

# Joseph Napolitan's Greatest Hints

The Top 100: In this first of two articles, the dean of political consultants offers 34 tidbits of hard-won general campaign advice and 8 rules for candidates. Next issue: 33 for consultants and 25 for campaign managers.

By Joseph Napolitan

**1** Strategy is the single most important factor in a political campaign. This is the most important lesson I have learned in 30 years. The right strategy can survive a mediocre campaign, but even a brilliant campaign is likely to fall if the strategy is wrong. The strategy must be adapted to fit the campaign; you cannot adapt the campaign to fit the strategy. Also, this small but essential point: If you cannot write it down,

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you do not have a strategy.

**2** There is no such thing as a bandwagon effect. For years, in countries all over the world, including the United States, campaign workers have told me, "People here like to be with a winner; they will vote for the candidate they think will win." Thereupon they proceed to release to the press poll reports showing their candidate ahead in the misguided expectation that this information will cause voters to line up behind their candidate.

If anything, I have found the reverse to be true: The supporters whose candidate is perceived as behind are motivated to work harder, while those of the candidate seen to be ahead tend to become overconfident and lazy.

Perhaps the most glaring example of

this occurred in Venezuela in 1978, where the candidate of Acción Democrática, Luis Piñerua Ordáz, ran double-page newspaper ads for two weeks before the election with banner headlines reading: "THE ELECTION IS OVER. PINERUA HAS WON!"

Well, for Piñerua the election was over: He lost. But the most interesting statistic was this: The turnout in that election was 5 percent lower than in the 1973 election, and the drop was greatest in areas of normal AD strength. Apparently Adecos believed their leader, so they stayed home. A costly lesson.

**3** Polls are essential, but do not be fooled by them. The only practical reason to take a political poll is to obtain information that will help you win the election. If the poll will not do

that, you are better off spending your money elsewhere. Perhaps the *least* important information in a political poll is who is ahead at any given moment.

Polls are not infallible, especially in primaries, or when they are taken before the *campaign* actually begins. I will not run a campaign without adequate polling—but neither will I place total dependence on the polls. Nor will I make my polls public unless there is an unusual and extremely good reason for doing so.

**4** **Never underestimate the importance of a divided party.** I recently worked on the presidential election in the Dominican Republic for Jacobo Majluta, president of the Senate and candidate of the PRD, the same party as the president, who was not seeking reelection. The party was badly split by a primary struggle in which Majluta defeated José Francisco Peña Gomez, mayor of Santo Domingo, friend and confidant of President Salvador Jorge Blanco.

After a shaky start, Majluta's campaign moved along nicely. I was confident we would win, but I was astonished when we lost to 78-year-old, legally blind Joaquín Balaguér. Our exit polls showed Majluta with 51 per cent of the vote; reportedly Balaguér's exit polls also showed Majluta with 51 per cent of the vote (this was a three-way race). In the end, we lost by a couple of points. Later we learned that the intraparty rift was so fierce that President Jorge Blanco himself voted against his own party's candidate for president, and many Peña Gomez supporters actively worked for Balaguér, the main opposition candidate.

Our surveys did not detect this phenomenon. We underestimated the damage caused by divisions in the party. And it cost us dearly.

**5** **Timing is critical.** Using an issue too early—or too late—can nullify its impact. For a candidate who is not well known, an early media campaign might be essential. For a well-known candidate, early media might be wasteful.

If your opponent makes an easily refutable charge, sometimes it is better to let him repeat it several times, so that he will look silly when you counterattack. But sometimes it is essential to answer the charge immediately. It is difficult to teach timing. Much of it is instinctive. And in this era of computerized campaigns, it is nice to know that human judgment still plays a critical role in the campaign.

**6** **If something works, keep using it until it stops working.** I have been involved in several campaigns in

which our opponents ran television spots we knew were hurting us, and then they inexplicably pulled them off the air. After one of these campaigns, I asked a consultant to the opponent why this was done. He said they felt the spot had served its purpose, and they wanted to come on the air with new material.

New is not necessarily better. Or, as they say, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

**7** **Make sure the message is clear and understandable.** Part of an overall strategy involves defining the right message or messages to be communicated to specific target groups, or the electorate as a whole. Whatever the message is, it should be clear and easily understood by everyone. The classic example is Ronald Reagan's message in the 1980 presidential campaign: "I will make America strong and lower taxes." Nothing could be clearer—or more effective.

If Jimmy Carter had a message in that campaign, no one has yet figured it out.

**8** **Never underestimate the intelligence of the voters, nor overestimate the amount of knowledge at their disposal.**

The electorate is not stupid. But often it does not have sufficient information at its disposal to make right (that is, favorable to your candidate) decisions. It is not their responsibility to go out and find this information; it is your responsibility to serve it up to them, on a silver platter if necessary.

If, at the end of a campaign, the voters still do not understand what your candidate is trying to tell them, it is the candidate's fault—not the voters'. No longer am I surprised at the sophistication shown by the voters in response to survey research questions, but I occasionally still am astonished by the lack of sophistication on the part of the candidate, and often that of his staff.

**9** **Negative attacks are better handled by third parties in paid media.** This is not the place to discuss the merits or demerits, the morality or immorality, of negative attacks on an opponent. Personally, I follow a simple rule: The candidate's public record is fair game for attack, his private life is not.

But negative attacks are a fact of political life, and if you are going to use them, you might as well use them as effectively as you can. I prefer *never* to have my candidate attack his opponent in paid television or radio spots; I prefer always to have my candidate emerge as the "nice guy" on television.

When you feel an attack is justified, then let the negative message be carried by an announcer, or the copy in a print ad, or by someone other than the candidate.

**10** **Do not underestimate the power and penetration of radio.** I have been signing this song for a long time, but some people do not want to tune in. Granted, television is the most emotional and persuasive of all the media—but radio is a close second and has several advantages over television: It is less expensive to produce; it can be produced quickly; it can be targeted more effectively than television; and it costs less to put on the air.

To me, one of the worst—and laziest—things you can do in a campaign is run the sound track of a television spot as a radio spot. This is as bad as running the same copy in a television ad and a print ad. They are different mediums. I have seen candidates spend \$150,000 or more on television production in a campaign and then scream bloody murder when asked to approve a \$25,000 budget for radio production.

Actually, there are more good television producers around than good radio producers, but just because someone can produce a decent television spot does not automatically mean he can produce effective radio. And they prove it all the time.

**11** **Do not underestimate the impact of an unpopular national administration.** This is another one of those hidden obstacles, like trying to measure the impact of a divided party. I also believe this phenomenon is most important during presidential elections. Assuming the merits of the candidates are about equal, if you represent the party of an unpopular administration, you probably will lose. This is a condition to factor into your equation when you are trying to determine the attitudes of voters.

**12** **Perception is more important than reality.** You do not have to be in this business very long before you learn this fact. If the voters think Candidate X is an honest man, he can steal the gold leaf off the statehouse dome and get away with it; if they think Candidate B is a crook, he can have four cardinals and 16 bishops attest to his honesty, and people will still think he is a crook.

The best living example of this (and maybe the best in all of history) is Ronald Reagan: He has American voters (a majority of them anyway) convinced he is protecting their money with a tight fist, while in reality the deficits his government has incurred are staggering almost beyond imagination.

And while Reagan is mortgaging the farm, he also is accusing Democrats of being the big spenders—and getting away with it. You take reality; I'll take

perception any day.

