Chapter 4:

Field Organizing

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Drafting Your Field Plan

Here is your choice: You can diligently plan your campaign, updating as necessary, and maybe you will achieve success. Or, you can decide the plan is not so important and definitely, definitely fail. It’s not an ideal choice, but it’s what you’ve got.

The field plan is the campaign’s blueprint for victory. The field plan is the series of strategies and tactics a campaign uses to gather the necessary votes to win an election. The media plan, the finance plan, and all the campaign’s administrative capacity serves one goal: Support an operation capable of gathering the number of votes necessary to win the campaign. The field plan is that operation. It is important to remember, the “smaller” the race the higher the amount of energy the campaign will need to allocate to field activities.

The field plan has four aspects:

1. Calculating Your Vote Goal: electoral victory (goal)
2. Targeting Your Voters (strategy)
3. Contacting Voters (tactics)
4. Timelines and Benchmarks

Your plan must detail the goals, strategies, and tactics necessary to execute a successful campaign.

Part 1: Calculate your vote goal.

Months before Election Day, a campaign should know how many votes the winner will need to receive on Election Day. This is a known number, specific to the campaign’s district, which can be calculated even before the start of the race. This number is your win number – your campaign’s overarching objective is to reach that number. A good Field Director will memorize this number early in the campaign.

Campaigns are fueled by resources. With few exceptions, these resources are limited. Most campaigns will never have enough money, time and volunteers to talk to every voter. But we also don’t need to talk to every voter. Most campaigns must achieve a simple majority (50%+1). The campaign must prioritize those voters who are most likely to vote (and vote for your candidate!) before it can spend resources on everyone else.

To estimate how many votes we need to win an election, we use the following formulas:

1. Registered Voters x Projected Voter Turnout = Expected Vote
2. Expected Vote ÷ 2 + 1 = Number of Votes We Need to Win

The number of registered voters in a district can be obtained from your county elections official or from the state Secretary of State’s office. This information should be compared to your voter file (Vote Builder) to make certain it is current and allows you to work efficiently.

Projected voter turnout is a little bit trickier. The best indicator of future performance is past behavior. However, not all elections are equal. In 2008, a record number of voters went to the polls and cast their vote. This was likely due to the prominence of the presidential race and the large investments of many organizations to educate and mobilize voters.

However, in years where there is not a presidential election, like 2009 or 2010, many voters did not participate. Other factors contribute to varying voter turnout as well: open seat elections and high-profile competitive races have higher voter turnout, whereas underwhelming candidates and non-competitive races create lower voter turnout. The key to projecting turnout using past elections is to compare similar past elections.
Again your county elections official or Secretary of State are the best sources for information about turnout percentages. Sometimes it can be difficult to find a past election similar to the current one. In these instances you have to think creatively and compare multiple elections to inform your turnout prediction. It is important that you look at number of voters in a similar election not the number of people who voted at all. This will take into account drop off from the top of the ballot to your election.

Use the worksheet below to calculate turnout for a given race:

**Turnout in Last Election for Same Seat (or other similar election)**
- a) Year: __________________________
- b) Total registration: __________________________
- c) Total votes cast: __________________________
- d) % Turnout: __________________________

**Other Relevant Election 1**
- a) Year: __________________________
- b) Total registration: __________________________
- d) Total votes cast: __________________________
- e) % Turnout: __________________________

**Other Relevant Election 2**
- a) Year: __________________________
- b) Total registration: __________________________
- d) Total votes cast: __________________________
- e) % Turnout: __________________________

Use as many relevant elections as you feel necessary to reach a reasonable average turnout

**Calculate Anticipated Turnout**

\[
\text{Total Registration} \times \text{projected turnout percentage} = \text{anticipated turnout}
\]

**Divide By Two**

\[
\text{Anticipated turnout} \times 0.50 = 50\% \text{ of anticipated vote}
\]

**Win Number:**

\[
50\% \text{ of anticipated vote} + 1 = \text{VICTORY}
\]

Many field plans calculate 52% or more to use as the Vote Goal to achieve a margin of safety.
Part 2: Targeting Your Voters.

Once the campaign figures out their vote goal, the next task is to figure out where to get these votes. Campaigns don’t have enough time, people, or money to sit down and target every single voter in the district, targeting is used to see where these resources can be spent most efficiently. Targeting is an exercise in resource management.

Campaigns seek to influence two kinds of voter behavior – whether the registered voter shows up to vote, and who the voter will end up supporting on Election Day. By understanding which behavior the campaign seeks to change, targeting helps us shape the campaign’s message.

A campaign targets voters using three methods: Geographic targeting, using voter history, and demographic targeting.

Geographical Targeting
Not all elections are the same, and not all voters perform equally. Similarly, not all places perform equally. For example, most Democratic voters often come out of the cities. Do we want to win the rural counties? Of course. But when considering a campaign’s limited resources, it makes sense to utilize the strongest precincts and send resources where they can make a difference in the election. In the long term, this creates a problem because campaigns do not make investments in these low-support areas necessary to increase its support. But campaigns can not make long term investments in anything. A campaign is not a long term entity. In its short time, a campaign exists for only one goal: to garner as many votes as possible at the lowest possible cost.

Calculating vote goals at the precinct or district level will assist in identifying how much people, time and money should be allocated to each region. Certain geographic areas have specific voting rates and partisan splits again and again over many election cycles. The Field Planning Exercise in Appendix A will help you determine where the best use of your campaign’s limited resources is.

Precincts can generally be divided into three categories, Democratic Base precincts, Swing Precincts and Republican Base precincts. Democratic Base precincts vote Democratic more than 65% of the time. The same is true of the Republican vote in Republican Base precincts. Swing Precincts are split Democratic and Republican. An analysis of the district’s precincts will show us if a campaign can win just by turning out its base precincts, or if it needs to target swing or even opposition districts.

Targeting with voter history
Most districts’ voter rolls will show a voter’s party affiliation and if/when that voter has voted in the past. This information is public and by utilizing it, we can identify which voters are most likely to miss a low profile election and which voters wouldn’t dream of missing an election.

Frequent voters are people who go to the polls for almost every election and almost every year. We do not need to do much to motivate them to vote. Rather, we just want to make sure that when they vote – we have given them the education they need to support our campaign. The term “4x4 voter,” for example, means a voter who has voted in all four of the last four elections – including primaries and off-year elections.

Infrequent voters do not turn out for every election, and they likely need some encouragement to get to the polls. These individuals may vote during the presidential elections, but often do not vote in off-year elections. We need to work extra-hard to get supportive infrequent voters to the polls.
**Voter History Targeting Guide**

**Box A:** These people always vote. Sometimes they vote Democratic, sometimes they vote Republican. Your campaign must persuade them to vote Democratic. Most of your resources leading up to the GOTV phase are spent talking to these voters.

**Box B:** These people always vote Democratic, but they don’t always vote. You do not need to persuade them whom to vote for, but you do need to drag them to the polls. In the GOTV phase of your campaign, these people are the top priority.

**Box C:** These people sometimes vote. Sometimes they vote for a Republican, sometimes they vote for a Democrat. This is the most resource-intensive group of voters out of A, B, and C, because many of those you do persuade will not vote. You will need to spend resources ID’ing, Persuading, and GOTV’ing these voters.

**Box D:** These are ideal Democratic voters. They always vote, and always vote Democratic. Contact these voters early in the campaign to build your fundraising and volunteer base. You don’t need to spend money persuading them and relatively little on getting them out to vote.

**Box E:** These voters never vote. Spend resources on these people if and only if you have saturated the voters in Boxes A, B, C, and D. Most campaigns do not have the resources to spend on these voters.

**Box F:** These are solid Republican voters. The campaign does not have the resources to spend with these voters.

---

**Partisanship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turnout</th>
<th>Strongly Supports (1)</th>
<th>Undecided (2, 3, 4)</th>
<th>Strongly Opposes (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always Vote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4x4)</td>
<td>D Super-voters</td>
<td>A Persuasion</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes Vote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2x4)</td>
<td>B Dem GOTV</td>
<td>C Persuasion #2</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Vote</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0x4)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying the voter’s past performance, answers the question of which behavior to influence. Frequent voters will likely show up to the election – the campaign needs to make sure that those voters vote for the right candidate. Infrequent voters might or might not show up. The campaign needs to identify which of these voters support the candidate, and make sure those supporters vote. What can you tell about the voter below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2008 Primary</th>
<th>2008 General</th>
<th>2010 Primary</th>
<th>2010 General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Al</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>2x4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, Sally</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3x4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas, Bill</td>
<td>0x4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1x4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Jan</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1x4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Tim</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>1x4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright, Orville</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who is the most likely to vote in the 2012 Primary?
Who is the most likely to vote in the 2012 General?
Who is least likely to vote?

Using a Voter File

In addition to the publicly available voter rolls, your local party may have access to a Voter File. A Voter File combines the publicly available data with information gathered through voter contact. By calling a voter on the telephone or speaking to them face to face, a campaign can determine how likely they are to support a specific candidate, party or issue. As you contact more voters and update your voter file, it becomes possible to target specific voters based on how frequently they vote and whom they usually vote for.

In 2005, then DNC Chairman Howard Dean invested in a single online voter file for the Democratic Party. This voter file, commonly known as VoteBuilder (or VAN) is made available to all state parties by the national committee. Rules for accessing VoteBuilder vary widely from state to state and there are a few states where local or private voter files are still sporadically used. If you are unsure how to get access to a local voter file you should contact your County Party.

