The Use of Campaign E-mails by First and Second Tier Candidates in Presidential Primaries

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The basic need for campaigns to directly contact potential supporters has existed as long as there have been elections. The methods of contacting those individuals, however, have changed dramatically over time. What once required an army of volunteers and staffers to accomplish through door to door campaigning, has since been accomplished through direct mail and phone banks, which allow a much smaller group of people to reach a much larger audience. More recently, of course, campaigns have seized upon e-mail as a medium to accomplish the same tasks. The use of e-mail, though, is in its relative infancy in campaigns and campaigns are clearly experimenting with the possibilities that such instant and cheap communication has for fundraising, recruiting, persuasion, and mobilization. In this paper, I examine the strategies that campaigns are adopting to make use of e-mail, strategies that are not only evolving from election to election, but within the same election. Looking at campaign e-mails sent out by the declared candidates for the Democratic and Republican presidential nominations from June 1, 2007 through the end of the primary season, I focus in particular on differences in strategies between the so called first tier and second tier candidates in each field in terms of the frequency of use, the requests made of supporters, the types of appeals used, and the references to other candidates in the same field, as well as candidates in the opposing field. I find that, by and large, second tier candidates are not taking full advantage of the opportunities available to them through e-mail.

Introduction

The basic need for campaigns to directly contact potential supporters has existed as long as there have been elections. The methods of contacting those individuals, however, have changed dramatically over time. What once required an army of volunteers and staffers to accomplish through door to door campaigning has since been accomplished through direct mail and phone banks, which allow a much smaller group of people to reach a much larger audience. More recently, of course, campaigns have seized upon e-mail as a medium to accomplish the same tasks. The use of e-mail, though, is in its relative infancy in elections, and campaigns are clearly experimenting with the possibilities that such instant and cheap communication has for fundraising, recruiting, persuasion, and mobilization. The 2008 presidential primaries, with historically large fields of candidates in both parties and the earliest starting date in the election cycle of any in our history, have served as a prime testing ground of this medium for campaigns. They also provide a great opportunity for political scientists to examine more closely how different campaigns make use of the possibilities that e-mail creates, especially for campaigns in very different strategic

positions. Since electronic communications are only likely to become a more important part of future campaigns at all levels, and since they open up opportunities to contact voters that do not require either huge war chests or attention from the news media, it is important to examine exactly how different types of candidates are making use of those opportunities. In this paper, I seek to do so by looking at the differences in the use of e-mail by the so called first tier and second tier candidates in each field, with an emphasis on the types of appeals made, the requests made of recipients, the frequency of use, and references to other candidates in both parties.

E-mail may be a way for lesser known and lesser funded candidates to build a base of support and compete with the heavyweights. While television advertising is limited by the amount of money that a candidate can raise, and free media coverage is dominated by candidates with advantages in fundraising, name recognition, and campaign staff (Traugott 1985), e-mail offers an opportunity for candidates to reach their supporters repeatedly for very little cost. This is especially important in a primary, where the base of support for each candidate is less well-defined than it is in the general election, and identifying and maintaining contact with that base can be hugely important, particularly in contests with proportional or district level voting, where candidates finishing outside of first place can still win delegates. It also has the advantage of providing one of the best representations of a campaign's intended message, since it is wholly controlled by the campaign and sent directly to supporters with few logistical limits on timing or frequency.

Going into the 2008 presidential nominating contests, e-mail carried the potential to be even more important than in previous years. The compressed schedule of the early contests and the huge amounts of money raised by the leading candidates, particularly in the Democratic Party contest, created huge challenges for underdog candidates that made an alternative medium for reaching supporters and potential supporters that much more important. Additionally, the wide open nature of both nominating contests left open the possibility that one or more of the second tier candidates could influence the outcome at the convention by swinging their support to a candidate seeking to cobble together a majority of delegates on a second or third vote. This would mean that holding on to a small group of supporters, even long after it had become clear that the candidate they voted for in their primaries or caucuses had no chance of actually winning the nomination, could have ended up being an important goal of one or more campaigns. In fact, John Edwards' campaign publicly discussed the possibility that he would play "kingmaker" at the convention (Cooper 2008). Doing so would be greatly facilitated by building a relationship with those supporters through personalized and repeated contact – the kind of contact perhaps best made through e-mail.

Clearly, then candidates running for president in 2008 should have been expected to make extensive use of e-mail in their campaigns, and the specific usage

of this tool had the potential to be shaped by the strategic position of the campaign. This is hardly surprising, nor particularly enlightening. To develop more specific, useful, and testable expectations about how a candidate's strategic position should affect the frequency with which he or she sends e-mail messages, the types of requests and appeals made in those messages, and the likelihood that other candidates will be attacked in those messages, it is helpful to first take a step back to consider the most direct precursor to e-mail for campaigns – direct mail. While there are important differences between traditional direct mail and e-mail, which will be discussed in detail below, they are clearly related and any examination of campaign use of e-mail could benefit by briefly considering what we know about this medium.

