

Vote NO on 8

Company Background

The “Vote NO on 8” campaign sought to defeat a November 2010 ballot proposition that would have led to larger K-12 class sizes in Florida public schools. The campaign was sponsored by Vote NO on 8. The campaign focused on the importance of small classes in children’s learning and teacher effectiveness. Chong & Koster is a media firm that specializes in digital communications for high-profile clients.

Objective

The campaign had a very small budget and needed to maximize the effectiveness of its marketing to persuade voters to vote no on the proposition. The backers also knew at the outset that they wanted to find a new model for voter communication. The first goal of the Facebook Ads campaign was to use Facebook as a market research tool to hone the messages identified by a baseline poll specifically for each micro-audience of targeted voters in Florida and for each demographic group. The learnings from this market research would be used across all other media buys. The second goal was to saturate Facebook users in Florida with targeted messages in the month prior to the election. The third, and most important goal, was to measure the impact of the online ad program to assess its viability as a new model for voter persuasion.

Facebook Executive Summary

Client:

Florida Voters:
voteNOon8

Agency:



Objective:

Obtain the most out of a limited marketing budget to defeat a ballot initiative in Florida

Solution:

Use Facebook Ads to test marketing messages across a variety of demographics, and to saturate voters in key Florida geographic areas with the correctly targeted message

Key Lessons:

- Facebook’s extensive targeting capabilities can make it a strong platform for market research, grouping people into target groups and testing marketing messages
- Facebook can deliver large volumes of impressions, even to specific target groups, making it an effective way of saturating targeted groups with a marketing message

“Facebook is incredibly powerful because both in politics and in business, there’s a huge gulf between those who can afford market research and those who cannot. For the 95 percent or 99 percent of marketing cases in which you would love some information but you just can’t afford to get it, now you can.”



Josh Koster, Partner, Chong & Koster

Approach

Successful political campaigns often depend on repeating their message to voters often and convincingly during the period shortly before the election. Mindful of this trend, the “Vote NO on 8 in Florida” campaign ran for two months starting in September 2010. The month prior to the November election was when the campaign focused the majority of its impressions.

Chong & Koster used Facebook’s targeting capabilities to serve a variety of ad messages to Floridians by age groups – 18 – 29; 30 – 44; 45 – 54; 55 – 63; 64 and over – separately for both males and females. The agency relied on Facebook’s Location Targeting to reach people in two of the most populated counties in Florida, Dade and Broward, which have a combined population of 4.2 million. It chose to focus the impressions here because it wanted to be able to benchmark voter results against the rest of the state.

“The methodology for using Facebook as a market research tool is really quite simple and incredibly efficient,” says Tyler Davis, Partner at Chong + Koster. “For each target audience identified by the poll, we ran a set of Facebook Ads that split-tested a variety of messages and imagery. Then, with Facebook’s real-time performance reporting, we were able to pinpoint the best message/image for each audience, and move those findings to inform display ad production within a week.”

The agency also used Facebook to target people who liked politically oriented Facebook Pages or



who listed relevant Likes & Interests or Education & Work. For example, it targeted people who listed terms like “teacher,” “pta” “math teacher” to reach educators. Because both the polling and Facebook research indicated that the issue carries special resonance with parents of school children, it even included interests like “I love my son” and “I love my daughter” (and layered them with demographic targeting.)

Chong & Koster used Facebook’s real-time feedback capability to test multiple marketing messages with each target group. More importantly, it was able to test which images pair best with each message and audiences, which was essential in scripting the display ads. The agency broke down the response rates for each message and demographic group, and picked the most effective messages for each. This was critical in maximizing the marketing budget. “We used Facebook as the master research tool to help determine the creative for banner ads and TV ads online,” says Josh Koster, Partner at Chong & Koster.

Clicks on the Facebook Ads drove people to the Vote NO on 8 in Florida website. Traffic from Facebook

“The methodology for using Facebook as a market research tool is really quite simple and incredibly efficient.”



Tyler Davis, Partner at Chong + Koster

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NO on Florida Amendment 8



Amendment 8 hurts students. That's why the Florida PTA Opposes Amendment 8. Learn more, and get involved!

was tagged for remarketing on the site. As a result, Chong & Koster was able to continue targeting the right message to that person on banner ads across the Web. “Facebook actually influenced our banner ad targeting,” says Josh. “Not only were our display ads based on the results of the Facebook research, but a lot of our ads ran to people who we originally aggregated on a remarketing list through the Facebook acquisition campaign.”

Results

- The campaign was successful, with the ballot initiative being defeated, falling 5.51 percent below the required minimum 60 percent approval
- This is the first ever statewide election to win using online ads as the primary form of voter communication. The experiment has been recognized as a watershed moment for the industry, winning a “Best Use of New Technology” Gold at the 2011 Pollie Awards
- A post-election poll conducted by an independent third-party, SEA Polling and Strategic Design, showed that the campaign had a clear impact
- There was a 19 percent difference in the way people voted in areas where Facebook Ads ran versus areas where the ads did not run
- In the areas where the ads ran, people with the most online ad exposure were 17 percent more likely to vote against the proposition than those with the least

- Ad exposure had a greater impact on how voters voted than ideology: audiences exposed to the Facebook Ads outperformed even Democratic base voters
- Among people who voted against the proposition, there was a very high recall rate of the messages in the Facebook Ads, reaching as high as 45 percent or more
- The ads saw 75 million impressions among people in key geographic areas of Florida, likely resulting in the average Facebook user in the key areas of Florida seeing a targeted ad five times per day

“Where the Facebook Ads appeared, we did almost 20 percentage points better than where they didn’t,” says Josh. “Within that area, the people who saw the ads were 17 percent more likely to vote our way than the people who didn’t. Within that group, the people who voted the way we wanted them to, when asked why, often cited the messages they learned from the Facebook Ads.”

Chong & Koster found that achieving such dramatic results was very economical using Facebook. “The beautiful value in this is that we can actually move public opinion intentionally and cheaply. The amount spent on Facebook buys is the amount it would cost to put one mailer in 150,000 voters’ mailboxes,” says Josh. “If one-third of the voters read the mailer, that’s equivalent to 50,000 voters for the same amount of money that we used to reach to the two largest counties in Florida at frequency for months.”

The Future

Chong & Koster believes that the strategy of using Facebook as a market research tool and as a platform for ad saturation can be used to change public opinion in any political campaign. The agency has already applied the model for other campaigns, and is also working with a number of brands that recognize that this could lead to a new model for brand advertising in the digital era.