



# Barack Obama: Organizing, Engaging and Winning

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# Background Timeline - 2008 Elections



Obama is the Democratic underdog running against party big-names such as Hillary Clinton, John Edwards, John Kerry, and Howard Dean.

The Republican party had two strong and well-known candidates: John McCain and Rudy Giuliani.

The other candidates from both the Republican and Democratic parties had spent considerable time building their brands and support on a national scale.

A photograph of Barack Obama speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is gesturing with his right hand, pointing upwards. The background features several American flags. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image in blue font with white outlines.

“Indeed, in any discussion of the 2008 presidential race, it is important to stipulate this fact right up front: in any prior year, Barack Obama would have lost”.

-Garrett Graff, Editor at Washington Magazine

# What was going on in 2008

- **Twitter:** fastest growing social network in the U.S.
- **Facebook:** becomes the “go to” all ages networking platform
- **Youtube:** videos become more popular and sought after. Youtube also launches Youtube Insight for analytics.
- **Going Viral:** companies realized that the secret to going viral was “the result of human reaction to connecting with funny, emotional or empathetic content
- **Customer Feedback:** collaboration and real-time feedback completely changed how companies interact and engage with consumers (push vs. pull)






# Interactive Media

While competitors used interactive media as a tactic, the Obama campaign used it as their strategy.

“The Obama campaign broke the mold for every major measurable campaign statistic, especially the three that matter the most: volunteers, money-raised, and votes garnered”.

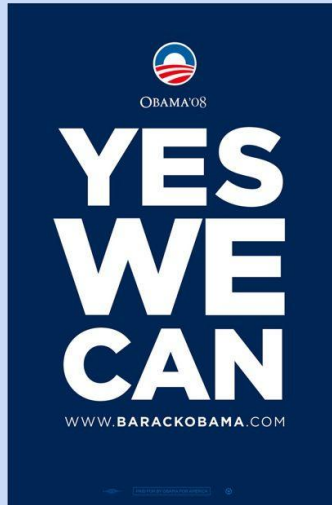
## Obama vs. McCain 2008 Presidential Campaign

Here are some comparisons between the Illinois Democrat and Republican rival John McCain:

	<b>FACEBOOK SUPPORTERS</b> Obama: 2,800,000+ McCain: 620,000+		<b>YOUTUBE VIDEOS</b> Obama: 1,821 McCain: 330
	<b>TWITTER FOLLOWERS</b> Obama: 122,000+ McCain: 4,900+		<b>FLICKR PHOTOS</b> Obama: 50,435 McCain: 95
	<b>MYSPACE FRIENDS</b> Obama: 870,000+ McCain: 225,400+		<b>GOOGLE SEARCHES</b> Obama: 71,000,000 McCain: 61,800,000

The Bennett Law Firm, P.C. Bob Bennett (5)

# The Strategy



The Obama team embraced and capitalized on the growth of interactive media by creating a cross-platform, cross-channel strategy that was unlike anything done before in the political sphere.

This allowed voters to "get to know" this candidate in a more intimate way, while maintaining a consistent and authentic message.

Using this strategy, the 2008 Obama campaign raised more money, gained more volunteers, and received more votes than his major competitors.

This strategy also brought in a new crowd of voters that politicians had never been able to reach before: ***young adults***.

# Rules of New Media

1. Interactive Media is NOT an extension of the proverbial soapbox, but it IS a platform to mobilize people
2. Execution trumps early adoption
3. Consistency across channels, platforms, and offline is vital to a successful strategy
4. Authenticity is like oxygen. Without it, your interactive media strategy will suffocate
5. The conversation must be “two-way”, otherwise your message will be filtered as white noise
6. “Viral” is NOT a viable and controllable strategy, but rather it is the exponential web 2.0 effect of a well executed campaign

# Media Performance using GRP

- GRP: the sum of ratings achieved by a specific media vehicle or the percentage of a target audience reached by an advertisement.
  - Used to evaluate the performance of traditional advertisements
- Two important dimensions: Reach and Frequency
- McCain and Clinton performed close to par with Obama on Reach; Obama Campaign differentiated themselves with Frequency.
  - Consistent message no matter what media channel
  - If you took in many channels, it increased the frequency



# YouTube (BIG)

Launched campaign YouTube channel on September 5, 2006.

- User Generated Content: cost free, wanted to take advantage of that
- You can't just "go viral"
- It's a cheap way of marketing and leveraging content
- Showcase the difference between Obama and his competitors
- Provided arena for engagement for Obama supporters
- SEO!!!



# YouTube (cont.)

Interactive media was only a tactic for McCain. It was a full blown strategy for Obama.