Snail Mail: An Important Precursor

Direct mail is a relatively understudied phenomenon in politics, most likely because of the difficulty in obtaining a good sample. Since campaigns control the list that they send mailings to, and are unlikely to be concerned about the impact of their choices on political scientists, studies that have looked at such mailings have made use of relatively small samples of pieces from congressional campaigns (Raymond 1987, Gowdin 1988) or presidential elections (Benoit and Stein 2005). Other studies have turned to surveys of voters (Goldenberg and Traugott 1980) or of candidates (McNitt 1985) to examine who received direct mail or how campaigns used it. Finally, a third group of researchers have used their own pieces in field experiments (Placek 1974, Gerber and Green 2000, Green 2004). These earlier efforts reveal some important things about direct mail, especially in pointing out the advantages of using direct mail, its content, the types of campaigns most likely to make use of it, and the effects that it can have.

Direct mail does have several advantages over other types of advertising or free media coverage. Direct mail can be specifically targeted to the recipient in ways that mass media communications cannot and allows for messages to be communicated to supporters without broadcasting them to the opposition (McNitt 1985, Salmore and Salmore 1985, Armstrong 1988, Bickert 1992). It also gives campaigns the ability to repeatedly contact the same individuals to ask for their vote or monetary support, in the process building a rapport with those supporters over time (Gowdin 1988, Armstrong 1988). Finally, direct mail is cheap when compared to other forms of advertising and allows campaigns to test the effectiveness of their messages by observing the response (Salmore and Salmore 1985, Armstrong 1988).

Previous work has also examined who is most likely to use direct mail and what those candidates are likely to include in their mailings. These studies indicate that candidates with more money and those in less competitive races are more likely than others to make use of direct mail (McNitt 1985, Gowdin 1988). They have also found that direct mail tends to focus heavily on issues (Raymond 1987, Gowdin

1988, Benoit and Stein 2005), although not necessarily in great detail, nor with candidates in the same race discussing the same issues. They are frequently used for attacks (Gowdin 1988, Armstrong 1988), but less often than they are for acclaims (Benoit and Stein 2005). While they can be used to try to persuade new supporters, they are most often used to try to mobilize a candidate's base (Gowdin 1988, Armstrong 1988). These uses, however, may be dependent on the candidates and their strategic positions, although there is no consensus on some of the details. Raymond (1987) found more issue content from challengers, while Benoit and Stein (2005) found just the opposite. Benoit and Stein also found challengers to be more likely to attack than incumbents and Democrats more likely to attack than Republicans.

Finally, other studies of direct mail have focused on the impact of these pieces, finding that they stimulate political discussion, increase knowledge of the issues discussed in the mailings, bolster name recognition and thermometer ratings of the sender, encourage oversimplification of politics, and may lead to modest improvements in turnout among some groups of voters (Placek 1974, Goldenberg and Traugott 1980, Armstrong 1988, Gerber and Green 2000, Green 2004, Benoit and Stein 2005).

It would be surprising if campaigns turning to the use of e-mail have not seen the similarities to direct mail and taken lessons from them. At the same time, there are clearly differences between the two which should change the strategies and use in important ways.

Shifting to Online Communications

Large scale use of the internet for any type of campaign purposes at the presidential level only dates back to 1996 (Margolis and Resnick 2000, Bimber 2003). It is not at all surprising, therefore, that there is far less work on the use of e-mail. The work that has been done, however, provides some very useful information about the use of the internet in general, and e-mail more specifically, by campaigns. Like the work on direct mail, this research helps to identify the advantages and disadvantages of online communications and the types of candidates who are most likely to make use of it.

Bimber (2003) points out several advantages and disadvantages of both the internet and e-mail for campaigns. Online communication is cheap and unfiltered by the media. The campaign can easily get out a specific message without having to worry about only having sound bites or summaries of their ideas reach their supporters. It can also be easily targeted to reach specific supporters and can be used to respond immediately to events or news stories to help the campaign either emphasize or shape reactions to them. Finally, by embedding links in the e-mails and

monitoring recipients' use of those links, e-mail provides a great opportunity for campaigns to gauge the effectiveness of particular appeals.

There are also, however, some important disadvantages of e-mail and other online communications. First, while campaigns control the content of the messages, they cannot control the distribution of those messages. Web sites can obviously be visited by anyone, and it would be hard to imagine presidential campaigns not paying attention to what their opponents post on the internet. Even the distribution of e-mails, which could be somewhat controlled, generally is not. Since candidates have an incentive not to exclude any possible supporter (or possible donor) from receiving e-mails, and since e-mail lists are not as easy to come by as lists of mailing addresses, it is common for candidates to allow individuals to sign up to receive messages from the campaign. In fact, as I will discuss below, that was true of every declared presidential candidate in this race with the exception of Alan Keyes. In addition to supporters (and interested political scientists), however, this also allows the opposition and the media to monitor the content of campaign e-mails by signing up to receive them, if they choose to do so. In addition, recipients can easily forward those messages to anyone, so that campaigns never know where their messages will end up. E-mails can also irritate the recipients if they are either unsolicited or too frequent, and therefore viewed as spam.

