

Obama and Web 2.0

A Comprehensive Use of New Technology
in Digital Campaigning

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Introduction

Modern communication plays an important role in successful campaigning and has been a key element in reaching potential voters in the United States since the early 1930s, when Franklin D. Roosevelt used a series of radio shows called “Fireside chats” to address the American public directly, sometimes greeting the audience with “My friends”. John W. Davis, the Democratic candidate in 1924, knew very well about the impact of radio broadcasting on politics: “The radio will completely change campaigning methods.”¹ Although there was only little experience in using radio to communicate political messages, he knew about the importance of delivering messages that come to the point. “I believe it will make the long speech impossible or inadvisable, and that the short speech will be the vogue. Otherwise your audience might tune out on you without your knowing it.”² Since Roosevelt, every president of the United States of America communicated with the public directly through regular addresses. John F. Kennedy gave presidential campaigning a new impulse by giving a remarkable performance on television to again address the American public directly³. Today many believe that Barack Obama won the presidential election because of his extraordinary online performance and his boldness to try new methods.

Barack Obama announced his candidacy for the Democratic party on February 10th, 2007. The term “Web 2.0” was invented roughly three years earlier by publisher Tim O’Reilly, who bounded it not to new technology but to a new utilization of the given possibilities. Until today it is not accurately and concordantly defined what is necessary in order to be able to call an online service “Web 2.0”, but there are some important features, which are common and accepted among most experts: Important is the use of the internet as a platform, but perhaps most important is the use of collaboration and participation – the user is

¹ Roosevelt, F. D., Buhite, R. D., & Levy, D. W. (1992). *FDR's Fireside Chats* (Page XIV). Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.

² Ibid.

³ Cp. Wagner, J. W. (2005). *Deutsche Wahlwerbekampagnen made in USA?: Amerikanisierung oder Modernisierung bundesrepublikanischer Wahlkampagnen* (Page 206ff). Freiburg: VS Verlag.

allowed and asked to evolve into an author and participate: He is asked to create content, in many cases the user himself even *is* the content (as in early versions of social networks). The usual configuration of two clearly distinguished groups, authors on the one side and recipients on the other, begins to fade away and is replaced by a structure of service-providers and users. In a paper released 2005 Tim O'Reilly tries to formulate a definition of Web 2.0 in a nutshell. According to him, a Web 2.0 service has to fulfil the following points, although noting "that excellence in one area may be more telling than some small steps in all seven."⁴

- Services, not packaged software, with cost-effective scalability
- Control over unique, hard-to-recreate data sources that get richer as more people use them
- Trusting users as co-developers
- Harnessing collective intelligence
- Leveraging the long tail through customer self-service
- Software above the level of a single device
- Lightweight user interfaces, development models, AND business models⁵

The university of Oregon used a very similar philosophy when they created new ways on campus: They seeded the whole area with grass, letting people decide with their feet where to create the actual ways. Later, the by use beaten tracks were paved.

Information concerning online resources

Due to the nature and recentness of the topic this paper relies in parts on online sources. All online sources are available as screenshot on the CD-ROM tied to this paper. It is also important to mention that I was lucky enough to be invited to a presentation from John Della Volpe, Director of Polling at the Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, who looked into the use of Web 2.0 by the Obama campaign. He was also kind enough to answer follow-up questions by E-Mail. Information presented by him is marked as such in a footnote.

⁴ O'Reilly, T. (2005). *What is Web 2.0?* (Page 5) Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media, Inc.

⁵ Ibid.

Strategic philosophy of the Obama campaign

When Obama started his campaign, he was a newcomer in national politics. He was firstly elected as an U.S. Senator in 2004, only three years before he ran for president. Seen in retrospective, Barack Obama was able to mobilize the younger generations, resulting in a historic turnout. The population of the United States can basically be divided into four generations:

- 1.) Millennials (born after 1982 to 2001⁶)
- 2.) Generation X (born in the 1960s to the early 1980⁷)
- 3.) Baby Boomers (born after World War II to the 1960s⁸)
- 4.) Greatest Generation (born after 1920 to the end of World War II⁹).

It has been common knowledge that – spoken generally – Millennials do not vote¹⁰. Considering this fact, there was an interesting development of Millennial participation at the Iowa caucuses in 2004 and 2008: More than 3x as many Millennials caucused in 2008 than in 2004. Obama won 57% of the Millennial vote, Edwards 14%, Clinton 11%. While Obama won that segment by 43 points, Hillary Clinton was able to activate voters older than 30 years. The Iowa Caucus is the first electoral event of the whole nominating process and receives not only broad media attention, but is also seen as an indication which candidate will be nominated by the accordant political party¹¹.

