

DIRECT VOTER CONTACT – SCRIPT

SLIDE 1:

Every campaign is about persuading voters that our candidates, political platform, or proposed solutions and policies are the best and that they should support them. In other words, every campaign is about communication with our constituency and the success of that communication depends on the following aspects:

1. What we say
2. When we say it
3. How we say it

The first aspect refers to our message. Developing a campaign message is a separate topic and is explained in a different set of materials you can find on this website.

The second aspect is about choosing the right timing of the communication. You can learn more about this strategy from our presentations and materials designed for Building a Voter Contact Plan, and 6 Steps to Build a Campaign Plan.

The third aspect – how we say or how we convey our message, is about the different communication channels we can use to reach out to our voters. All methods to communicate with our voters can be divided into two groups – direct and indirect voter contact and this distinction is based on whether we use a two-way or one-way communication. This presentation is about the methods we can use for direct voter contact.

On the following slides you will find information about what different methods of communication are considered direct voter contact, what you will need to efficiently implement these methods, as well as some suggested tools you can use in your campaign.

To explore other aspects of communication with voters, we suggest you use our following presentations: Message Development, Building a Voter Contact Plan, Indirect Voter Contact, and Door-to-Door Campaigning.

SLIDE 2:

Before we start talking about different techniques, let's look at the general characteristics of direct voter contact methods.

Direct voter contact techniques are very effective, but very time consuming, and require many volunteers. They give you more control and allow you to get your message across as you want. These techniques are personal, individual and relationship building. Through direct voter contact you can target voters precisely, answer questions and receive feedback on your candidate or party.

Campaigns with many people, but little money usually focus on direct voter contact, since it is not expensive. A big advantage of direct voter contact is that it can be used in any phase of a campaign. You can equally benefit from these methods during the research phase (when doing surveys and learning about issues and priorities of your constituency), using them as a message delivery tool, or during the final phase of the campaign as part of your get-out-the-vote efforts.

The downside of direct voter contact is that it is less efficient – it does not reach a vast number of voters in a short period of time, unlike television ads for example. The target audience for direct voter contact is small by default and due to the nature of the activity – one-on-one conversations - it is very time consuming.

Direct voter contact includes tactics such as:

(#1) - Door-to-door

(#2) - Small personal events, such as coffee or tea gatherings

(#3) - Town meetings and other events

(#4) - Candidate “meet and greet” events

(#5) - Distributions at gathering places

(#6) - Phone banks

Deciding which methods you will use depends on various factors, such as: time available for campaigning, characteristics and landscape of an area (it can be rural or urban, apartment buildings or houses), strength of your party in that area and number of available volunteers, as well as information you have already collected about voters and their preferences.

If we have a constituency in an urban area with apartment buildings and enough volunteers and enough time, the most effective method of direct voter contact is going door-to-door. But if we have to reach out to remote villages where we still do not have many supporters, we would opt for a town meeting. If time for campaigning is very short, distributions at gathering places can be a good option. All in all, choosing and combining these methods is an important part of strategizing and planning your campaign. And remember, once you select the voter contact methods to be used in the campaign, you need to make sure you are well-prepared to implement these activities.

SLIDE 3:

Here is the list of fundamental materials you would need for implementing direct voter contact:

- **(#1) District maps** (divided into neighborhoods) to ensure volunteer teams will clearly understand where to go and avoid overlapping or missing some parts of a district. You should be able to find these online through Google Maps (<https://maps.google.com/>) or through CAPMAS.
- **(#2) Written instructions** for each volunteer that includes:

