



Developing A Good Campaign Calendar As A Candidate Campaign Manager, or Activist

BY RICHARD P. BURKE

A good campaign calendar is indispensable to any well-run campaign. Unless you are running unopposed or enjoy uncommon advantages, you will need a well-organized and well-managed campaign calendar to win your election. No two calendars will be alike, but there are things in common with successful campaign plans that can help you get one together.

A good campaign calendar is also indispensable to any serious political activist. Even if you are not a candidate, but a serious volunteer, a campaign calendar can do a lot to ensure that your time and skills will be effectively deployed throughout an election cycle.

1 CHOOSE A PLATFORM TO MAINTAIN YOUR CALENDAR ON

a. IF YOU ARE A CANDIDATE OR ARE RUNNING A CAMPAIGN. If you are a candidate or are running a campaign or ballot measure campaign involving more people than just yourself, use an online calendar and designate one person to maintain it. Google Calendar and Basecamp are examples of such platforms. Each platform has different features, benefits, and costs (some are free) suitable for different campaigns. Online calendar platforms allow all necessary people to view the calendar in real time no matter where they are, minimizing the chance that something could be missed because they don't have the current copy of a paper calendar. Unless emergencies arise, all requests to add or remove items from the calendar should go through this person. Multiple "chefs" will result in confusion and chaos.

b. IF YOU ARE AN ACTIVIST/VOLUNTEER. If you are working as a "lone wolf" a paper calendar can suffice but consider using an online calendar. Online calendars can be laid out for each of the campaigns you are active in, can be changed quickly, and can be viewed at home or on your phone. Changes made anywhere appear everywhere. If you like working with paper, online calendars can always be printed out. In some cases, your campaign calendar(s) can be overlaid on top of a campaign's online calendar or a personal calendar.

2 PLAN BACKWARD

Start your voter contact planning from after election Election Day (win or lose there are always things to do at the end of an election) and work backwards to the current day. Doing so will help to ensure that you will

allot sufficient time to do the critical things which need to be done as Election Day approaches.

3 BEGIN WITH KNOWN DEADLINES AND LAWS

Plan your timeline within the framework of the election law. Does your specific election law specify certain dates by which certain activities must be accomplished and dates before which other activities are prohibited? Filing deadlines, fee payment deadlines, petition deadlines (if applicable) dates on which normal, absentee, and out-of-state ballots are mailed and voter registration deadlines are examples of such deadlines.

4 QUANTIFY YOUR GOALS

All of your voter contact activities and other campaign activities should be quantifiable wherever possible. Poor goals might be "Raise Money" or "Knock on Doors" while better ones would be "Raise at least \$5,000 by October 1st" or "Knock on 500 doors by October 1." How many events will you hold? How many press releases will you send out? How many posters or signs will you have to put up? How many brochures will you have to print and distribute? How many doors should you and your supporters have knocked on? Phone calls? Get Out The Vote (GOTV) contacts? How many social media posts should be made? There are so many such metrics to consider that it is impractical to list them here; but YOU will need to list as many as will apply to you. Quantification is important for two reasons:

a. TO MEASURE PROGRESS. Quantifiable goals will help you measure the progress of your campaign. If by December 10th your team has knocked on 5,000 doors, is that good or bad? If your goal is 6,000, it's good; if your goal is 60,000, it's bad. If you have not set a quantifiable goal, you have no idea.

b. TO MANAGE SPENDING, TIME, AND RESOURCE DEPLOYMENT. Quantifiable goals will help your budgeting process. You cannot reasonably compare the relative costs and benefits of brochures vs. posters vs. radio ads unless you know how many of each you are talking about. If you are an activist, a campaign calendar can help you to maintain balance between your private life, your work life, and volunteerism.

5 DETERMINE NECESSARY ACTIVITIES AND WHEN THEY SHOULD TAKE PLACE

For each goal, plan the activities that will be required to reach that goal. When will these activities take place? When will the planning for them take place? Who will be responsible for the planning, execution, and other aspects of your campaign activities? If you plan to put up 2,500 lawn signs by September 1, by what date should you take your poster design to the printer? When should the graphic design of the signs take place? When will the people to put up the lawn signs be recruited and when will they put up the lawn signs? It can get very complicated and involved.

The kinds of activities which can be undertaken which need to be placed on a calendar are almost endless; you will need to determine what those activities are. If it isn't possible to do them all, it will be necessary to prioritize. Getting Out The Vote (GOTV) is typically critical. Neighborhood canvassing, phone canvassing, sponsoring, or participating in public events, and many other activities should find their way onto your calendar.

6 DETERMINE NECESSARY PEOPLE AND RESOURCES

Do not forget to plan for the resources you will need to accomplish each activity. As you look at your timeline, figure out for each week how many people and how much money you will need for the activities planned for that week. Where will the resources come from? Include those pieces of information on your calendar (or link them to your calendar) so you can keep track of who is responsible for what.

7 BE ADAPTABLE

There are deadlines and events which cannot be changed. Such static events will go onto your calendar and will remain frozen there. But in most campaigns, things come up on short notice, unexpected events transpire, priorities must be changed, so do on. If you are an activist, things may arise in your private or work lives which will require some juggling. It is therefore important that you be ready to adapt your calendar as needed to accommodate the dynamic nature of the political season.

NOTE:

This document was adapted by Richard P. Burke from the *"POLITICAL CAMPAIGN PLANNING MANUAL: A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO WINNING ELECTIONS"* by J. Brian O'Day of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.