Seeing the voting numbers, the Obama campaign made an important decision, which is supposed to be arbitrate for the outcome of the election: Instead of treating Millennials as a less important group of voters, they directly addressed them. This decision was based upon three important facts:

⁶ Howe, N., & Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*. Vintage Books.

⁷ Tulgan, B. (1997). *Generation-X-Management: 1963-1981 - eine Generation auf dem Weg von McJobs zu BigJobs*. Signum-Verlag.

⁸ Green, B. (2006). *Marketing to Leading-Edge Baby Boomers* (Page 4). Paramount Market Publishing.

⁹ Brokaw, T. (1998). *The greatest generation* (Page 3). Random House.

¹⁰ Presented by John Della Volpe in Munich on March 30th, 2009.

¹¹ Hull, C. C. (2007). *Grassroots rules: how the Iowa Caucus helps elect American presidents*. Stanford Law and Politics / University of Michigan.

Few voters, many individuals

Millennials may vote in low numbers, but account for roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ of the overall U.S. population. Seen worldwide, Millennials make up nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the population of the planet¹².

Highly educated, expansive point of view

Millennials are supposed to be highly educated and tech-savvy, resulting in the also used term „Digital Natives“. Junco and Mastrodicasa, who found out that a majority of the so called “Net.Generation” is using instant messaging, online services like Facebook and alternative information streams like blogs, proved this fact in 2007: 97% of them own a computer¹³. Also, they are supposed to be open-minded and have a track record of volunteering in the community (college, high school, church or other institutions): More than 60% of college students volunteer on a regular basis¹⁴.

Willing to act

Millennials quest for opportunities to make an impact – if they are asked, they will help. Erika Luckow, director of The Millennium Generation Studies, concludes: “It is a return to the idealistic generation”¹⁵. She adds:

*This generation is a 'we' generation, not a 'me' generation. This is an eager generation but also an anxious one. They are living in a world of conflict and they have experienced a lot, both nationally and globally. They are eager to move on with life in positive ways and they are determined to help out. They are a well balanced mixture of heart and mind.*¹⁶

It is important to recognize that although Obama essentially created new ways of campaigning, he did not invent something completely new: In order to gain public attention and gain a good position, one has to control the public agenda. You do this by getting endorsements, raising money and buying advertisement space in different media channels. The very same framework was used by the Obama

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Junco, R., & Mastrodicasa, J. (2007). *Connecting to the Net. Generation: What Higher Education Professionals Need to Know About Today's Students*. NASPA.

¹⁴ Presented by John Della Volpe in Munich on March 30th, 2009.

¹⁵ Berger, L. (12. August 2005). *'Millennials' Are 'Eager But Anxious'*. (University of Central Florida) Retrieved from Young Money:

http://www.youngmoney.com/careers/career_trends/050315 on March 20th, 2009.

¹⁶ Ibid.

campaign, adding some “extra ingredients”: As John Della Volpe notes, the known framework was extended to include three new points: dialogue, efficiency and respect.

Instruments and Web 2.0 technology used

It is important to note that the 2008 run for presidency was not about technology: Some of the applications created and used by the Obama campaign had more features than their equivalent applications on the side of Hillary Clinton or John McCain, but there was no big difference in means of technology but in the way of how the Obama campaign utilised the given possibilities¹⁷. This chapter shall present and explain the technologies and instruments used by the Obama campaign.