A few studies have examined the use of e-mail and other online communications by campaigns to understand the circumstances or characteristics of candidates that are most likely to lead to use of these methods, as well as the aims of those campaigns in sending e-mails. In a 2007 article, Herrnson, et al, found that constituency characteristics, candidate characteristics, and, most importantly, strategic circumstances all played a role in predicting candidate use of the internet. Candidates running in districts with lower African-American populations, fewer voters over the age of 55, and more college educated constituents were more likely to make use of the internet for their campaigns. Candidates who had come more recently to politics were more likely to make use of it than their more experienced counterparts. They also found that it was more likely to be used by challengers and open seat candidates than by incumbents, by candidates with more money, candidates with larger districts, and candidates in competitive races, the last finding echoed by Bimber (2003). The internet is also used more often by major parties than by minor parties, despite expectations that it might help level the playing field (Margolis and Resnick 2000, Bimber 2003).

Bimber (2003) also examined the use of e-mail and found that it was targeted more at the base than at swing voters. Given the way in which campaigns generate lists of e-mails, this only makes sense. With such a composition of the recipient list, it is also not surprising that he found it was frequently used to solicit donations, find

volunteers, promote events, and alert supporters to new content on the campaign's web site.

Theory and Expectations

Several of the findings in research on direct mail help to inform expectations about the use of e-mails by campaigns. Like direct mail, e-mail can be targeted to specific individuals or groups, is cheaper than other forms of advertising, can be used for repeated contact to build a relationship with specific voters, is unfiltered by the media, and can be used to test the effectiveness of particular messages. Also like direct mail, it is a useful platform for delivering attacks on other candidates and best for mobilizing the base, rather than persuading swing voters.

E-mail differs from direct mail, though, in some important ways. First, it is so cheap that candidates without large war chests can make use of it as easily as those with them. Second, the communication is essentially immediate, giving the campaigns a much better opportunity to respond to events and news coverage than they have had with direct mail. Finally, while it is still less conspicuous than other types of advertising or free media coverage, it is much easier for the other side or the media to infiltrate. Understanding these similarities to and differences from direct mail can help to shape expectations about how first and second tier candidates should differ in the frequency with which they send e-mails to supporters, the types of requests that they make of those supporters, the types of appeals utilized in their e-mails, and their willingness to attack one another.

As previous studies have indicated, candidates with more money make more use of direct mail than those without. The negligible cost of e-mail, however, should change that. With a self-selected audience, very little cost to put together e-mail messages, and no marginal cost of sending any given message to more recipients, the disparities found in direct mail between well-funded candidates and their rivals should not be found in e-mail. In fact, the reverse should be true, since this is a cheap way for second tier candidates to try to make up the communication gap they face when it comes to other forms of paid advertising and free media coverage. Additionally, since too frequent or unsolicited e-mails can actually have a negative marginal utility, sending frequent e-mails may actually be a risky strategy. Since second tier candidates have less to lose and more to gain by contacting their supporters more frequently, those risks should be easier for them to accept.

> *H1: Second tier candidates will send e-mails to their supporters more frequently than first tier candidates.*

Both traditional direct mail and e-mail are used to request help from supporters, especially in the form of donations, volunteers, and assistance in recruiting more

voters, donors, and volunteers. Given both the nature of e-mail and the composition of the list of recipients, there should be no difference in the willingness of first and second tier candidates to make extensive use of e-mail to request donations. Presidential elections have become more expensive than ever, and the pressure on candidates across the spectrum of public support to increase their fundraising efforts is huge. Seeking money from supporters through a medium that is cheap and allows for repeated solicitations with personal-seeming messages is both an obvious and a natural strategy for any candidate. There are similar incentives to seek volunteers and ask for help with recruiting in e-mails. If anything, though, these requests should be more common among second tier candidates. While first tier candidates certainly need volunteers and help from supporters to recruit others to the cause, campaigns with less money and smaller bases of support need grassroots help even more to make up for their other disadvantages if they have any hope of gaining momentum in the campaign.