McCain broke three important rules of media strategy:

- 1- Used YouTube as an extension of his soapbox, didn't use it to reach new voters, direct them to site and mobilize them
- 2- Didn't engage in a two-way conversation like Obama did, thus his supporters didn't feel compelled and engaged in creating viral moments.
- 3- Thought going viral was a strategic initiative, not an effect:

## Video examples:



A photograph of Barack Obama smiling and speaking at a wooden podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a red striped tie. Two microphones are positioned in front of him. The podium has a blue sign with white text that reads "CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE IN" and "BarackObama.com" with the Obama campaign logo. A large block of blue text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**"All told, the campaign created nearly 2,000 YouTube videos, which in turn were watched some 14.6 million hours. This multitude of videos...was part of a broad micro-targeting effort whereby each video was aimed at speaking to a particular group of voters or supporters. Those efforts paid off in a big way: TubeMogul estimated that Obama received the equivalent of some \$45 million in "free" television airtime from people watching those videos.**

**-Garrett Graff, Washingtonian Magazine**

# Social Networking and Direct Messaging

- 1- Regardless of the social network, the whole profile was complete
- 2- Created groups wherever possible
- 3- Links to other platforms whenever possible, creating a tightly knit web
- 4- Use combination of text, images, and videos in posts

**KEY TAKEAWAY: BE CONSISTENT HOES**



# The Big Star: BarackObama.com

The screenshot shows the BarackObama.com website. At the top, there is a banner with Barack Obama's face and the Obama '08 logo. A quote from Obama is displayed: "I'M ASKING YOU TO BELIEVE. Not just in my ability to bring about real change in Washington ... I'm asking you to believe in yours." To the right, there is a "GET INVOLVED" section with a "SIGNUP FOR EMAIL UPDATES" form, including fields for "Email Address" and "Zip Code", and a "SIGN UP" button. A link for "EN ESPAÑOL" is also present. Below the banner is a navigation bar with links: LEARN, ISSUES, MEDIA, ACTION, PEOPLE, STATES, BLOG, and STORE. A prominent red "DONATE NOW" button is on the right. The main content area features a large "YES WE CAN" graphic with the text "THANK YOU, NEW HAMPSHIRE" and a map of the United States. Below this is a red button that says "BUILD THE MOMENTUM". To the right of the map, there is a section for "January 9" with a link to "Yes We Can" and sub-links for "Obama Wins Iowa" and "Who Can Win in November?". At the bottom right, there is a "MEET BARACK OBAMA" section with a small image of Obama. On the far right, there is a sidebar titled "MAKE A DIFFERENCE" with four links: "Find Events", "Join Group", "Register to vote", and "Volunteer", each accompanied by a small icon.

EN ESPAÑOL

OBAMA'08

"I'M ASKING YOU TO BELIEVE.  
Not just in my ability to bring about  
real change in Washington ... I'm  
asking you to believe in yours."

GET INVOLVED  
SIGNUP FOR EMAIL UPDATES

Email Address

Zip Code

SIGN UP

LEARN ISSUES MEDIA ACTION PEOPLE STATES BLOG STORE

DONATE NOW

January 9

Yes We Can

Obama Wins Iowa

Who Can Win in November?

YES WE CAN  
THANK YOU, NEW HAMPSHIRE

BUILD THE MOMENTUM

MEET  
BARACK  
OBAMA

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Find Events

Join Group

Register to vote

Volunteer

# BarackObama.com

With the internet becoming a much more prevalent source for everything, Obama and his campaign team created “The Queen Bee”: BarackObama.com

One stop shop for everything Obama related - News, videos, blogs, etc.  
Created a platform for e-commerce, which fueled online donations

Chris Hughes, a co-founder of Facebook, developed an entire social network within the site, allowing for blogging, video sharing, personal profiles and more

Allowed for people to “take matters into their own hands” by creating a way for volunteers to get involved. This was done by adding do-it-yourself event planning tools, voter registration interface, a polling station locator, communication tools to help create and find events, and so much more.

## BarackObama.com (cont.)

A state of the art phone banking system was implemented. This banking system would identify 20 voters who were thought to be on the fence that shared a similar demographic profile as their caller. There were also a multitude of scripts that allowed for the caller to relate and try to transition what was going on in the potential voters head, into an actual vote. The tool also lets users share some of the campaign details, help people register to vote, find polling stations, and then would record the outcomes of those calls.

Each caller was also rated on an activity index that was viewable by anybody on the inside.