**13** Do not complicate the campaign. There are three simple steps to winning any campaign: (1) Decide what you are going to say. (2) Decide how you are going to say it. (3) Say it.

I have been in campaigns with so many committees, subcommittees, liaison committees, special-interest directors, colonels, captains, lieutenants and sublieutenants you have trouble finding directions to the men's room, never mind trying to receive a clear picture of what is going on.

Being a campaign manager or consultant in a major campaign is like being a professional football coach: You might know 1,000 different plays, but you can only use about 25 of them in any given game.

Campaign managers can waste money on many silly things—like expensive newsletters mailed mainly to supporters and campaign workers—only to wind up with insufficient funds to pay for an adequate media campaign. Everything should be as clear and uncomplicated as you can make it, from the table of organization to the graphics on the letterhead.

**14** Protect home base first. If you have a strong base of support, protect that first, then go after other votes. It also is easier to increase the percentage of your vote in a favorable environment than to find an equal number of votes in a hostile environment. Do not take your base for granted.

**15** Do not be afraid to invade opposition territory. This might seem to contradict the previous point, but read carefully: *First* you protect home base, *then* you invade opposition territory. I often run into candidates who will not speak before certain audiences because "they're all Republicans." (I'm sure Republican consultants run into the same problem with Republican candidates.)

I try to explain to my reluctant candidate why he *should* talk to those groups in very simple terms, something like this: "If you speak to 100 Democrats, and you have all their votes before you go in, all you can do, at best, is hold your own, and you might lose some. If you talk to 100 Republicans who start off being opposed to you, you can't lose any votes—and you just might gain some."

White candidates should go into black neighborhoods; black candidates should go into white neighborhoods; rich candidates should go into poor neighborhoods; city slickers should go down to the farm.

**16** What you say in Peoria can be heard in Pasadena. Candidates sometimes have a peculiarly anachronistic idea that once they are away from their home turf they can say things they would not say at home. My favorite example of this occurred way back in 1962, when I was doing Endicott Peabody's campaign for governor against the incumbent Republican governor of Massachusetts, John Volpe.

Governor Volpe, a competent man who later went on to serve in the Nixon cabinet, made a speech in Portland, Oregon, in which he said he was opposed to the Medicare program proposed by President Kennedy. Not surprisingly, we heard about it in Boston. This was only a few days before the election. I churned out an instant brochure with this message: "Governor Volpe is opposed to President Kennedy's Medicare program. Endicott Peabody is in favor of it."

**17** Try not to self-destruct. It is astonishing how often this simple rule is broken. Although I concede other factors were involved, I also am convinced that Walter Mondale lost whatever chance he might have had to win the U.S. presidency in 1984 in his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention when he announced that if he were elected he would raise taxes.

I cite Mondale only because the example is recent and glaring; candidates manage to shoot themselves in the foot with astonishing regularity.

**18** Do not let your opponent have a free ride. Although I am not a great proponent of the negative campaign, neither can I be considered a "turn the other cheek" consultant. Too often I see, or work for, candidates who refuse to answer an opponent's charges, refuse to refute reckless accusations made against them, or do not want to "dignify" the opponent by replying to his remarks.

If your candidate has a solid lead, and you are confident your campaign plan is so well designed it can compensate for these charges, or if you frequently research the opponent's charges and find they are having no impact at all, then maybe, *maybe*, you can get away with letting your opponent have a free ride. But I'd advise against doing so.

The candidate does not have to refute each and every charge personally, but the *campaign* should do so. Otherwise you run the risk that the unrefuted statement, often repeated, will be perceived as the truth, and then you can be in real trouble. Also, you never should underestimate the *cumulative* damage

such unanswered charges can cause.

**19** Endorsements are fine if you use them properly. Popularity is not easily transferable. If the most popular political figure in the district (or in the state or in the country) endorses your candidate, this does not necessarily mean all his voters are going to vote for your candidate.

Used carefully and selectively, endorsements can be extremely helpful. Last year I was involved in a campaign where our opponent claimed my candidate was supported only by the political bosses. As a result, our first wave of television spots consisted of man-on-the-street interviews of average, ordinary people saying good things about my candidate.

If a candidate is thought to be an intellectual lightweight, find some heavy thinkers to endorse his candidacy and talk about his intelligence; if he is perceived to lack minority support, find some blacks and Hispanics or whatever the minority groups are in the district to endorse him in commercials.

I'm not much for the "celebrity endorsement," but sometimes testimonials can be given by non-political people who might say, "I've never publicly endorsed a political candidate before, but let me tell you why in this election I'm supporting Joe Jones . . ."

**20** Do not create exaggerated expectations—especially if you are likely to win. This is especially true in gubernatorial or presidential elections in which your candidate has a good chance of winning and hopes eventually to run for reelection. If you promise more than you can deliver, this will cost you at the next election. If the people forget what you have promised (and some of them are sure to remember), you can be certain your opponent next time around will remind them.

Better to be more modest and to set goals you have a reasonable chance of achieving. Also, sometimes promises are so exaggerated they simply do not ring true and can damage a candidate's credibility.

**21** Take nothing for granted. This is critical advice, even if it is almost impossible to follow, because at times you simply must rely on the information provided by others in the campaign. In a recent presidential election, we were burned badly in the rural areas of a county, even though I had been assured everything was fine in those areas.

If you are suspicious that something might not be as it seems or as it should be, run an independent check. This might mean a flash poll using a different pollster in an area you have doubts

about. If you are told money is no problem, be suspicious.

**22** **If you make a mistake, admit it and try something else.** There are few perfect campaigns. Inevitably, mistakes occur. Usually, in a long campaign, a few mistakes won't hurt much—unless you compound them by repeating them.

In one campaign I was involved in, a television producer made several spots that generated a howl of protest from supporters of the candidate, who claimed they would withdraw their support if the spots continued to run. Faced with this, the producer became stubborn, said it would take awhile for the message of the spots to sink in, and urged they be run for at least two weeks. The campaign manager wisely decided to withdraw them immediately; supporters quieted down, and the candidate eventually won.

Earlier I suggested, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The opposite is true as well: "If it is broke, fix it." Everybody makes mistakes; the smart ones correct them.

**23** **The little things often are important.** To reach people, you must relate to their level of understanding. For example, there was little complaint on the part of the American public about the country's bloated military budget, because few people could understand what the numbers meant. But when it was revealed the Air Force was paying \$640 for a toilet seat or \$125 for a hammer you could buy in a hardware store for five bucks, *then* people became aroused, because they could understand and relate to the situation in their own terms.

Sherman Adams, President Eisenhower's chief of staff, ran an effective White House and was one of the most powerful men in the government, but he was forced to resign, and the credibility of the presidency was damaged, because he accepted a vicuna coat from a Boston financier, a coat worth maybe \$200 at the time.

The lesson here is do not always jump on the big things; the little one could prove to be much more important in turning the campaign.

**24** **Be leery of primary polls.** Great advances have been made in political polling in the past 20 years, but one area that remains difficult to predict is the party primary. This holds true on all levels, from presidential primaries to local elections. One reason for this is the usually low turnout in the primary. Poll respondents may favor one candidate or another, but when only one in three or four turns out to vote, the results can be seriously

skewed.

Even when several screening questions are asked to eliminate those less likely to vote, the actual voting returns often bear little resemblance to poll results. If your candidate is running ahead in the primary poll, do not assume you necessarily are going to win—and if you are running behind, do not be discouraged, because primaries produce strange results.

