No president has ever had the support of such a powerful grassroots movement, and Barack and Joe will need you to continue fighting alongside them.

But before we take the next step, we need to get our house in order.

The Democratic National Committee poured all of its resources into building our successful 50-state field program. And they played a crucial role in helping Barack win in unlikely states like North Carolina and Indiana. We even picked up an electoral vote in Nebraska.

The DNC took on considerable debt to make this happen.

Make a donation of \$30 or more now to help the DNC pay for these efforts, and you'll get a commemorative 2008 Victory T-shirt.



The DNC began building a 50-state organization in 2005.

The infrastructure they put in place over the last four years opened up a new batch of battleground states where a Democratic nominee hadn't been competitive for a generation.

In the final few months, the DNC went above and beyond to expand our ground efforts and ensure victory.

We couldn't have won this election without their support.

As we start laying the groundwork for real change, we need to help the DNC recover the resources it took to win. Please make a donation today and get your 2008 Victory T-shirt:

## **Social media**

Social media platforms were the hub of campaign activity



http://www.facebook.com/barackobama

## **Facebook**

- Meet the man with more friends on Facebook than any of us!
- Using Facebook as a campaign tool was a perfect example of how the campaign reached out to people in the places they hung out on the web
- The feeds fuelled millions of messages on other people's Facebook pages and this in turn reached tens of millions more people
- Social media was a primary channel for the campaign team





● September 15 at 11:06pm · View Feedback (11,818) · Share



**Barack Obama** On Wednesday night President Obama delivered a passionate address on health reform to Congress and all Americans, then immediately asked for your help in making reform a reality.

The response was astounding: In less than 48 hours, more than 450,000 pe...Read More ~



A Message from the President Length: 1:53

http://www.youtube.com/barackobama

## YouTube

- "YouTube gave us the chance to talk directly to the American people" explained Obama campaign manager David Plouffe in his interview with Digitak
- "We could say what we wanted to say without it being edited down to a tiny soundbite. This changed the quality of the debate and allowed us to talk about real issues, issues that mattered to Americans."
- Using YouTube as a campaign tool was a perfect example of how the campaign reached out to people in the places they hung out on the web
- The content is archived and continues to be constantly used and reviewed
- Online video was a primary channel for the campaign team







http://www.barackobama.com/

## BarackObama.com

- Every brand has its home on the web, and this was the central digital asset for the campaign
- Emails and social media linked here, content from House Parties and local comment was collated here, speeches and videos were published and broadcast from here
- It was a groundbreaking website at the heart of a ground breaking social media campaign



The President's Weekly Address: "Reforming our health insurance system as a critical step in rebuilding our economy"

by Christopher Hass | Saturday October 3 2009 04:00:30 PM



del.icio.us







**DNC Partybuilder** 

**OBAMA MOBILE** 

TEXT HOPE TO 62262



LinkedIn

## And after the election?

This campaign continued. Unlike any campaign in American politics before, the relationship with voters continued at a high level once the administration was in office.



# Fundraising, engaging

- Another perfect example of fundraising and commemorating combined together
- The Obama campaign continued to cement its role in people's lives with the election as a defining moment in US political history



From: President Plate

[mailto:PresidentjPlatee@reeseswe.com]

**Sent:** 01 December 2008 16:25 **To:** Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital **Subject:** Get your piece of history today

### Change Has Come! Historic Presidential Victory Plate

Now you can own a piece of history! Celebrate the victorious election of our 44th President of the United States, America's first African American Commander, with the commemorative plate from the American Historic Society™. The Historic Victory Plate™ is a priceless work of art featuring the triumphant President-Elect surrounded by the American flag and spectacular fireworks celebration. This first collectors issue plate celebrates with the inscription "Change Has Come" scripted in 22K Gold text. The back displays the seal of the American Historic Society and documents the historic electoral and popular vote totals on Election Day.

Order Now



## **Voice of The President**

- The campaign succeeded in part because it bypassed mainstream media to talk directly to, and with, voters
- That process continued once in office, with the video addresses broadcast out to supporters through the same email database that drove the campaign
- The process educated and informed people, brining then closer to the workings of government and adding a depth that US politics had lacked since the Kennedy era

Friend --

I have some exciting news to share about the future of this grassroots movement.