> *H2: Second tier candidates will be just as likely to request donations in e-mails to their supporters as first tier candidates.*

> *H3: Second tier candidates will be more likely to ask for volunteers and help with recruiting in their e-mails to their supporters than first tier candidates.*

When considering the types of appeals made by different candidates, specifically references to issues vs. references to candidate qualities, there is reason to believe that different types of campaigns will have different emphases. Clearly, both sets of campaigns will reference both types of appeals during the campaign, but first tier candidates should be less likely to refer to issues than are smaller campaigns. First, issue discussions are riskier than talking about a candidate's own good qualities. Qualities such as experience, strength, compassion, or knowledge may be more or less important to any given voter, but are unlikely to be seen as negatives by voters. Issue positions, however, can attract or repel. Candidates in worse strategic positions should be more likely to take risks because, again, they have less to lose by doing so. Additionally, second tier candidates are likely to have more homogenous groups of supporters. Not only are smaller groups of supporters more likely to be homogenous in the first place, but individuals who have chosen to support someone who is getting less attention in the election and seems to have a significantly worse chance of actually winning the nomination are likely to be committed to that candidate for some powerful reason. While these reasons certainly could involve characteristics of the candidate, they are more likely to be based on that candidate's position on some small number of issues. Consider this year's fields of candidates. If voters were simply looking for charisma, experience, knowledge, strength, compassion, or honesty, they could likely have found those qualities in one or more of the leading candidates in each field. If, on the other hand, a Democratic

voter had wanted a commitment to immediately withdraw all troops from Iraq or a Republican voter had wanted a candidate committed to focusing first and foremost on cracking down on illegal immigration, they might have been better off supporting Bill Richardson or Tom Tancredo, respectively. Since their appeals should be largely issue driven, these candidates should be expected to frequently and forcefully remind their supporters of their positions on those issues.

> *H4: Second tier candidates will be more likely to mention issues in e-mails to their supporters than first tier candidates.*

> *H5: First tier candidates will be more likely to mention candidate qualities in e-mails to their supporters than second tier candidates.*

Finally, while e-mail, like direct mail, is certainly one of the better methods a campaign may use for criticizing the opposition, it is not as perfect a medium as more traditional direct mail. The fact that it is aimed largely at a candidate's base and is not broadcast in the open makes attacking other candidates through e-mail appealing. The ease with which other campaigns and the media can monitor those e-mails, however, makes doing so riskier than through traditional printed materials. This important distinction should create a difference in the willingness of different types of campaigns to attack, much less even mention by name, other candidates in either field. Second tier candidates should be more likely to mention other candidates by name, regardless of the context or tone. First, since leading candidates have no incentive to draw attention to other candidates who are struggling to get any attention at all, there are simply more candidates that second tier candidates may have a reason to mention. Second, while a candidate at or near the top of the polls may have the luxury of simply trying to sell his or her own qualities, candidates at the back of the pack need to point out their differences with other candidates if they have any chance of closing the gap.

Those comparisons, of course, are likely to be critical of the other candidates, and second tier candidates should be more willing to attack other candidates than are first tier candidates. The study by Bimber (2003) previously discussed found more attacks by challengers than incumbents in direct mail pieces, and first tier candidates are certainly closer to being in the situation faced by incumbents, while second tier candidates' strategic position is closer to that faced by challengers. Not only do they need to make up ground, but, again, they have less to lose from assuming the risks that an attack on a rival may backfire by turning people against them. This distinction should be even greater when only looking at intraparty attacks, and for the same reasons. The incentives, however, are reversed when it comes to cross-party attacks in a nominating contest. First tier candidates can not only more credibly look ahead to the general election, but want to both present themselves as strong candidates in potential general election matchups, and may want to promote an aura

of inevitability by ignoring their own-party rivals and directing their fire at the other party.

> *H6: Second tier candidates will be more likely to mention other candidates by name in e-mails sent to their supporters than first tier candidates.*

> *H7: Second tier candidates will be more likely to criticize other candidates by name in e-mails sent to their supporters than first tier candidates.*

> *H8: Second tier candidates will be more likely to criticize other candidates in their own party by name in e-mails sent to their supporters than first tier candidates.*

> *H9: First tier candidates will be more likely to criticize candidates from the other party by name in e-mails sent to their supporters than second tier candidates.*

Data and Method

To test these hypotheses, I examine a dataset created from e-mails from all of the presidential candidates in both fields from June 1, 2007 through June 4, 2008, the day that Hillary Clinton sent out a message to her supporters announcing her plans to drop out of the race.[1] This dataset, then, represents all of the e-mails sent out by the campaigns to a national audience, all of the e-mails they sent to individuals who signed up for the list but did not contribute to the campaign, as well as any specifically targeted at someone living in Arkansas. While it is not, therefore, the universe of e-mails sent out by each campaign, it represents a large percentage of all the messages sent out by all the presidential campaigns in the 2008 nominating contests, as well as a very representative sample of the types of messages used by each campaign. These e-mails were then coded for characteristics of the sender (party, sponsoring candidate, and individual signing the message), the types of requests in the message, the issues mentioned, the way the sponsoring candidate was described, mentions of other candidates, government officials, celebrities, or other well-known figures, and links embedded in the message, among a host of other variables.[2]