Demographic Targeting

Certain demographic groups (African Americans, Latinos, Jewish Americans, single women, union members, young voters, etc) consistently support Democratic candidates over Republicans. When planning your field program be sure to consider how you will reach out to these demographics to build support in their communities. Usually there are already established organizations in your area that represent these constituencies. The key to building support is to reach out to these organizations both early and late in the campaign. If possible, it’s good to conduct a baseline poll to identify demographics where your support is strong or where persuadable voters can be found.

Not only are demographic groups important for a campaign in terms of volunteers and outreach, but they can also be a critical way for us to build our GOTV universe if we haven’t made it to our win number with just ID’d supporters.

Targeting with Models and Scoring

Advanced modeling is the newest trend to target universes of voters in a very sophisticated manner. While modeling itself is extremely complex (based on any number of different data points from previous polling, market research, contribution records, etc), you will never actually need to conduct your own model. Through partnerships with the DNC, VoteBuilder will have these models already built into the voter file, although not every campaign or candidate is allowed access.
A model will tell you which segments of various demographics are likely or unlikely to support you, and can be broken down to an extreme level of micro-targeting. This is done through a process called scoring. A score is percentile breakdown of your support level (usually given in “deciles” or factors of 10). A voter with a higher support score is more likely to vote for you than those with a lower support score (i.e. a voter with a support score of 82 has an 82% probability of supporting you over your opponent, give or take).

Typically, every voter in the voter file will have two scores associated with them – a Support Score and a Turnout Score. A turnout score works the same way as the support score, except that it tells you how likely a certain voter is to actually get out and vote. Therefore, to target most effectively you should cross-reference the two scores to see not only who supports you, but also who will actually go and vote. Remember, don’t waste time on those folks that will never vote or will never support you! The majority of your effort should be focused on voters (or precincts) that have support scores between 35-65 and turnout scores of 50-80.

Part 3: Contacting Voters
Once the campaign figures out where to go and what to say, the campaign needs to figure out how best to reach the voters. The campaign will have a menu of techniques for contacting voters. All of these techniques should have one or more of the following goals:

- Identifying supportive, undecided, and opposing voters
- Spreading the campaign’s message to undecided voters
- Increasing the turnout among supportive voters
- Collecting information for future voter outreach efforts

Data Collection
Remember, the goal in any election is to make sure that 50 percent plus 1 of the Election Day voters support our campaign. A well-organized field campaign will track which voters they have communicated with and how a particular person is likely to vote. Collecting this data is crucial to your voter contact strategy. Many local Democratic Parties will allow you access to Vote Builder which combines the publicly available voter registration data with party or candidate preference information from previous campaigns. If no party voter file is available to your campaign, then it is important to create your own system of tracking voter’s preferences.

Categories of Voters
There are essentially three groups of voters in any election: our supporters, undecided voters, and our opposition. Unless your local party has a well-kept voter file, you will probably not know which voters belong in which group at the beginning of the election. As you contact each voter you will begin to categorize them as supporters, opponents or undecided. Each of these categories requires a different voter contact strategy.
Below is a visual representation of how a targeted field campaign sorts voters into different categories.

Think of voter contact as a process of refining and re-refining a huge list. The more times you’re able to go through your list contacting each voter, the more you are able to tailor a specific message (GOTV or persuasion) to a specific voter.

Types of Voter Contact
The more personal and retail the contact, the greater impact the contact will have. At the same time, making retail contact with each and every person is extremely demanding on your resources.

Voter Contact can be divided into two different categories: High impact and Low impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Targeted</th>
<th>Two-Way?</th>
<th>Resource Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canvassing</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Highly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Highly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Drops</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawn Signs</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human visibility</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2008, Yale political scientists, Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber, produced a 2nd edition of Get Out the Vote!, a book which quantified the effect of voter contact tactics on GOTV. Their second set of research produced very similar conclusions to the first: the more personal the tactic, the more likely that tactic would produce a vote. As a general rule, Green and Gerber estimated how many contacts each tactic required to turn out each additional voter (GOTV only):

- **Canvassing:** One additional vote for every 14 people successfully contacted.
- **Phone banks:** One additional vote for every 38 people successfully contacted.
- **Literature Drops:** One additional vote for every 189 people successfully contacted.
- **Direct Mail:** One additional vote for every 200 people successfully contacted.
- **Robo Calls:** No discernable increase in voter turnout

The study indicated that these tactics had greater impact in local (or down-ballot) elections and in mid-year elections. Although these numbers generalize the significant distinctions among different kinds of voters, the research powerfully illustrates the varying degrees of efficacy for each tactic.

What voter contact strategy a campaign employs will be based on resource realities. The most effective impact will come from a combination of techniques, designed to be as personal as possible and related to one another both in message and timeline. Effective communication is layered.

**Example: Layered Communication to Persuade an Undecided voter**

1. **TV and Radio ads** raise voter awareness across a large segment of the population.
2. **Door-to-door canvass** identifies a voter who is undecided on an issue.
3. **Direct mail** provides persuasive issue material to voter.
4. **Phone bank** re-identifies - voter is now in support.
5. **Election Day direct mail** reminds supportive voter to vote.
   - **Election Day phone bank** reminds supportive voter to vote.
   - **Election Day doorknockers** reminds supportive voter to vote.
Direct Voter Contact: The most cost effective tactic for reaching voters
Of all the tactics you can use to get your message out to the voters, nothing has a higher impact or is as cost-effective as direct voter contact though door knocks and phone calls. Canvassing and Phonebanking have long traditions in campaigns and should constitute the cornerstone of any campaign.

Why Canvassing & Phonebanking?
Is direct voter contact losing its effectiveness? Not according to the most recent studies. Yale Political Science Professors Donald Green and Alan Gerber compared the cost effectiveness of various GOTV tactics in their book “GOTV”. Here are some of the advantages that Canvassing and Phonebanking provide over other campaign tactics.

1. Higher impact than other campaign tactics
   The more personal an appeal to a voter, the more effective the contact has on their actions.

2. Least expensive campaign tactics
   Canvassing isn’t cheap be any means and has some significant start up costs. It is far less expensive than other forms of voter contact such as visibility, direct mail or paid media advertisements.

3. Ability to Target Voters
   By using public information such as voter rolls and previous election data direct voter contact allows you to focus your limited resources on people who are registered and likely to vote.

4. Ability to gather info from voters
   By engaging in conversations with voters it allows to campaign to gather valuable information about them such as who they intend to vote for and what issues matter most to them.

Canvassing: Rules of the Road
Canvassing is one of the oldest, most versatile and most effective methods of contacting voters. Though it is very time and resource intensive, canvassing is by far the most effective voter contact tactic available to your campaign.

Canvassing is also sometimes known as ‘Door-knocking’ or ‘block-walking’. It is a high impact voter contact tactic because it allows for two-way communication between the campaign and the voter. Television and newspaper advertisements can help get a campaign’s message out, but they are easily lost in the daily blur of our commercial culture. A face-to-face conversation also gets a campaign’s message out to a voter, but it also allows that voter to ask questions about the candidate and express his/her hopes, fears and frustrations about the district and issues that affect his/her daily life. This conversation makes the contact more memorable and thus more likely to influence the voter’s behavior on Election Day.

If you are a candidate in a local election, there is no higher impact you can make on a voter than personally knocking on their door, listening to their concerns and asking for their vote.
Canvassing Preparation

Canvassing is a very resource heavy tactic in people as well as time. Before you can begin to canvass or send others out to do so you need to make sure you know where they are going and what they are going to say when they get there.

This information should be assembled together in a ‘canvass packet’ before you can begin an effective canvass. A canvass packet has information on the voters who are being targeted, maps of the area being canvassed (also known as ‘turf’), campaign literature and scripts.

Be sure that your canvassers are delivering the right message to the right voter. Are you trying to identify and persuade voters or are you trying to remind your supporters to get out and vote?

Your ‘canvas packets’ should be completed before any canvass is to take place in order to ensure your volunteers’ time is not wasted and they can move immediately into training and role-plays.

10 Super Canvassing Tips

1. Safety First
Always canvass in teams. Never go inside anyone’s house and be careful of dogs! If you have to enter a fenced in area to reach the door, shake the fence first and see if any dogs are waiting for you. Bring doggie treats as a last resort and to earn brownie points with owners.

2. Dress the Part
Check the weather before you leave. Dress appropriately & wear comfortable shoes! Bring snacks and water. Look presentable but casual.

3. Know Your Message
Be a brief speaker and a good listener. Do as many role plays as possible before hand. Have the script memorized so you don’t have to read from the sheet and can engage the voter in a conversation.

4. It’s Not Only What You Say
90% of communication is non-verbal. Always be smiling when a voter answers the door and look them in the eyes. Take a step back from the door after you knock to allow them to open the door and talk. Try to hand them your campaign literature if they don’t open the door at first.

5. Say ‘I don’t know’
Never guess the candidates position on anything! If you can’t answer a question, write it down along with their contact info and then follow up with the voter later.

6. Never Debate
Avoid getting in an argument with a voter in front of their own home. Even if you can win the argument, you’ll likely lose the vote. Spend most of your time listening, then pivot back to your message. Spend the most time with people who are open to your campaign instead of hard core opponents.
7. Let Them Know You Were There
If the voter isn’t home write a short note on your literature saying “Sorry I missed you.” Leave literature somewhere noticeable (think eye level). NEVER leave literature in the voter’s mailbox.

8. Know Your Environment
Look for clues about the voter from their home (bumper stickers, kid’s toys, type of car, etc) Find a way to relate to them! Show respect by not cutting through yards and using the sidewalk.