- Assigned area(s) which is defined with streets' names and numbers, so that volunteers know exactly where they go and what houses they are responsible for. Usually, the campaign field director or the campaign coordinator for that district would assign different neighborhoods on the map to each volunteer team, taking into consideration which volunteers are the most familiar with which areas. You can learn more about these strategies in our presentation on Door-to-Door Campaigning on this website.
- Suggested script – a few sentences that include an introduction of the activity, party message and invitation for action. Keep in mind that you want all your volunteers to convey the same message, so giving your volunteers a prepared script can help you to ensure that.
- Name tag with party logo - to be easily identified as a party activist.
- **(#3) Party materials** – a flyer or brochure or any other promotional material your volunteers will give to voters. This does not only apply to going door-to-door, but even when you organize small personal events, you should have samples of your party's printed materials that you can leave with voters you have just talked to.
- **(#4) Forms** for volunteers to **record information** from each contact (or a sign-in sheet for group settings). It is crucial to have a record of all contact you make with your voters. It is important for your current and even more important for future campaigns. By maintaining a voter database, you can track voter preferences and likeliness to support your party over time, which will help you to target your resources even better in the future. As previously mentioned – direct voter contact is a two-way communication, but if your volunteers do not document all their contact with voters you cannot hear what your constituents are saying.
- **(#5) Volunteer and membership forms** for those voters who want to join your campaign and your party – there will always be some people that want to join you and help – do not miss the opportunity to ASK them!

SLIDE 4:

In order to ensure everybody is on the same page and that they will deliver the same message, respond the same way, knock at the door at the right times, and not miss an opportunity for recruitment, you need to organize trainings for your volunteers. It can be in the form of a several hour long meeting, but what's important is that your volunteers get directions from you on the proper way to get their job done. You can find more details on training volunteers in our presentation on Volunteer Recruitment on this website, but here is a list of the important points that your volunteers need to hear from you and remember:

- **(#1)** What to say and NOT to say
- **(#2)** When to visit
- **(#3)** What to wear

You may think that what to say or not to say, or when to visit, or what to wear are issues of common sense and something everyone already knows, but you would be surprised at how different people's ideas can be about these simple things. In any case, it is always worth taking a little time to clarify for

your volunteers what is appropriate and what is expected of them because they ultimately represent your campaign.

- **(#4)** Knowing how much time they should spend on each contact is crucial, since every volunteer will have the same deadline for the same number of contacts. You do not want anyone spending hours at somebody's door or on the phone. Each conversation should be short and simple and your volunteers have to be able to keep any discussions brief. At the same time, volunteers must note all the questions a voter might have, so somebody else from the campaign team can get back to them and answer those questions.
- **(#5)** Volunteers have to be trained on how to fill out the voter contact form and must understand why it is important to obtain and record this information.
- **(#6)** How to respond to a negative reaction - your volunteers should never argue with opponents and should never spend time trying to convince those who have already made up their minds on who they will support. This is something that most volunteers are not aware of and their inclination is usually to try and convince these opponents to support their candidate. Volunteers need to know they should not waste their time and that it is more productive for the campaign if they move on to other voters who might actually be supporters or potential supporters of your candidate. Volunteers should just be polite when they come across a voter who has a negative reaction. They should simply apologize for disturbing the voter and say "thank you", before turning away. Volunteers should also note in their voter contact form when a voter does not support their candidate to make sure no one from the campaign wastes time contacting them in the future.
- **(#7)** How to recruit in case of positive reaction – train your volunteers how to encourage people who are supportive to join your campaign.
- **(#8)** Even when you recruit volunteers from the same neighborhoods where your campaign will take place, make sure they are aware of the important local issues and potential cultural sensitivities.

SLIDE 5:

What needs to be done after each voter contact activity?

Everyone wants to feel appreciated – this motivates them to continue doing the hard work they do, so do not forget to thank **(#1)** your volunteers!

Developing a database **(#2)** of voters is crucial for the future. If in 4 years you need to start gathering information and building your campaign from zero all over again, then you did not invest your resources wisely. You can learn more about how to build a database for your supporters in our presentation on "Membership Database" available on this website.

YES voters or voters that said they support you, can be your potential volunteers and/or funders, or they will just vote for you. In any case, you need to make sure you follow up **(#3)** with them and ask if they can contribute to your campaign with either volunteer time or other resources.

MAYBE voters or voters that might support you, need to be contacted again **(#4)** so that you can reinforce your message and possibly persuade the voter to support you.