**ORGANIZING  
FOR AMERICA**

**"I'M ASKING YOU TO BELIEVE.**  
Not just in my ability to bring about  
real change in Washington ... I'm  
asking you to believe in yours."  
**BARACK OBAMA**

Home's Home

Community

Events

Feedback

Logout

My Neighborhood

My Groups

Find Groups

My Friends

People Near Me

UPDATES

SIGN UP

nore

Logout Account Settings



#### MY PROFILE

Edit Profile

Share some basic information about yourself and why you support  
Barack Obama.

Create Your Profile

#### NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR

At the time, there are no campaigns available to you.

Please click here to go to your my.barackobama.com dashboard

#### MY BLOG

Manage Blog

Share your thoughts and experiences with other Obama  
supporters. Whether it's a photo, personal story, or simply your  
concern of the campaign, you can share it through a personal blog.  
Manage Your Blog

#### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

What's This?



My Activity  
Index  
Details

#### MY ACTIVITIES

All 7 Days 30 Days

Events Hosted	0
Events Attended	2
Calls made	20
Doors Knocked	0
Number of Blog posts	0
Donors to your personal fundraising	0
Amount raised	\$ 283.00
Grades earned	0

#### My Home

Community

My Neighborhood

My Groups

My Friends

Find Friends

Events

Find Events

Host an Event

Manage my Events

# BarackObama.com (cont.)

Obama didn't know the value of the website truly until he lost the New Hampshire primary. However, he hadn't realized yet the true potential that was brewing within the integrated social network.

Even while Obama was understaffed during the primaries, the availability and the versatility of the website had allowed for an extensive list of eager volunteers to take matters into their own hands.

They were amazed to find that through the social networking tools available on my.barackobama.com, supporters had already self organized, planned caucus meetings, and rallied to promote Obama's candidacy in their neighborhoods and communities.

*"All of a sudden, it made a difference that we have 60 really organized groups in Kansas, a caucus state. And a hugely active Boise for Obama group," Hughes recalls.*

***“What’s amazing is that Hillary built the best campaign that has ever been done in Democratic politics on the old model - she raised more money than anyone before her, she locked down all the party stalwarts, she assembled an all-star team of consultants and she really mastered this top-down, command-and-control type of outfit. And yet she’s getting beaten by this political start-up that is essentially a totally different model of the new politics” - Peter Leyden, New Politics***

**Institute**



*"Campaign staffers dispatched around the country discovered what the MyBO community had accomplished. When Jeremy Bird, the official state director, parachuted into Maryland to prep for the Potomac primary on February 12, he was astonished to find a whole field operation at work. 'They had the entire thing set up- an office with seven computers, phone lines, a state structure, county chairs, and meetings every other Saturday. They had even picked their own state director.' Obama won with 57.4% of the vote." - Jeremy Bird, Obama Campaign Official State Director*



# BarackObama.com - Metrics

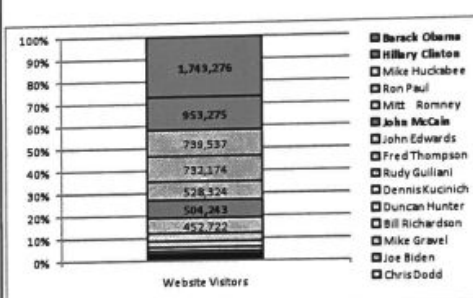
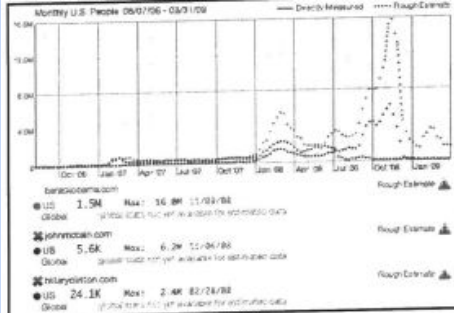
Barack Obama was a success by all the traditional web metrics: reach/unique visitors and engagement.

His engagement peaked immediately before the election at 9M for the month of October, the ideal time for a flurry of energy, fundraising, and education about the candidate.

BarackObama.com was ranked within the top 1000 websites, due to the amount of traffic throughout the months leading up to the election.

