

**WHITE PAPER**

# How to Increase share of political revenues

**LocalMediaInsider**  
Intelligence for online publishers

**WHITE PAPER**

# **Building political ad revenues**

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## Introduction

Overall more than \$5 billion will be spend on political advertising in 2012, about 50% more than in the 2008 election year. Local media companies are already profiting from this new revenue gains, however even if your company's political dollars are going up, that doesn't mean they are going up *as much as they could*. Consultants expect some local media, for example, to more double political revenues by following these step-by-step strategies.

Political does not mean just presidential. In 2012, there will be 33 senate races, elections for all 435 members of the house of representatives, 11 races for governor and thousands of state, city and local races – for a total of 500 to 600 in mid-sized markets. Plus there are hundreds of PAC's and Super PAC's (Political Action Committees) that are pouring resources into the elections; American Crossroads alone will spend about \$150 million in 2012.

How to get your share on a local level requires a systematic approach to sell into all political races outlined here. Research for this report came from a variety of sources, including Tom Edmonds, Edmonds & Associates; John Kimball, John Kimball Group who are consultants to the newspaper industry and who we asked to assessed the relative position of other local media. We also sourced two newspaper efforts, Richmond Media Group and the LA Times for best practices. This report relies heavily on presentations at the Newspaper Association of America, the *American Voter Media Use Study, January 2012* and the *Pew Research Center for People and the Press Campaign Interest and News Sources, February 2012 study among others*. We also interviewed various media companies selling political advertising who have unique and aggressive ideas for increasing market share.

Our consultants are bullish on television's ability to hold its market share – but also bullish on newspapers' ability to increase their share at the expensive of radio and direct mail. Radio has an opportunity to protect and grow its share – limited only by inventory. The big loser this year will certainly be the post office – but only in terms of market

share, the money is that big. One last note: Edmonds and Kimball consultants to the newspaper industry, however, we've asked them also to weigh in on how radio and broadcast can utilize this information to improve.

We've also included one case study and some great ideas from two newspaper companies who are going after market share this year.

## **1. Contacting all the buyers**

The first step in an aggressive political sales effort is to commit to calling on all contacts. For national that means calls on PAC's and Super PAC's; while a local effort needs to go deep – all the way to the local sheriff or school board.

There are two simple ways to make sure you have every contact – and know which ones are spending.

The first step – and one recommended by the LA Times and Richmond Media Group – is to simply **purchase the list** from John Kimball Group for \$500. It goes deep in to the market – down to the sheriff and school board level we mentioned– and also provides a list of the contacts for the top 260 PACS and Super PACS.

Second, make sure you **contact TV and radio** for “whose buying now,” they willingly give up this information as they are legally required to do so.

Without a budget it is free but time consuming to find the contact - Google the Federal Election Commission, click on state, person and get the information directly. The state election commission also has a web site that should the name of candidates, and website where who places the media buys might be listed. Finally there are political journals such as Roll Call, Politico, and The Hill.

## **2. Understand the competition**

All political spending is competitive, and requires competitive positioning. The gorilla in the room is still television. Combined with cable, television has a 55% share of all political ads, followed by direct mail at about 15%, and radio which, at 8% is almost a tie with newspaper's share.

Use these strengths/weaknesses to train your teams and create competitive promotional packages.

## **Television**

Television continues to dominate political advertising and it is not likely that this is going to change. Top strengths of television:

\*Television is where 67% of people say they get their political information. Broken out into segments (below) Fox is the top source with 44% share of people who answered this question, followed by cable, with 33%, and networks with a combined 37%.

\*Marketers like the high emotional impact of television ads

\*Personal – Candidates can talk to viewers

However television also has some drawbacks for a media planner:

\*Limited inventory. Once television is sold out, the buyers are looking for other ways to reach audiences that have an impact.

\*Though TV is still number one place people look online for political news, newspapers have the dominant websites. In the mobile space, television and newspapers are dead even.

\*Video can easily be reformatted (see Mixpo.com) for the web, leveling the playing field.

