

## Use of Online Technologies and Best Practices in Online Campaigning

An overview of online campaigning methods focusing on strategies employed by Senator Barack Obama in the race to win the 2008 U.S. Presidential Election.

Researched by David F. Dumaresq

### Technical Savy

Barack Obama employed, in February 2007, ten people to run his Internet Team, including Facebook co-founder [Chris Hughes](#). (Ref)

### Site Design

- Eye-Candy stimulates donors: Impossible to overlook, the big red Donation button is positioned in a prime location (the end of the 'f' in scanning behaviour) and guarantees it will be viewed repeatedly by site visitors.

<http://www.barackobama.com/>



- Content Management System: It's difficult to tell from external appearances, but through some probing, the Obama campaign site appears to use open-source Drupal (<http://drupal.org/>) as its CMS.

Using open-source software speaks to a certain group of people; it demonstrates frugality; and does not encourage hacking by openly announcing the application server, such as DSF (<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/default.asp>) does by showing .asp file types.

Entering asp into Google renders the top result: The Official Microsoft ASP.NET Site

### Email

Briefly: Mass Emailing to supporters is routinely used to request donations and offer incentives:

<http://elections.foxnews.com/2008/06/25/obama-offers-car-magnet-to-get-internet-base-to-donate/>

## Forum versus Blog 'Open Thread'

The typical discussion forum is not used, instead the HQ blog (see below) invites a nightly closing comment section, titled 'Here's your open thread...' This may provide both an economical use of existing infrastructure and also a cleaner mechanism for capping threads.

<http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hqblog>

## Blogging

The official HQ blog shows tremendous respect and trust for his supporters and their peers' opinions by directly linking in blog posts from supporters on the My.BarakObama portal.

Portal: <http://my.barackobama.com>



- Provides a social network dashboard enabling:
- neighbourhoods (based on zipcode. see below)
  - friending
  - events focus
  - messages
  - groups
  - fundraising focus
  - personal blog space

Here is an example of how you are connected to others in your social group, based on the Neighborhood (sic) of San Francisco:

## My Neighborhood: San Francisco, CA

[San Francisco for Obama](#)  
Created: Feb 10th, 2007 Distance: 2.95 miles

[California Women for Obama](#)  
Created: Sep 8th, 2007 Distance: 3.87 miles

[San Francisco for Barack Obama](#)  
Created: Feb 10th, 2007 Distance: 2.49 miles

### [Mission + Noe + Obama](#)

**Created:** Mar 29th, 2007 **Distance:** 3.88 miles

### [Endorsements for Barack Obama](#)

**Created:** Sep 9th, 2007 **Distance:** 3.87 miles

[See more local groups](#)

## Facebook & Social Networks

Groups have been created for Barack Obama on 16 social networks:

Facebook, BlackPlanet, MySpace, Faithbase, YouTube, Eons, Flickr, Glee, Digg, MiGente, Twitter, MyBatanga, Eventful, AsianAve, LinkedIn, DNC Partybuilder

Barack Obama's Facebook group has surpassed 1 million subscribers, as of this writing. Visitors may browse photos, notes, videos, and commentary.

'For the 2006 mid-term elections, Facebook administrators created an "Election Pulse" section by creating profiles for all candidates running for federal or gubernatorial office'  
- [http://www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/facebook\\_and\\_political\\_communication.pdf](http://www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/facebook_and_political_communication.pdf)

## Meetup.com

Meetup.com may be considered an independent or grass roots initiated social network, because its members are defined by physical location, with much less of a central influence than the official Facebook site of Barack Obama.

<http://barackobama.meetup.com/>

<b>10,198</b> Members	<b>3,798</b> Interested	<b>114</b> Groups	<b>90</b> Cities	<b>7</b> Countries	<b>1,583</b> Meetups
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## Twitter

Twitter is a free tool for keeping in touch with friends; Obama uses Twitter to post up-to-the-minute commentary on his activities, as well as follow the activities of his 'followers'.

<http://twitter.com/barackobama>  
**Stats**

<a href="#">Following</a>	44,832
<a href="#">Followers</a>	43,319
<a href="#">Favorites</a>	0
<a href="#">Updates</a>	144

Note: "Obama follows his followers (on Twitter), Clinton does not." - Joe Solomon

<http://twitter.com/hilaryclinton>

#### Stats

<a href="#">Following</a>	0
<a href="#">Followers</a>	56
<a href="#">Favorites</a>	0
<a href="#">Updates</a>	1

## Video

Video plays an important role in motivating and connecting online supporters; it provides a compelling way to associate an individual with an organisation's key goals through imagery and music. Stories told using images are often more influential than those told simply through words.

