

10 Ways to Lose Your Campaign

by Leo Haggerty

Some consultants will try and tell you they have a sure-fire way to win a campaign. There are no sure things in politics, but here are 10 things that will almost guarantee a loss on Election Day. **Be warned:** you still might win if your opposition is doing more of these than you!

1 Don't work: Running for office is a lot of work. If you think that you can get by on a few handshakes and a speech or two, you are well on your way to losing.

2 Don't listen: Thinking that you know everything and that you don't need help from trusted, experienced people is another big step towards losing.

3 Listen to everyone: During a campaign, you will come into contact a lot of people. Many will try to impress with how smart they are. They'll say, "If you want to win all you have to do is..." If you change strategy every time someone makes a suggestion, you are headed to Loserville.

4 Try to do everything yourself: Being a candidate is a full-time job. You cannot and you should not be writing press releases, deciding on sign placement, stuffing envelopes, writing TV commercials and so on... That's what staff and volunteers are for. Not only will you lose your campaign, you'll lose your campaign team, too.

5 Try to shake every hand: It's simple math. If you are running in a district with 75,000 registered voters, it will take 467 days, working 8 hours a day to spend just 3 minutes with each voter. Now you won't need all 75,000 to votes, but it usually takes a lot longer than 3 minutes to land a new supporter. Getting out and meeting voters is a must, but if all you do is shake hands, you'll have a lot of time to shake more hands after you lose.

6 Focus on the lowest cost per vote: Generally the campaign that spends the most wins. Of course, you do need to be spending money on the right things. If your main focus is to cut costs and not do what it takes to win, you will have a lot of time to clip coupons after you lose.

7 Screw up the plan: You can do this many different ways: Don't work the plan, repeatedly change the plan or my favorite, not have a plan in the first place. You need a plan; you need to work the plan, and you don't need to change the plan every time the wind blows. Or you can plan to be at home while your opponent gets sworn into office.

8 Don't ask for money: There are lots of reasons candidates give for not asking for money. "It's rude..." "People won't like me if I ask them for money..." "I'm no good at it..." If you don't ask for money, you might be the most popular loser in your town.

9 Yard signs will win the race: Signs serve two purposes in campaigns: Signs help with name ID, and they give your supporters something to do that makes them feel good about being part of the campaign. Signs don't vote and no one ever said, "I'm voting for Jane Smith because she had the most signs." It will be depressing picking up all those signs while your opponent and their supporter are at the victory party.

10 I know everyone and I know what they think: If you knew everyone and exactly what they thought you'd already be king of your city, district or state. We all have a circle of friends that is actually small compared to the number of voters. We also tend to be closest to people who think like us. If you are not willing to meet new people and poll or do focus groups, maybe you can get elected president of your book club after you lose your election.

If you'd like to avoid these and other campaign pitfalls, contact The Campaign HQ for help!

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