\*Network news viewership is falling. Its share is down from 32% in 2008 to 26% in 2012. Local television share of audience dropped from 40% to 32% and cable was also down.

\*Commercials are routinely skipped or stripped out of shows

\*Newspapers have equal reliability levels and “turn to” ratings for mobile sites.

Still, television is so dominant that consultants recommend that other media focus on weaker competitors, and only take on television to acquire dollars during sell-out. Here are the leading television statistics that back up their leading market position:

## Media Choices: Republican, Democrat and Independent Voters

How have you been getting most of your news about the November elections?

	<u>Voted</u> 	<u>Voted</u> 	<u>Voted Ind.</u>
All forms of TV	67%	74%	73%
Fox Cable	47%	15%	23%
Local Cable	33%	29%	23%
ABC Network	8%	12%	10%
NBC Network	10%	16%	12%
CNN Network	9%	16%	16%
CBS Network	7%	12%	9%
MSNBC Network	3%	7%	5%
Newspapers	27%	31%	39%
Radio	14%	14%	15%
Internet	24%	24%	19%

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Source: Joint post-election survey by Pew Internet & American Life Project Internet & Campaign 2010

Television is all the number one web site that people turn to for political news:

## Websites Most Often Visited for Campaign and Election Information



All TV websites (network/cable/local)	44%
All newspaper websites	22%
Candidate(s) websites	12%
Local radio station websites	2%

Newspaper Websites are Ranked #1  
in 22 of top 25 Markets

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Source: Moore Information (January 2012), *American Voter Media Use Study*



### Radio

Radio with 7% to 8% market share, has many of the same strengths of television, however is considered vulnerable to newspapers due to lack of inventory.

Radio is a high-emotional impact medium that is “easy to buy,” and can launch ads on a “next day basis” providing an outlet for a last minute change of message or added promotion, especially where networks are available. Candidates can deliver a personal voice message to voters. And more people are relying on radio talk as a news source. Kimball advises “Play on being easy to buy” which takes advantage of the complexity of print, which needs to “become easy. Radio already is.” Weaknesses include:

- \*News talk is limited to AM stations, skews Republican and “preaches to the choir.” Another issue is not as effective for reaching swing voters and Democrats.
- \*Most talk shows do not cover local races
- \*Hyper-local races can’t afford to buy the whole audience
- \*Competitors cutting into market share

- \*Less support from NAB and RAB,( unlike NAA which dedicated significant resources to market share strategies).
- \*Most are spot buys, not network
- \*Weak presence in fast growing internet news sector, where news consumers are shifting, marketers are shifting dollars and print has a lead. Print media with dominant sites in their market and a great demographic match with voters, will go to market with competitive multi-media packages.

Radio sites can level the playing field by using their strengths – emotional impact, adding geo-targeting capabilities such as text and email (especially if data-mined for voting preferences), personality endorsements and “get out the vote” live remotes. Consultants recommend using clear packaging, speed to market and network buys. Look carefully at packaging options, especially going into new multi-media areas.

## **Direct mail**

Direct mail via the U.S. Postage Service has dominated the delivery franchise, securing the second most political ad dollars. People receive their voting registration forms via the mail and/or vote by mail, including the state of Oregon where voting by mail is mandatory. Not coincidentally, direct mail is strong for “get out the vote” messaging and targeting for local races.

However, consultants are advising the more aggressive newspapers to go after market share from this category by using their own distribution networks and packaging in targeted opt-in emails and text alerts with competitive pricing. Weaknesses of direct mail:

- \*Post office will not compete on price
- \*Delivery times are no longer 100% guaranteed – i.e. political mail is no longer tagged same as first class

\*Newspapers have alternative delivery capabilities that include competitively priced and targeted printing, inserting and/or direct distribution. Snail mail perceived as old school.

## **Newspapers**

As shown here, newspapers have key, if they seize the opportunity. Voters are “least annoyed” by newspaper ads, “find newspapers the most reliable (but only slightly as we shall see), are the place more voters learn about local candidates – rather than national ones. Finally, newspapers can geo-target mailers, have great premium positions and expandable inventory.