9. Move Quickly
The more doors you are able to knock on each hour increases the number of quality contacts you can make. Try to knock on at least 12 doors per hour with 5 contacts per hour. Avoid talking to a single voter for longer than a 5 minutes

10. Take Good Notes
The information you collect through canvassing is pure gold to the campaign. Write down anything you think will be helpful (be sure to write legibly so others are able to read and enter the data). After you finish for the day write up a quick postcard to that voter thanking them for talking with you and asking for their vote

Phonebanks
Phonebanks are a critical element to any political campaign. They are one of the most inexpensive, effective, and resource efficient tactics to contact voters and deliver your message. Although not as persuasive as canvassing, phonebanks allow you to reach voters that canvassers sometimes cannot due to time or geographic constraints.

Keep Good Records
Keeping accurate records is essential to any voter contact tactic. With the high number of contacts a campaign can make with phonebanks, it’s all the more important to record the outcome of each call. Be sure to create clean and easy to understand call sheets and that your volunteers are trained how to fill them out. Info from the previous night’s calls (who is voting with us, who is not, who has a disconnected number, etc) should be entered into a voter file the next morning.

Create a Positive Working Environment
Keep your phonebanking space clean and organized. It should look busy and inviting to any current (and potential) volunteers. Have all necessary calling info ready in a Phonebank Packet for volunteers when they arrive. Be sure to have coffee, water and snacks available at all times. A good phonebank manager will push their volunteers to make more calls while making sure they are having a great time doing so. Think of creative ways to keep the energy and excitement high in any phonebank.

The speed and efficiency of phonebanks makes them ideal for any type of voter contact.
- Voter Identification
- Crowd Building for events
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Voter Persuasion
- Get Out The Vote

Sample Phonebank Packet
- List of voters (call list)
- Scripts
- Campaign literature
- Pens
10 Super Phonebanking Tips

1. Smile
They can tell on the other end of the line. Keep a mirror handy to check that you’re smiling while you talk.

2. Connect
Find ways to relate to the person you are calling. Say your full name and where you are from. Be casual and relaxed.

3. Ear Glue
The more calls you can make per hour, the better it is for the campaign. Keep the phone glued to your ear between calls. You’ll save time and momentum. Try to make at least 30 calls and 10 contacts per hour.

4. Dammit!
Don’t sound like you’re asking them a question unless you are. (This often happens without you even realizing it!) Think the word ‘Dammit’ at the end of each sentence to emphasize your point and sound more assertive and declarative.

5. Stand
Standing while you call keeps your energy and enthusiasm high. Move around while you do calls to keep your blood flowing.

6. Be Prepared
Use whatever data is provided about the voter to your advantage. Is the voter male or female? Young or old? Frequent or infrequent voter?

7. Ask questions
Never dominate the conversation. Asking the voter open-ended questions is a great way to get them engaged in a dialogue with you.

8. Listen more than you talk
Along with asking questions goes listening to their answers. This is especially important when it comes to persuasion calls.

9. Take clean notes
Every call is helpful to the campaign no matter what the results. Wrong and disconnected numbers will save the campaign time later on. Be sure to clearly mark down the result of every call so it can be easily and quickly read and entered into the voter file.

10. Forget Your Last Call
Don’t worry if you get hung up on or yelled at. Brush it off and quickly move onto the next call. Dwelling on negative experiences will make you less friendly to other voters.
Direct Mail
Direct Mail is a highly targeted voter contact tactic that can be used for persuasion or GOTV. Although Direct Mail is expensive, it is much less expensive than paid media (especially on TV). For low budget campaigns that cannot afford television advertising, direct mail becomes the primary visual medium to promote your campaign.

Advantages to Direct Mail
Mail can be extremely well targeted. With a good voter file, you can send mail as a follow up to undecided voters contacted at the door or on the phone to tell them your candidate’s stance on their most important issue. You can also send reminders to vote to likely supporters in the days leading up to the election.

Direct Mail is also known as the ‘Silent Killer’ because it is difficult for the opposing campaign to determine when and to whom you sent each piece, making it very difficult to respond.

Don’t Go Dark
The key to persuading voters with mail is to repeatedly hammer home the same message until it sinks in. Stick with a single interesting and repetitive message and be sure that once you begin sending mail to your targeted voters, you should not stop until election day. Sending a single piece of mail in September won’t do your campaign much good.

Will they read it?
The disadvantage of using Direct Mail is that many voters will toss them before reading. Use the following tips to make sure your mail gets read by the voters.

1) Easy on the text - Less is more
2) A picture is worth 1000 words
3) Don’t use envelopes
4) Make it relevant to them
Part 4: Setting Timelines and Benchmarks

So far, the campaign has determined the overall vote goal, targeted voters and evaluated voter contact tactics – all the aspects necessary to construct a field plan. In order to put together a plan, these aspects must be placed in the timeline of the campaign and given benchmarks by which to measure progress. Unless each aspect of the plan is measured against the time remaining until the election, the campaign plan is meaningless. The campaign can increase its finances, it can motivate more grassroots activists, but it can never, never reclaim lost time. Campaign resources (voters contacted, funds raised, etc) must always be measured against the time remaining.

Good plans start at the end of the timeline with the desired goal and work backwards to the present. An electoral campaign’s goal is the vote goal achieved by Election Day. Each week of the field plan has a goal to find a certain number of supporters through its voter contact plan. If you need 5000 votes on Election Day, your goal for the week before might be 4800 identified supporters. The week before that your goal might be to have identified 4600 supporters and so on. These benchmarks determine how to allocate resources efficiently and allow the campaign to adjust the plan as necessary.

Once benchmarks are set for the campaign, tactics to reach these benchmarks must be determined. In order to do this, a number of assumptions need to be made. If you need to identify 200 supporters in one week, how many voters will you need to contact? How much time will it take to contact these voters? What methods yield the most supporters per week?

Setting good benchmarks requires you to know basic info about how quickly your supporters can contact voters. Remember the number of households to knock or call is not the same as the number of voters in the district. Below are some good rates to determine and some industry standards. Remember though, your race is specific and a number of factors can alter these rates significantly. The best way to establish contact rates for your campaign is to track them yourself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Rates to determine:</th>
<th>Standard Rate:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Voters per household</td>
<td>→ 1.667 voters / home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Households knocked / hour</td>
<td>→ 8 - 12 knocks / hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Households contacted / hour</td>
<td>→ 2 - 4 contacts / hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Phone calls / hour</td>
<td>→ 15 - 20 calls / hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Phone contacts / hour</td>
<td>→ 3 - 5 contacts / hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- % of contacts / attempt</td>
<td>→ 24% contact rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- % Support / Undecided / Oppose</td>
<td>→ 15% - 70% - 15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A generic timeline follows on the next page. A campaign plan can be broken down further by week and by day, all having specific and quantified goals for each tactic.

A field plan can be written in any form – text paragraph, bullet points, or charts, but it MUST be written down. This field plan is a basic summary chart for a campaign starting in June, with a little over five months to plan. The accompanying benchmarks will vary with the particulars of each district, but in every field plan, the majority time will be spent on direct voter contact activities. Your detailed plan will be organized by each week and will have numerical benchmarks for each week and each tactic.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realm Contact</th>
<th>June - July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>Early Sept</th>
<th>Late September</th>
<th>Early October</th>
<th>Late October</th>
<th>Election weekend</th>
<th>Election Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Field coordinator writes field plan</td>
<td>- Determine voter targets, messaging</td>
<td>- Begin Voter ID canvass</td>
<td>- Start phonebanks as soon as you have volunteers that will phone</td>
<td>- Voter Reg in High Dem areas</td>
<td>- Voter ID canvass</td>
<td>- Voter ID Canvass</td>
<td>- Begin GOTV Phones &amp; Doors</td>
<td>- GOTV! (door to door, phone banks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Field coordinator writes field plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Continue Voter ID canvass</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Voter ID canvass</td>
<td>- Early Voting GOTV turnout</td>
<td>- Begin Election Day planning</td>
<td>- Precinct turnout projection rovers coordinated and in place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote ID Benchmarks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Voter ID canvass</td>
<td>- Early Voting GOTV turnout</td>
<td>- Finish Voter ID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 500 supporter ID (10%)</td>
<td>- 1000 supporter ID (20%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 2000 supporter ID (40%)</td>
<td>25% of Early vote, VBM and absentee targets hit</td>
<td>50% of Early vote, VBM and absentee targets hit</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 3500 supporter ID (70%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 5000 supporter ID (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>- Build lists of potential volunteers</td>
<td>- Begin Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Begin scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
<td>- Weekly Saturday mobilizations, focus on voter contact</td>
<td>- Recruit for Election Day</td>
<td>- Recruit and train canvassers</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Precinct turnout projection rovers coordinated and in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Begin Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Begin scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
<td>- Continue weekly Saturday mobilizations, focus on voter contact</td>
<td>- Continue recruitment for Election Day</td>
<td>- Continue canvassing</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Begin scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Continue weekly Saturday mobilizations, focus on voter contact</td>
<td>- Continue recruitment for Election Day.</td>
<td>- Begin daily canvassing</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Begin for Election Day</td>
<td>- Begin daily canvassing</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Continue scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
<td>- Continue scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
<td>- Continue scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
<td>- Continue scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Continue scheduling in volunteers for regular shifts</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue recruiting for Election Day GOTV shifts</td>
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<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
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<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
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<td>- Continue recruiting for Election Day GOTV shifts</td>
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<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
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<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue Saturday canvass, focus on vol rec’t.</td>
<td>- Continue recruiting for Election Day GOTV shifts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Volunteer Management | - Have field coordinator in place  
- Focus on recruitment for any outstanding volunteer needs  
- Prepare election day GOTV plan | - Hold volunteer leadership trainings  
- District-wide all volunteer training | - Focus on recruitment for any outstanding volunteer needs  
- Prepare election day GOTV plan  
- Organize district wide volunteers and train for election day | - Prepare election day  
- Confirm e-day GOTV shifts phone & doors | - GOTV  
- Precinct turnout projection rovers coordinated and in place. |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Administrative Systems | - Have space at HQ dedicated full time to field ops.  
- Hold weekly report with coordinator | - Weekly reports with coordinator  
- Twice a week reporting from coordinator | - Twice a week reporting from coordinator  
- Twice a week reporting from coordinator | - Twice a week reporting from coordinator | - Daily reporting from coordinator  
- Stay in contact with coordinator  
- Precinct turnout projection rovers coordinated and in place. |
| Material Resources | - Start printing of targeted walk packets  
- Start printing walk lit. to be dropped at doors  
- Have targeted walk packets and lit. prepped | - Continued printing of targeted walk packets and lit. prepped  
- Continued printing and prep. Of targeted walk lists and lit.  
- Prepare election day plan and materials | - Continued printing and prep. Of targeted walk lists and lit.  
- Prepare election day plan and materials | - ID Election Day phone bank locations  
- Prepare Get Out the Vote lists, distribute election day materials | - Prepare signs and publicity materials |
| Absentee, Early Voting, VBM | Phone Canvass #1 Mailing #1 | Phone Canvass #2 Mailing #2 | Phone Canvass #3 Mailing #3 | | |
Neighbor-to-Neighbor Precinct Organizing
Take Back Your Country – Starting In Your Own Backyard