Website: Static homepage, meet the Obama Social Network

The official Barack Obama website did not only offer the “usual” information and

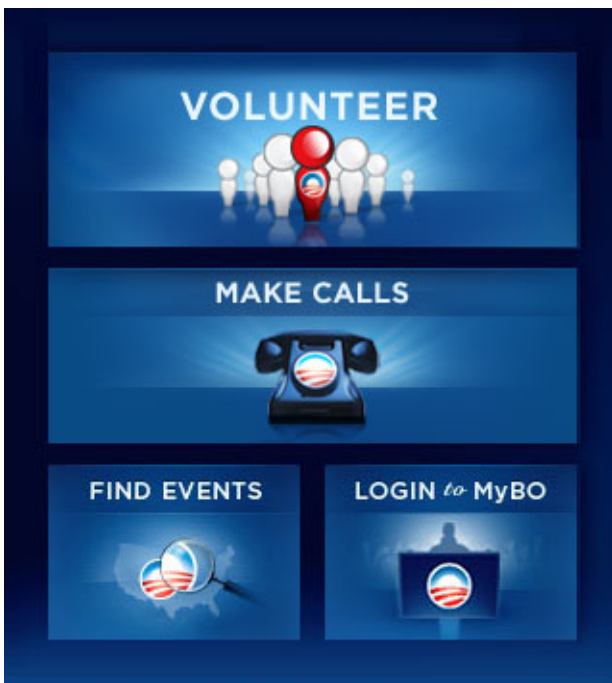


Figure 1: Sidebar

infomercials, but also offered supporters and people having sympathy for Barack Obama possibilities to not only interact, but also to participate in the campaign. Under the lead of Chris Hughes, one of the lesser famous founders of Facebook, and the agency Blue State Digital¹⁸ a new social platform called my.barackobama.com was created. The website allowed people to create profiles, upload pictures, publish a complete personal profile of themselves and

interconnect with friends. Also, users were able to use a personal blog to publish

¹⁷ Presented by John Della Volpe in Munich on March 30th, 2009.

¹⁸ Blue State Digital. (no date). *Case study: my.barackobama.com*. Retrieved from Blue State Digital: http://www.bluestatedigital.com/casestudies/client/obama_for_america_2008/ on March 25th, 2009.

thoughts and comments. Taking politics 2.0 into the power of social networking, people were also able to participate in fundraising, organize events or join local supporting groups – and were given points for these activities, so that they could publicly show how big their personal impact were. An “activity index” with a rating between one and ten was automatically calculated from numerous factors, which were also presented on the personal and public profile:


- Events hosted
- Events attended
- Calls made
- Doors knocked
- Number of blog posts
- Donors to your personal fundraising
- Amount raised
- Groups joined

It is important to mention that the Obama campaign did not reinvent the wheel: The whole user-interface was easy to use and completely familiar to any user of one of the big social networks like Facebook, LinkedIn or MySpace. Also, the whole website was streamlined and optimized for direct action and delivery of information. A sidebar visible on the homepage of the whole website offered “one click to action”-buttons (figure 1), asking people to take matters into their own hands.

The results are impressive: Over two million profiles were created, 200.000 offline events were planned, 400.000 blog posts were written and more than 35.000 volunteer groups were created¹⁹. The important thing to note: The Obama campaign let users organize and express themselves; the massive amounts of content did not cost anything.

¹⁹ Presented by John Della Volpe in Munich on March 30th, 2009.

Felix's Home Community Events Fundraise Logout



ORGANIZING
FOR AMERICA


"I'M ASKING YOU TO BELIEVE.
Not just in my ability to bring about
real change in Washington ... I'm
asking you to believe in yours."
-BARACK OBAMA

GET EMAIL UPDATES

SIGN UP

Chris Ainsworth

Add to Friends | Report to Admin



PROFILE

Location: West Chester, OH

Why I support Barack Obama:
Because I believe that one person can make a difference. Not just a President, but each of us. I feel like Barack Obama is the only candidate that really cares about people, on either side of the Red and Blue fence. I believe that fear doesn't make us safer. I believe that we should all make things better than the way we found them.

Birth Date: October 19th

Issues: economic fairness / security; smart energy policy; public infrastructure / transportation; affordable health care; education

Registered to Vote: Yes

BLOG View Blog

MY PHOTOS FROM THE BARACK OBAMA RALLY IN CINCINNATI

By: [Chris Ainsworth](#) 11/03/08 @ 1:13am EST
Here are a few photos I took of the rally and my friends & family at the Barack Obama rally at Nippert Stadium in Cl...
[comments \(0\)](#)

GREAT "O" IPHONE WALLPAPER

By: [Chris Ainsworth](#) 02/24/08 @ 1:10am EST
I found some great Obama wallpaper to bling up your iPhone. Here's a link: Obama '08 iPhone Wallpaper I just p...
[comments \(1\)](#) last on 02/26/08 @ 4:44pm EST

PLANTING OUR FLAG

By: [Chris Ainsworth](#) 02/24/08 @ 12:38am EST
Well, at least one house in Republican-stawart West Chester, Ohio is showing its Obama-pride in advance of the March 4th...
[comments \(1\)](#) last on 02/24/08 @ 12:42am EST

MAKING A DIFFERENCE What's This?

