AN INTERNSHIP FOR THE PHILPOT FOR CONGRESS CAMPAIGN

A capstone Internship Portfolio Submitted to Southern Utah University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts in Professional Communication

April 28, 2011

By
Stuart Bunker

Capstone Committee:

Kevin Stein, PhD, Chair
Matthew Barton, PhD
Lionel Grady, PhD
We certify that we have read this portfolio and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as an Internship portfolio for the degree of Master of Professional Communications.

Capstone Committee

Kevin Stein, PhD, Chair

Matthew Barton, PhD

Lionel Grady, PhD
Acknowledgments

There are a great number of people without whom I never would have completed this project. I would first like to thank my parents Clint and Anita Bunker who besides raising me and teaching me also lined me up to become a State delegate which was the first step on this crazy road. My chair Kevin Stein has been patient and helpful throughout the process and has provided me with motivation and the belief that this information is pertinent and interesting to others besides myself. The rest of my committee Dr. Matt Barton and Dr. Lionel Grady for their input and helping me to shape what this document would eventually look like which helped me to get it all down on paper.

I appreciate Morgan Philpot for taking a chance on me, and becoming a dear friend. Lyall Swim for providing stability and direction in an environment that tends to lack both. I also appreciate the campaign staff, volunteers, and others who impacted my life during the campaign in various ways. Many friends and family members have been instrumental in stimulating my thoughts and shaping my perspectives.

Finally I could not have done this without the unwavering support of my wonderful wife Taylia, who was willing to leave our comfortable lives and embark on this adventure with me.
Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.............................................................................. 3

INTRODUCTION....................................................................................... 5-7

DUTIES..................................................................................................... 7-17
  Weekly emails, Press releases, and other communication.............. 7-10
  List control & Map development.................................................. 10-12
  Daily Review of the Media............................................................... 13-17

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY........................................................................... 18-45
  Background..................................................................................... 18-20
  Method............................................................................................ 20-21
  My experience................................................................................. 22-30
  Lessons............................................................................................ 30-42
    Arm chair Quarter Back............................................................. 33-35
    Intra-party communication....................................................... 35-36
    Jockeying for Position............................................................... 36-39
    Outside messaging................................................................. 39-42
  Conclusion..................................................................................... 42-45

REFERENCES....................................................................................... 46

End Notes............................................................................................ 47
Introduction

The key factors in participation in this internship-focused capstone were to help me learn real life professional lessons, provide me professional experience, help familiarize me with the industry, and give me a sense of my career interests. This portfolio will show how these factors were all fulfilled through this internship. This also shows how this internship was the ideal capstone, which equipped me with the experience I needed to be able to secure employment. This portfolio also includes a research paper showing the ability to both approach life situations and provide verifiable insights. This fusion will prove useful in the political workforce. Whereas many ideas are perpetuated simply because of personal experience, I will be able to use research tools to analyze actions and practices so as to provide insights that are more than anecdotal.

This volume will be a compilation of different elements. The first element will be a detailed explanation of my work duties. This section will serve to give specific detail to what it is I was responsible for on the campaign. I will also show how I was able to participate in the process of campaigning. The other major section of this portfolio will be an Autoethnographic essay of the entire experience. The auto-ethnography provides narrative and lessons. This section crystallizes many of the specific lessons I have been able to learn with narrative examples and experiences.

It is interesting to note that through this experience I realized that breaking onto the political scene is really not that difficult. Anyone with desire can become
a part of elite political circles, at least at a state level, without too much work. Despite the relative ease of getting into politics, the workload on a campaign and in politics in general is daunting, to say the least. The experience helped open my eyes to how the world of politics really works and let me work within the system to pursue changes that I favor.

Internship

The internship was initially chaotic and not what I had expected, however, thanks in large part to the campaign manager Lyall Swim, I was able to nail down specific responsibilities, which were applicable to my background and helpful to my progression while still having time to be involved in many other activities that broadened my horizons. I guess part of the beauty of working 60-80 hours a week for 6 months is that I got to experience a lot more, both in terms of quantity and variety, than I could have experienced otherwise. I learned more because during that time there are so many different things to do. The variety factor comes about because people and events vary depending on how long people have been working or how early or late the hour.