**25** **Recognize your own limitations.** We are all better at some things than we are at others.

No one I know in this business is equally talented in all phases of politics or campaigning. The best ones know what they do best and are not hesitant about bringing in experts in other fields.

Sometimes, individuals who are truly talented in one area, such as television production, put themselves and their candidates in big trouble by attempting to expand this expertise into areas in which they are much less effective. Pollsters are another group who fall into this trap: They often believe they are expert in designing campaign strategy just because they have obtained some interesting numbers in their poll. What's worse, campaigns, even on a high level, often make the mistake of confusing producers and pollsters and other specialists with strategists who have the ability to put all component parts of a campaign into place.

**26** **Don't panic over mistakes. They will happen.** I never have been in a perfect campaign, and I doubt anyone else has. Mistakes will happen. Usually they are not serious; occasionally they are. The important thing is not to spend a lot of time crying about the mistake or criticizing the person who made it, but to decide how to handle it. In many cases, the best thing is merely to ignore it and forget about it.

Human feelings are important here, too. You do not want to ruin the morale of the campaign staff or unnecessarily embarrass or humiliate one of your good workers because of a mistake. If the same person keeps making the same kinds of mistakes, that's another matter, and you might have to fire him or her.

**27** **If you do not have to use negative campaigning, don't; if you do, make it sting.** Like many consultants, I think there is too much negative campaigning these days, and the reasons are easy to understand: It is easier to move people to vote *against* someone than *for* someone. Nevertheless, although it might sound old fashioned, I think every candidate has an obligation to tell the people what he would do if he



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were elected and what solutions he has to their problems.

When you feel compelled to use negative campaigning, make it sting. If you are going to do it, do it right. Do not just rap someone on the knuckles, give him a good whack alongside the head. I prefer not to use negative campaigning if I do not have to, but I also prefer to win with negative campaigning than to lose without.

I do not subscribe to the concept of never mentioning your opponent by name. If you are going to call someone a son-of-a-bitch, leave no doubts in voters' minds about whom you mean.

I also believe negative attacks should be confined to a person's record and not to his personal habits—and never to his family. A candidate's record should be subjected to careful scrutiny and attack where warranted; the fact that his son has been arrested on drug charges or his wife is an alcoholic are, in my opinion, private family problems and not subjects for discussion in a campaign.

**28** **Dominate the dominant medium.** Not long ago, I wandered into a bookstore, where I saw a book on how to run political campaigns. I looked in the appendix to see if my name was mentioned. When I checked

the references to me, I found one that said, "Many campaign managers follow the advice of veteran political consultant Joe Napolitan to dominate the dominant medium."

Now I don't ever remember saying that, and I don't know where the authors of the book dug it up, but I think it's a hell of an idea. If it actually was mine, I'm sorry to have forgotten, and if it were someone else's, I hope he or she gets the credit due.

It makes such good sense. The dominant medium varies. In many campaigns, it is television. But in some it might be newspaper advertising or radio. In a contest for a primary nomination in an overwhelmingly Democratic congressional district in New York City, it would be direct mail. Whatever it is, concentrate your resources to make sure you achieve dominance, and chances are you will do well in the campaign.

**29** **Campaigns should be fun.** Campaigning is an intense business, full of pressure and tension. But it also should be fun. If a campaign does not have its moments of joy and laughter or sheer insanity, then it can become boring and depressing.

There's nothing more debilitating than a dull campaign or a humorless candidate. I have worked for a few, and I do not want to do so again.

**30** **Establish your candidate's own credibility before you launch a negative campaign.** No one has ever done this more effectively than Ronald Reagan in his 1980 campaign against Jimmy Carter. Today, all people remember about that election is that it was a Reagan landslide; but it didn't start out that way. Going into the campaign, voters had serious doubts about Reagan's political philosophy, and his potential to push the U.S. into war.

Wisely, Reagan spent the early months of his campaign easing those doubts and establishing his own credibility. Not until his campaign advisers were convinced that his own credibility was established did they launch a devastating negative campaign.

There is no doubt in my mind that that negative campaign would have been much less effective if they had begun it earlier. There is a tendency today for candidates whose own positions are not known, whose own credibility has not been established, to go on the attack. My strong advice is to concentrate on the positives and establish your candidate's own credibility before making attacks on your opponent.

**31** **Do not confuse education with intelligence.** There is a lot to be said for gut instincts and street

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smarts in political campaigns; it is not always the best educated people who are the most politically intelligent. Almost everywhere I have worked, I have encountered people with weak education credits and high intelligence.

The same is true of voters. Early in my career, I learned never to underestimate the intelligence of the voters nor overestimate the amount of information at their disposal. Providing them with the information is the campaign's responsibility; their intelligence will take over from there.

**32** **An election is like a one-day sale.** This is what makes timing so crucial in a political campaign. If you are selling Fords or Toyotas, the customer can buy his car today, tomorrow, next week, or next year. But the product (candidate) in a campaign (sale) is available for only a few hours on one day.

You must gear your campaign to peak as close to Election Day as possible. Too often we have seen campaigns peak on Labor Day when the election is in November. From then on, it is downhill. It might be better to have a late peak than an early one; at least that way the campaign will be moving in the right direction on Election Day.

You have certain controls in the peaking process, such as media time buys and when to make major announcements, and although you might not be able to fine-tune the campaign to peak precisely when you wish, how effectively you manipulate the controls will determine how close you come to your ideal peak.

**33** **Differentiate between the essential and the nonessential.** The wise candidate or leader learns early to distinguish between them, to make the essential decisions and take the essential actions himself and to leave the nonessentials to staff and others in his government.

The same guideline applies to consultants: Do not make a big thing of something that is not really important or essential, but if it is essential, utilize all your resources to achieve the objective.

**34** **They won't let you run in the general election unless you win the primary.** It's just like baseball, where they won't let you play in the World Series unless you win the pennant. Yet how many times have we seen campaigns where the candidate thinks and talks of nothing but how he is going to beat his opponent in the general election, paying scant attention to his opponent in the primary?

In a classic case in Massachusetts, the incumbent governor, a Democrat, prepared television commercials and a

whole panoply of other campaign materials to use against an incumbent Republican senator. His primary opponent was a mayor of a medium-sized city, and the decision was made to ignore the mayor in the primary, not to respond to any charge or attack.

All the governor's television commercials, signs, and bumperstickers went into the trash the morning after the primary, because the unheralded mayor had scored a smashing upset.

#### Advice for Candidates

**35** **The size of crowds bears little relationship to the vote.** Another example from Venezuela: During one campaign, Acción Democrática held a rally in downtown Caracas. It was mobbed; more than 50,000 people turned out. Two days later, the Socialist Party, which never receives more than 5 percent of the vote, staged a rally on the same site—with the same turnout.

In 1968, I was director of media for Vice President Hubert Humphrey in his campaign against Richard Nixon. One day Nixon toured Philadelphia; the crowds were enormous. Humphrey went through a few days later; the crowds were small. Humphrey won Philadelphia by 100,000 votes. The Republicans obviously did a better job in turning out the crowd, but at least in this case, not the vote.

**36** **Do not be hung up on slogans and logos.** Too often a candidate or his advertising manager will be so hung up on a slogan or a logo that they will insist they be used in every television spot, every radio spot, every brochure, every print ad, and so forth. Use them where they work, and if they seem out of place, use something else or nothing at all.