Precinct Organizing Overview
Electoral districts come in varying sizes and scopes. States and U.S. Congressional districts are the largest, with state senate and state house districts getting progressively smaller. Organizing from the ground up, starting at the grassroots, begins at the most basic of all electoral units, usually called a ‘precinct.’ The common trait of these basic electoral units is that people in the same geographic vicinity all use the same voting station. For the sake of ease, this section refers to the basic electoral unit as a precinct, though it sometimes goes by other names. The general concept of this section is to emphasize the importance of neighbor-to-neighbor organizing.

Campaigns typically group the voters of each precinct together to predict or influence voting behavior. Ideally, Party members working at the precinct level connect the precinct to state-level Party organizations. In other structures, activists have been known to create their own network to compliment, compete, or substitute for the Party.

Precincts are not an arbitrary unit of division created by the campaign or a Party, but an administrative unit set by the county. Since precincts exist continuously - with or without any particular campaign working in them - so should your organizing efforts.

Campaign Oriented Organizing vs. Community Oriented Organizing
Electoral campaigns organize precincts as part of their field plan. A campaign will organize a precinct in ways that make sense for a temporary organization with a one-time specific numerical goal. Currently, most precincts organized by a Democratic organization in this country are organized for short-term campaign work. This is not the only way to organize a precinct. Precincts can also be organized along a community oriented model. In these models, the organizers are people who live in the precincts themselves and have a more personal connection with their neighborhood. This kind of organizing lends itself to greater sustainability through multiple election cycles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits of campaign and community oriented organizing models</th>
<th>Community oriented precinct organizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Precincts activated from two to five months before an election.</td>
<td>- Organized and sustained independent of the election cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Field organizers are typically marginally familiar with the area.</td>
<td>- Genuine relationships developed with voters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unfamiliarity with precinct gives impression of impersonal, remote, or distant relationship to voter.</td>
<td>- Organized in-precinct by organizers intimately familiar with the precinct itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Field organizers are often trained in electoral organizing and are paid to dedicate many hours a day to working for the precincts they are assigned.</td>
<td>- Volunteer activists: unpaid, limited time available, frequently untrained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Allows for controlled, consistent messaging from the campaign.</td>
<td>- Typically lacking in resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Connected to and directed by larger organizations with material and staff resources.</td>
<td>- Might be disconnected or poorly connected to campaigns or Party organizations: off-message, duplicated work, voter confusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Focused on winning an election on a specific date.</td>
<td>- Focused on long-range community building.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both models of organizing have advantages and disadvantages. To leverage the advantage of both models, activists and Party organizations should utilize the traits of both. Ideally, a precinct organization is built from the ground up by local activists and endorsed and supported by the state and county Party organizations. When a campaign is ready to contact voters, it should utilize the existing precinct organizations to supplement their direct voter contact work. This ideal scenario requires both the local Party and the local activists to work together from the beginning to formulate local precinct plans.

Before anything else, local activists should check with their local or county party organization to see what precinct efforts already exist. Duplicating efforts could serve to confuse the voters. Work with the existing efforts to improve them. If no precinct level organizing is taking place, propose starting a precinct program to the local Party and get to work!

**Strengths of Your Precinct Program**

A campaign’s limited resources shape it’s organizing in particular ways. Campaigns are not meant to build a district’s democratic performance in the long-term, only take advantage of what performance currently exists in the district at the time of the election. It does not usually make sense for a campaign to spend resources registering new voters, developing strong relationships with the voter, engaging Republican-Base areas, or preparing for anything beyond Election Day. An electoral campaign should be spending its resources on people likely to vote and in targeted (swing and/or base) precincts.

Your precinct program has an interest in sustaining and improving the performance of your precinct, has local knowledge on the precinct’s voters, and has substantially more time to invest. Precinct organizations are not limited by a campaign’s typical field organizing time frame (three to six months). Because of these advantages, a precinct program can engage voters in all precincts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities over the long term (continuous)</th>
<th>Priorities over the short term (campaign)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Maintaining an updated voter list</td>
<td>- Maintaining an updated voter list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maintaining your activist base</td>
<td>- Identifying and maximizing Absentee,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identifying and engaging infrequent and</td>
<td>Early, and/or Vote-by-mail supporters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drop-off Democratic voters</td>
<td>- Identifying and persuading undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Finding and registering new Democratic</td>
<td>voters likely to vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section brings together skills from other sections (activist recruitment, voter contact, etc) for use year-round in our own neighborhood. Even if you do not work or volunteer on a specific campaign, you can always work to maintain your precinct.

In a campaign setting, precincts are ranked in order of importance for targeting purposes. Base precincts are targeted for turnout. Swing precincts are targeted for persuasion. And Republican-Base precincts are ignored completely. This makes sense from a resource management standpoint for most campaigns. But for your continuous precinct organizing strategy, you have a larger, long-range view: Increase the Democratic voter turnout cycle after cycle.

The voter contact section of this manual discusses voter targeting in a campaign environment. This section will discuss precinct organizing for the long run.

**Close elections are won or lost at the precinct level.**

In 1960, John F. Kennedy beat Richard Nixon by one vote per precinct. One vote!

This phenomenon becomes more apparent in close local elections.
Organizing Individual Precincts

Your precinct is the first piece of a precinct network in your county, your district, and your state. The goal is simple: build a political community to increase Democratic voter performance.

Step One: Get to know the political landscape
The first step in organizing your precinct is to understand the precinct, and where the precinct fits into existing electoral organizations. Check around and see what efforts have been made in the area. Duplicating efforts of another organization is not only frustrating for organizers and volunteers, but confusing for the voters.

Know the Players: Developing a good relationship with state and county Party leaders is a priority for a precinct organization. The Party’s County Chairs will likely have access to vital information such as the precinct’s voter file and potential activists in the area. Even with initially unenthusiastic Party officials, the county Party or local precinct committee person will see the power of your organizing by seeing the results you produce. The first step is to sit down and meet with the County Party or other Party official. Having a good relationship with the county and state Parties will help campaigns plug into your existing precinct work.

Know the Numbers: Your most important asset in organizing your precinct is the ‘voter file.’ The Party’s voter file is more substantive than the publicly available voter roll kept by the County Board of Elections. As we noted in the ‘Developing a Field Plan’ section of this manual, different precincts may be targeted and prioritized by campaigns in different ways, depending on their vote share and Democratic performance. Knowing what kind of precinct you are organizing will help you set goals in a similar manner.

The number of registered voters is important for letting organizers know what they will be working with, but a truly effective electoral organization relies much more heavily on Democratic Performance, Voter History, and a sustained Voter contact program to hit its goals. To do this, you must obtain voter file data for your precinct.

Know the Dates and Places: Just as with field planning, an organized precinct must have a timeline and benchmarks. Keep track of the significant election calendar dates. Consider both Primary and General election schedules, as well as local municipal elections. Keep track of precinct voting locations and attempts to move the polling place. Every precinct team member should have a map of the precinct with borders and polling location clearly marked.
Step Two: Initial Recruitment

After you’ve met with the local Party and/or any other local players, get started on recruitment right away. You can not - and should not - do this alone. A precinct captain should create a precinct team and invest these activists in the success of the precinct. Refer to the section of this manual, “Building An Activist Base,” for an in-depth view on how to grow your organization and develop your activists.

First Tier: Relational. Remember to start close to home – literally - and cast a wide net around your neighborhood. Call on your existing local network – people who would help you because they know you. Known DFA and Party activists in your area are also a good first outreach. Elected officials and Party activists might know a number of reliable activists in your neighborhood. As always, the best source of volunteers is other volunteers. Utilize other people’s personal networks.