Here is a list of newspaper’s competitive strengths, all numbers are from the *American Voter Media Use Study, January 2012* :

\*Newspaper demographics closely match voters. Voters read and readers vote. Over 80% of voters 35+ are regular newspaper readers and 8 out of ten readers voted in the last two presidential elections (see charts below). That is, while more people are persuaded by television, people who actually vote are regular newspaper readers.

\*Newspapers are rated most reliable and accurate, ahead of – but about equal with television - but substantially ahead of radio. That is 51% say newspapers are reliable, 50% say television is, but only 44% say radio is.

\*Unlimited inventory, a key plus during a peak season.

\*Strength in multi—media. Newspaper websites typically dominate in their markets. Newspaper websites are ranked #1 in 22 of 25 largest markets. One third of internet “news” comes from a newspaper.

\*Relative strength in political influence. If you break broadcast into individual components, newspapers are second only to television in “how I get my political information” – ahead of radio and internet.

\*While TV ads are considered “interruptive” readers consider political ads as a form of news content.

\*Unlike television and radio (with the exception of cable), newspapers can geo-target using their distribution vehicles making them exceptionally efficient, and add print to multi-media buys.

\*Due to local political coverage, newspapers are also a natural environment for these ads. Newspapers lead television in most reliable for civic and local issues - 57% to 55% for television and 43% for radio

\*The oft-complained about aging demographic is a strength here, since they are a core group of voters.

Here are some sources for this information:

## Even 30% of Those Who Prefer the Internet are Really Reading Newspaper Content

How have you been getting most of your news about the November elections?

	Voted 	Voted 	Voted Ind.
All forms of TV	67%	74%	73%
Fox Cable	47%	15%	23%
Local Cable	33%	29%	23%
ABC Network	8%	12%	10%
NBC Network	10%	16%	12%
CNN Network	9%	16%	16%
CBS Network	7%	12%	9%
MSNBC Network	3%	7%	5%
Newspapers	27%	31%	39%
Radio	14%	14%	15%
<b>Internet</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>19%</b>

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Source: Joint post-election survey by Pew Internet & American Life Project Internet & Campaign 2010



# Voters Read.



84% of Democrat, 83% of Republican, and 81% of Independent voters are regular newspaper readers in print or online.

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Source: Moore Information (January 2012), *American Voter Media Use Study*



## Seniors, The Most Reliable Voting Bloc, are Avid Newspaper Readers



*In the last presidential election ...*

- 70% of 65+ yr. voted*
- 69% of 45-64 yr. voted*
- 52% of under 30 yr. voted*

84% of older voters are frequent and regular newspaper readers (print and online)

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Source: Moore Information (2008; January 2012), *American Voter Media Use Study*



## Among those registered to vote

<u>Newspaper Media</u>	<u>18 - 34</u>	<u>35 - 44</u>	<u>45 - 54</u>	<u>55 - 64</u>	<u>65+</u>
Read Daily/Several times per Week	44%	51%	57%	60%	65%
Read Once a Week or More Often	67%	73%	78%	76%	79%
Print/Website Once a Week or More	79%	84%	85%	83%	84%

The last chart shows that even younger voters are newspaper readers. Note that 79% of 18 to 34 year old registered voters read a newspaper or newspaper site once a week or more.

The Moore study on how reliable newspapers are as a source is shown below, in comparison to other sources of information: So newspapers have a great story to tell.

Weaknesses of newspapers:

One weakness of newspapers is simple lack of preparation, due to having conceded this market to television in the past. Here are some other weaknesses:

\*Medium lacks emotional impact of broadcast

\*Perceived as "dying dinosaurs"

\*Products and rate cards overly complex, hard to buy

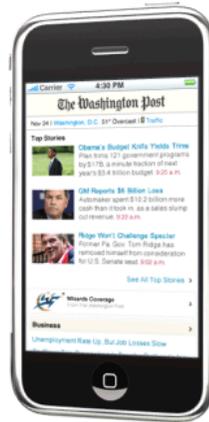
\*Late to market issue for local races where there could be a clear advantage

### **Going mobile: Newspapers catch up**

An especially interesting phenomenon happens when political news is consumed on a mobile platform: Newspapers catch up to television. That is, one in four who report planning to use a mobile device to access news about campaigns and elections say newspapers and television are their first choice – and equally so.