YouTube Channels provide context from which videos can be published. YouTube lists 95 channels containing the words 'barack obama'

[barackobamadotcom](#)

#### Politician

Videos: 1,135

Subscribers: 60,58

[WeCan08](#)

Type: Standard

Videos: 3

Subscribers: 2,691

#### [Yes We Can - Barack Obama Music Video](#)

From: [WeCan08](#)

Views: 8,438,197

Comments: [62,055](#)

#### [Canada: "Account of Obama's stat...](#)

Added: 3 months ago

Views: 1,747

Campaign Announcements:

[Video: Important Announcement from Barack](#)

Barack TV uses a sophisticated user-interface to provide familiar 'channel'

access to recent items, issues, people's stories, and speeches. It also provides closed captioning.

<http://www.barackobama.com/tv/>



## Fax

A Fax service may allow an organisation to increase their reach. Fax services now deliver content to email accounts through gateways and avoid the expense and waste of paper.

<http://thecapitolfaxblog.com/>

## Text Messaging

The Obama campaign makes thorough use of Text Messaging and allows supporters to stay informed on both general and key issues by subscribing to specific messaging numbers:

By signing up, you can expect periodic updates from the campaign as well as advance notice about local Obama events and important updates about Barack's public appearances. We value your privacy and will not share your information outside the campaign.

To receive specific issue updates, text

HEALTH to OBAMA (62262)  
healthcare policy updates  
EDUCATION to OBAMA (62262)  
education policy updates  
IRAQ to OBAMA (62262)  
updates on bringing our troops home  
JOBS to OBAMA (62262)  
economic policy updates  
REFORM to OBAMA (62262)  
updates on cleaning up Washington & taking on special interests

## Google Trends:

Google compares average search traffic and provides graphing, which can be useful for determining the impact of targeted campaigns on the media.

Example comparing [obama, mccain, clinton](#)



## Camp Obama

This was an intensive four day leadership training program for supporters of the Barack Obama campaign. It ran over seven weeks with approximately 50 people attending each camp. The camp received more than 1200 applications for only 350 seats.

The main themes covered during the camp were:

- Teams/Leadership, Community, and Power
- Relationship building,
- Motivation (story telling)
- Strategizing
- Action (making it happen)

Training was provided by Marshall Ganz, PhD of Sociology at Harvard. Audio/Video coverage of the themes discussed during the camp is available at [Camp Obama](#)

## Web API

It appears that Obama does not provide a Web API to allow users to create remixes and mashups from his data sources. That fact is being recommended to McCain as a way to leapfrog Obama's success:  
<http://blog.programmableweb.com/2008/06/12/should-obama-and-mccain-have-apis/>

## Articles

- How McCain's Website Can Beat Obama By Becoming a Platform

By Patrick Ruffini, 06/07/2008 - 2:52am

[http://techpresident.personaldemocracy.com/blog/entry/26233/how\\_mccain\\_s\\_website\\_can\\_beat\\_obama\\_by\\_becoming\\_a\\_platform](http://techpresident.personaldemocracy.com/blog/entry/26233/how_mccain_s_website_can_beat_obama_by_becoming_a_platform)

- Expanding the Public Sphere: The Impact of Facebook on Political Communication

By Mike Westling, UW - Madison May 2007

[http://www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/facebook\\_and\\_political\\_communication.pdf](http://www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/facebook_and_political_communication.pdf)

- The [ACM Portal](#) contains 11 articles that where keywords Barack Obama occur, but it requires a (Free, limited) membership.

For example:

[A new paradigm for designing e-government: web 2.0 and experience design](#)

### ABSTRACT

Innovations in World Wide Web technology coupled with new developments in information

design present both challenges and opportunities for the creation of e-government applications that are functional, engaging for users, and that enable the achievement of democratic goals. We review the affordances associated with Web 2.0 technologies and more recent information design research focusing on user experiences that make it possible for government organizations to interact with citizens in new and compelling ways. It seems useful to consider how to design e-government resources that draw on these capabilities to add value through citizen participation in various forms of governance practices. We provide some examples that illustrate how we might pursue e-government designs that engage users in experiences with government.

**Credit**

Thanks to Joe Solomon ([engagejoe.com](http://engagejoe.com)) for time spent describing some of the strategies employed by the Obama campaign.