Second Tier: Voter History. The bulk of your initial recruitment can be done using your voter file. You may know nothing else about the people on your list, but you know the most important facts – their voting frequency and contact information. Identify those voters who never fail to vote. People who have voted in every election in the last four cycles are likely to take a great deal of pride in the fulfillment of their civic duty. A good recruiter can appeal to this sense of civic pride. Also identify voters who have voted in any recent Democratic primary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>'00 Pri</th>
<th>'00 Gen</th>
<th>'02 Pri</th>
<th>'02 Gen</th>
<th>'04 Pri</th>
<th>'04 Gen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Black</td>
<td>121 main lane</td>
<td>555-1357</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Sadler</td>
<td>125 main lane</td>
<td>555-2468</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Armatage</td>
<td>137 main lane</td>
<td>555-1256</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Silbergeld</td>
<td>139 main lane</td>
<td>555-3478</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Quayle</td>
<td>149 main lane</td>
<td>555-9865</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Erin Dame</td>
<td>120 main lane</td>
<td>555-5421</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ilya Shayman</td>
<td>128 main lane</td>
<td>555-0921</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ari Jack</td>
<td>144 main lane</td>
<td>555-4567</td>
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</table>

Third Tier: Public Displays of Affiliation. Wearing buttons is not enough. But it is a good way to see who is passionate in the neighborhood. These are people with liberal bumper stickers, lawn signs, buttons, and other visible displays of friendly politics. If this person is a stranger, work on becoming familiar. A knock on the door or a sidewalk chat is a great way to create a neighborly bond.

Turning Volunteers Into Team Members: The Initial Precinct Meeting

One of the most powerful tools in neighbor-to-neighbor organizing is the House Meeting, or in this case, a ‘Precinct Meeting.’ This isn’t a meeting for folks to get together and commiserate or rant about politics. The precinct leader rolls out a plan, explains how people can make an impact, and encourages participants to commit to a role.

Potential activists are invited to a meeting at an activist’s house. The meeting starts out with some time to get to know each other and connect, but it is important to get down to business quickly. The precinct leader should briefly explain the value of precinct organizing, giving the context of the organizing project. This includes a numerical breakdown of the precinct – how it has voted in the past, and how it can be organized to vote differently in the future. The precinct leader works out a goal for the precinct (number of volunteers, target percentage for future Democratic performance, etc). The precinct leader discusses the importance of direct voter contact and layered communication as a strategy and lays out tactics used in the precinct (canvassing and phone calling). A rough timeline with benchmarks should be rolled out.

At this point, many potential activists will be impressed, overwhelmed, or a combination of both. Make sure the numbers and the plan are accessible to people who might not have a campaigning background, but do not sacrifice the serious tone of the project.
The precinct leader should break down the plan into small, manageable chunks. The precinct-wide contact goal can be broken down block-by-block. Every potential role in the precinct is written out for people to see.

**Delegating Tasks**

It is easy enough to work out an impressive sounding plan, but the challenge is to get your team to execute it. You’ll need to get people invested in their own part of the plan. Because everything is quantified and broken down, people can see the impact one person can make. Even in a group setting, it is important to commit people by asking them individually. Everyone at the meeting should be offered a chance at being the captain of their block and/or their neighboring blocks or areas. Additional tasks for those who want to take leadership positions should be laid out. Each person should be asked, one-on-one at the meeting and for everyone to hear, “Can I count on you to identify all of the Democratic voters in your block?” (or something similar). The precinct captain goes around the room, asking each person in turn, until each person has been asked. Start with the strongest, most enthusiastic team member – the first response will set the tone for each subsequent ask.

After people have been asked to take responsibility for their own block, you can ask the room as a whole for volunteers to take on additional responsibilities (see box for examples). Don’t worry if not all the roles are filled, everyone on the team is responsible for recruiting more team members. The precinct captain should expect attrition over time, so positions will need to be regularly filled.

After roles are fulfilled, take a moment to celebrate your new team. Boost the energy level of the room. Before concluding, the team should head right into the plan sketched out by the precinct captain. As a group, start filling in your timeline or calendar and determine an action item that can be agreed upon and completed in a week’s time. Determine the date of the first round of voter contact (identifying supporters) and the first precinct Democratic social event. Keep the momentum of the first meeting going by making sure to call and follow-up with each of the attendees within two days of the meeting.

**Always Be Recruiting: Additional Volunteer Pushes**

The initial precinct meeting is the culmination of the first recruitment push. Your precinct organization must always be recruiting. The social chair, precinct captain, or other person should be in charge of making sure the team is constantly growing. Recruitment must be one of the benchmarks to measure the success of the organization.

Every now and then the initial precinct meeting should be replicated to give new volunteers a sense of context. The team should evaluate progress toward benchmarks and celebrate successes. Different tactics can be used to build up the names of potential activists in your neighborhood. Social events and community service projects are excellent ways to build a political community as well as build you volunteer list. Precinct Democratic BBQs or similar events in the neighborhood can be a great first event. Having your initial team invite their assigned Democratic voters is an easy contact for the team member and a fun event for the voters. These social events serve as a community-building opportunity, a voter ID opportunity, and a recruitment opportunity.
Step Three: Planning and Precinct Management

Refer to the section of this manual, “Building Your Volunteer Base,” for an in-depth view on how to manage activists in your organization. Also refer to the section, “Time: Planning and Goal-Setting” for greater detail on developing a plan for your precinct. Refer to the section, “Developing a Field Plan” to see what kind of precinct you live in and to predict how you will interact with campaigns once they establish themselves.

Planning

As with any campaign planning, your precinct plan should start with a goal and work backwards from there. The ultimate goal of the organization is to increase the number of Democratic votes cast in the precinct. Additional goals can include the number of volunteers on the team, or the number of social events and service events.

Set your timelines and benchmarks as specifically as possible. If the precinct is in its activist recruitment phase, how many activists is it looking to recruit by a specific date? If the precinct is identifying supporters, how many households does the precinct team need identified, and by what date? If you know you need to identify a certain number of supporters, you should set monthly and weekly goals leading up to the election.

Remember to consider your resources. If you live in an area where houses are spaced far apart, then your team members will require more time to contact the precinct’s voters. Understanding your phone and canvass rates are crucial to planning and setting expectations for your team members.

Good planning requires good data management. The precinct data manager should be tracking voters contacted and volunteers recruited. For the voter contact operation, block captains report to the data manager and the data manager to the County Party so they can report it up to the State party. Figure out a regular reporting system for your team. For example, you might decide that team members report in to the data manager twice a month on a certain day of the week. As that date approaches, the precinct manager checks in with each team member to check in on progress. After that date has passed, the data manager calls each team member who has not reported in.

Managing

Just as recruitment is an ongoing process, so is developing the team you’ve recruited. The tone set by precinct captain will determine the success of the precinct team. Celebrating successes and highlighting those who’ve done good work is the key to any campaign organization. Your focus should always return to the impact a small group of people can make in their own backyards. The precinct captain is building a team, not merely recruiting volunteers. Ideally, you’ll work with these team members over a period of many years. Keep the tone casual, friendly, and neighborly.

Encourage your teammates sense of ownership over the program – this is their neighborhood. If you are part of a larger precinct network, let your activists know from the start. People will feel more confident of your plan knowing that others nearby are doing the same.

Utilize the leadership ladder (as described in “Building Your Activist Base”) to encourage your team members to take on greater responsibility. You should have a plan for your best activists to take increasing leadership. Meet with your best team members individually to reinforce their sense of ownership over the precinct.

Precinct Captain Responsibilities:
- Recruit
- Train
- Motivate
- Coordinate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Vote Goal for Precinct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2006 Performance:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>771 registered voters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>312 Total votes cast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143 Dem votes cast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.5 turnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.8 of votes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step Four: Make your presence known – be a resource

One of the greatest benefits of having a robust precinct program is building a local and personal connection between your Party or organization and the voters themselves. Does your Party have a local Party Headquarters in every single precinct? Probably not. Building a precinct program will serve that function, literally bringing politics close to home for more people. Instead of being confused as to who or what the Democratic Party is or what they stand for, your neighbors will have a resource easily available to them. You are the local representative of the Party.

Modern campaigning has become more efficient, but runs the danger of becoming remote and impersonal. Voters increasingly ignore strangers calling their homes, knocking on their doors, and sending them mail before an election. It’s not that people ignore callers, knockers, and mail – they ignore strangers who do it. This is the greatest strength of community-oriented precinct organizing – familiarity.

Relationship Building: Your Precinct’s Voters

Your next task is to build up visibility and awareness for the organization in order to let your neighbors know they have a Democratic resource easily available to them.

An easy and engaging project for your team early in the cycle is to get your activists invested by creating a quick visibility campaign. Even though bumper stickers and lawn signs have a negligible impact on voter persuasion and turnout, they can create a sense of community for those who share a similar view and help to build a sense of community. Get as many Democrats to post signs in their windows, cars, yards etc. indicating that they support a particular Democratic candidate or that they support a particular progressive issue. The precinct captain might display something like “Precinct XY Democratic Headquarters.” Other team members put up their own signs. This is a particularly encouraging project in areas with a large Republican population because Democrats will realize that they are not alone in their neighborhood.

Do an ID canvass so you know who your Democratic supporters are. A voter’s explicitly stated preference is more accurate than their listing on a voter file. This is why Voter ID and Democratic Performance are more important than Democratic registration numbers. Team members can canvass every Democrat, Independent, or unaffiliated with an issue survey and/or with an informational flyer listing all of the public officials representing the area and how to contact them. One of these officials would include the Democratic precinct leader. Mail or deliver a sign to all registered Democrats in the neighborhood and follow up to encourage them to display the signs. Your precinct team members are establishing themselves as a resource to the voters. Voters will know that they can go to a neighbor with questions about issues, registration, and voting.