During this experience, I was constantly learning what I could contribute to the campaign. The key things that I accomplished consistently were my 40-hour a week staples. However, in the 20-40 hours left a week I was able to participate in many other activities, through which I learned a great deal as well. These other activities included preparing for and executing parade floats, wrapping an RV with vinyl, attending scores of meetings and interacting with those present about
Morgan and the campaign, fundraising, contacting tea party groups and soliciting help, attending the only open to the public Jim Matheson event and videotaping it, as well as many other activities. Though I will not explain these duties in detail I figured that they deserved at least a passing note.

**Duties**

**Weekly emails, press releases, and other communications**

As part of the campaign there were several pieces of writing that I did consistently. The first piece was a weekly to semi-weekly email that would go out to the Utah State GOP list. The state party has collected a large email list and would send out periodic emails through their list that were produced by the campaign. I was charged with writing those emails. We had a basic platform for the emails, which included information and good news about the campaign, for instance after pumping the reader up with all of the things that were going well for the campaign; we would have a call to action. The call to action and what was going well on the campaign needed to be related as well. For example, we would talk about how our commercials were up on the radio and people were responding well to them in terms of donations increasing, online views being up, or receiving positive feedback from viewers or listeners. The call to action would be an explanation of how much radio spots cost and a request for donations to help the campaign continue to buy spots. Another example is talking about the success of rallies and sign placement by sharing how many people had showed up or how many signs had been placed in yards, the call to action would be to volunteer to help with signs or rallies. Here is a copy of one of the weekly emails.
that I wrote in this capacity. In this particular email, the call to action was less overt. We really wanted the readers to go and read at least the headlines of the news stories, which might give them a less favorable view of Jim Matheson. The idea for this email came as a result of two news articles from the previous day showing Matheson's dependence on PAC money and what his top personal contributors' reasons were for contributing (i.e. getting money from the federal government, etc.). We wanted to make sure that these stories got as much coverage as possible, and the GOP house list was one medium through which we pushed the stories.

Dear Fellow Republican,

Utah has a problem, and it's time to fix it.


Did you know that Congressman Matheson gets more than 84% of his contributions from special interest groups. That is TWICE the national average. You simply can't put Utah and its citizens first when you are almost exclusively dependent on special interest money to fund your campaign.

If we want representation that is accountable to us, then it's time for new representation in Utah's 2nd District.

It's time to Expect More. It's time to Elect Differently.

~ Morgan Philpot
PS: To make a citizen donation to our campaign, go to: www.philpotforcongress.com/donate

Another important piece of writing that I did fairly regularly was to draft press releases. Whenever we had information or some message to get out to the media, I would draft a press release. Before beginning the draft, I would discuss with Lyall the desired content and tone. Once we had figured out the broad goal and some more specific ideas on how to achieve that goal, I would draft a possible press release and then we would re-work it to fit our message. Press releases are interesting because they can be totally ignored or picked up and run with. Given that they had the potential to make significant waves in the media, we tried to make sure that they didn’t have anything that would make us look bad. At the same time we tried to make them catchy enough to be picked up and help papers sell. The truth of the matter is that if you fumble one press release and write 50 good ones, the one you fumble is going to make the papers while the ones you write well likely won’t. Here is an example of one press release I helped write.

By admin, on Jul 16, 2010

For Immediate Release

Salt Lake City, Utah — July 15, 2010 — The Morgan Philpot for Congress Campaign has released an official statement urging the Senate to reject the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Philpot points to absence of real reform of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae as Congress setting the stage for another financial disaster.
"How can you ignore Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and make any claim that Utahns or Americans are better off because of this bill," said Morgan Philpot, Republican candidate for Utah's 2nd District. "Once again the Democrat led congress, with the help of our current congressman, let special interests get in the way of meaningful reform."

"Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac were at the center of the financial meltdown and have received the most government money. But this bill does nothing to hold these two institutions accountable for their reckless behavior. At the end of the day, any reform bill that does not address these two institutions just sets the table for another financial meltdown," said Philpot.

