

Let's Talk About the "Door-Knocking Charade!"

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People acquire things, or support notions, to satisfy their wants and needs. Sales is the process of connecting those needs and desires with answers and solutions; and sometimes this even includes educating folks about new needs and desires. Campaigning is simply sales at its most primal level.

Idaho Democrats are consistently told that "Door Knocking" is the essential key to a successful campaign. But if you notice, the Fuller Brush company no longer comes to your door. Neither does Avon, nor any of the other door-to-door sales operations. In fact, I'll bet you can't find a single item, aside from some cookies or other school fund-raiser, in your house that you purchased from a door-to-door peddler. Even the opposition doesn't use that technique -- and they win! We have had candidates diligently knock every door in my District and still lose to the opposition who did none of it. I have lived at my address for over 30 years and during that time I have had only one candidate, or their campaign team, knock on my door. I get plenty of "lit-drops" but no conversations. Wonder WHY?

Sales Funnel



Today's lifestyle doesn't support that technique any more. Stay-at-home moms simply aren't there today, they too are probably working. The majority of voters aren't even home until after 6:30 in the evening, and then they really don't like being disturbed after about 8 o'clock. So you have just an hour and a half of potential productive time each weekday for canvassing. Saturdays are barely better, giving you maybe a few more hours but many doors still not-home. And Sundays are a no-go.

Simple "Lit-drops" coupled with a GOTV push in the last few weeks before an election can have a positive affect in some cases. But that is different from a persuasion door-to-door campaign where someone is trying to introduce a candidate and convince the voter to lend their support. Professional sales and marketing studies have long held that persuasion efforts take at least 8 - 10 "touches" before the prospect even becomes aware of a new notion. And that's just to get past the daily buzz that the world throws at us. Only then, can you start to persuade.

Door-Knocking is a good tool for campaign team-building, it generates excitement and energy. But as far as being an efficient sales tool, there aren't enough days in a normal campaign with the usual number of volunteers to knock enough doors to persuade the majority of those prospective voters. And while we waste our time, and reputation on these tasks; our opposition conducts effective marketing campaigns and wins.

In today's 'Twitter-verse' we largely vote by tribe. Life is simply too busy, too crowded, and too messy, for most folks to do the needed homework to research each candidate's qualifications and then remember them again in the voting booth. So we 'buy' the Brand, or Party, that seems to answer most of our individual wants and needs and we vote mainly by tribe or Party. That makes the Party responsible for establishing our BRAND, our WHY. Why should the voter select our Party? Or our candidate?

(I have a dozen full-service grocery stores nearby, but I don't go from store to store when I do my grocery buy – I have my favorite who gets most all my business.)

It can't be based solely upon any specific issue, they are too ephemeral. It needs to start by identifying our core principles and global missions. Principles like, "All people are created equal," the foundation statement of Democracy itself. Then current issues and projects can be highlighted to stem from, and to fulfill, those core principles. That is how the Party must identify our WHY, in order to establish the current NEED or ISSUE that must be SOLVED for the voting public. The candidate simply becomes the local distributor for that solution. *(i.e The Party sells the need/desire for hot dogs at the game, and our candidate's job is to simply proclaim that he has those hot dogs available here and now.)*

"Door-knocking" is however, an efficient distraction for a Party that won't, or doesn't know how, to sell their message to the wider public to create the demand, or the "draw," for the solution. (Much the way the flue in the fireplace provides the 'draw' to pull fresh oxygen into the fire.) Door-knocking is an easy dodge to foist those responsibilities off onto the local Party and/or individual candidate. This forces the candidate to focus their energies first into just establishing the NEED they want to solve for the voter. It also distracts the candidate from their prime job of closing the sale between themselves – the solution – and the voter.

When the campaign fails, it's the candidate's fault -- not the Party's. The candidate didn't door-knock enough, the candidate didn't do their job. Candidate feel like they failed, and they rarely return for another try. One-n-done, Churn-n-Burn. The Party gains the reputation with voters, and even loyal Party members, that this Party can't navigate political waters; and those supporters go Dark.

When responsibilities get shifted like this, problems can never get remedied because the issue has been mis-diagnosed at the start. Mismanagement like this becomes routine – even procedure. And the failures continue, repeated time after time.

Toyota ads sell the features, quality, and value of their cars. The local dealer's task is then just to tell the buyer that they have those quality Toyotas and to make that buyer want to do business with them. Our candidates need to be like the local Toyota Dealer, not the factory.

Our Party needs to sell our BRAND, so our candidates can concentrate on "closing the sale" with their voters.