Precinct Events – Casual, targeted precinct events are a high impact activity which will motivate your activists and volunteers as well as engage ‘ordinary’ Democratic voters. These events can be ordinary, such as a neighborhood BBQ in your backyard – except that all the attendees are neighborhood Democrats. Especially in Republican dominated areas, this serves to build community among the precinct’s registered Democrats. The event can be as conspicuous or inconspicuous as you feel appropriate for your neighborhood, but the point is to start putting a local, familiar face on electoral organizing. The first events do not need to have an explicit agenda except for a few key items:

**Democratic Precinct Event Guidelines:**

- Everyone should know how you got their name (publicly available registration).
- Everyone should know that the event is a local precinct event – one of many to come.
- The invite list is targeted to registered Democrats, but no one should feel alienated. No ‘litmus’ test for attendance, unless they’re just there to heckle.
- Data collection. Always important. Have everyone sign a ‘guestbook’ with contact information.
- You have a plan, let people know. You want to encourage people to join you.
- Make an ask.
- Make your contact info available, along with basic materials on voting, registering, etc.
Future events can be structured according to the needs of the precinct. These events can be entirely social (i.e. neighborhood Democratic Bowling night), educational (political movie/DVD night), or volunteer-oriented (precinct mailing night). Ideally, your events are a little of everything (for example, ‘Mailings and Margaritas’ at Susie’s house).

**Relationship Building: Your Precinct Network**

Just as your precinct team is a resource for your precinct’s voters, it is also a resource for the County Democratic Party and for the other precinct teams in the area. If there is a network of precinct captains in your area (county, ward, district, or other geographic area), get in contact with these activists. Your County Democratic Party should be aware of other activists organizing the area. These people can provide experience and resources for your precinct team and likewise your precinct team might be able to provide insights for them. It is a good idea to meet regularly with these other activists, at least once every other month.

Regular contact with the County Party will also help the Party stay up to date with what is happening on the ground in your area. The most basic form of contact is to send your updated voter file over to the Party on a regular basis. In most states, campaigns rely on the State Party to provide them with the most up-to-date voter lists. Often campaigns do not have fully accurate information, largely because such information doesn’t exist or didn’t get passed on from one campaign cycle to the next. The continuously organized precinct organization is the solution to this common problem. Your precinct sends its information to the County Party, the County sends it to the State Party, and the State Party to the campaigns running in the state.

Inter-precinct events also help build a sense of community for your activists. Having a picnic with five or six different precincts shows each team member how they are part of a larger effort. These events can also show voters that the Democratic Party is not a foreign, distant, or faceless organization; instead the Democratic Party is a network of their neighbors.
Step Five: Work Your Precinct – Local, direct voter contact.

The greatest strength of community oriented precinct organizing is the very local and personal nature of the work. As politics get larger and more impersonal, it becomes more important for activists to put a familiar face to the issues which affect them and to do so year-round.

The bulk of your precinct organizing work will be direct voter contact. Everything else is just a prelude to the real work of contacting potential voters and keeping track of these contacts. From the very beginning, your precinct should have a plan with goals, strategies, tactics, timelines, and benchmarks. If you know that your precinct cast 200 Democratic votes in the last similar election (2002), your precinct goal might be to increase to 250 votes. If you have an entire year to work on this plan, this might be realistic. If you have three months, you might have a harder time. Either way, your events and activities follow a plan and have a purpose.

On the most basic level, your precinct’s tactical plan is:

1) Walk
2) Phone
3) Update
4) Repeat

Finding New Votes – A continuous neighbor-to-neighbor organizing program has the time and the local knowledge to increase Democratic voter performance in a way that no temporary campaign can afford to. As a precinct level organization, your voter contact priorities can play to these strengths. (For more on information on targeting from an electoral campaign’s perspective, see the section in the manual on Developing a Field Plan).

Absentee, Early Vote, and Vote By Mail – All electoral campaigns should have a solid plan for organizing absentee, early vote, and vote by mail. Precinct organizations are a good place to distribute, explain, and collect absentee and vote-by-mail ballots. The familiarity of having a neighbor explain an alternative process will help add new advance voters to each precinct, freeing up resources on Election Day.

Strategy and Tactics: Variations and Considerations – There are literally hundreds of thousands of basic electoral districts in the country. The principle of neighbor-to-neighbor organizing is the same in all of them, but more targeted tactics may vary greatly. Starting early and planning far into the future is the best way to maximize available tactics. The gold standard is accomplishing direct contact with every supportive and undecided voter multiple times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precinct Type</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Tactical Consideration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Retiree population</td>
<td>More likely to be home, sleep earlier</td>
<td>Higher contact rate, cannot contact late evening, can contact all afternoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Student population</td>
<td>Less likely to be home, sleep later, irregular schedule, moves frequently</td>
<td>Low contact rate, can call/canvass late, can call/canvass in the afternoon. Yearly re-ID to see if students have moved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Houses far apart, value face-to-face contact</td>
<td>Canvass is higher impact, but fewer canvass contacts per hour. Supplement with phone contacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Houses close together, less likely to be home</td>
<td>Low contact rate, but many houses per hour. Need multiple rounds of canvassing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnically/racially Homogenous</td>
<td>More open to similar race/ethnicity</td>
<td>Recruit volunteers of similar race/ethnicity to canvass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartments/ Condos</td>
<td>Difficult to access</td>
<td>Find volunteer who lives inside condo/apartment to canvass. Supplement with phone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SUGGESTED VOTER CONTACT PRIORITIES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Tier</th>
<th>Drop-off and Infrequent Democrats – This is an effective way to find more Democratic votes for your elections over the long term. A great many Democratic voters are unreliable in mid-year elections or for offices lower down the ballot. These are people who probably would vote Democratic, but often stay home because they do not understand the importance of the election or office. In most districts the discrepancy between presidential year turnout and Midterm turnout is large. Because these voters are already on your side, because there are many such voters, and because these voters are easy to locate, this can be your most lucrative target to increase turnout. The better your relationship with Infrequent Dems, the easily you can turn them into ‘always voters.’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key principles:</td>
<td>1) Early Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Tier</td>
<td>New registrants, new voters – Newly registered Democrats are always an exciting prospect. It is important to remember, however, that a new registration is not a new voter. If you are registering voters without any sort of follow up, consider that registration wasted; that person will probably not vote. Make your neighborhood registration effort meaningful with a good tracking system and a targeted follow up plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key principles:</td>
<td>1) Targeted Outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Tier</td>
<td>Independent or Swing Voters – People who claim to “vote for the person, not the Party.” Finding common ground (rather than points of contention) outside of an election cycle will put you in the strongest position as the election approaches. As always, make sure you are making the most of your opportunities with Democrats and new voters before spending resources on this category. Precinct organizations are a good fit to spend time with this group because of the time organizations have between elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key principles:</td>
<td>1) Listen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Tier</td>
<td>Persuading the Opposition – Many activists feel a great satisfaction knowing they’ve ‘converted’ a voter. Persuading a Republican to start voting Democratic is relatively uncommon. From an organizing perspective, such persuasion is either a luxury or a last resort. It requires a large commitment of resources for a small and unlikely return. You could spend the same amount of time elsewhere and make a greater impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key principles:</td>
<td>1) Think about resource allocation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Get Out the Vote (GOTV)
In the final days of a campaign...
GOTV IS THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS

Before GOTV Can Begin

The months of work on the campaign’s field plan all lead up to the final weeks of the campaign in the GOTV phase of the campaign. Because of this, a number of benchmarks must have been hit before GOTV even starts.

Campaigns often see GOTV planning as a process that begins close to election time e.g. within days of the election. This is not true. With the integration of absentee, early voting and vote-by-mail programs, GOTV is starting as early as September. Planning must start during the summer. If you are just getting into a precinct made up primarily of base voters 4 days out, you have already lost.

Well-run campaigns create their entire field plan with GOTV in mind from the beginning. The GOTV plan needs to be made with information gathered from months of work in the field program. The field plan needs to be built with GOTV considerations in mind. The GOTV plan incorporates information such as the locations and characteristics of supporters and likely supporters. The GOTV plan will also need to prioritize groups of supporters and the precincts they live in. Because of this, the field plan has to start with a goal to identify and/or persuade a certain number of supporters and it must track these supporters on a precinct level.

In other words, the GOTV program relies on a list of supporting voters. Building this list is the job of the field program until GOTV begins. Once GOTV begins, the campaign is focused on turning out that list.

If this list is incomplete by the time GOTV contact starts, the GOTV plan will be less effective.

Goal Setting and Targeting Your ‘GOTV Universe’

You’ve already calculated your ‘win number’ (50%+1 of est. turnout) and your ‘vote goal’ (52% of est. turnout). These numbers formed the basis of your field plan in the previous sections. These numbers and the work you’ve done in the field plan will now form the basis of your GOTV plan. There are two targets for your GOTV efforts: 1) Identified Supporters and 2) Democratic Base Precincts

1) Most of your voter contact efforts should be targeted at ‘Swing’ precincts (35%-65% Democratic Performance). Every supporter you identify in a swing district should be placed in your GOTV universe so that you can ensure they turn out to vote.

2) Look at your Democratic Base precincts (Democratic performance = over 65%). You spent time early in the campaign building a name for yourself among your base, but paid far more attention to the swing precincts for the remainder of the campaign. Now it’s time to go back to your base. Judging by democratic performance and likely turnout, how many votes can you expect from these precincts?