For more information about Morgan Philpot, visit www.philpotforcongress.com.

These two pieces of writing and their importance to the campaign helped me learn to write professional documents that would serve their purpose while being able to use writing skills and communications theory learned during my coursework in the communications program as well. I was able to fuse the academic and professional by creating documents with practical purposes using academic information. This fusion will be vital to my professional career.

List Control and Map Development

At the Utah County Central Committee meeting for June, a representative from the RNC came and taught us how to use a database called Voter Vault. Voter Vault is a database of all registered voters including all information
provided on the voter registration as well as other information available on individuals.

Since the RNC owns Voter Vault, access to this database is distributed to the state party from the RNC and then from the state party to individual campaigns. Voter Vault has many useful applications for any campaign. I managed the Voter Vault access and for a while was the sole person on the campaign that retrieved information. There were several main reasons that I downloaded information from Voter Vault. The first reason I downloaded information from Voter Vault was for walks.

Within Voter Vault there is a tab under which you can make maps for walking. Walking is the term used to denote a variety of different activities, which are all, characterized by going door-to-door. Several of the activities that fall under the category of walking include dropping off flyers, targeted voter registration, knocking doors to discuss the candidate, and soliciting sign placement. The first information required to make a map is deciding in which precincts you want to walk. After you designate the precincts, a voter information page comes up which allows you to specify what information to filter out and what to use in the map. The first is what party affiliations you want on the walk. The choices are Republican, Democrat, Independent, unidentified, and other. The next bit of data was absentee voter status followed by perfect voter score, and lastly demographic information including age and gender. Before I go on I will explain the perfect voter score. This score is from 0-5. The ratings from 0-4
represent how many times out of the last four primary and general elections a person has voted. So a score of four means they have voted in all of the last four elections, which would mean they have voted in two primaries one general and one midterm election. The perfect voter score of five means that the voter is newly registered.

In the beginning, Voter Vault was used mostly for our grassroots efforts. I would create and download maps with the houses marked that we wanted our volunteers to contact by dropping off a particular piece of literature. As time progressed, I taught some of our grassroots leaders how to use Voter Vault to make their walk lists. Once I had taught them, I served as a resource but no longer acted as the main map-making person on the campaign. This transition was good because as the campaign progressed the number of walks going on in any given week increased significantly, to the point where I would have had time only to make walking maps. My role with Voter Vault then became one of making phone lists to use with all of our direct advertising media. I created lists for Robo-calls, internal polling, advocacy calling, GOTV (get out the vote) calling, and any other phone lists we needed. Robo-calls are when a computer calls people and plays a pre-recorded message. Internal polling calls were done by volunteers who would use polling software that would make the call route it to the volunteers phone and record the answers to various questions only a few of which were questions we were concerned with the rest were to minimize hypothesis guessing. With polling calls no advocacy (attempts to persuade the voter) were allowed. Advocacy calls are essentially telemarketing except that the product you
are selling is the candidate. GOTV calling is the process of calling people who have been identified as supporters to encourage them to get out and vote and then record if they have voted or not. GOTV calling is a means of ensuring that your core support group actually makes it to the polls. This traditionally was only done on election day. However, with vote by mail and early voting as it currently exists in Utah this process goes from the beginning of October to election day.

Voter Vault contains information collected on voter registration forms. Due to the manner in which it is collected and the financial value of the data I had to develop a disclaimer to send out with all maps that were emailed to grassroots leaders. The disclaimer let them know that they were only to use the maps and other information for campaign purposes and that they needed to delete the data once the election was over. Here is the disclaimer I drafted and Lyall re-worked.

The attached files are for use only as it pertains to Morgan Philpot for Congress campaign. The data contained may not be transferred or sold to anyone outside the campaign for any reason. Distribution of this data in a manner not prescribed by the campaign will be subject to possible legal action. Sale or promotion of any product using this data is strictly prohibited.