I recorded a personal message for you. Please take a minute to watch the video:



From: Barack Obama

[mailto:info@barackobama.com] **Sent:** 17 January 2009 18:07

**To:** Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital **Subject:** The future of the movement

http://my.barackobama.com/thefuture

What you built can't stop now. Together with our partners at the Democratic National Committee and its new chairman, Governor Tim Kaine, this movement will continue organizing and bringing new people into the political process.

The challenges facing our country are too great, and our journey to change America is just beginning.

I look forward to working side-by-side with you in the months and years ahead.

Thanks,

Barack



# **Changing culture**

In an interview with Digital, David Plouffe explained that "the campaign needed to continue moving message, involving Americans in the way our government works, getting them to support ongoing rapid change once The President was in office. We knew this meant the campaign couldn't stop - the job wasn't done."

[mailto:info@barackobama.com] **Sent:** 18 January 2009 17:53 To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

From: David Plouffe, BarackObama.com

**Subject:** What are you doing tomorrow?

#### Friend --

In your neighborhood and in thousands of communities across the country, Americans are answering President-elect Obama's call to service.

Tomorrow, January 19th, our nation will come together in a shared spirit of community. And I wanted to make sure you know how to participate.

Monday is not only the eve of an inauguration that brings all of us so much hope, it's also Martin Luther King Jr. Day -- when we recognize the power of one man to bring about change by serving his country.

Help kick off an ongoing commitment to serve our communities by taking part in this extraordinary day of service.

Sign up to attend or host an event in your community and help rebuild America one neighborhood at a time.

The grassroots movement you helped build was always about more than an election. It's about bringing much needed change to Washington and our communities.

Barack is calling on us to help rebuild our country. He knows what can happen when ordinary people turn their hopes into real action.

Take the first step this Monday, January 19th, by joining a service event near you. Sign up now:

### http://www.USAservice.org/content/home

Thanks,

David

David Plouffe Campaign Manager Obama for America





# **Inside government**

- Read this email and consider what's happening...
- The process of changing key agendas and policy from one side of the political spectrum to the other was bound to be met with resistance
- Polls, petitions, emails and calls to opponents were part of channelling the energy of millions of people motivated by the campaign into a focus that could be used as evidence to support the demand for change

**From:** President Barack Obama [mailto:info@barackobama.com]

**Sent:** 21 May 2009 00:05

To: Danny Meadows-Klue @ Digital

Subject: Today I need your voice on health care

Friend --

The chance to finally reform our nation's health care system is here. While Congress moves rapidly to produce a detailed plan, I have made it clear that real reform must uphold three core principles -- it must reduce costs, guarantee choice, and ensure quality care for every American.

As we know, challenging the status quo will not be easy. Its defenders will claim our goals are too big, that we should once again settle for half measures and empty talk. Left unanswered, these voices of doubt might yet again derail the comprehensive reform we so badly need. That's where you come in.

When our opponents spread fear and confusion about the changes we seek, your support for these core principles will show clarity and resolve. When the lobbyists for the status quo tell Congress to hold back, your personal story will give them the courage to press forward.

#### Join my call: Ask Congress to pass real health care reform in 2009.

After adding your name, please consider sharing your personal story about the importance of health care reform in your life and the lives of those you love.

I will be personally reviewing many of these signatures and stories. If you speak up now, your voice will make a difference.

#### http://my.barackobama.com/HealthCareOrganizing

American families are watching their premiums rise four times faster than their wages. Spiraling health care costs are shackling America's businesses, curtailing job growth and slowing the economy at the worst possible time. This has got to change.

I know personal stories can drive that change, because I know how my mother's experience continues to drive me. She passed away from ovarian cancer a little over a decade ago. And in the last weeks of her life, when she was coming to grips with her own mortality and showing extraordinary courage just to get through each day, she was spending too much time worrying about whether her health insurance would cover her bills. She deserved better. Every American deserves better. And that's why I will not rest until the dream of health care reform is finally achieved in the United States of America.

Please add your name to join my call. Then share your personal story about why you too will not rest until this job is done.

### http://my.barackobama.com/HealthCareOrganizing

Last November, the American people sent Washington a clear mandate for change. But when the polls close, the true work of citizenship begins. That's what Organizing for America is all about. Now, in these crucial moments, your voice once again has extraordinary power. I'm counting on you to use it.

Thank you,

President Barack Obama