**37** **Start early.** You can never start planning your campaign too early. You can *begin* the campaign too soon; that's something else again. In my own experience, the best example I know of long planning period/short campaign was Mike Gravel's upset victory over Alaska Senator Ernest Gruening in the 1968 Democratic primary. We planned Gravel's campaign in December 1966; the execution of the campaign, pretty much according to what we had decided to do 18 months later, occurred during two weeks in August 1968.

By starting early, you have plenty of time to take and analyze polls, study your opponent and his likely moves in depth, design and discuss various possible strategies, select the best specialists to work on the campaign, and mentally prepare your candidate.

When you start late, it does not mean you have fewer things to do, but merely less time to do them.

**38** **Beware of easy solutions to complex problems.** There are none. If the problem is complex, chances are the solution also must be complex. There are ways of providing simple *explanations* of proposed solutions, but anyone who comes up with a "simple" solution to crime, drugs, unemployment, inflation, housing, or a myriad of other complex problems clearly doesn't even understand the problem, never mind the solution.

**39** **Exude confidence—but never overconfidence.** Personally, I prefer a low-key approach in this area: Express confidence that you will win, but say you expect a hard, tough campaign. This is especially true in a campaign where you are expected to win, start out strong in the polls, and then are lulled into a sense of false security and fail to do everything needed to ensure victory.

If anything, it is better to be less confident than too confident; it also will keep your staff working harder.

**40** **You need not oppose every position or statement by your opposition.** Even the opposition is right sometimes, just as a stopped clock is right twice a day. By criticizing everything, you dilute the strength of your own criticism. I prefer to reduce the frequency of attacks, or counterattacks, but to make them really sting when you do use them.

**41** **A power base helps.** It might not be absolutely essential to have a power base in a political campaign, but it sure helps. The base can be geographic (the candidate's home state, city, or county) or demographic (blacks, Hispanics, elderly, liberals, conservatives, whatever).

If you start with a power base, you have something to build on. If you do not, your first step is to create one, and that detracts from other things you can do. Any candidate who starts with a built-in power base has an advantage.

**42** **You are never going to please everyone.** Candidates sometimes try to run campaigns by consensus; they think they can appeal to everyone, please everyone, without getting anyone angry. This just does not happen. Campaigns are a series of decisions, many of them easy, some of them difficult. Every time you make a difficult decision, some group of voters is not going to like it.

But if you do not make any decisions, or if you attempt to water down your positions so they become meaningless, *no one* is going to like it. ■

# Joseph Napolitan's Greatest Hints

The Top 100 concludes: Included in the final 58 bits of advice from the dean of political consultants are 33 hints for campaign strategists and 25 for campaign managers.

By Joseph Napolitan

## Advice for Consultants

**43** Television spots showing large crowds are of little real value; they just make the candidate feel good.

In one Latin American campaign, the advertising agency proudly showed me 22 spots they had produced for their

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candidate. At least 18 of them showed nothing but cheering crowds; not one of them showed the candidate talking to the people about what he would do for them if he were elected.

We made the necessary adjustments in that campaign, but this phenomenon exists, and it sometimes is difficult to persuade inexperienced campaign workers that such spots really do not help very much.

**44** Every campaign is different; every campaign is the same. The object of any political campaign is to persuade voters to mark their "X" after one name instead of another. In every campaign, certain basics are similar if not identical. Every campaign contains the same essential ingredients: polls, strategy, message, advertising, organi-

zation, fund-raising.

But each campaign has its points of dissimilarity, and the approach and strategy must be defined and adapted to conform with existing elements. Just as generals often are accused of fighting the last war, we never should allow ourselves to "fight the last campaign." We must adjust our tactics to meet current needs.

**45** You might be able to polish a candidate but you cannot really change him. I have seen candidates who have improved (and some who have gotten worse) in the course of campaigning, but I have never been involved with a candidate who really *changed* very much. Sure, you can do some cosmetic things: Convince him to wear dark suits, cut his hair differently,

change the color of his socks, buy more attractive eyeglasses, maybe even get him to be more prompt.

But almost all the time, you really must work with what you have, so you might as well adjust to this at the beginning of the campaign and adapt your campaign plan to fit your candidate.

**46** **Instill some sense of priority in your candidate.** Rationally and logically, every candidate knows that just about every appearance he makes on television, especially in paid commercials purchased in prime time, will be seen by more voters than will see him in person during the entire course of the campaign. But virtually every candidate resists spending the time necessary to permit the best possible television production.

This is why it is so important to have as the campaign scheduler someone who understands the importance of various activities, such as media production, and who will cancel a breakfast with 50 supporters so the candidate can have more time to prepare for television, or rehearse an important speech, or take a day's rest, or discuss critical strategy decisions.

**47** **Proceed cautiously in foreign elections.** First, because you are a foreigner, there will be natural skepticism about your ability or understanding of the problems. If you are an American, these problems usually are compounded.

A good friend of mine used to drive me to distraction in early discussions with presidential candidates in foreign countries. After one two-hour meeting, he was prepared to design the whole campaign, tell the locals what they were doing wrong, and give some very simple solutions to extremely complicated problems. Some of his analysis was right on the mark, but its effectiveness was dissipated by the speed with which he made his recommendations.

The first objective in dealing with candidates and their staffs in foreign countries is to win their confidence. Ideas they might reject if offered in the first meeting might well be accepted, or at least seriously considered, after they have developed some confidence in you. Proceed slowly and cautiously, even if you know right from the beginning what needs to be done.

**48** **Always let the campaign staff know you are not looking for their job.** In my first meeting with the candidate's staff I give a little speech about my role in the campaign. I explain that I have no interest in being the governor's chief of staff or press secretary or head of the state lottery; all I want to do is help win the election and



*Joseph Napolitan*

go home.

I want them to look on me as a resource, a support system, not a threat. Usually this works, but not always; I know that in some campaigns some staff members, invariably those least secure about their own abilities, try to undercut my recommendations. Not much you can do about this; it's an occupational hazard.

But if you make the effort at the beginning to win the cooperation of the candidate's staff, and assure them your role ends on Election Day, then it's usually an easier campaign.

**49** **If your advice is not being accepted, quit.** If your advice constantly is being overruled or ignored, you have two choices: Give in or get out. I always prefer to get out—not that it happens all that often, maybe three or four times in 30 years. Once I was retained as media consultant in a New York gubernatorial primary. One afternoon I had a cup of coffee with the representative of the advertising agency hired by the campaign that turned into a mutual complaint session. By the time we finished our second cup of coffee, we both agreed to quit.

In a situation like this, I usually tell the candidate and/or his campaign manager, "Look, you are telling people I am the media director in this campaign, but I really am not, because you are not accepting my recommendations. You are paying me money for advice you are not using, and I am spending my time working in a campaign where my advice obviously is not

needed or wanted. Why don't we part company and stay friends?"

**50** **Settle your financial arrangements at the beginning. Better not to do a campaign than to do it and not be paid for it.** You learn as you grow older. Early in my career, after meeting with the candidate and his team, I often would design what amounted to a whole campaign plan and submit it with my proposal to work for the candidate. Until I became smarter, they often would reject the proposal for whatever reason, and then use the campaign plan pretty much as I had written it. Now I will not write a plan until we have agreed on a contract.

There are certain expenses built into my fees. For example, first-class air fare. When you make 40 trips out of the country in a single year, as I do, it is not just a question of comfort, it is a question of survival.