Aside from campaign strategy and finances, Voter Vault data was the most closely guarded information.
Daily review of the media

The daily review of the media was a short report on all of the media that the campaign wanted our confederate bloggers to take note of and comment on. This media review was really an ongoing process with the normal outcome being a once-daily email to the confederate bloggers. Confederate bloggers were individuals who were supporters of the campaign who, for a variety of reasons, could at any moment logon to the Internet and comment on news about the campaign, whether in the comment sections of the news articles themselves or on their own personal blogs.

The process of reviewing the media was quite extensive and occupied most free moments. During the campaign I only listened to talk radio stations, and during the day I would change the stations depending on who was talking about politics. For example, 102.7 (KSL news radio) has the political Doug Wright show on from 9am-12pm Monday-Thursday and 9-10am on Friday. At about 8:30 am I would start to listen to 102.7, since they usually preview the show. If anything regarding Morgan, Matheson, or the race in general was going to be discussed then I would alert others, including the confederate bloggers, and listen myself. At noon on 102.7 is Utah news. From 1-3pm I had to listen to another station because the radio show on 102.7 is about the Internet, not politics or news. On 105.7 (KNRS), the line up is Glen Beck 7-10 am, Rush Limbaugh 10am-1 pm, Sean Hannity 1-4 pm, Rod Arquette 4-7 pm, and Dave Ramsey 7-10 pm. Beck, Limbaugh, and Hannity aren't likely to discuss our race
without us knowing it so I didn't worry about listening to them. Since 105.7 commentators weren't likely to discuss our race before 4 during the Rod Arquett show I usually listened to 90.1 (NPR) from 1-3.

Another major part of the daily review was the traditional print media. All of the major news outlets for the district have online versions so I looked through all of the online versions for stories on Morgan, Matheson, or anything about the race. The best way to review this media was by setting up Google alerts through Gmail. With Google alerts you set up key words, and then Google will send you an email including all stories, websites, tweets, Facebook updates, or anything else that includes your alert words or phrases. I set up Google alerts for Jim Matheson, Morgan Philpot, and Claudia Wright. In the beginning I didn't trust the Google alerts so I would do a follow-up sweep of the major outlets to check. My anecdotal evidence suggests I have no need to worry about Google missing an important item.

I had my Google alerts set to deliver emails as they happened. I would check for new alerts throughout the day, and if anything were particularly pertinent, I would send it out to the confederate bloggers. Most alerts could wait until the next morning. Every morning, while listening to talk radio, I reviewed the most recent Google alerts. I would go to the links provided and scan the articles to see what they were about. I would then copy the URL to a MS Word document and write a brief explanation of the content. I did this for every unique piece of
media, and then I emailed the complete document to all of the confederate bloggers.

The last major part of reviewing the media involved trolling the Internet for discussion groups, Facebook pages, twitter feeds, and other media that could be leveraged for campaign purposes or needed to have negative effects mitigated. This included frequent checks of all of Jim Matheson’s online outlets (twitter, Facebook, congressional web page, and campaign web page) as well as all of Morgan Philpot’s online outlets. With Philpot, I reposted everything he posted on Facebook. I also re-tweeted everything he tweeted.¹

To summarize, the daily review of the media involved listening to the radio, monitoring traditional online sources of information, monitoring social networking, or non-traditional, online sources, summing up the information in a daily email sent out every morning to confederate bloggers, and then making sure comment-boards were dominated by friendly messages. It should be noted that the campaign did not encourage or even provide to the rapid response confederate bloggers links to Matheson’s Facebook page. Though there were frequent and sometimes effective antagonistic posts on his page. The campaign’s official position and unofficial stance was to leave his page alone and focus on our campaign. Matheson’s interns and even congressional staff however, frequently made antagonistic posts on Morgan’s Facebook page. Another interesting note is that Morgan did not have his page censored he would in fact answer tough questions asked of him on his wall himself. Matheson’s
page on the other hand was censored, antagonistic posts were deleted I assume so as to maintain an image of being generally liked, while Morgan’s page was not.