The data set included 1556 e-mails from 18 different candidates, excluding the messages sent to welcome a new subscriber to the list and messages sent after a

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[1] To gather this data, I signed up for each candidate's e-mail list on June 1, 2007, or as soon as one became available. Ron Paul did not have a list for several weeks after that, and Fred Thompson did not declare his candidacy until about three months later, so their e-mails did not begin until later than the others. Additionally, Alan Keyes declared his candidacy, but never set up a sign up list for e-mail.
[2] Intercoder reliability was calculated for a random selection of 200 e-mails. Reliabilty coeffecents for all variables in the analysis were at least .80.

candidate had dropped out of the race. Compared to the other studies already referenced, this is a very large sample of e-mail pieces, and this election year, only the fourth presidential election in which e-mails have been used, provides a good opportunity to study e-mail usage. There is clearly still some experimentation going on by campaigns, but they also had a chance to have learned something from earlier elections. Additionally, this election year had the advantage of having an unusually large number of candidates campaigning over a historically long period of time before the first votes were cast. Obviously, there was no incumbent candidate in the race, but there were clearly strong differences in the strategic outlook for various campaigns. The nominating contests, in turn, provide an ideal backdrop for studying e-mail, since they increase the importance of the key targets of e-mails, the base, the contests are decided by appeals other than to party identification, which makes reaching voters with more specific messages that much more important, and the proportional or district level elections in many states, spread out over weeks and months allowed for even relatively unknown candidates to stick around for a long period of time if they chose to.

Candidates were coded as either first or second tier based on their position in the polls. Looking at the results over the course of the year, there was a clear break in each field between candidates' standing, one that, anecdotally, was reflected in the way that the media treated those campaigns. In the Democratic field, Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, and Barack Obama always had double digit support, while, Joe Biden, Chris Dodd, Mike Gravel, Dennis Kucinich, and Bill Richardson never did better than 5% in any Gallup poll (Pollingreport.com). On the Republican side, Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, Mitt Romney, Fred Thompson, and, after November 15th, Mike Huckabee[3], were clearly distinct from Sam Brownback, Jim Gilmore, Duncan Hunter, Ron Paul, Tom Tancredo, Tommy Thompson, and Mike Huckabee prior to November 15th (Pollingreport.com).

To see how the candidates in each group differed from one another in their use of e-mail, I looked at the frequency with which e-mails were sent by each type of candidate, the types of requests made in those e-mails, the types of appeals used by the senders, and mentions and criticisms of other candidates in those e-mails. For all but the first of these questions, I used binary logistic regression, controlling for other important factors that may have influenced those decisions. Specifically, I controlled for the party of the sponsoring campaign, the title or description of the individual who signed the e-mail, whether issues and or candidate qualities were mentioned in the e-mail, and the timing of the message. Obviously, since the candidates were competing in two separate nominating contests, controlling for party allowed for differences in the nature and tone of those competitions. The title or description of

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[3] This represented the first time Huckabee received double digit support in a poll, something he maintained from that point on throughout the rest of his candidacy.

the individual sending the e-mail should also play some role in all of these decisions. For example, an appeal for a donation coming from the candidate may be taken more seriously than one coming from a relatively unknown staff member, while an attack on another candidate coming from the candidate directly might be riskier for the campaign than one coming from a supporter without a direct position in the campaign.

A candidate's strategic position, however, would also affect the size of the campaign staff available to send such messages. E-mails were coded as being signed by the candidate, by the campaign manager, by other named campaign staff, by family members, by other individuals (including government officials, celebrities, and private citizens), and by no one, with the last used as the default category in the analysis. While all campaigns may have felt a need to justify the requests they made or attacks on other candidates by referencing issues or the good qualities of their own candidates, that pressure was most likely not felt equally by all of them.

Finally, particular events in the campaign would seem likely to influence decisions about what to ask for, how to appeal to supporters, and whether and how to refer to other candidates. Specifically, I controlled for whether or not e-mails were sent near the end of the quarter, when campaigns had to report on their fundraising to the FEC, in the days leading up to a primary or caucus, when the urgency of getting voter support was at its height, and during the time immediately preceding and following a debate, which presented a golden opportunity for campaigns to emphasize their messages or contrast their own candidates with others. The opportunity to send e-mails during these times was, of course, related to a candidate's standing in the polls, since first tier candidates were more likely to stay in the race longer and therefore be around on the relevant dates.