Unless I know the candidate well or have worked for him before, I now insist on quarterly payments in advance. This is especially important overseas, where you essentially have no recourse if a candidate or party refuses to pay for your services.

I am perfectly willing to do campaigns for nothing or for a token fee, if the candidate is a good friend, or if it is a cause or candidate I really believe in and want to work for. But if we are talking about a business arrangement, it should be conducted on a businesslike basis—and that means being paid on schedule.

The surest way to avoid problems is

to receive a chunk of money up front; at least that way you are not hurt too badly if the second payment never comes. This is even more important for television producers, who need to invest substantial amounts of money in production costs.

I must say that more than 90 percent of the political candidates I have worked for have paid me in full. A few did not, and their names are etched in my memory.

**51** Research your candidate as thoroughly as you do your opponent. In almost every campaign, an individual or team is assigned to re-

search the opponent's record, in the hope of uncovering things that can be used against him. In my campaigns, I insist we make the same effort researching our own candidate. If there is anything in the candidate's background or record we will need to defend in a campaign, I want to know it, sooner rather than later. Maybe the opponent's researchers never will find out about it; more likely they will. Better to be prepared.

I always meet privately with a new candidate to ask him if there is anything in his record that could prove embarrassing later in the campaign.

Sometimes candidates tell you the truth; sometimes they do not.

My favorite story here concerns a southern candidate for governor, a free-wheeling bachelor. When I asked him the question, this conversation ensued:

"Joe, do you know what they say about me down here?"

"No. What do they say?"

"They say I drink whiskey and chase women."

"Do you?"

"Of course I do."

How can you hate a guy like that?

**52** Marginal improvements are important—and often decisive. A fascinating book I strongly recommend is *Thinking in Time*, by Richard Neustadt and Ernest May. One of the points they make is that "marginal improvements are important." Although the authors are not referring to political campaigns, their advice is on target.

When you start a campaign with your candidate 30 or 40 points behind, there is no way you are going to make up this deficit in one gulp. You must chip away, make "marginal improvements," over a period of time. But even more important, most elections are decided by close margins, and if you can make small improvements with every group of voters, these will add up.

**53** Know when to use bold strokes—and when not to. There are times when a bold stroke is necessary to put some zip in your campaign. Usually, you can use a bold stroke if (1) your campaign is drifting and needs a spark; (2) you are in with the pack in a multicandidate race and need to pull out of the pack; or (3) you are behind and conventional tactics are not moving the campaign.

By definition, a bold stroke can be dangerous and has the potential to backfire or be counterproductive. As a general rule, I recommend a bold stroke only when it appears nothing else will pull you out of a rut. Knowing *when* to use a bold stroke is as important as knowing *how* to use one.

**54** Do not let your candidate think that just because he has said something once everyone has heard it. In the first place, to be a candidate, you must have a sizeable ego. Part of that ego is the belief that because you make a statement or a speech, the whole state (county, world, universe) knows what you said and what your position is.

I once had the president of a Third World country tell me that his people could recite his speeches by heart, that they all listened to his talks on television, and that they all were familiar with his programs. "Fine," I said, "let's take a poll."

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The poll showed not many people watched the television programs; those who did usually had little idea of what the president was talking about, and they had no idea at all about what he was doing. We made some changes.

It is not only in the Third World that candidates or heads of state have these attitudes; they are prevalent wherever I have worked. If your candidate says something good or important, repeat it and repeat it until the message sinks in. Do not depend on a speech or news coverage to carry important campaign messages; reinforce them with paid advertising.

**55** Be prepared to produce media right to the end. In years gone by, it was common practice for a campaign to contract with a television producer to make a package of spots or longer programs. Often the finished package was delivered four or five weeks before the election. Not any more. Today, you must be prepared to produce television, radio, and newspaper ads right up to election eve. You must have the flexibility to capitalize on last-minute events and developments.

Arrangements should be made with your producer to be available right to the end. If this is not possible, then reserve an hour of studio time each day for the final week of the campaign for instant production, if needed.

**56** Establish and maintain an immediate communications system. There are occasions in almost every campaign when you simply *must* reach the candidate, the campaign manager, the media director, the television producer, or the pollster in the campaign immediately. Unfortunately, these occasions usually occur at midnight, early Sunday morning, or in the middle of a holiday weekend.

One of the first projects in any campaign should be to prepare a small directory of all the key people, with telephone numbers where they can be reached after hours, on weekends, or other inconvenient times. Naturally, distribution of this directory should be limited to those with a decision-making position in the campaign.

During the campaign, someone in the headquarters should know where everyone in the campaign can be reached. If the candidate is traveling, someone in the entourage should call "communications central" several times a day to report what is happening with the candidate and to find out what is going on at headquarters.

**57** You do not have to love your candidate, but at least you should respect him. I have found it is

possible to continue to work for a candidate you do not really like as long as you maintain some respect for him or her. If you neither like nor respect a candidate, then it is difficult to do your job properly. If you realize this at the beginning, it is not much of a problem: Just don't take the campaign. The difficulty comes when you start out having a decent relationship with the candidate, only to see it deteriorate during the course of the campaign. Then you have a tough decision to make: remain with the campaign and do the best you can, or quit.

**58** Make sure your candidate knows why he is running and can answer the question: "Why should I vote for you instead of your opponent?" The classic example of this is Senator Edward M. Kennedy's fumbling the question, "Why do you want to be president?" put to him by Roger Mudd of CBS News in 1980. Kennedy might have lost the election right then and there.

Actually, it is astonishing how much difficulty many candidates have with this question. You would think that by the time they have decided to run, they would know the answer. Do not take this for granted. If the candidate does not answer the question to your satisfaction, work with him until he has a crisp, polished, sensible answer.

**59** If your candidate has a difficult name, try to turn it to your advantage. Sure, it's nice to have candidates with names like Kennedy, Carter, or Reagan, but how about Ed Mezvinsky, Jim Scheuer, and Frank Licht? These were candidates I worked with, and all of them were elected—but not before we made special efforts to make sure voters knew how to pronounce their names.

In Mezvinsky's case, Tony Schwartz produced some classic (and frequently copied) television and radio spots poking fun at the name and deliberately mispronouncing it. The point of those ads was that even if people had difficulty with Ed Mezvinsky's name, they knew what he stood for.

In the case of Licht and Scheuer, we used rhyming: "Licht. Rhymes with teach." "Scheuer. Rhymes with lawyer."

Maybe I'm wrong, but I think people are hesitant to vote for candidates whose names they can't pronounce. How are they going to tell anyone who they voted for?

**60** "Instant information creates involvement."—Marshall McLuhan. Politically, what this means is that the quicker you can deliver information about an event to the voters,

the more impact it will have. Tony Schwartz is a master at instant production of radio spots to capitalize on fast-breaking news developments and linking his candidate (favorably) or opponent (unfavorably) to the news.

In a campaign last spring for an old friend seeking his eighth consecutive four-year term as district attorney, we took advantage of President Reagan's antidrug campaign. Video Base International of New York, which produced the spots for the campaign, immediately dug out existing footage of my candidate, Matthew Ryan, in which he spoke strongly about his own antidrug campaign. The VBI spot's narration began something like this: "Long before other candidates discovered the dangers of drug use, Matty Ryan had made it his No. 1 priority..." The spot worked and helped Ryan win.