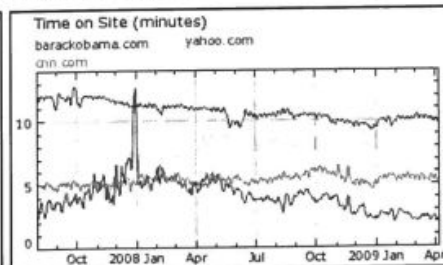
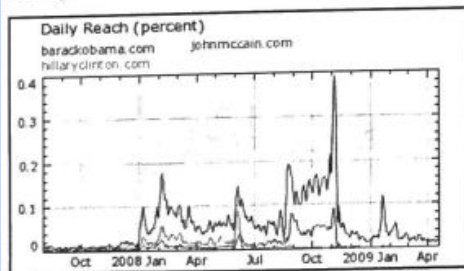
By January 2008, Obama owned 27% of share in total traffic to all presidential candidate websites combined





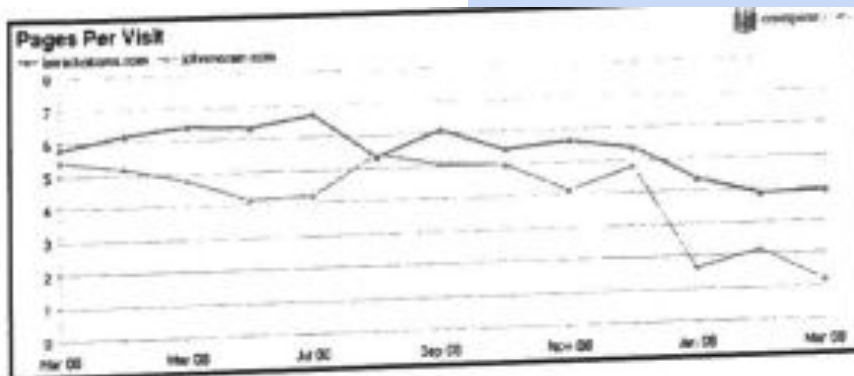
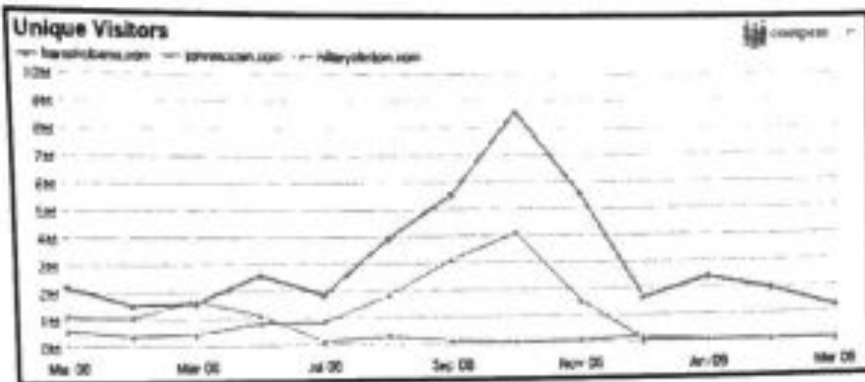
Monthly traffic to candidates' websites<sup>ii</sup>