## Mobile Platforms

Of the one in four who report planning to use a mobile device (smart phone or tablet) to check for news about campaigns and elections ...



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Source: Moore Information (January 2012), *American Voter Media Use Study*.



\*Track record of impacting swing votes for key elections

\*Highly visual – voters associate name with a face

## ... Newspapers and TV are Their First Choice

Newspaper sources	58%
National TV sources	58%
Social media websites	41%
Local TV sources	33%
Other kinds of sources	27%
Radio sources	20%

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Source: Moore Information (January 2012), *American Voter Media Use Study*.



## 4. Pricing, packaging and selling

Key go to market strategies integrate competitive messages into sales packages. Here is a check-list of go-to-market tactics that increase political sales:

**\*Dedicated sales staff with all campaigns covered.** Finding people who are passionate about selling the political category and supporting them with an early start makes a big difference. If managers have an organized effort – i.e. good packages, leads lists and competitive training – a dedicated political team should be able to go to market on straight commission, in addition to what other products they are selling. With more than one dedicated local rep, political races can be divided into Democrat and Republican – depending on the interests of the rep, or State versus Local. Be sure to tap a manager as a team leader.

**\*Print should lead with new media** If you are a newspaper multi-media levels the playing field so lead with new media. This is the easiest way to play to your strengths if you have a great site and get a foot in the door. **Radio sites can package in geo-targeting text alerts and email for last minute get-out-the vote events.**

**\*Political multi-media rate cards** Consultants recommend two simple three tiered multi-media bundles. The first is small, medium and large.

Also create special combinations for federal, state and local candidates. Just like the small, medium and large tiers, special combinations for different kinds of races work well, since they require different kinds of targeting. Each bundle has one price to there are literally six choices. Buyers can also access ala carte rates for premium buys.

**\*Use strong visuals** For print companies get rid of column inch rates and sell modular sizes. All local media can improve the visual presentation by highlighting the saleable space (banners, corner peels or mobile ads and text alerts) in red, and provide information online. FlipSnack is a \$20 platform that can be used for top quality presentations.

**\*Play up premium buys** This is a good time to play up site takeovers, corner peels and other premium buys. Print companies should focus on presenting their cover wraps, front-page ads and post-it notes. All media should have a few strong “by the day” buys.

**\*Be able to handle 1 to 2 day closings** Being able to have an order place on a media or media site in 24 hours can be the difference between getting the buy and losing it.

“If you can turn something around in a hurry, that would be great... Friday at 6:30 a client wanted to be on the air on Monday – we got them on the air on Monday, that is what we have to be able to do.”

### **Case study: Richmond Media Group**

One local media company that does this right is Richmond Media Group (see a full case study on their political packaging here:

[http://www.localmediainsider.com/stories/political-ads,727?preview\\_key=b98d194b8bdcd964ac0a0c022f911430](http://www.localmediainsider.com/stories/political-ads,727?preview_key=b98d194b8bdcd964ac0a0c022f911430).

Richmond Times-Dispatch, owned by Media General includes TimesDispatch.com, Richmond.com and Richmond Suburban news. John W. Kelly, VP, Revenue and Business Development headed up the political effort, which also will sell newspaper markets throughout properties in Virginia and Tennessee.

Historically the group underperformed in political ad sales and lacked a well-timed strategy to capture additional market share. The increase in political campaign dollars in 2012 incited Kelly to come up with a new plan that would accomplish several things:

- \*Increase sales pressure
- \*Launch an attractive competitive rate structure –
- \*Use packages and bundles to make buying easier
- \*Leverage digital
- \*Sell across the region

### **Strategy**

Kelly’s team planned to take these principles, start early and execute with passion:

**Using The John Kimball Group** was the primary source for candidate’s contacts. Kelly says, "This was one of the most worthwhile investments we made."