Results

Contrary to expectations, second tier candidates did not use e-mail at an impressive rate overall. While Joe Biden made the most frequent use of e-mail of any candidate in either field, and Mike Huckabee (pre-November 15th), Duncan Hunter, Ron Paul, and Bill Richardson used e-mail as often as some of their first tier counterparts, six of the second tier candidates averaged fewer e-mails per week than any of the 1st-tier candidates (See Table 1). The average for all second tier candidates was almost one and a half e-mails per week lower than that of first tier candidates. Even when the candidates who made almost no use of e-mail at all (those who sent 5 or fewer during their entire campaigns) were excluded, the average for second tier candidates was still about one e-mail per week lower than for the first tier candidates.

Table 1. Differences Between First and Second Tier Candidates' E-mail Frequency

First Tier Candidates	Avg. E-mails Sent per Week as an Active Candidate	Second Tier Candidates[4]	Avg. E-mails Sent per Week as a Active Candidate
Clinton	2.9	Biden	4.1
Edward	3.9	Dodd	1.7
Giuliani	1.9	Gilmore	0.4
Huckabee (after 11/15/07)	3.0	Gravel	0.3
McCain	3.1	Huckabee (before 11/15/07)	3.3
Obama	3.2	Hunter	3.6
Romney	4.0	Kucinich	0.0
F. Thompson	3.4	Paul	2.1
		Richardson	2.3
		Tancredo	0.9
		T. Thompson	0.1
Weighted Average	**3.2**	**Weighted Average**	**1.8**
		Excluding andidates Sending 5 E-mails or Fewer	**2.1**

   Both sets of candidates made extensive use of e-mails to request assistance from their supporters, particularly in the form of donations. When analyzing requests for donations, I broke such requests into three different categories. Active requests for donations were those in which a specific appeal was made in the text of the e-mail itself for donations. This could be something as simple as one line in a post-script asking supporters to donate to the cause or an entire e-mail dedicated to explaining why the money was needed and how it would be used to spread the candidate's message. Appeals with additional incentives were those in which some reward was offered for donating to the campaign. These rewards included any side benefit given to those who donated and not to those who did not. Some incentives involved offering donors a chance to win something of value, such as being entered into a drawing to have dinner with Barack Obama, lunch with Hillary Clinton, or an opportunity to spend the day campaigning in New Hampshire with John McCain. Other incentives were automatic for anyone donating a certain amount, including

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[4] Sam Brownback had an e-mail list but did not send any e-mails during his campaign, and was thus excluded from the analysis.

Mitt Romney fashion wear, a password that allowed the donor to log onto a website and see Joe Biden's campaign commercials before they aired, or John Edwards' mother's pecan pie recipe. Finally, donation requests could be passive, which meant including a link to the donations/contributions page on the campaign website. A single e-mail could involve one, two, or all three types of appeals.

Table 2. The Impact of Strategic Position on the Likelihood of Requesting Donations, Volunteers, and Help Recruiting Support in Candidate E-mails

Variables	Active Request for Donations	Incentives Offered for Donations	Passive Request for Donations	Request for Volunteers	Request for Help Recruiting Support
First Tier Candidate	-0.173 (.122)	0.920** (.173)	0.884** (.142)	1.325** (.227)	0.311* (.144)
Republican	0.091 (.122)	-0.725** (.170)	-0.908** (.152)	1.006** (.197)	1.122** (.148)
Signed by Candidate	1.818** (.174)	-0.267 (.230)	1.304** (.191)	-0.387 (.300)	0.160 (.192)
Signed by Campaign Manager	1.495** (.186)	-0.347 (.248)	1.223** (.230)	0.087 (.293)	0.377 (.205)
Signed by Campaign Staff	0.958** (.175)	-0.668** (.257)	0.432* (.186)	1.279** (.253)	0.162 (.203)
Signed by Family Member	2.252** (.297)	0.107 (.320)	1.145** (.362)	0.017 (.443)	0.209 (.315)
Signed by Other Individual	1.512** (.451)	-1.115 (.777)	0.774 (.570)	1.174* (.574)	0.640 (.470)
Mentions Issues	0.118 (.126)	-0.156 (.167)	0.031 (.150)	-0.479** (.185)	-0.112 (.145)
Mentions Candidate Qualities	0.875** (.123)	-0.166 (.162)	1.054** (.148)	-0.592** (.196)	0.357* (.150)
End of Fundraising Quarter	1.178** (.292)	1.013** (.258)	0.921* (.381)	-1.041* (.534)	-0.871* (.369)
Own Election Date	-0.477** (.155)	-1.270** (.278)	0.122 (.203)	1.284** (.189)	0.586* (.167)
Own Debate	0.329* (.141)	0.105 (.179)	-0.062 (.169)	-0.028 (.213)	0.217 (.156)
Constant	-1.545** (.283)	-0.786* (.373)	0.819* (.323)	-4.554** (.478)	-3.790** (.344)
Pseudo R^2	.128	.073	.178	.183	.072
N	1556	1556	1556	1556	1556

$*p < .05$ $**p < .01$

As expected, first and second tier candidates were equally likely to make active appeals for donations. A majority of e-mails from both sets of candidates contained such appeals (58.1% for first tier candidates and 57.4% for second tier candidates), and the negligible difference in those percentages, not surprisingly, failed to produce a statistically significant effect of being in the first tier (See Table 2). The other types of fundraising appeals, however, did not follow this pattern. In both cases, e-mails from first tier candidates were more likely to contain such appeals than were those coming from second tier candidates (17.5% to 9.6% for offering incentives and 85% to 64.9% for passive donation appeals). These differences remained statistically significant when controlling for the other factors in the analysis.