The "instant information" formula works just as well, perhaps even better, in free media. We try to generate instant reaction to campaign developments; what is news and usable by the press if issued immediately is old stuff and unusable if you let a day go by.

**61** Learn where the real power lies. Sometimes the power positions are laid right out on the table of organization, but as often as not, the real power lies elsewhere. It could rest with the candidate's biggest financial supporters, with his wife or girlfriend, or with a trusted adviser, colleague, or associate.

This holds true for incumbents as well as for candidates. The intelligent consultant will quietly nose around until he finds out where the real power lies in a campaign or government and then will determine how he can utilize that power in the campaign. This also saves a lot of wasted effort dealing with people who do not really have the authority to make decisions.

Not all the wielders of real power are a bad influence; often they exercise their power cautiously, conservatively, and effectively. But it sure helps to know who holds it.

**62** Analyze your losses. I think you can learn a lot more in a losing campaign than in one you win. For one thing, candidates (and consultants) seldom spend much time analyzing why they have won. They do not bother with postelection surveys and other tools available to them.

When you lose, you are much more likely to examine painstakingly all the decisions made in the campaign and the reasons for them, to reevaluate your strategy and decide where it went wrong, and to poll voters after the elections and see what you can learn about

why they behaved as they did. Of course, if you keep losing, all the analysis in the world will not help much; then it is time to start looking for another career.

**63** **How a person intends to vote is more important than who he thinks is going to win.** This is a point I have a great deal of difficulty conveying to candidates and inexperienced campaigners. I don't even know why pollsters ask the question about who the respondent thinks is going to win, because the results can be misleading and give the candidate a false sense of confidence.

I would *always* prefer to have a person say he or she plans to vote for my candidate but believes the opponent will win than have them say they are planning to vote for my opponent but believe my candidate will win.

**64** **Do not fool yourself or your candidate.** It's okay to try to fool the opposition, or even the voters, but don't ever fool yourself or your candidate; this is a one-way ticket to disaster.

Candidates want to wait to take a poll until after some event that will give them a splash of publicity, so the poll results will be better. I would rather take a survey when the candidate is at the nadir of his popularity, so you get a true reading of opinion.

Last summer I was approached by representatives of a congressman to take a survey. The congressman had been office 32 years and was in his mid-seventies. The only real issue in the campaign was his age. Yet the congressman's people knocked out every question in the survey pertaining to his age; they were worried they would "remind" voters how old the candidate was. This was ridiculous and demonstrated a lack of understanding of what polling is all about.

Candidates, of course, *want* to hear the optimistic analysis and prefer to ignore the pessimistic interpretation. Better they should know the truth.

**65** **Be persistent—but know when to back off.** There is a difference between persistence and pig-headedness. If you feel something is important, do not accept a quick brush-off from the candidate, manager, or whomever you are working with. Put it in a different form, amplify it, answer their questions or arguments.

But if there appears to be no chance they will accept the idea, back off. It is possible the idea might not really be as good as you thought it was, or the candidate might have personal reasons that have nothing to do with its merits—but that he does not want to dis-

cuss with you or anyone else—for refusing to accept a suggestion.

**66** **Live to fight another day.** Candidates and the "impassioned amateurs" I mentioned earlier often are willing to burn their bridges behind them in a campaign and do things that might have some short-range benefit but could have fearful long-range consequences. A consultant should be more rational. He lives on his reputation, and win or lose, he must come out of that campaign with his reputation intact.

It also is worth noting that many candidates do not win the first time around; it often takes two or even three tries to be elected. I am as competitive or aggressive as anyone in the business, but there are lines I will not cross, because I know there is another day, another year, another campaign.

**67** **When you think you know it all, you don't.** When I started out as a political consultant, I think I won my first 13 elections. Then I lost a gubernatorial primary, so I figured, "Well, I might lose to another Democrat, but I've never lost to a Republican." Then I lost to a Republican, and that theory was shot to hell.

When I was 35, I thought I knew all there was to know about campaigning and making people vote for your candidate. Now, more than 20 years later, I'm beginning to realize how little anybody really knows about what motivates voters to mark their "X" for one candidate or another.

Matt Reese and I were talking one day about a young consultant who had acquired a good reputation on the basis of winning several campaigns. I did not know the man, and I asked Matt, who did, how good he really was. "He's pretty good," said Matt, "but he'll be a lot better after he loses a couple of elections."

**68** **If you hear someone has said something nasty about you, do not overreact.** It's inevitable, in this or any other business, that at some time someone is going to tell you one of your colleagues or competitors has said something nasty about you. Don't overreact. The person might not have made the statement, or the version you heard was taken out of context or unknowingly twisted. It might have been made in the heat of a campaign, in anger, in jest, or the person might have regretted it the moment he said it.

You can't have a thin skin and survive long in this business.

Now, on the other hand, if you really believe the statement was made, that it was made in malice, and you are hurt by it, then you can always observe the

old political adage: Don't get mad, get even.

**69** **Learn patience.** This is especially true if you are working overseas, especially in places like Latin America or Africa. Sometimes it is difficult for American consultants, who have become accustomed to thinking that today's 4 o'clock meeting is going to take place at 4 o'clock today, to adjust.

I cannot count how many hours or days I have sat in hotel rooms or by hotel pools, waiting for a call from the presidential palace. Now I come fore-armed, with a stack of books, a box of cigars, and mentally prepared to wait.

**70** **Do not assume you have the contract until you have the check.** Again, this probably is more pertinent to those who work for foreign candidates, parties, or governments. And, of course, in other countries, if your contract or agreement is not honored, there is little you can do about it. I now require payment in advance, but I still am stiffed now and then.

For those new to the business of overseas counseling, I strongly advise against any significant expenditures prior to receiving the initial payment. This includes exploratory trips to discuss a contract with a prospective client; always ask for travel expenses to be paid up front. It is bad enough to have someone default on a fee, which represents time; it is much worse to have them renege on payments that also cover your own out-of-pocket expenses.

**71** **If your candidate wins, it's because of his charm, appeal, and powers of persuasion; if he loses, it's your fault.** After managing a campaign that most political observers hailed as a sensational upset—and putting everything I had into it—I overheard the candidate tell a reporter that he really did not have a campaign manager, that he pretty much handled that himself. I did not say anything then, but later I remembered the old rule about not getting mad but getting even. I doubled the fee I had intended to charge him for the general election.

Few candidates will admit they lost because the voters did not care about them or their programs, or maybe they liked them well enough but just liked another candidate better.

**72** **Be tolerant.** I already have said not to panic when a mistake occurs, but there are other times a consultant must learn to be tolerant—with the candidate, with the people in the campaign organization, with those with whom he has to work.

Those of us who have been in the business for a long time know that when

we become involved with a new campaign, especially overseas, it sometimes feels as though we are reinventing the wheel each day. When you work in a different culture, a different environment, with less experienced people, it is easy to become exasperated. This does not do you or the campaign any good.

**73** **Maturity comes with age.** In many ways, I think I might have been a better consultant 15 or 20 years ago than I am today. In those days, I would argue and fight with my candidates and their staffs, pounding the desk, screaming and sulking. Now, I am more relaxed, more patient, more tolerant, and, I hope, more mature.

I also have come to realize that my function is to *advise* a candidate, not to pummel him into accepting my ideas. What I might have lost in pugnacity, I think I have gained in maturity, and I do not know any way to speed up this gestation period.