1

/ 10

Activity Index Details


ACTIVITIES All 7 Days 30 Days


Events Hosted	0
Events Attended	0
Calls made	0
Doors Knocked	0
Number of blog posts	3
Donors to your personal fundraising	0
Amount raised	\$0.00
Groups Joined	4


NETWORK Add to Friends


Your Relationship to this person: No relationship
You are not permitted to message this user.
[Add Chris Ainsworth to your friends network](#)

CHRIS AINSWORTH HAS 8 FRIEND(S)!

 [Bryan](#)

 [Catherine Hardin](#)

 [Flyeroo](#)

 [Jen In West Chester](#)

My Home

Community

- [My Neighborhood](#)
- [My Groups](#)
- [My Friends](#)
- [Find Friends](#)

Events

- [Find Events](#)
- [Host an Event](#)
- [Manage my Events](#)

Contact voters

Fundraising

Messages

Blog


- [View All Blogs](#)
- [Search All Blogs](#)

Action Center

Resources

[Learn](#) [Issues](#) [Media](#) [News](#) [Blog](#) [Action](#) [States](#) [Store](#) [Donate](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Contact us](#)

PAID FOR BY ORGANIZING FOR AMERICA,
A PROJECT OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL
COMMITTEE -- 430 SOUTH CAPITOL STREET SE,
WASHINGTON, D.C., 20003. THIS COMMUNICATION
IS NOT AUTHORIZED BY ANY CANDIDATE OR
CANDIDATE'S COMMITTEE.



POWERED by HOPE
AND SUPPORTERS LIKE YOU

Figure 2: MyBO profile

E-mail: Writing humans instead of an anonymous administrator

E-Mailing lists are nothing new and especially nothing that could be called Web 2.0. Although often denounced as “old school” and not successful in online marketing, the Obama campaign used E-Mails as one of their important parts in

communicating their point of view. By the end of the run for presidency the Obama e-mailing list included 13 million addresses. Again, it is not about the technology itself, but about how the Obama campaign utilized e-mails: Instead of sending advertisement letters, users and supporters received personal e-mails, of which more than one billion were sent. Starting at the despatcher, the mails were not sent from administrator@barackobama.com or info@barackobama.com but from barrack@barackobama.com. Occasionally, the e-mails were sent by campaign manager David Plouffeor – but always as personal letters, from one human being to another. Also, the mails were an information-rich update on the course of action or progress of the campaign – a call for donations was only included on the end of the mail. Although one might think that the call for donations was “hidden” in that way, the Obama campaign received remarkable amounts of donations. Ultimately, the biggest difference between the classic way political e-mails were sent and the way the Obama campaign used e-mails lies in the philosophy: Personalization, intimacy and effective use of the “we-feeling” made the very cost-effective way of advertising successful. The reason is obvious: A small and decent positioned call is more effective than a big and aggressive call that is not read at all.

iPhone-Application: Harnessing the power of „Mobile Web 2.0“

The Apple iPhone is one of the most powerful mobile devices available today and was officially announced in January 2007. Since launch, the mobile phone received enormous amounts of positive media coverage, leading essentially to a hype. Third party developers were not initially allowed to develop mobile applications actually running on the device itself – instead, Apple asked developers to write AJAX-based web-applications. Enormous pressure from the developer community and multiple successful attempts to remove the limitations resulted in an official software development kit, which was made available²⁰ on March 6th, 2008.

The official Obama-iPhone-Application was launched on October 2nd, 2008. The official description asked volunteers and supporters to take action:

²⁰ Rieseberg, F. (March 6th 2008). *iPhone SDK und Funktionen für Unternehmen*. Retrieved from Apfeltalk: <http://www.apfeltalk.de/forum/iphone-sdk-funktionen-t131948.html> on March 20th, 2009.

Obama '08 is your official, comprehensive connection to the heart of Barack Obama and Joe Biden's campaign, giving you the tools you need to make an impact and stay in the know.

Making a difference takes only moments using the Call a Friend feature. Want to do more? Find your local Obama for America HQ or look up local campaign events.