I expected second tier candidates to make more use of e-mail to seek other types of help from supporters, particular volunteering and recruiting. Instead I found just the opposite. Requests for volunteers, which would include anything from asking them to show up to work at campaign office to getting them to make phone calls from home, were found almost three times as often in e-mails from first tier candidates as in those from second tier candidates (15.9% to 5.6%, respectively). Requests for supporters to help recruit, which included things such as requests to forward the candidate's e-mail to ten friends or family members and requests to bring people to events, were also noticeably more likely to be made by first tier candidates (23.7% to 16.7%). Both differences produced statistically significant results in the logit analysis.

I also examined the types of appeals made by the candidates in their e-mails, coding them for issue content and references to the candidates' own qualities. I expected second tier candidates to be more willing to discuss issues, but found just the opposite, with about 70% of first tier candidate e-mails mentioning at least one issue, compared to approximately 60% of those coming from second tier candidates. My expectation that first tier candidates would devote more energy to promoting their own qualities, however, was met, with nearly a 15 point gap in the percentage of e-mails mentioning such qualities between the different types of campaigns (66.3% to 52.8%). Again, these differences produced positive and statistically significant coefficients for being a first tier candidate in both multivariate analyses (See Table 3).

Finally, I examined the willingness of campaigns to discuss other candidates in the race, looking at whether an e-mail mentioned any other candidate by name, criticized any other candidate by name, criticized a candidate in the same party by name, or criticized a candidate in the other party by name. I expected that second tier candidates would be more likely to be willing to both draw attention to their opponents by mentioning them by name and risk the backlash that could come from going negative in all but the analysis of cross party criticisms. When it came to

Table 3. The Impact of Strategic Position on the Likelihood of Mentioning Issues and Candidate Qualities in Candidate E-mails

Variables	Mention Issues	Mention Candidate's Own Qualities
First Tier Candidate	0.464**	0.437**
	(.122)	(.118)
Republican	-0.463**	0.857**
	(.124)	(.123)
Signed by Candidate	0.361*	0.256
	(.173)	(.166)
Signed by Campaign Manager	-0.358	1.106**
	(.187)	(.193)
Signed by Campaign Staff	-0.467**	0.256
	(.177)	(.174)
Signed by Family Member	-0.786**	1.258**
	(.260)	(.280)
Signed by Other Individual	2.208*	1.454*
	(1.036)	(.570)
Mentions Issues	N/A	1.125**
		(.120)
Mentions Candidate Qualities	1.116**	N/A
	(.120)	
End of Fundraising Quarter	-0.531*	-0.005
	(.239)	(.243)
Own Election Date	-0.544**	-0.187
	(.156)	(.158)
Own Debate	-0.149	-.539**
	(.140)	(.143)
Constant	0.739**	-2.345**
	(.263)	(.287)
Pseudo R^2	.090	.105
N	1556	1556

*p < .05; **p < .01; *p < .05

simply mentioning any other candidate by name, however, the difference was extremely slight (with 26.6% of first tier e-mails and 24.6% of second tier e-mails mentioning another candidate) and not statistically significant (See Table 4). Contrary to my expectations, first tier candidates were actually more likely to criticize another candidate than were second tier candidates (17.3% to 10.4%, respectively), and this time the difference did reach the level of statistical significance in the logit analysis. Within-party attacks, however, were slightly more common in the e-mails of second tier candidates (8.6% to 6.8%), a difference that fell just short of being statistically significant (p=.056). The biggest difference was found in the frequency of cross-party attacks. First tier candidates were about

five times as likely to criticize a candidate in the other field (12.5% to 2.3%), which was consistent with my expectations and produced statistically significant results in the analysis.

