

Political Social Media Strategies

Tips and Ideas for Digital Campaigning

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Political campaigns have many options for online advertising to reach and influence voters. Candidates can now reach out based on demographics and tailor their advertisements to specific audiences. With a low cost to entry, even local candidates can put together an effective social media strategy.

Online ad spending is way, way up over the last few election cycles. How much should you budget for online advertising? This varies on the size of your campaign and the amount of money you have to work with.

Online campaigning isn't just for the big guys anymore. Local campaigns can follow almost any marketing strategy that a state and federal race can do.

The question is, do you have the budget and resources to do it all? Odds are, you probably don't. Sure, it would be great to put out video on TikTok and maintain a Pinterest board. But is it *really* practical for someone running for a school board or town council position to be spending time promoting themselves on those platforms?

You should pick your online targets carefully to create publicity to the right voter audience.

It is a good idea to commit a small budget early on to see what works best for you. Build a reserve for your online *Get Out The Vote* advertising. Every campaign has a different set of challenges. Fortunately, it is easy to shift online advertising in response to new events and situations.

Here are some ideas to help improve your campaign's social media campaign:

First Things First: Get Your Campaign Verified

Before your campaign begins social media advertising, you will want to have your campaign verified and authorized. To provide greater transparency, Facebook (and Instagram), Google and Twitter now require user verification.

Verification allows social media users to easily identify ads that deal with politics, to know who paid for them, and whether the ad was authorized by a candidate or campaign.

As of this writing, US campaigns need the following to run advertisements on Facebook or Instagram:

- Be the Page admin or advertiser on the Page from which you're running ads.
- Have two-factor authentication enabled.
- A US passport, driver's license or ID card
- A US-based residential mailing address

We've found [this Facebook Help article](#) to be helpful for those who want verification.

One downside to verification is the time it can take. Give yourself a few weeks to become authenticated. You will be snail-mailed verification cards to confirm your address. You won't want to wait until the last minute to request your confirmation postcard. Otherwise you might not be able to run any advertising.

TIP: If you plan to run Google ads, you will also need to have your campaign verified. You'll want to start that process early, as well.

Don't Just Rely on Facebook Posts

Using social media for election campaigns is more than just broadcasting a message and hoping someone sees it. With declining Facebook reach for individual Page posts, you may want to test

the water with [Facebook advertising](#). This can expand your reach to followers, friends of followers or others based on specific demographic criteria such as by location, age, or interests.

Facebook allows candidates to target voters based on their demographics. This means you can drive your message directly to voting-age users that match specific locations and have expressed interest preferences.

You can promote direct advertisements or your individual Facebook posts. The minimum required budget is only a few dollars per ad, so the barrier to entry is low.

Generally, any ads that mention a political candidate, issue or cause must adhere to the disclosure rules described above.

If you plan to run display ads on Facebook, Google or through IP Targeting services, you are required to include in your ad a disclaimer information about the campaign. This is usually something along the lines of, “Paid for by”. You will need use a disclaimer if you are a candidate, a political party or even election committee.

Use Images With Your Social Media Posts

As social media has become more visual, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter are more image-friendly than ever. Adding a picture with a post will take up more space and help capture attention from viewers.

If you are sharing a blog post or web page, an image is usually pulled in from the source. If not, use a new engaging image and attach it to your update. [Real campaign photos](#) work better than stock images.



While we are on the subject of images, make sure that all of your social media profile headers incorporate your campaign or party's colors and fonts into the page design. While Facebook, Twitter and YouTube all have different dimensions, your header images should have a similar look and feel.

Use Video to Promote Your Campaign

With the ability to record video from just about any phone, there is no reason not to include video content in your social media mix. **Create a campaign YouTube channel** to host your videos in once central location. Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook allow for video posts. However, it is best practice to directly upload video to those other channels than to embed a YouTube video link into your posts. You will get more initial exposure on those platforms in this way.

Creating video today is easier than ever. Anyone with a smart phone can record and even edit video on the go. Live-streaming is more popular than ever as virtual events have become more mainstream through services like *Facebook Live*.

Facebook Live is a feature of the Facebook social network that uses the camera on a computer or mobile device to live-stream video directly to an audience through Facebook. This can be done through your *Facebook profile, a Page, group or even an event*. Viewers can watch from their computer, mobile phone or other connected devices. For political campaigns, Facebook Live allows candidates to speak and engage directly to their audience.\



NOTE: The social media platforms that do NOT accept political advertising include Twitter, Pinterest, Twitch and TikTok. Though you can create accounts and use them for your campaign, they all prohibit political advertising.

Post Updates From The Right Account

This trips up campaigns more than you think. Make sure you and your campaign staff keep personal and campaign social media posting separate. Personal posts sent through official campaign accounts have caused embarrassment for many campaigns.

One way to keep everything separate is to use a separate browser for just campaign posts. That way you don't even have to worry about logging in or out of different accounts.

Add Your Social Media Info To Your Email Signature

Every personal and campaign email you or your campaign staff send is an opportunity to mention your social media profiles (and website). Add social media links into your email signature.

Strategy: Be authentic

Voters value authenticity from politicians who use social media. Candidates should work to engage in a conversation with readers, rather than simply broadcasting campaign updates. It is, after all, a *social* network. Treat it like an on-going conversation. Read the comments, respond when necessary, and take note of what your supporters (and your dissidents) are saying.

When possible, the candidate should be the one who posts, and the messages should be *authentic*. Don't just post a string of press releases and bland statements.

The goal is to get voters to *know, like and trust you*. That won't happen if every post sounds like it was vetted by the legal team of a PR firm.



Track Your Success

Once you begin promoting yourself or your organization online, *keep track of how well each political digital marketing channel performs*. Run multiple ads at one time to determine which is more effective with different audiences. This can improve your messaging and effectiveness as you approach Election Day.



With some planning and a budget, you can increase voter exposure and run circles around your opponents. **It's a two-front battle – online and offline.**

For campaign website and marketing services, visit OnlineCandidate.com