Purchase a precinct map from the local county elections official to help with your targeting. Color your base precincts blue and look for clusters where you can turnout large numbers of voters with fewer resources. VAN will often provide this information, but confirm that it is correct with current lines.
Add these two numbers – ID’ed supporters and Base voters – together. This is your ‘GOTV universe.’ If you live in a Democratic area, or if you’ve run an aggressive field program, you might find that your base voters and your ID’d supporters meet or exceed your vote goal. You will want to build a GOTV contact plan for your voters, broken down by likelihood of voting. Somewhat likely voters get more contact than very likely voters.

What if your GOTV universe isn’t large enough?
We’d like campaigning to involve very little guesswork. That’s why it is so important to run an aggressive field plan: The more supporters we ID and persuade, the less guessing we have to do as the campaign enters its final weeks. Unfortunately, not all campaigns are able to reach their vote goal through ID’s and existing base voters. For these campaigns, we will need to figure out how to increase the size of our GOTV universe in a way that produces more votes for the campaign.

1) Turning out potentially supportive, but infrequent voters
Take another look at the high Democratic performance precincts. We determine our turnout projections in these precincts based on previous performance. If the turnout in Democratic base precincts increases above its expectation, the campaign would receive more votes. Focusing on increasing turnout in high performance/low turnout precincts is a resource intensive strategy. These precincts usually have low turnout for a number of reasons – reasons which previous campaigns did not overcome. The precinct could have high residency turnover, inaccessible households, individuals working numerous jobs, etc. If the campaign decides to target these voter/areas, the campaign should take a look at the factors which lead to low turnout in the target areas. The campaign must develop a plan for contacting these voters. That plan must begin with a goal of how many more voters the campaign can turnout (usually on a precinct by precinct basis) with increased contact activity.

If thought out in advance, this strategy will produce increased numbers of supportive voters. The increase comes in the form of more time, money and people used to contact these voters.

2) Turning out likely demographics
Sometimes you just have to guess. At least make it an educated guess. If you have objective information stating that a certain kind of voter is very likely to support your candidate, you might decide to add all of that kind of voter into your GOTV universe, including unidentified voters. This most likely occurs if the campaign has access to polling information indicating the inclinations of specific demographic groups. The pollster might find that two-thirds of women under the age of 50 support your candidate. In this case, your GOTV plan would be wise to add all female voters under the age of 50 to the GOTV universe. Do not add in groups of voters to your GOTV universe without reliable, objective information. “Hunches” are not the foundation of a GOTV strategy.

If done with reliable information, this strategy can be a huge help in building a GOTV universe. It relies on having a detailed voter file (including age, race, sex, income, etc) and an objective source of quantifiable demographic inclinations.

3) Turning out supporters in hostile territory
There are reasons we do not spend much time in Republican base areas. Untargeted turnout work is likely to produce more opposing votes than supportive, and targeted turnout work is more expensive on per/voter basis. If, by GOTV time, your campaign is unable to build an adequately large GOTV universe by targeting base precincts, ID’d supporters, supportive demographics, the campaign might decide that targeted GOTV work in Republican precincts will be necessary.

This strategy is risky because Republican base areas do not need any reminders that there’s even an election in progress, much less that there’s a Democrat running. GOTV in these areas is risky, expensive, and potentially frustrating.
4) Turning out individuals with a high GOTV Score
If you have a voter file with integrated modeling and scoring, you should be utilizing it! Make sure you are turning out voters and/or precincts that have HIGH support scores (depending on the campaign, this number could be scores of 65+ or 75+) that are also LESS LIKELY to be voting (Turnout scores between 50 and 80). Don’t waste time on turnout scores above 80 – these voters are likely going to vote whether you call them or not. Spend your time where it matters most!

Coordinated Campaigns
Chances are, in GOTV, most of it has been done before. Just as during the start of the campaign, the GOTV phase of the campaign will benefit from having reached out to other campaigns, previous campaigns, and the existing Democratic Party infrastructure. Local groups and activists who have worked in the district in past cycles might be able to share their experiences with the campaign.

Additionally, many campaigns will work in the context of the state’s Democratic Coordinated Campaign. The state Party usually pools resources and data from Democratic campaigns running in the state in that cycle. Most of this coordination is done between the largest campaigns (statewide and Congressional campaigns), but can be useful for down ballot campaigns as well. Be sure to ask the state’s Democratic Coordinated campaign what it can share with your campaign. The coordinated campaign can be a huge help for GOTV.

It is imperative that every campaign, no matter what level, knows what the statewide coordinated campaign is doing. Too often, lack of coordination can result in overlap of targeted voters which is unnecessary and a waste of resources.

Coordinated campaigns are run by the Democratic Party and will require a buy-in from the campaign, usually through monetary or volunteer resources. If you can provide neither, the coordinated campaign is less likely to show interest in your campaign’s targets or message. The coordinated campaign will then pool resources in order to run a more efficient coordinated operation.

It is critical for all campaigns to understand the coordinated campaigns targets, and also continue to work their own target voters that might not be a part of the coordinated campaigns targets. The coordinated campaign cannot cover every single targeted voter of all the campaigns it is supporting. Targets outside the coordinated universe that are specific to a local campaign are still critical, and can be a great place for a local candidate to spend time knocking on doors.

Staffing
As the campaign transitions into its GOTV phase, your staffing structure will begin to change. The campaign will require increasing amounts of staff time and resources spent on GOTV. Most of the staff will switch over to GOTV work. In the final days of GOTV nearly all the staff has switched over with the possible exceptions of the scheduler, communication director, and the finance director in their original roles.

Municipal or county level campaigns will typically bring on a dedicated volunteer or someone close to the campaign to run GOTV if the resources are not there to hire a new staffer.

Many campaigns will bring on a dedicated GOTV director to plan and execute the GOTV phase, others will transition the existing field director. Having a fresh staffer on the ground who is not distracted by anything other than the needs of the upcoming GOTV phase can be a huge help when the campaign needs to transition into GOTV. Researching, planning, and preparing for this final phase of the campaign is a major undertaking and needs to begin well in advance of the election. The new GOTV director needs to learn about the district and the campaign’s work up to that point in a short amount of time. Additionally, the new GOTV director will need to jump into an existing staff and establish new accountability and reporting procedures.
Whether the campaign has the ability to bring on a GOTV director or decided to use the existing Field Director, the campaign must have a clear system of who is accountable to whom for the final GOTV phase. As more staff members are added and existing staff is shuffled, everyone should be clear what is expected of them and from whom. As the campaign nears the final stretch, the GOTV director’s responsibilities become increasingly greater, as does the number of staff that report to him or her.

**Beef up Your Capacity**

A good field program will cycle through their persuasion/ID universe 3 times in the course of the campaign. By going through this universe three times we are more precisely refining and populating our GOTV universe. We are also repeating the campaign’s message in the ear’s of persuadable voters which is a key factor in bringing those voters to our side. We will then cycle through the GOTV universe at least 3 times in the course of the GOTV. Depending on the level campaign you are working on you could have anywhere from 150,000 people in your universe (congressional) to 500 (municipal). This means we need to always be thinking about our capacity. How much people power do we have?

**Prioritize, Evaluate, and Revise**

As with any project where your resources are limited, smart prioritizing is the key to successfully reaching your goal. In GOTV, you prioritize voters and the precincts they live in. Much of the GOTV work the campaign will do utilize three main tactics: **door-knocking**, **calling**, and **mailing**. The key to distributing these tactics efficiently is to figure out which voters and which precincts get canvassed, called, and/or mailed for GOTV.

As stated earlier, your GOTV universe consists of people reliably identified or are presumed to be supporters of the campaign. Among these supporters, some voters will require more contact than others. Among those same supporters some may need to be contacted by different methods and will require varying levels of resources.

**Prioritizing by Voter Behavior**

Frequent voters require relatively little contact. This group of voters should still receive some contact before the election and might be included on Election Day GOTV voter contact lists.

Infrequent voters will require much more contact. These voters should be contacted in a number of different ways – phone, canvass, mail, etc – before the election. They have a record of missing some elections, so it’s worth making sure they know this one is important.

**Prioritizing by Precinct**

Every vote counts equally once it has been cast. But getting that voter to cast the ballot is not equal in terms of the resources required. Some precincts may be more difficult for a person to access on a given day. The campaign will emphasize phone and mail outreach for these voters.

Some precincts have more GOTV targets than others. Because you have limited resources, it will be important to target the precincts with the highest number of GOTV targets, especially for Election Day when the campaign must distribute canvassers. An hour spent by a canvasser in a GOTV dense precinct will produce more than an hour spent in a precinct where there are fewer targets. Large Democratic Base precincts will almost certainly have the greatest number of targets, followed by swing precincts in which the campaign has done its most aggressive voter ID and persuasion work.

On Election Day, the campaign will distribute volunteers to precincts in the order in which they are prioritized. Priority precincts will be covered throughout the day, pulling out all the voters in the precinct team’s list. If a volunteer lives in a priority precinct he or she should work in his or her home precinct, but this should be worked out beforehand for

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Example: Prioritizing Precincts for GOTV</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Precinct</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct 5-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct 5-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct 5-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pct 5-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pct 5-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct 5-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
priority precincts. Avoid sending volunteers to non-target precincts until all target precincts have been filled. It’s tempting to send volunteers wherever they want to work, but unless they refuse to work anywhere else, priority precincts must be covered before non-priority precincts are considered. This prioritization should happen not only on a campaign wide level but also in each staging location.