You'll have instant access to Barack's positions on important issues, as well as local and national campaign news as it happens. Photos and videos from the campaign trail are all here, too.²¹



Figure 3: Obama '08 iPhone application

Again, the iPhone application was just a useful tool to empower volunteers and supporters to mobilize and organize each other. The users were not only able to receive news about the campaign or information from the campaign management on the go, but also to *do* actual campaigning: Contacts on the phone were reorganized and prioritized by key battleground states. Using the integrated GPS-chip, the application automatically received information about campaigning events nearby and organized them by proximity.

Recent YouTube videos and pictures were just one click away as well as comprehensive information about certain issues.

YouTube: FDR's fireside chats 2.0

Spoken generally, YouTube is nothing new to politics. Every politician participating in the 2008 race for presidency used YouTube to express own

²¹ America for Barack Obama. (no date). *Obama '08: The Official iPhone Application*. Retrieved from myBO: <http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/iphone> on March 20th, 2009.

viewpoints. On the official Obama YouTube channel, visitors were able to watch speeches, events, and TV ads. Over the time of the presidential race there were more than 1800 videos posted, being watched over 110 million times. Arun Chaudhary, director of field video production for the Obama campaign, attributed the success of the YouTube channel to the Obama campaign management, who took online video “serious from the start”²². In the campaign 50 people were responsible for shooting, editing and posting video content – in one case, staff was able to upload a video only 19 minutes after shooting²³.



Figure 4: Obama YouTube channel

YouTube is not only very useful because of its popularity, but also because of its application programming interface, which allows webmasters and users of numerous online services easy integration of single videos. Using few lines of simple HTML-Code, people could easily integrate official Obama ads or speeches on their own blog or website. It is to note that there is a big difference between broadcasting video content on television and uploading videos to online services

²² Learmonth, M. (July 27th, 2008). *Obama's Video Guru Speaks: How We Owned The YouTube Primary*. Retrieved from Business Insider: Silicon Alley Insider: <http://www.businessinsider.com/2008/7/obama-s-video-guru-speaks-how-we-owned-the-youtube-primary> on March 20th, 2009.

²³ Ibid.

like YouTube: If a user watches a video online, he is actively requesting the content – in contrary to television, where the ad is pushed on him.

User generated YouTube content

In the spirit of the whole campaign, which constantly asked people to participate, YouTube was also a huge platform for people to create own videos. Some of those videos got viral and were spread using multiple online services throughout the web, being essentially free advertising for the Obama campaign.

One example is a music video called “Yes we can”, created and promoted by famous musician “will.I.am” and director Jesse Dylan. The video used existing motion picture footage, which was available by the Obama campaign through YouTube and combined it with new music. The resulting video was viewed more than 1,400,000 times and received more than 7,000 comments²⁴.

Use of Web 2.0 philosophy and technology for offline campaigning

Talking about an efficient use of Web 2.0 in modern campaigning, the main focus is upon using Web 2.0 to campaign within the web. The Obama campaign took the new concepts one step further and used Web 2.0 to organize, train and educate volunteers for offline campaigning. It was Howard Dean to be the first politician using a service called “Meetup.com” to organize meetings and donation collection²⁵. One of the most important tools for organizing offline activities within the Obama campaign was “Central Desktop”, a collaboration tool for business teams. The on-demand collaboration platform offers tools to fulfil scalable communication and organizing needs, structured in a way that is very similar to the way wikis are organized. One of the noteworthy features of “Central Desktop” is a scalable permissions model, which allows permissions on variable levels. This feature ensured that spamming did not become a problem as big as in public wikis with an open-editing policy.

²⁴ YouTube, LLC. (no date). *YES WE CAN - Music Video Barack Obama*. Retrieved from YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yq0tMYPDJQ> on March 20th, 2009.

²⁵ Wolf, G. (January 2004). How the Internet Invented Howard Dean. *WIRED Magazine* (12.01).

Central Desktop was first used in California, where the Obama campaign faced a difficult situation. Usually, the diverse state was campaigned using direct mail and TV advertisements. Nobody since Bobby Kennedy tried campaigning in California with a grassroots field operation, but the Obama campaign decided to set up virtual Central Desktop-workplaces for selected volunteers in order to manage internal organization. According to Central Desktop CEO Isaac Garcia, the virtual workplaces were made available to more volunteers during the campaign and organized a total number of 6,000 precinct captain volunteers²⁶.