**Contacting television and radio stations early and often.** By law broadcast stations are required to give contacts for their political buys and do so willingly. Kelly was able to find and contact PAC and Super PAC dollars early in the year.

**Creating a Dedicated team.** Richmond created a **five person political sales team** from existing staff included people passionate about politics – on the left and right. One key rep was a real estate sales executive. The organization of the team includes a sales manager (with shared responsibilities) ,

national rep, and three local reps for a total of five people. All these sales positions are paid on straight commission, added to their regular jobs.

**Focusing on competitive strengths** Kelly's team focused on the direct mail market, and also to be in position to pick up **broadcast dollars** whenever they sold out.

To position against direct mail delivery service, RMG prepared by offering:

- \*Guaranteed day of delivery

- \*Print and deliver turnkey solution for geo-targeting

- \*Free design and quick turn-around.

The media group also pitches the unlimited inventory - especially for last minute buys - when TV and radio are apt to be sold out. This also worked to pitch large accounts such as auto dealers who stand to be "bumped" off the air when campaign season is in its peak. So either way, more dollars come in.

Also in the pitch – beside the optimal age demographics – are Premium capabilities. Kelly advises, to think "What can you offer candidates in turns of space. We need the money so badly the newsroom rolled over on everything in terms of space, strip ads on the front page, for the first time."

**Assessing - and building out - political advertising channels** Political advertising is a natural tie-in for news readers. But Media General also has a variety of multi-media opportunities and decided to add partners to beef up its online offerings:

- \***Partnership with Politifact** creates an additional, saleable online political news channel. Started in 2011, Politifact is a key news source for people addicted to following political news, runs on the front of the Richmond Times-Dispatch site.



They also added [Evoter.com](http://Evoter.com), a start-up that posts all candidates and races and allows voters to “look-up” all of the candidates they are eligible to vote for. E-voter charges the campaigns for the right to post additional information on the site and splits 50% of the revenues with the local media company; and the media company can sell advertising exclusively across the channels.

Finally Richmond lined up a partnership with **CityTwist.com** an opt-in email provider that allows candidates to blanket a geo-target with both email as well as direct mail.

**Premium Print products** include stitched covers, adhesive notes, plastic wraps, and direct door-to-door distribution to compete with the post-office.

Adding on extra digital products for better local targeting. Not just online and mobile, but also email and text alerts were added to provide extra promotional cache. Site take-overs and corner peels were important premium offerings.

**One simple message was created to brand all packages.** The lead message for Richmond Media Group for political advertisers is **"Reach all voters seeking to be informed,"** which capitalized on print's strength with people who actually vote. Rather than competing head to head with television - the primary source of information on political candidates and issues - the messaging positions the newspaper products as the logical second buy when television sells out.

**Rates were also made more competitive.** A mistake many companies make is over-pricing political “call-ins” – usually to national rate cards – without understanding how to utilize more aggressive competitive pricing to steal market share and increase total dollars. Under-pricing the post office is critical.

**Strong visual sales and promotion tools**

How you show your case makes a difference. In this case a flip-book (on a \$20 platform by FlipSnap) created a highly visual page-turner. Using blocks of red to identify the saleable space / opportunity created a strong visual highlight. The flip book was also reformatted for a six-page newspaper print-out and ads also ran.

Packages include small, medium, large and premium, plus buys for city hall, state, and federal. Note how the expandable ads are key components:

Digital Bundles: 3 of 3



 **Town Hall**

**City Spender:**

- InsideNova.com,  
100,000 impressions
- TimesDispatch.com,  
200,000 impressions
- Richmond.com,  
50,000 impressions
- DailyProgress.com,  
75,000 impressions
- NewsAdvance.com,  
75,000 impressions
- WSLS.com,  
100,000 impressions

