

Joe Fuld

Don't knock door-to-door canvassing

Canvassing is special to me. I love knocking on doors. I think it is still a vastly underrated form of communication. Why do I think canvassing is so special? Because of the connection direct contact makes with targeted voters in a personal and systematic way. With any paid medium you need repetition over a condensed period of time.

With door-to-door contact, especially on political campaigns and issue organizing, one good conversation can be enough to make a difference. Let's discuss how a good door to door contact can make such a difference.

break

Door-to-door contact breaks down barriers

No matter where you are or who you are, door-to-door canvassing has a power that no other medium has. It can get people to actually talk to each other and break down self-imposed barriers of party, race, gender, identity and ignorance. The conversation you can have at a door is a great equalizer - you are a walking change agent.

Forms unlikely connections

Canvassing done in the right way can create a connection between two people who may have never met and may never meet again, but that brief exchange of ideas can persuade someone in a way that a TV spot or a mail piece cannot. Whether it is volunteer, candidate or even paid door-to-door canvassing, it can make a great impact.

Real conversations matter

The power from door-to-door contact comes from real interaction, not a lit drop or a rushed interaction with the candidate looking at his watch.

Understanding the voter

Real connections happen when the conversation is about the voter. The conversation at the door needs to be about the voter and what issues matter to them, not about the candidate or the campaign.

A script can only get you so far

Think beyond the script. How do you draw in the voter to make a connection? Take notes, collect an email address, and follow up!

No really, follow up!

The follow-up matters as much as the initial contact. If you said you were going to do something, do it. If you made a connection with someone, ask for their email address or send them a real hand written note. They will not forget it and you won't either. What you get from these conversations will help influence your

work down the road, and we will all be better off. A real connection is hard to forget both for the voter and the candidate. That is what makes it so powerful and so rewarding.

Actually knocking on doors

Tools can help you canvass, but you still need to actually knock on the doors. We love the door-to-door canvassing tools that are out there. Catalist, Grassroots unwired , NGP VAN, Smart VAN, Organizer and Votebuilder all have tools that can help organize and support canvas programs, but they cannot make you knock on the doors and have those real conversations. You need to do that on a regular basis to make a difference.

Have a plan

Have a real plan and stick with it. This can separate the winners from the losers. Knowing how many doors you need to knock on will make a big difference in your campaign.

Does door-to-door replace other communication efforts?

You should spend a lot of time knocking on doors, but even if you do this you will not reach everyone you need to. You need to have a layered approach. Authentic conversation with authentic paid communication that matches the tone at the door is key. Social media can also help but again, you need to have a real volume of contact for both paid and unpaid social efforts to make the impact that gets you to a win.