

AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL EXCHANGE COUNCIL REPORT

Individual study tour to the United States of America

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Australian Greens
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a record of my individual study tour to the United States of America from early October to early November 2012. It captures some of my key learnings from observing and participating in campaigns to mobilise and organise people during this critical election period.

Purpose of study

This study focuses on how campaigning organisations effectively mobilise and organise their supporters during and between elections in the United States. I looked at how field and digital operations are being integrated and deployed and offer lessons that may further inform electoral campaigning in Australia. I sought out practical mechanisms for mobilising and activating supporter bases, organising models for coordinating across electorates and neighbourhoods and using online organising tools and new media. This study is based on the assumption that effective organising builds electoral power which results in tangible policy outcomes.

Itinerary Overview

This study to the East Coast of the United States from early October to early November 2012 involved three key elements:

- hands-on experience with an active electoral campaign – Organising for America;
- immersion in an organisation supporting electoral campaigns – New Organizing Institute; and
- a series of meetings with over 25 individuals from 11 campaigning organisations doing digital mobilisation or community organising. These include MoveOn, Purpose, All Out, Sum of Us, Access Now, Make the Road, Greenpeace and Planned Parenthood. These meetings were impeded by the impacts of Hurricane Sandy in the latter part of my trip.

Lessons for mobilising to win

The lessons drawn from this study cannot be accurately captured in this report, they will evolve as they are applied to the Australian context. Here are seven principles that act as a starting point for further research, discussion and application:

1. Identify your win number and target voters
2. Know your story
3. Share the strategy
4. Invest in people
5. Prioritise voter contact tactics
6. Integrate effective digital
7. Manage your data.

Reflecting on the election result, it's clear that community organising has a lot to offer electoral campaigning. It's by no means the same thing but there are significant opportunities to apply some of the key principles to connect people to the political process in Australia and engage community in actively deciding who their elected representatives will be.

I'd like to thank the Australian Political Exchange Council for the opportunity to represent the Australian Greens and I hope this report will be useful to our members, supporters and the political community more broadly.



ITINERARY OVERVIEW

This study tour to the East Coast of the United States from early October to early November 2012 involved three key elements – hands-on experience with an active electoral campaign, immersion in an organisation supporting electoral campaigns and a series of meetings with campaigning organisations doing digital mobilisation or community organising.

- Organising for America (OFA)
OfA is President Obama's re-election campaign. I was based in Norfolk, Virginia – a key battleground state – working alongside Field Organisers for the final two weeks of the election campaign focused on direct voter contact.
- New Organising Institute (NOI)
NOI is a community of organisers offering training to build and manage effective movements by integrating community organising, digital strategy, and data-driven decision-making. I was based in Washington DC working alongside Community Engagement staff preparing for Roots Camp 2012.
- Meetings with over 25 individuals from 11 organisations:¹

KEY CONTACTS SUMMARY

This section details the three most influential contacts:

- Marshall Ganz;
- New Organizing Institute; and
- Organizing for America and provides brief descriptions of the other organisations I met with.

Professor Marshall Ganz

Professor Ganz is a long-time organizer; a Lecturer in Public Policy at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; and a principal of Harvard's Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations. Marshall is cited as leading the development of Obama's successful field organising model in 2008 and applying community organising to electoral organising.

Community Organising starts with a constituency. Who are the people? What are the challenges they face? How can they use the resources available to them to address those challenges?

Electoral Organising is different but over time involves the same questions. To organise constituencies, we need to understand how to target, motivate and reach out to the people who support our shared goals and find ways to motivate them, support them to take responsibility and secure their commitment to achieving our shared goals.

Ganz believes that this requires a shift from marketer to organiser. The organiser must identify who they are organising by segmenting target voter groups and developing strategies for overcoming the barriers to them voting for you. In the US this involves different challenges compared with Australia, in particular the fact that voting is optional. The upside is that there is more detailed voter information available to target the right people including people's voting history (which party and how regularly), key demographics and contact information.

Once voter targets have been identified these can be translated into vote goals (win numbers) and given to organisers, volunteers and supporters to take responsibility for achieving. By developing shared ownership you can build greater commitment. This is flipping the priority – it's not about

¹ Further meetings were impeded due to Hurricane Sandy hitting the East Coast during the latter part of my trip.

tactics and metrics – how many stalls, flyers, events, it's about votes ... that's what wins you campaigns. Moving from a tactics-led one-way communication to a constituency engagement and direct voter contact campaign.

Organizing for America and the New Organizing Institute are two key organisations inspired by and implementing Ganz's philosophy.

New Organizing Institute

The New Organizing Institute (NOI) is a community of organizers. NOI believes that if people have the skills to engage others, the tools to build powerful campaigns, and a community of practice to help them learn and grow, they can win real change, make measurable improvements in people's lives, and restore faith in government and our democracy.