**74** **Do not take unnecessary risks.** Again, this applies more to working overseas than it does in the United States, and maybe it is another function of age. But there are countries I will not work in, nor send anyone on my staff to work in. If you have any doubts, don't go. Campaigns are important but not that important.

**75** **Do not have too much sympathy for a candidate.** Not many candidates are drafted. Most of them are candidates because they want to be, because they want the glory and power that the position they seek will give them. They are there of their own volition. As consultants, we have responsibilities to our candidates and to our campaigns. But the candidate also has certain responsibilities, and it is as important for him to fulfill his commitments to the campaign as it is for me to fulfill mine.

So do not waste time commiserating with candidates. If they were not willing to make the many sacrifices that being a candidate entails, they did not have to run.

#### Advice for Campaign Managers

**76** **Do not be afraid to bring in the real experts.** The sense of insecurity that exists among campaign managers and advisers never should be underestimated. For some reason, this seems to be especially true in the Democratic party in the U.S.

In several recent presidential elections, the advisers and workers who helped obtain the nomination for a particular candidate blocked out talented specialists from working in the general election, some of whom had worked for

other candidates in the primary, some of whom had not worked for any primary candidates.

It broke my heart in the 1984 presidential election to see all the talent on the sidelines not being used by the Democratic candidate—when he clearly needed all the help he could get. If you have access to the skills of a Tony Schwartz, or a Bob Squier, or a David Garth and you don't use them, you are making a mistake. Hire the best people you can find, and don't worry about whose feelings might be hurt.

**77** **Most campaigns do not know how to use consultants properly.** This seems absurd, but it is true, and it is more true in foreign elections than it is in the U.S. Most candidates and their managers really have little idea about what a consultant does or should do. You must make this clear to them at the beginning, so their expectations are neither exaggerated nor unrealistic.

**78** **How much money you have to spend is not as important as how you spend it.** Although no one will deny it is comforting to have all the money you need to conduct your campaign, it is not always the candidate with access to the largest amount of money who wins. There are many factors involved, of course, but certainly one of these is how effectively you spend the funds you have available.

It is easy to squander money in a political campaign—and many candidates do so. Occasionally, it is possible to drown an opponent in a sea of cash. But in most campaigns, assuming that each candidate has at least the minimum amount of money to mount a decent campaign, the likely winner is the one who spends his money best—or, put another way, succeeds in getting the biggest bangs for his bucks.

**79** **Running a campaign is not a democratic process.** It is more like a military operation—at least if it is run right. All voices should not be equal in campaign discussions and decisions. A campaign should have experts and specialists in various areas. Their opinions should carry weight. If you need an operation, you should pay more attention to the surgeon's opinion than to that of the ambulance driver; if you need to get to the hospital in a hurry, then take the ambulance driver's advice.

The ultimate responsibility for making campaign decisions should rest with the campaign manager. If he wants to talk to the candidate about these decisions, fine. If he wants to accept a consensus from his staff, fine. But he certainly should not make his decisions

on the basis of one-person, one-vote.

**80** **Make sure your candidate understands the issues.** Those outside our business would consider this a simplistic statement; those in it know what I am talking about. Never mind the extreme cases, like the candidate for the U.S. Senate who once asked me, "What is this detente business, anyway?" Just consider the run-of-the-mill candidate who does not do his homework.

Last year, a Maryland television station embarrassed some senatorial candidates by asking them some simple questions on foreign and domestic policy. If it had been an examination in high school civics class, they all would have failed.

It is bad enough when the candidate is not informed about the other guy's issues; what is really bad is when he is not informed about his *own* issues. It happens.

**81** **Let your candidate talk to the people.** In this era of "creative" television commercials, there is a tendency to make a whole package of spots in which the candidate never once talks directly to the people. This is a mistake. The people want to see and hear the candidate. Maybe he does not look like Robert Redford or speak like Ronald Reagan; they still want to see him, hear him, get a feel for him.

Those of us in the consulting business sometimes make the mistake of assuming we know more than the candidate. The longer I stay in the business, the more convinced I am that the eyeball-to-eyeball spot can be one of the most effective weapons in our arsenal.

**82** **Latch on to existing organizations.** Creating an organization not only can be a formidable task, it can be expensive and difficult as well. Whenever possible, latch on to an existing organization, whether it happens to be a political party or special-interest support group.

Organizations that share the candidate's views on highly emotional subjects, such as abortion, gun control, or the nuclear freeze, can be of great organizational assistance to a campaign. At the very least, they can provide useful mailing lists; at best, they can provide bodies, experience, and money.

**83** **When you use new technologies, make sure you bring in specialists.** It is not enough to buy or rent a couple of computers and hire a kid who has taken a course in computer programming and then believe you have "computerized" your campaign. If your campaign calls for any sort of sophisticated equipment or procedures, make certain you hire specialists who

know how to operate that equipment or execute those procedures.

I have a degree of familiarity with how computers can be used effectively in political campaigns; it would never occur to me to try to run a computer operation, because I do not possess the required technical skills.

**84** **If your media materials do not work, throw them away no matter how much they cost.** There is a tendency to think that if you have paid a lot of money for a television spot or a brochure, then it must be good. Often it is; sometimes it is not. And if you ever discover that a television or radio spot or print piece is not working, or, even worse, is counterproductive, then dump it immediately. At least you will save the cost of putting it on the air. If it really is bad, continuing to show it could damage your chances of winning the election.

Do not let the producer make this decision. A few producers are willing to admit that some of their materials might not be working very well; few will ever say, "This has turned out to be a bad spot; let's kill it."

Incidentally, I am not talking here about spots that have "burned out" because they have been shown a lot; this can happen to perfectly good materials that need to be replaced with new material. I am talking about material that is bad from the start, and should never be run, or material which, after being shown a few times, clearly is not working.

**85** **Restrain impassioned amateurs.** A persistent problem for political professionals is the impassioned amateur—the person with enthusiasm but little experience—who does not have the knowledge to put the campaign in perspective. These people remind me of football fans who always want the coach to go for the first down when it is fourth down and a yard to go, and cannot understand why the coach sends in the punting team.

On a volunteer level, these people usually are not much of a threat to the campaign, because they are not in decision-making capacities. When they become dangerous is if they hold important positions in the campaign, are large contributors who link their support to acceptance of their suggestions, and perhaps worst of all, when they are related to the candidate and in a position to influence his thinking.

**86** **Have a reason for what you do.** Ask some tough questions of yourself about every step taken in a campaign:

- Why are we doing this?
- What will we get from it?

- What will happen if we don't do it?
- Is this the most effective way to use our money?

If you are working to a strategy, there should be a good reason—and if you are not working to a strategy, you are in trouble anyway.

**87** **Make sure you have good photographs of your candidate.** This should be one of the simplest steps in a political campaign. In actuality, it always proves to be one of the most difficult. One of my first recommendations at the beginning of a campaign is to take good new photographs of the candidate in various situations, even if some good pictures already are available. I have found that you *never* have enough good photographs.

What often happens is the candidate will resist taking the time early in the campaign to have a good photographer spend sufficient hours with him to produce a good photo file, and then, in the crush of the campaign, when pictures are needed for brochures, signs, print ads, and a dozen other things, you are forced to use inferior photographs or grab some on the fly at the last minute.

Hire a top-flight still photographer. It is worth the cost. More people will see your candidate's picture than will ever see him in person.