**Voter Protection Law**

Election laws differ from state to state and change frequently. Administration of these laws may even vary from county to county. The importance of researching election law and regulation can not be understated. The campaign should understand voter registration timelines, absentee and mail-in voting regulations, early voting, poll checking rules, poll opening and closing times, peculiarities of different voting machines throughout the district, etc. Election information is usually kept by the Secretary of State and administered by the individual counties or county organizations (Clerk, Board of Elections, etc).

On Election Day, the individuals overseeing the polling station might not be well-versed on election law, especially due to the recent and numerous changes in the laws over the last few years. This means we need to be prepared to assist and react when the precinct is not appropriately administering the election. Therefore, the campaign needs to have a legal team available to anticipate, evaluate, troubleshoot and deal with problems. These individuals need to be lawyers that have election law background.
GOTV Messaging & Tactics

GOTV contact makes a specific ask, “Vote!” and makes this ask many times over a short period of time. Generally, the more contact a voter receives, the more likely that voter will turn out and vote. At times this may seem to temporarily frustrate the voter, but the relationship between number of contacts and turnout is solidly in favor of repeated contacts. This is especially true of infrequent voters. Ultimately, the best way for a voter to end contact from the campaign will be to get out and vote.

The more personal the GOTV contact, the better the response. More personal forms of contact, such as canvassing, are necessary but also resource intensive.

GOTV Messaging

GOTV messaging has recently changed significantly. GOTV messaging is no longer short and sweet “GET OUT AND VOTE.” Groups such as the Analyst Institute (www.AnalystInstitute.org) have studied this issue extensively and found that certain messaging strategies will work to increase turnout among infrequent democratic voters by significant margins. These tactics include:

1) **Social Pressure and Emphasis on HIGH voter turnout**
   Emphasize HIGH turnout with the voter. Remind them that their friends and neighbors are going out to vote and it is the socially responsible thing to do. Citing low turnout can actually deter voters from going to vote.

2) **Making a Plan With the Voter**
   Research has shown that walking through a plan with the voter will significantly increase the rate at which people go vote. Instead of saying just “GO VOTE” we need to be working these questions into our GOTV script. When do you plan to go vote? How are you getting there? Do you need a ride to the polls? Who are you bringing with you?

3) **Highlight “voter identity”**
   People also respond better and are more likely to take action when you remind them of their association with exclusive groups. As amazing as it is, voters ARE exclusive groups of people in and of themselves! Tell the target that you are calling because he/she is the “kind of person who votes.”

4) **Remind Voters that you are Local**
   Remind folks during GOTV contact that you are a local member of the community if in fact you are. If not, send folks into communities that they are familiar with or may know people. Voters are much more responsive to people who are part of their local community, not people or organizers that are shipped in from outside the area.

5) **Remind Voters that Voting records are Public**
   Make voters aware that others can see their vote history to trigger the psychology of social accountability. For example, “We see you voted last year. Thank you!”
GOTV Canvassing

Contact for contact, door conversations yield greater turnout than any other contact. It’s easy to throw away a piece of literature or even cut short a phone call, but a cheery and persistent volunteer is difficult to ignore or dismiss. That said, canvassing is by far the most labor and time intensive form of contact. An efficient canvass operation requires advance material preparation, adequate volunteer training, and a system of volunteer supervision.

Training for GOTV canvassing needs to be made mandatory even for veteran canvassers. The campaign should arrange for a number of meetings around the district to serve as a canvass briefing and training.

The canvass coordinator might choose to cluster precincts together. If so, be sure to separate base precincts (blind-pull) from swing precincts (targeted GOTV). Volunteers should *always* have a list of targeted voters even in base precincts.

A quality canvass program requires supervision. By the time GOTV commences, the campaign will have recruited a number of volunteer leaders. These leaders will be responsible for recruiting, training, and launching GOTV volunteers. Many campaigns use off-site (away from HQ) staging areas where volunteers gather to receive materials and training. These sites are run by volunteers the campaign knows and trusts. The staging area(s) is effectively HQ for any volunteer during Election Day and the actual campaign HQ is deserted except for core staff and Election Day attorneys. Precinct materials should be signed out by the leader and he or she should collect the contact information of any volunteer who takes out a precinct.

GOTV Phoning

Phone outreach is essential to any GOTV operation. In the days before the election, phone calls are made to every supporter in the GOTV universe, with an emphasis on infrequent voters. Use these calls to remind voters of their polling location, confirm their support of the candidate, set up volunteers if they have special needs, and to recruit volunteers for Election Day. Phones provide the most coverage of any personal tactic.

Volunteer phone calls have a greater affect on an individual voter, but if the campaign cannot muster up enough volunteers to cover the list, it would be prudent to hire a campaign firm. Volunteer GOTV calling should be supervised and done at phone banks. This ensures that volunteers are making the calls and that data from the calls comes back to the campaign in a timely manner.

One of the major responsibilities of the GOTV director is securing enough phone lines to make calls through the GOTV universe. Union halls and businesses (law firms, travel agencies, etc) will provide multiple lines if asked. Planning for phone banks requires some calculation and some educated guess about rates (these guesses are replaced by real numbers once specific contact rates of your own).

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**Be Prepared for Bad Weather**

**Rain:** Clear plastic cover sheets, found in a school supplies section of any store, can reduce smudges on walk sheets when clipped on the top of walk sheet.

**Rain:** Inexpensive plastic ponchos, or even garbage bags, will keep canvassers dry. It isn’t high fashion, but volunteers will appreciate your thoughtfulness.

**Cold:** The campaign cannot provide warm clothing for every volunteer, but glove and boot warmers can be affordable if purchased in bulk.

**Cold:** Cheap pens can freeze in cold November weather. Use pencils in cold weather.

**Wind:** Clipboards are a huge help, but they lose effectiveness if there are too many items stacked in one. Having a bag, even a grocery bag, will allow canvassers a better place to stick their glossy campaign literature.
Calculating Your Phone Rates –Example
Figuring out key rates in your phone program can help you assess your needs for Election Day.

1) Completion Rate. Your GOTV universe mostly consists of people the campaign has already called through the voter ID and persuasion phase, so you know the numbers are good. Assume a 75% contact rate after three rounds of calls. To figure out how many completed calls to expect, multiply the GOTV unique households by .75. For calls to uncontacted base supporters, assume a lower number (60%). In this example, we assume all the GOTV universe has been contacted at least once before (a good idea, anyway).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Households in GOTV universe = 4604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumed contact rate = 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected contacts = 1381</td>
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</tbody>
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2) Call rate. The rate at which a campaign’s volunteers can contact voters is largely a volunteer management issue. On-task volunteers are able to cover the GOTV universe, ensuring that every voter is contacted. These scripts need to be as effective as possible. Recent studies have shown the most effective way to get voters to vote is with social pressure and making a plan, with them. These scripts are a little longer than the traditional “Go Vote” script, but they are ultimately far more effective. This will help you figure out how many hours of calling the campaign will need to do to cover its GOTV universe.

<table>
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<th>EXAMPLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projected contacts = 1381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumed call rate = 15/hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer hours needed = 93.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Hours available. Election Day, as any other day, provides a finite length of time in which calls can be placed. Election Day calls can begin at 9am and last until shortly before polls close. Now that you know how many volunteer hours you need to fill on the phones, you will need to calculate how many phones you need by dividing the available calling hours

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer hours needed = 93.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available hours (9am – 7pm) = 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phones to fill = 9.306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*A number of factors should alter the above assumptions. First, your GOTV operation should ideally update the phone lists and remove supporters who have already voted from your contact lists. Second, contacts will not be made evenly throughout the day. The campaign will make few contacts in the morning and afternoon, and will have many contacts to make in the evenings. In this example, you might decide to keep eight phones filled for the morning and afternoon and 25 or more for the evening.
**Direct Mail**

Although lower impact than phones or canvasses, direct mail is an indispensable part of GOTV. Unlike the canvass or phone outreach, anyone for whom you have an address is guaranteed to receive contact. Just as with the other forms of contact, you should use the social pressure message and provide assistance on voting (hours, locations, etc). Your mail piece should be simple. Include information about where to vote (each address would have its precinct printed or stuck to the mail piece), why it is important to vote, include information about civic duty and recognize the voter as a “good citizen” in the past, and contact information for the campaign office for questions.

Even more than with other direct mail, your GOTV mail needs to be timed well. Ideally, you want your pieces to arrive on the days before the election. When in doubt, aim to be a day early.

**Literature Drops (Lit Drops)**

Lit Drops take less time to cover a neighborhood than it does with a canvass. But just as with mail and canvassing, Lit drops are a poor tactic to use if it is not targeted. Typically, lit drops are done in Democratic Base areas and at times when canvassing can’t be done. A tried and true method of GOTV lit drops are door hanging literature with the polling place information for that neighborhood printed on. Though it can be effective, extra care must be taken with this tactic not to accidentally confuse voters with wrong information.

Canvassing takes more people and time, Direct mail takes more money. If you have the resources, however, it’s always worth concentrating your volunteers on real voter contact (canvassing and calling) and your money on direct mail.

**Visibility**

Only after ALL phone shifts and ALL canvass shifts are filled to 125% capacity should ANY volunteers be distributed for visibility purposes. These efforts have no measurable impact on your GOTV program, and can in fact be detrimental.

**Precinct Turnout Projections**

The modern form of Election Day strategic voter turnout is done in the form of turnout projections. This is why we have emphasized to such a degree the importance of knowing what level of turnout you need in your targeted precincts to get to your win number and vote goals. These turnout levels will be critical figures you will be using as you stage your turnout projection operation.

Turnout projections can be gathered in coalition with the coordinated campaign, or on a campaign by campaign basis. You will have to assign volunteer leadership to each target precinct (Note:}
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