The “MyPrecinct” called public virtual workplaces could be used to organize task assignments, calendaring, documents as well as key information. All of this information could be used in a collaborative way and allowed a decentralized way of operating the whole campaign in California. This is again a representation of one of the most important themes of Web 2.0: The volunteers were able and allowed to participate, reducing the necessity of head-to-body organisation by central campaign management. Volunteers could be educated online and assigned specific jobs, the wiki-organized information management allowed rapid deployment of new information. Although Obama was not able to win in California, he gained a significant number of delegates. Because of the success of the tool in California, the Obama campaign management decided to use the tool also in Texas, where it was again proved as useful. Mike Chapman, one of the volunteers, draws a conclusion:

I've been involved in and with political campaigns my whole adult life and you are absolutely right about how effective the Obama online campaign was. There were some occasions where the system slowed down due to high volume of use, but the site was interactive; the campaign made modifications in response to our input as we went. It was extremely effective in allowing for precinct captains and other volunteers to work out of their own homes or offices and be constantly connected to each other and the campaign. The time saved from going to the headquarters alone was tremendous. At my own precinct caucus, where Obama easily defeated Clinton, many, many people came up to me and told me they appreciated the personal touch of someone from the neighbourhood calling them, another advantage of the Obama and Central Desktop operation.²⁷

²⁶ Ives, B. (March 5th, 2008). *How Obama is Using Web (and Enterprise) 2.0 in the US Primary Campaign*. Retrieved from FASTforward Conference Blog: <http://www.fastforwardblog.com/2008/03/05/how-obama-is-using-web-and-enterprise-20-in-the-us-primary-campaign/> on March 22th, 2009.

²⁷ Ibid.

Social Media: MySpace, Facebook, Twitter

Social Networks have taken over the web: for the first time in history, pornography does not consume most of the overall internet traffic²⁸. Social networks are the “archetype” of social media – without users creating profiles, uploading media and interconnecting with each other, most of the social networks would be nothing more than one boring site with a login-box and a button to register. The biggest social networks are Facebook (revenue: ~300 million US-Dollar²⁹; more than 175 million users³⁰) and MySpace (revenue: ~800 million US-Dollar³¹; user data not disclosed and no recent or reliable approximation available).

Facebook

The Obama campaign created profiles for Barack Obama on both networks as well as for Michelle Obama and Joe Biden, allowing people to express their support by becoming “friends” with Barack Obama. One could read personal information like his favourite books, movies or music about him, see his pictures, read his notes or leave him a personal message. Again, the presence of Barack Obama on those networks was aimed at creating a close and intimate connection between him and his supporters. It is very important to note that a representative of the campaign personally answered some comments and questions from other Facebook-users (figure 5). It is important to actively “use” the profile in order to maintain authenticity – a “dead” profile is worse than no profile. The combination of personal information and a direct and amicable approach towards the public resulted in Barack Obama being seen as a friend – on August 13th, 2008, Barack

²⁸ Goldsmith, B. (September 18th, 2008). *Porn passed over as Web users become social: author*. Retrieved from Reuters:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/internetNews/idUSSP31943720080916?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=1&sp=true> on March 20th, 2009.

²⁹ Bertoni, S., & Gell, E. (November 16th, 2008). *FORBES*. Retrieved from By The Numbers: Billionaire Bachelors: http://www.forbes.com/2008/09/16/billionaire-bachelors-single-lists-cx_mm_0916bachelor_slide_11.html?thisSpeed=30000 on March, 21th 2009.

³⁰ Facebook. (no date). *Facebook Statistics*. Retrieved from Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics> on March, 21th 2009.

³¹ MySpace does not disclose revenue or profit separately from News Corporation. Dignan, L. (August 7th, 2007). *Fox Interactive turns annual profit; MySpace revenue to top \$800 million in fiscal 2008*. Retrieved from ZdNet: <http://blogs.zdnet.com/BTL/?p=5899> on March 21th, 2009.

Obama had 1,3 million Facebook supporters³². Bloggers commented his favourite movies, the press created semi-professional analyses, enlarging his public presence a little bit more.



Barack Obama Inderraj, Mary, and Walmen, we're glad to have your support.

Aaron, thanks for the suggestion.

Margaret, so glad you like the Senator's writing.

Effie, Laura, and Nikki, please continue checking back at the Issues tab on our homepage, www.barackobama.com, or use the Answer Center under the Contact Us link to find the answers to your questions.

Thomas, unfortunately I only help the Senator respond to the messages received on his profile each day and cannot offer direct responses from him to your questions. If you visit our website's Issues section, you will find the Senator's stance on some of the most pressing current issues and events. Thanks for reaching out!