**88** **Make sure your candidate gets some rest.** It takes a big ego and a certain machismo for someone to be a candidate, and candidates often feel they must maintain their Superman image by forgoing rest and vacations. They act as though it is inhuman to admit they become tired and need rest.

This is a mistake. A tired candidate is an unreliable candidate, prone to error, inclined to talk without thinking of the impact of his words, and certainly not looking his best. It is especially important for a candidate to take two or three days off going into the final month of a tough campaign. Even if he resists, insist that he take a rest. A candidate not at his best is a threat to the campaign.

**89** **Be careful in the selection of technicians.** The campaign service industry is booming. Individuals and companies are available to sell you almost any kind of service you can conceive. But they are not all equally good; some, in fact, are so bad they can be counterproductive to your campaign.

One of the qualities an experienced consultant or manager brings to a campaign is the knowledge of who are the competent people in the technical area: computers, direct mail, production, telephone campaigns, and so forth. Obviously, in making their pitch, these

technicians, will emphasize their successes and play down or ignore their failures. Check them out with other consultants, managers, or candidates; know what questions to ask; take the time to call their references.

**90** **Preempt negatives.** If there is something in your candidate's background that is certain to come out in the campaign, sometimes it is better to bring it up early and get it out of the way. I recommend this strategy only if you are virtually certain the opposition is aware of the fault and will use it. And, of course, much depends on what it is.

I have found that voters will accept a candidate who drinks whiskey, has a physical handicap, or chases women, but except in rare instances, they reject candidates who use drugs, have been treated for mental disorders, or are homosexual.

If your candidate had problems with the law as a young man, then you should try to use this in a positive way ("I know; I've been there") before your opponent slugs you late in the campaign by making the record public. If there is something on his record that sounds worse than it really is, then it should be explained before you are forced to go on the defensive.

**91** **Do not unilaterally talk about your negatives if you do not have to.** No candidate is perfect; every one has done or said things he wished he had not. Most of these are fairly harmless, and I don't think it's my responsibility as a consultant to show the candidate's warts: this is the responsibility of the press and his opponent.

I realize this point seems to contradict the previous one about preempting negatives, but it really does not. For example, if your candidate struggled through high school and barely managed to graduate from college, I do not think it is the campaign's responsibility to tell people that he might be a nice guy, but he's just not too smart. This is not the kind of issue the opposition can do much with, and there is no need for you to talk about it.

**92** **Do not distort your candidate's record; you're almost sure to be caught.** In most cases, it is not the consultant who distorts a candidate's record, because most consultants are smarter than that. It is the candidate himself, and most of the time it is hard to figure out why. Candidates are constantly claiming they were graduated from Harvard University, when it turns out all they did was attend an occasional football game there, or saw combat in Vietnam, when what they really did was type reports on a supply

ship 50 miles off the coast.

Why candidates persist in doing this is beyond me. I do not think the average voter much cares if the candidate went to Harvard or Appalachian State. Most of them didn't go to Harvard either. And, to me, "served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War" is sufficient, as well as accurate.

**93** In a major campaign, always create a reaction unit. These go by various names. What they consist of is a small group of knowledgeable people in the campaign, with political sensitivity and experience, who meet regularly in the closing days or weeks of a major campaign.

As a matter of personal preference, I like to have these meetings early in the morning and to limit the group to four or five members. The purpose is to analyze developments of the preceding day, to determine if any responses or other actions are needed, and to decide who should make the response.

Some of the time, perhaps most of the time, the best response is no response. But when a reaction is called for, it is important to have key people with decision-making responsibilities available.

**94** Know what your opponent is up to. You do not have to be a political genius to realize the importance of monitoring your opponent's activities, but it always is surprising to learn how few campaigns do this on a systematic basis. You start with the record, if the opponent has held or run for office before, and try to find out who his advisers are and anything you can about their style. All public statements must be recorded and filed; all pieces of literature collected and reviewed. If possible, have someone attend his speeches and other public meetings. The better informed you are about you opposition, the easier it will be to win.

**95** Your enemy's enemy is not necessarily your friend. It might be true in war, love, or high society, but it certainly is not true in politics. It *could* be true but, just as often as not, you might want to keep a fair distance from your enemy's enemy.

Often, these "enemies" are disenchanted or disgruntled former friends or supporters of your opponent. They might even have a legitimate complaint. But most of the time their hatred is passionate, clouds their thinking, and encourages them to provide you with a lot of "facts" that might be far from the truth. I advise extreme caution in dealing with your opponent's enemies, especially if they are people who once were close to him.

These observations hold primarily for

individuals. There certainly are situations when a group, association, or even a whole social class is upset at an incumbent or frightened of a challenger and is willing to work hard for his defeat. This is a different situation, and usually these groups can be turned into assets.

**96** Information is power; use it wisely. Intelligence is critical, especially if you have it before anyone else. Having information is one thing; using it effectively is something else. This is why I always cringe when I see a candidate spend \$25,000 or \$30,000 or more for a poll and then immediately announce the results. Knowing what the situation is, while your opponent might be in the dark, can be a great advantage.

Any form of political intelligence can be useful. But like the raw data in a survey, it needs to be analyzed and used directly.

**97** Learn how to count. Most people learn how to do this in kindergarten and then seem to forget when they are old enough to become involved in political campaigns. The ability to count is especially important when you are dealing with delegates in a convention. To have any real value, your estimates of strength must be based on a hard count. If the count is not hard, you are only fooling yourself and your candidate.

**98** Just because something is different does not mean it is better. There is a compulsion in some campaigns to do "different" things. This is fine—if what you do differently is more successful than what you were doing. Often it is not.

Making changes just for the sake of making changes is, in my opinion, a waste of time, effort, and, probably, money. If what you are doing is working, stick with it. If you have used a specific technique in other campaigns and it works, keep doing it until it stops working. If it becomes necessary to do something differently, make certain that what is different is an improvement.

**99** Do not underestimate the importance of visual symbolism. Some candidates are said to have "presence" or "charisma." This often is due to how the candidate looks, dresses, and handles himself. A candidate does not need to be handsome to dress well and look good. I am suspicious if a candidate is sloppy in his personal dress and habits that he might be careless in other areas—such as looking after my tax money if he is elected.

And sometimes it is not a case of upgrading the candidate's clothes or

style or use of symbols, but in downgrading them, as in the case of a candidate I once worked for in a southern state who drove a Rolls Royce. I suggested that if he really wanted to be elected, he would be better off driving a Chevrolet or a Ford, like most of his constituents.

**100** Let the candidate's spouse take whatever role he or she wants. Most candidates are men, and most of them are married, and efforts almost always are made to push the candidate's wife to become involved in the campaign. Sometimes this works and sometimes it does not. I have seen wives of candidates who would make better candidates than their husbands. I also have seen wives who have been a disruptive force in the campaign and actually wound up doing their husbands more harm than good.

What I usually do in a campaign is take the candidate's wife to lunch privately, find out what she would like to do in a campaign, if anything, and then encourage her to do it. If she would prefer to sit the campaign out, fine; if she would prefer to accompany her husband, fine; if she would like to have her own schedule, fine. She need not be forced to do something she would be uncomfortable doing.

Once in a California gubernatorial campaign I had lunch with the candidate's wife early on. She was Mrs. Frosty personified when I met her. By the time we had finished lunch, she was completely relaxed and told me, "I had this idea you were going to want me to go out and make speeches and do things like that, and I was petrified. All I want to do is work quietly in headquarters." And that is what she did. ■

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