**Total Online Impressions:**  
**600,000 impressions (\$9 cpm)**  
**\$5,400/month**

**Local Takeovers:**

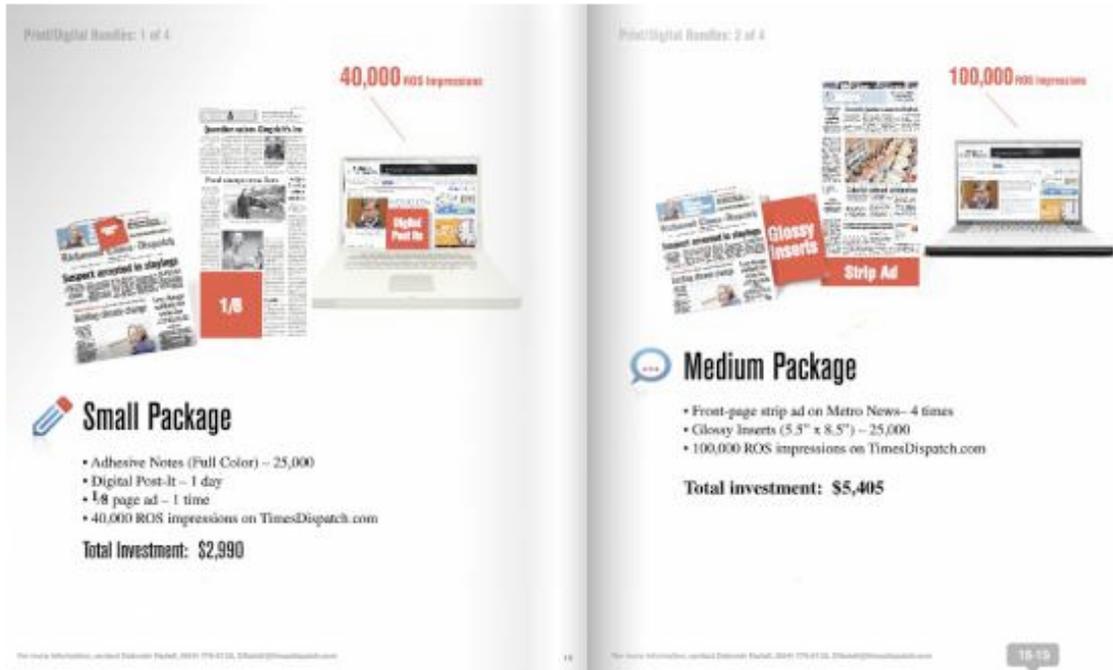
**TimesDispatch.com:**

- Expandable ad on Homepage  
LB or Med Rec M-F (\$2,000/day)
- Expandable ad on News Homepage  
LB or Med Rec M-F (\$1,700/day)
- Expandable ad on Business Section Homepage  
LB or Med Rec M-F (\$1,300/day)

**InsideNova.com or DailyProgress.com:**

- Expandable ad on Homepage  
LB or Med Rec M-F (\$1,000/day)
- Expandable ad on News Homepage  
LB or Med Rec M-F (\$800/day)
- Expandable ad on Business Section Homepage  
LB or Med Rec M-F (\$750/day)

*Other site takeover prices available upon request.*



All packages have some kind of premium included. The small package above includes post-it notes, an 1/8<sup>th</sup> page (note: no column inches!) and 40000 impressions for \$2995. The Medium pages includes a front page advertisement, glossy insert and 100,000 impressions for \$5405.

The large package added a half page to the front page ad - both run twice - plus doubled the impressions and mobile, for just more than \$11,000. And the premium package added the corner peel, Spadea wrap and upped the buy to \$23,000.

To see the full kit go to this link:  
[http://richmondmediagroup.net/public/documents/RTD\\_Political\\_Media\\_Kit.html](http://richmondmediagroup.net/public/documents/RTD_Political_Media_Kit.html)

The flipbook was also printed as a six page insert.

**Results:** As of March RMG has sold \$200,000 in political dollars and is on track to more than double revenues from prior election seasons. More importantly, we predict that rising to the challenge of packaging for the highly visual political market improves multi-media marketing overall - and prepares the company for other kinds of competitive selling.