Analysis: share of traffic, Obama has 27% in January 2008<sup>iii</sup>



Reach measured as percentage of internet traffic<sup>iii</sup>

Engagement measured by time on site<sup>iv</sup>

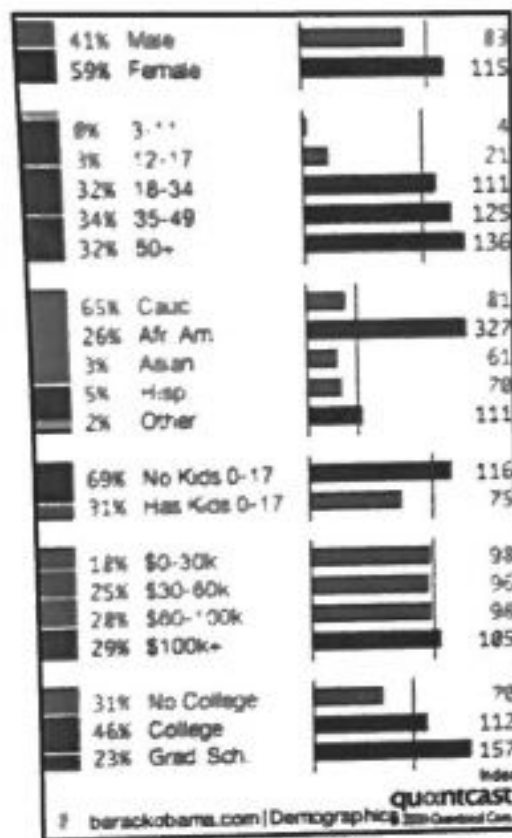


# BarackObama.com - Metrics (cont.)

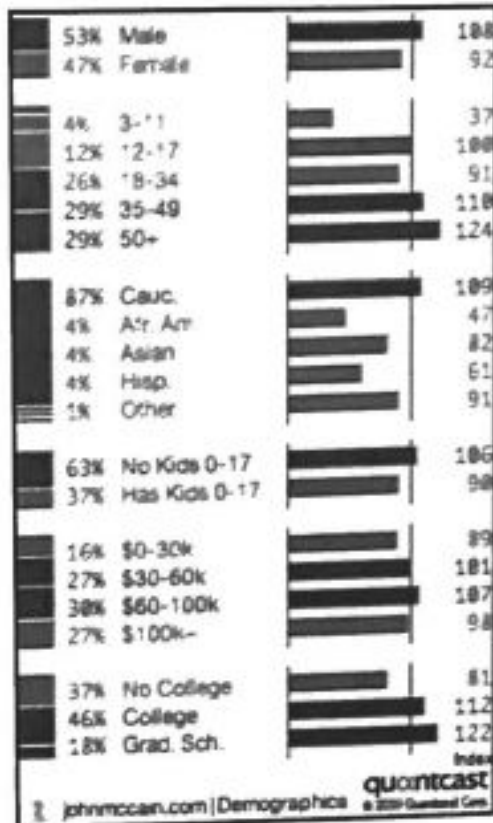
Managed to build both a strong base of loyal followers, while also maintaining high traffic volume of users. This demonstrates the success of achieving both depth and breadth with the website and the larger digital media platform.

The type of users that visit BarackObama.com are a major detail when it comes to the success of the website and the engagement it was able to create.

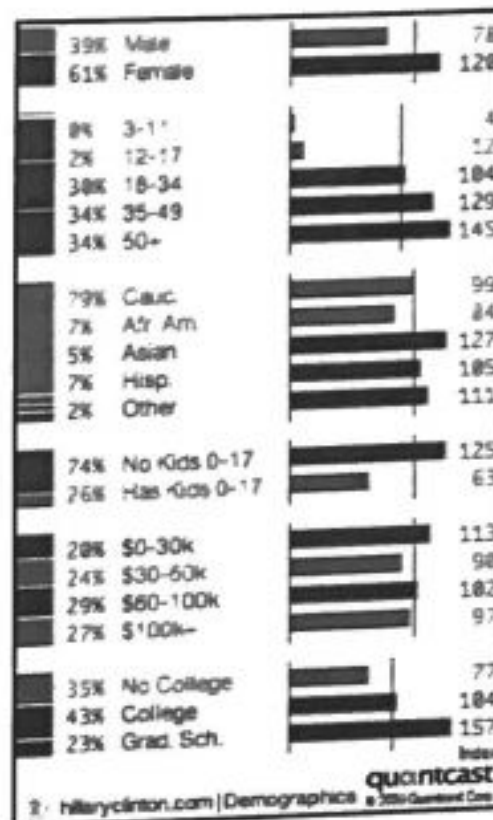
Obama's website disproportionally attracted a female audience across a wide range of ages skewing slightly older with a high proportion of high salaried professionals, childless individuals, and African Americans. This would suggest that he is attracting a diverse group to his campaign. Traffic to McCain's website suggests that he was less appealing to a broader audience, as his demographic heavily favored the upper end of the age demographic, men, and caucasians.



Demographic statistics for Obama<sup>ix</sup>,



McCain<sup>ix</sup>,



and Clinton<sup>ix</sup>



# BarackObama.com - Monetization and Impact

Obama raised three quarters of a billion dollars, making this the first ever billion dollar election (combined total between all candidates).

On BarackObama.com, web visitors created over 2 million profiles, over 200,000 user initiated events were planned through the website and executed across the country, 35,000 community groups were created, 400,000 blogs have been written, and 70,000 personal fundraising pages netted \$30 million. Over 3 million people contributed online.

# Key Takeaways

Barack Obama could not have won the election without the internet-based donations and volunteer mobilization engine he created. Obama found a way to balance both ends of the spectrum, by harnessing the power of the long-tail and in the process, they proved that small donors can carry an election.

This election and through the actions of Obama and his campaign team provide powerful lessons that are applicable to businesses, non-profits, and politicians alike:

1. Social networking is here to stay. Figure out your business and its goals and tap into the new digital version of social interaction if you wish to thrive
2. Different people and different demographics use different ways of communication. You should use all of them to avoid failure
3. Challenge yourself and your organization to experiment
4. Finally, whatever business you are in, be sure to utilize the six rules of new media execution

**“If anyone still doubts whether New Media Marketing is something they should take advantage of for their business, just look at Barack's win and ask yourself, can I afford NOT to use new media to get the word out for my business, platform, or campaign?” - David Bullock and Brent Leary, Barack 2.0**