NOI supports and trains organisers to do 'engagement organising' -- building and managing effective movements by integrating tried-and-true community organizing, cutting-edge digital strategy, and data-driven decision making. NOI's projects are varied but with a strong focus on creating resources to support progressives to run effective election and issue campaigns.

NOI's agenda is informed by research they conducted on voter registration. It shows how American voters are changing from majority white men (about 70%) to what will be a majority of young mostly women and people of colour by 2018. NOI prioritises working with this 'emerging majority' – young people, women and people of colour including Latino and African American communities.

NOI works with partners to identify campaign issues. Many of these connections come through their open fee-paying activist trainings on various topics ranging from Organising and Leadership, Online Organising, Campaign Management and Data Management. Once they've got a campaign that fits with their agenda, they offer 360° support because they believe that only 20% of organiser learning happens at a workshop and 80% happens in the field. 360° support involves training the group, mentoring leaders and organisers, offering direct support on campaign strategy and direct organisational development.

Reinforcing Marshall's philosophy, NOI believes you win electoral campaigns by identifying your win number, directly engaging with targeted voters, managing your data, and training your activists. NOI uses issue campaigns to build electoral power and civic engagement capacity.

I worked on RootsCamp with Jamie (right) which brings activists together after elections to debrief, learn from each other and work out what's next. Interestingly they organise a jobs fair with key NGOs to help redirect organisers and campaigners post-elections. RootsCamp is organised to keep people in the game, build movement and avoid a slump in momentum – a critical challenge to be addressed by political parties in Australia including ours.



Organizing for America

Organizing for America (OfA) is the community organising project that picked up where President Obama's 2008 election campaigning efforts left off. The Democratic National Committee was keen to maintain the momentum, capacity and infrastructure built in 2008 to support the new President's political agenda. Organising to build support around healthcare reform for example.

The experiment seems to have worked to greater and lesser degrees across the country and this study didn't collect the evidence to make a call either way but it was clear that the OfA project found it difficult to maintain momentum between elections. Some argued that it was a problem that the Party took it on because it held the reins too tight and didn't provide people with the kind of freedom that effective organising needs for constituencies to work on their own challenges mobilising the resources they have. It's not surprise that the energy and hype and the real volunteers on the ground that was built during 2008 was a hard act to follow for any campaign.



Obama's 2008 campaign was the manifestation of Ganz's philosophy and some I talked with question the theory in practice but for the most part people are convinced it works and a wholesale invested in making it work in 2012 (with some reflexive improvements). The striking noticing is that numerous activists I spoke with or heard about cut their political teeth in 2008 and are applying what they've learned in countless other organisations – testament to the success and value of the model.



OfA invests in people. They believe that a solid and effective field operations wins campaigns. Their motto: Respect. Empower. Include. Win. And there's no doubt that talk is being put into action. The campaign is structured around a neighbourhood team, which are managed by paid field organisers. They develop a sense of commitment to winning by constructing a decentralised network of organisers who are given responsibility for meeting set goals using a distributed set of direct contact tactics in a phased and targeted voter persuasion, registration and turn-out campaign.

The campaigns start by identifying supporters and targeted voters, developing relationships through one-on-one meetings, escalating volunteer involvement and intensive direct engagement tactics, mainly house meetings, doorknocking and phone banking. Targeted media buy, direct mail and printed materials back this up but the focus is on meaningful conversations – so much so that the Obama crew no longer support the distribution of yard signs: 'yard signs don't vote, people do'.

The direct engagement work is lead by community and also organised key constituencies: African Americans, Latinos, Women, Young people, LGBTIQ, veterans and faith-based communities. It's premised on the fact that people trust their networks and people like them most, so the more community 'validators' you have the better. These people can then be mobilised to send letters to their neighbourhoods or constituencies or host house meetings to build support.



Leadership is an important aspect of the OfA model – leaders need to be solid, be prepared to do what they're asking their teams to do, show that they're trustworthy, committed and there to support their teams. They invest in training people – 'trained volunteers are confident volunteers are successful volunteers are repeat volunteers.' The whole campaign is built on social capital and rigorous numbers. OfA values data, knowing their targets and having specific goals for organisers and their teams to reach them – how many doors

knocked, how many conversations had, how many voters persuaded, and they manage data intensively: 'if it's not in the database, it doesn't exist.'

Purpose

Purpose builds movements to harness the energy and power of their supporters as citizens and consumers to help solve the world's biggest challenges. They develop and launch their own social and consumer campaigns using their model of movement entrepreneurship, and work with organizations and progressive companies to help them mobilize large-scale action.



Purpose grew from experiments in mass digital participation including Avaaz and GetUp! Purpose believes technology is unlocking new forms of political participation and social engagement. While the challenges of clicktivism endure, Purpose is pioneering new ways of engaging people. Their movements deploy huge numbers of people, online and on the ground, to influence the political process. At the same time, they are working to create the consumer demand and behavioural shifts required to bring about the kind of change that politics alone cannot. For example, Purpose has helped to create new efforts to fight cancer, eliminate nuclear weapons and change food culture and they recently launched All Out (see below). Other examples of their work include working with the Civil Liberties Union to boost their campaigning capacity, campaigning on electoral donations reform 'Represent Us' (pictured) and an initiative to increase the demand for solar technology.