## **Case study #2: Tricks of the trade from the LA Times**

We also picked up some key tips from Tom Erspamer, the national political seller for the LA Times. While this is a huge newspaper some its tips and geo-targeting strategies are worth looking at in most local media markets.

### **1. Selling the premium**

Like Richmond Media Group, the LA Times aggressively sells its premiums. One of those is the Spadea wrap, a most powerful "get out the vote" format unique to print. Erspamer said the wrap is one of the most powerful tools to influence voters - especially for "getting out the vote." A Spadea wrap for Proposition 19 - legalization of marijuana - did not win the election acquired 4.6 million votes "more than Meg Whitman got." Plus there is a halo effect. "If you are wrapping our newspaper with a three page Spadea its going to look like we are endorsing you. We get calls from angry readers about why are you allowing so and so to get such visible ad space on LA Times. You can look like you've won the endorsement with well-placed ads."

The LA Times also negotiated with editorial and now sells its front page space every day but Election Day. Broadcast and radio sites need to think about premiums – including site takeovers – that can be packaged to create valuable one or two day propositions.

**Ad units that stream social media** are another premium up sell. Streaming live Twitter and Facebook feeds into a banner ad is a product that Impact Engine sells and provides political marketers with new, sexy multi-media vehicle to expand their social media voice to additional markets in a targeted way.

### **2. Reselling mobile text and e-mail**

The Times has partnered with a company that has developed 150 million text and email opt-ins, allowing it to resell this form of messaging to political marketers. "The mobile texting and email opt-ins are contracted out. Find out who is selling these and get them lined up in advance. They need us because they have a problem breaking through to the buyers."

Email and texts are media agnostic - as we've shown on this sites even radio stations have been highly successful in developing their own lists. Any local media can get in to the targeting business by working through third parties.

### **3. Create Multi-media packages for district races**

LA has 30 districts, and many of those district races are too small to run television campaigns without a lot of waste. So the group has developed highly targeted packages for each district. They include:

\*80,000 text messages and emails

\*Banner ads

\*Tribune Direct mail

\*TMC printed fliers with a QR code.

Price is a key advantage for the fliers, which are 10.5 " glossy sheets that are priced at \$25 per thousand, printed and delivered, with a QR code. "They are used to paying \$700 just to print a postcard."

**4. Contacting the TV stations - and repurposing video ads online** using a quick turn-around video-to-web platform. A standard best practice for selling political ads is to contact every television and radio station to get the contacts of the buyers who are legally required to turn these contacts over and do so readily. LA Times goes a step further by preparing to repurpose the video ads for the web on-the-fly by using Mixpo, a company out of Seattle.

## **Conclusion**

For markets with under-developed political strategies, here is a summary of how to create a plan that could double revenues in 2012:

\***Start now.** November is just a few months away and partnerships and packages should be developed.

\***Identify all the races.** Our recommendation is John Kimball Group and regular check-ins with television and radio

\***Have a dedicated team**

\***Package multi-media buys – and keep it simple.** Small medium large and combinations for city, state and federal are recommended.

\***Consider content partnerships** with evoter and politifact to expand the importance of your site as a political news destination.

\***Consider adding email and text for additional geo- and voter-targeting.**

\***Create big, “by the day” premium buys such as site takeovers.**

\***Be able to execute orders over night.**

**Resources:**

Political contacts: John Kimball Group, [john@johnkimball.com](mailto:john@johnkimball.com) , [7036692507](tel:7036692507).

Content partners: evoter.com and poltifact.com

Email opt-in: citytwist.com, Take5solutions.com, consumerbase.com

Rich media ads: ImpactEngine.com provides a platform that builds premium ads such as corner peels, sliding billboards and Twitter ads that can be deployed in minutes by a trained production person.

Video to web conversion: Mixpo.com converts video to multi-media

Multimedia presentation: FlipSnack is a \$20 platform that provides a great page-turning digital presentation

Consulting: Tom Edmonds, Edmonds and Associates,  
[tedmonds@edmondsassociates.com](mailto:tedmonds@edmondsassociates.com), [703/448-8000](tel:7034488000)

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