Confederate Bloggers were supporters of Morgan Philpot who went out and influenced the dialogue about the media being put forward. In the beginning, our rapid response team was small and mostly included campaign staff. As the race progressed, the number of confederate bloggers increased to 15 by July and over 30 by September. With the numbers growing, I drafted an email of the campaign guidelines. The idea behind the rapid response confederate bloggers was that they would make their own comments on the content. In this way the campaign provides the rundown of where information and discussions are taking place and that’s it. I made sure not to comment on what people should say on any particular topic. The guideline email was somewhat of a safety net for the campaign. That way if the media got wind of what we were doing they couldn’t say that the campaign had pushed any particular message.

The job duties that have been described give a substantial understanding of my specific duties. Having read through the previous section one could learn what skills might be necessary to perform the duties, which fell under my pervue. However, the preceding section does not convey the experience in its totality. The following Autoethnography is an attempt to convey some of the knowledge and a sense of the experience that make up the more lasting impact that this internship has had on my life.
Autoethnography

In recent months and years, citizen involvement in politics has increased. In 2008 we saw incredible amounts of money come into President Obama's coffers from previously uninvolved citizens. Many people voted for the first time in 2008. The political process is an interesting and complicated beast. This essay takes a very personal look at the political process using auto-ethnographic and interview methods. The 2010 congressional campaign of Morgan Philpot is examined.

Background on the race

Jim Matheson, son of popular past Governor Scott Matheson, has been the seated congressman since 2000 when he beat Derek Smith in a district that mostly encompassed Salt Lake City. His only other notable election was his first re-election in 2002 with a significantly different district, which had been changed during re-districting. In this election, John Swallow lost by 1500 votes after Matheson dropped a negative commercial three days before the election saying that Swallow favored allowing convicted sexual predators the ability to work at daycares. Since the 2002 election Matheson has won re-election by ever widening margins with a high of 26%, which he won by in the 2008 race against Bill Dew.
Morgan Philpot, a previous state representative, had recently become state party vice-chair. Within the Utah GOP establishment he was known but outside of that he was a virtual nonentity.

This set the stage for the race. Also as part of the background I will include pre-convention and convention happenings, as I officially became part of the campaign at convention. The day after the caucus meeting, the state delegates were bombarded with opportunities to meet with all of the potential Republican nominees for every state and federal level race. Delegates are taken to lunch and dinner and courted by many political figures. I was a state delegate and it was quite an interesting and enjoyable experience. The second meeting I attended was at IHOP with Morgan Philpot. He spoke and answered questions for us for a period of time. I was impressed and recognized the importance of his race. I also met with his challenger Neil Walters. Walters was also a good guy whose ideas I generally agreed with but he didn’t have the same draw that Morgan Philpot had. Over the course of the next few weeks I decided that I wanted to work for Morgan Philpot and help his campaign. I got involved and helped out starting at Convention.

The way things work at Convention is that there are multiple rounds of balloting. After the first round, any candidate who has over 25% of the vote will advance to the second round. If there are more than two candidates in the second round, the two candidates with the highest number of votes move on to the third round. In the final round, the top two candidates vie to get 60% of the
vote. If at any point one candidate does get 60% of the votes, he/she automatically becomes the nominee. If neither does then it goes to a primary election.

In the race for the GOP nomination for the second congressional district there were three candidates. This means that there were only two rounds of balloting in Convention. In the first round Morgan got 57% of the vote, Neil Walters got 42% and Ed Eliason got 1%.

As we waited to find out if Morgan won over the 3% of delegates needed to avoid a primary I sat down next to Morgan and said, "I want to work for you full time." He said, "Ok, move up." I said that I would. Ten minutes later we found out that Morgan got 60.0013% of the vote. He literally avoided a primary by one vote. At the same time, in the other end of the same building, the democrats’ convention was being held. As we waited to find out whether or not Morgan would be in a primary, an announcement was made letting us know that Claudia Wright had received 45% of the delegate votes, forcing Matheson into a primary.

Method

The Autoethnographic style is the method that was chosen for this paper. I actively embedded myself within a community, which I desired to be a part of. The auto-ethnographic style allows for a fusion of direct experience seen through the lens of a researcher. In this way, we are able to learn many things, which would otherwise remain unseen. The auto-ethnographic research bridges the
gap between academic knowledge and real world experience. It is important to bridge this gap because of the inherent dissimilarity with the two. With real world experience, many times the only criteria applied is utilitarianism. However, with academic knowledge, many times utilitarianism is left out completely, and internal consistency and plausibility are the only measure of correctness. In other words academic knowledge seeks more objective truth that can be generalized to larger populations whereas the world outside of academia works largely with subjective truths. An example of this is the fact that compelling narrative will persuade voters more than the facts alone.