SLIDE 6:

As the campaign becomes more intense, it is important that you have established procedures for keeping accurate records of your voter contact efforts. It is equally important to always deliver clear instructions to your volunteers and staff, and have mechanisms to deal with various things such as invitations and contributions to your campaign. Remember, you have already calculated how many votes you need to win when you set your goal at the beginning of your campaign. Now you need to make sure you reach that goal and collect enough resources to do so. You will not know if you are meeting these goals if you do not keep track of your efforts and resources.

(#1) This is a sample form you can use to document any interaction through direct voter contact efforts. Each sheet should have a place where a volunteer can write down the name of the district they are visiting, his/her own name, date, street name, and the number of doors knocked or contacts made (this is because you might go door-to-door several times in the same area during one campaign). Below is a simple table for recording data about each voter and household – the data you need is the resident’s name, house number or apartment building and apartment number, number of voters in that household, intention or how likely they are to support you, and any issues raised by that voter.

Intentions are listed in the Intention Key box on the upper right hand side of the form. Your volunteers have to be able to identify if a voter they are talking to is your supporter, neutral or opponent. It is important to record those doors that did not open too, so someone else from the campaign can go back to them later and try again. And, of course, there could be foreigners or minors opening some doors who are not eligible to vote - your volunteers should note that also so that another volunteer can go back and visit these homes when an eligible voter might be present.

SLIDE 7:

This sample volunteer card is another tool you can use to keep records of your constituents. Such a tool will make your work more efficient and easier to pass on to future campaign organizers in your party.

You can decide what information you want to collect about your volunteers, but here are suggestions of what you might need from a campaign perspective. Besides their general information such as name and contact information, you need to know what district that person votes in (we might recruit him or her to be a party agent) and their party affiliation (not all the people who are ready to volunteer are willing to be a party member).

After collecting this data, there are two other types of information we’ll ask for:

- i) If there are any election-related needs of that voter (as you can see on the bottom left of the form)
 - ii) How that person will participate in the campaign (as you can see on the bottom right of the form).
- This last question helps you save some time when recruiting volunteers, because you will already know which volunteers are willing to do which activities – you will not need to waste time calling all of your volunteers to ask what they are interested to help with.

SLIDE 8:

When training volunteers, it is important to ensure they are all saying the same things to voters. One way to ensure this is by developing scripts for your volunteers to use, rather than letting them make up their own and possibly going off your campaign message. By creating scripts, you make the volunteer's job easier and prevent misunderstanding and misinterpretation of what they need to say.

Here is an example of a telephone script with the purpose of identifying voters in a phone bank activity, followed by instructions for volunteers on what to do after each call **(#1)**:

*"Good evening (morning or afternoon). May I speak with Mr./Ms. _____, please?
Mr./Ms. _____, my name is _____ and I am calling on behalf of Candidate X of Party XX.
In this election, the difference between Candidate X and the other candidates is clear. A vote for Candidate X is a vote for XXX. What our country and region needs is a lot more XXX and a lot less YYY.
That's the decision you can make in this election. On Election Day, can Candidate X of Party XX count on your support? Thank you for your time."*

Rate the voters on the phone sheets according to the following scale:

- "1" Supports your candidate
- "2" Undecided
- "3" Supports an opponent

Do not get into a discussion with the voters. This will only take time away from making more calls. Only answer the most basic questions and do not discuss issues.

Remember to thank each individual spoken to when concluding the call.

Turn in your completed call sheets or list of numbers that you have called when finished. If you do not complete a call sheet, make sure it is clearly marked at the point you stopped. Keep any call sheets you did not complete separate.

Thank you for your effort in making your phone bank a success

SLIDE 9:

CONCLUSION:

(#1) After you choose which direct voter contact methods you will use for your campaign, prepare the necessary materials and tools, and make sure to train your volunteers. For the success of your campaign and future campaigns, keep all voter contact records, develop and enter the information you collected into a database, follow up with voters, and thank your volunteers!