-Lindsay @ Obama HQ


30 May 2007 at 14:33 · Report

Figure 5: Obama campaign responding to comments and questions

MySpace

TURN THE PAGE
ON YOUR WEBSITE

ANIMATED
CORNER:



EMBED ON A DARK BACKGROUND:

```
src="http://www.barackobama.com/images/myspace/obama_corner_blank.gif" border="0" width="33px" height="33px" /></div></a></div>
```

EMBED ON A LIGHT BACKGROUND:

```
<div style="position:absolute; top:0px; right:0px; width:123px; height:123px; display: block; margin:0; padding:0; z-index:0;"><a href="http://www.msplinks.com/MDFodHRwOi8vbXku"
```

Figure 6: Ready-written code

His MySpace profile was very much the same as the Facebook profile, although it's interesting to see the numbers, which are disclosed on MySpace: For instance, Barack Obama received impressive 141.693 comments and questions on his MySpace profile. One instrument used on MySpace only is the offering of tools for placing advertising for the Obama campaign on your own profile. On MySpace, users are able to personalize their profile. The Obama campaign utilized this fact and offered buttons and badges completely with ready-

written code to integrate Obama-ads in an easy way (figure 6).

³² Condon, S. (August 13th, 2008). *Barack Obama dominates Twitter*. Retrieved from CNet: http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-10016399-93.html on March 22th, 2009

Twitter

Twitter is the big „newcomer“ in Web 2.0, although the service can already enjoy great popularity. Although twitter is seen as a social network, it is more a micro-blogging service, allowing people to write short messages, which are passed on to friends – essentially being social instant messaging. The written “tweets” may only be 140 characters short and are automatically delivered to people who have signed up to receive them.

The official Barack Obama Twitter account was used to get short messages and appeals out to volunteers and supporters. A short list of example messages:

*Asking you to help Get Out the Vote in these last few critical hours of our campaign for change. Visit <http://my.barackobama.com/finaldrive>
2:42 PM Nov 4th, 2008 from web³³*

*Delivered my closing argument earlier today in Canton, Ohio. Watch the full speech at <http://tinyurl.com/67pymg>
7:57 PM Oct 27th, 2008 from web³⁴*

Again, the numbers are impressive: In August, Barack Obama had more than 56,000 followers and more than 59,000 friends³⁵.

A word on donations and budget

All of the described tools were used to ask for donations. Seen in retrospective, it is easy to say that online donations matter: Three million donors made a total of 6,5 million donations, adding up to a total donated sum of over \$500 million. 92% percent of all donations made online were in increments of 100\$ or less, the average donation was \$80. The average Obama donor gave more than once.

The use of Web 2.0 tools then allowed Obama to dominate the traditional media: No other campaign spent more money on traditional advertising³⁶.

³³ Obama campaign. (no date). *(BarackObama) on Twitter*. Retrieved from Twitter: <http://twitter.com/BarackObama> on March 22th, 2009.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Condon, S. (13th. August 2008). *Barack Obama dominates Twitter*. Retrieved CNet: http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-10016399-93.html on March 22th, 2009.

³⁶ Numbers presented by John Della Volpe in Munich on March 30th, 2009.

Conclusion

„I was never the likeliest candidate for this office. We didn't start with much money or many endorsements. Our campaign was not hatched in the halls of Washington.“³⁷ The Obama campaign is an impressive example for excellent use of social media and Web 2.0 to mobilize and activate potential supporters and existing volunteers. The Obama campaign used the same tools used by many other politicians today, but few other understood how to actually use them. It was bold to not use the safe haven of carefully written PR-messages but to use the given technology as intended by the respective inventors: In dialogue with the people, treating them and their points of view with respect and being efficient in delivering the own message.

Many European politicians have realized that they should step into Web 2.0 in order to promote their own cause, but it will most likely take some time until major European and German politicians realize how actually to use them. The decisive difference between the use of Web 2.0 by the Obama campaign and the use by (for example) the German federal government lies in the philosophy, strategy and understanding of those tools. The older approaches by classic PR are definitely not obsolete but simply do not fit media channels like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube or Twitter – it is the challenge of today's political campaigning to understand and use this difference for one's own ends.

³⁷ Cable News Network. (no date). *Transcript: 'This is your victory,' says Obama*. Retrieved from CNN Politics: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/04/obama.transcript/> on March 22th, 2009.

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