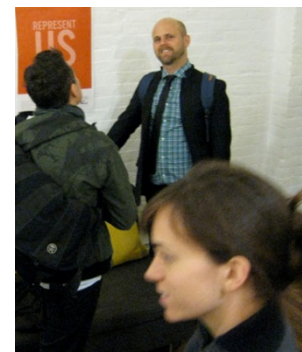
Access Now

Access Now is a new global movement for digital freedom (lead by Executive Director, Brett Solomon, below right). Access believes that political participation and the realisation of human rights are increasingly dependent on access to the internet and other forms of technology. Access works with digital activists and civil society groups internationally to build their technical capacity and to help them advocate globally for their digital rights. Access provides leadership and practical policy recommendations in the broader field of internet freedom, and based on that expertise mobilises its global movement to campaign for an open internet accessible to all.

Access sees itself as departing from the tried and true online organising platform in two key ways – it's has its own policy development capacity and it works on internet technology – ensuring accessibility and security for partners and activists through technological developments. Examples of Access' campaigns include protecting internet censorship anonymity, against the Philippines' Cybercrime Prevention Act which could lead to social media users being jailed for twelve years for liking or re-tweeting something that doesn't fit the rules, and participating in the World Conference on International Telecommunications defining the future of the internet.

All Out

All Out is a new organization (the team below) building a global movement for LGBT equality. All Out organize online and on the ground to build a world where every person can live freely and be embraced for who they are. Gay, lesbian, bi, transgender or straight. All Out partner with individuals and organisations across the world to amplify personal or particular stories and win campaigns that lead to greater equality for all. All Out leverage the political space available to queers in more 'privileged countries' and use it to help those fighting oppression where there is less freedom and equality. All Out's campaigns are mostly online with strategic media and field components where it makes sense. Examples of All Out's work include a campaign on MTV to disassociate their network with a homophobic and misogynist blogger, joining the fight against the 'gay gag rule' in the Ukraine, and



campaigning to free Roger Jean-Claude Mbédé, who was jailed for sending a 'gay' text message, and to place a moratorium on Cameroon's discriminatory anti-gay laws.



Sum Of Us

Sum Of Us is a global movement of consumers, investors, and workers all around the world, standing together to hold corporations accountable for their actions and forge a new, sustainable and just path for our global economy. Established in 2011, Sum of Us has over 775,000 members worldwide and works on corporate focused campaigns mostly in partnership with other campaigning organisations, particularly those who don't have global or mass online reach. At this point they only work online, using single actions. They recently joined the successful campaign against voter intimidation billboards aimed at discouraging poor people of colour from voting. The billboards were then replaced with advertisements encouraging voter turn out.

Make the Road



Make the Road New York builds the power of Latino and working class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. Make the Road has a strong organising focus and aims to mobilise its 11,000 members to make change in their own lives and that of their communities. Make the Road offers a huge range of services to members (only) including legal help with employment, housing, immigration, healthcare and public benefit issues, literacy education and job support. To access most services, members are required to stay active by attending a couple of meetings or joining campaign or neighbourhood committees. Campaigns include: workers rights, housing, immigration, education and LGBT issues. Make the Road also run a non-partisan voter education project registering voters and educating them on how the system works.

Greenpeace

Greenpeace is the largest independent direct-action environmental organization in the world. Many readers will be familiar with their work. My conversations with Greenpeace digital strategists focused on their experiment to integrate online and offline efforts to mobilise a network of supporters against coal expansion. Coal mining and burning is not on the political agenda in the way it has been in Australia and the group has struggled to mobilise an effective presence on the ground in many communities but with this experience comes solid learning. The key one here has been to ensure that field organisers are also digital savvy and vice versa – if you want to integrate online and on the ground you need to make sure one appreciates the value of the other.

Planned Parenthood

Planned Parenthood is America's leading women's health organisation and is involved in significant campaigning work. Planned Parenthood offer health care provision, education, advocacy and partner with smaller organisations to do the same. Planned Parenthood delivers reproductive health care, sex education, and information to millions of women, men, and young people worldwide. Planned Parenthood run grassroots political engagement campaigns (lead by Tara Gibson in Virginia, right) based on the OfA model to ensure women are informed about their political choices and vote for who they believe represents them best.



Move On

Move On is a family of organisations that aim to give Americans a voice in the political process without big money and armies of lobbyists. MoveOn works online and in the field. During the election campaign they involved their members in turning out votes, fighting voter suppression and innovative communications campaigns. MoveOn's campaigns are driven by their members. Lessons from MoveOn have been incorporated my findings and resource links.



LESSONS FOR MOBILISING TO WIN

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