Discussion

The use of e-mail by campaigns is still a relatively new phenomenon, and undoubtedly one that will continue to evolve from election to election for the foreseeable future. Even taking into account, however, that candidates and their staffs are still learning the best ways to make use of this medium, several of the results of this analysis are surprising. While e-mail creates opportunities for second tier candidates to match, if not surpass first tier candidates in their ability to get messages out to their supporters, by and large these candidates did not make use of that opportunity in the 2008 nominating contests. With a few notable exceptions (particularly Biden, Huckabee, and Hunter), second tier candidates failed to take advantage of e-mail in a way that was comparable to or more extensive than their better known and better funded opponents. It may not be coincidence that the candidate who made the most use of it had run for president before, and the second tier candidate who came closest to matching his use of e-mail was the only one in this group to break out of the second tier. This relative lack of use of e-mail was most likely the result of one or both of two factors. Fewer resources translate into a smaller staff, so that even though the marginal cost of sending out additional e-mails is negligible, the opportunity cost of devoting staff hours to putting them together and sending them out may still be harder for small campaigns to pay. The difference in frequency may also, however, reflect the reason some of these candidates are in the second tier in the first place. Their campaigns may simply not have been as well run or have made as sound strategic decisions as their more successful opponents, leading both to their standing in the polls and their less frequent use of e-mail.

While second tier candidates made similar use of e-mail to actively request donations, they were less likely to offer additional incentives or make it easy for supporters to respond to any e-mail by donating money through including a link to the donations page. The first difference is understandable, given that they generally had fewer resources available to use to provide incentives. Flying a supporter to an event, for example, would represent a significantly greater percentage of funds raised by second tier candidates than for first tier ones in any given fundraiser. It is important to note, however, that candidates did not need to come up with expensive ways to reward donors. The examples cited above from Joe Biden's and John Edwards' campaigns, for example, were creative ways to reward people with no real cost to the campaign. While the incentive to donate in exchange for a pecan pie recipe may not be as great as the incentive to donate in exchange for an opportunity to have a meal with one of the candidates, it is still likely better than nothing. The disparity in passive fundraising, however, I would argue, points strongly to a

difference in the sophistication level of the campaigns. This could, of course, be related to staffing issues, but since all of these campaigns had a donations page, providing a link to it is such a low cost, low effort way to try to raise funds that the difference in these candidates' willingness to use it is hard to explain without some reference to the quality of the campaigns' efforts.

When it came to requesting volunteers or help in recruiting support, things these smaller campaigns clearly needed as much, if not more, than their larger counterparts, there is again a puzzling gap between first and second tier candidates. The first may be due to differences in staffing, and thus differences in the ability to put volunteers to work, but the latter would again seemingly point to a relative lack of sophistication of the campaigns. A simple request to have supporters forward the message on to friends or family, for example, requires essentially no extra effort from the campaign, and carries the potential to provide great benefits to the campaign. Failure to make use of such a simple and easy tool to build the campaign is hard to defend.

The analysis of types of appeals contained in the e-mails presented another situation where the results, at least in one case, contradicted expectations. While second tier candidates have more of an incentive to provide issue content, they were less likely to do so. As expected, however, first tier candidates were more likely to discuss their own candidate's qualities. What is surprising, though, is that the smaller campaigns were less likely to make either type of appeal. About 40% of their e-mails contained no issue content, while nearly one-half said nothing about the candidate's characteristics. Those numbers were just about 30% and just over one-third, respectively, for the larger campaigns. The trailing candidates were less likely, therefore, to give or remind supporters of a reason to stick with the campaign, something that would seem more important for the campaigns with a smaller base of support.

There were no significant differences in the willingness of candidates to mention others by name or to criticize those within their own party. On the other hand, first tier candidates were significantly more likely to criticize any other candidate, regardless of party, and to make cross-party attacks. The last finding is the easiest to explain, given the greater likelihood that these campaigns will have to deal with the other party's nominee, as well as the greater credibility they have in looking forward to the general election. What is interesting, though, is that there was no significant difference in intraparty attacks, and such a small difference in the simple frequency of these attacks. This may be because both parties had competitive nominating contests, so even first tier candidates, in this particular election, had an incentive to attack their own party rivals.

It would seem, then, that e-mail, while clearly something that presidential campaigns are making use of, is not revolutionizing campaigns by providing a way around money for lesser known or funded candidates. Those in a worse strategic position are not reacting, in most cases, the way we would expect them to given the opportunity that e-mail presents to them. This may be because of opportunity costs, suggesting that campaigns still put a greater emphasis on other roles for staff, or because of lower quality campaigns for second tier candidates, which would of course not be unrelated to a differential ability to pay those opportunity costs. This does not mean that these things cannot change, of course. The use of e-mail is still in relative infancy. By way of comparison, consider how much television commercials have evolved from their first few campaigns to today. Further, other results in the multivariate analyses do illustrate that campaigns are thinking strategically about their use of e-mails. The fact that donations requests of all types were more common near the end of the fundraising quarter, while requests for volunteers and recruiting picked up as election dates neared, or that candidates let others talk about their good qualities, while they focused instead on issue appeals, shows that, overall, strategic considerations are playing a role in the ways that campaigns use e-mail. The inability of second tier candidates to make the most of the opportunities available to them is, however, perhaps discouraging, particularly in an age where the public has clear concerns about the importance of money in campaigns.

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