In both situations, the narrow criteria for proving truth also provides for truth that is only applicable to the criteria with which it is measured. Since researchers are well trained in the criteria for good academic knowledge and truth, they see the world through that lens. If a researcher observes and takes part in real life events, he/she is then able to fuse the two types of knowledge. All of the truth is subjected to both tests of utilitarian and academic rigor. Returning to our previous metaphor academic truths such as O'Keefes (1987) message design logic, which tells us how to structure a message most compellingly, can be used to make a compelling narrative. So academic insights improve the utilitarian knowledge about what motivates people. This process usually started when an idea or campaign “common knowledge” was surfaced. From that point rather than simply accept it or reject it based on my opinion I would look into whether or not any research had been done on the subject and then would bring that information to the debate as to how to use or implement the idea. In this way
campaign knowledge would be double checked against research. Since the ideas that emerged had passed through the refining process of both practical utility and academic research, they would be applicable and true in both situations or put another way they would be both useful practically and verifiable experimentally.

The Autoethnography provides an opportunity to do what Emerson (1841) suggests when he says, "Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense" (p.2). By participating in the events, which we want to research, we are able to develop these convictions and thereby speak them. This method provides, as Crawford (1996) put it, "a very fertile activity and staging ground for exploring human experience" (p. 170). During this process, knowing that I would have to write some sort of research paper, I would ask questions and form possible research questions. The experience shaped the research just as the research shaped the experience.

My Experience

I feel strangely calm. Everything feels calm... too calm. I know that everything is about to change. I know that the results are in and that we lost. I know that there is no way the vote by mail ballots will win us the election. It's 2:30 am and my father-in-law says something nice about moral victories as I pick up my son Truman. I mumble something back about either exhaustion or something else preventing the situation from distilling on me.
On Wednesday, things start to settle in. I begin to feel the results of the cumulative actions of 319,719 people throughout the second district. Wednesday is a blackout day. I have no contact with the campaign. I don’t know what’s going on with anybody. This is the beginning of the end.

My first formal involvement with the campaign started when I met and talked with Lyall Swim, the campaign manager. We sat down in his office and began to talk. He asked me about my background and what I was looking for in the campaign. We talked about my degree and the fact that I was looking for some hands-on experience working in public relations and politics. He told me that contracted firms would do a lot of the stuff I was interested in. I found out later that Morgan Philpot and Lyall Swim had been negotiating with Jason Powers to try and get him to help the campaign. This is important because if he had come onboard then I would essentially have been out of any meaningful involvement because he would have taken over most of the campaign. I came away, from that first meeting with Lyall, somewhat putout about what my experience was going to entail on the campaign. In fact, the only thing that I knew for sure was that I should start doing a daily review of the media. The review would include scanning all of the major newspapers serving the district as well as monitoring the content on talk radio stations to ensure that our message was not being misrepresented. Little did I know that things were not going to get much clearer with time.
I worked from home for the first two weeks. I did the daily review every morning and then was done with my duties. During this time I did reach out to every political contact I had to ask for advice and ideas. One of my contacts, Ron Mann, sent me a document of information on campaigning. In it he recommended contacting the small, low-circulation newspapers in the district, and, if possible, setting up interviews with the candidate and the editors prior to the campaign season. I ran the idea past Lyall, and he liked it, so I began compiling the contact information for all of the small papers.

In June, the campaign really started to feel more real as I traveled to St. George with Lyall and Morgan. On the way down, a reporter called to talk to Morgan. Lyall got the gist of what the reporter was looking for and then said he would have Morgan call him. Jim Matheson was complaining about how redistricting was going to be unfair to him when done in 2011. We talked over his response and he called the reporter as we were arriving in St. George. Morgan told the reporter that he hadn't been part of the redistricting process but thought the allegations were a bit ridiculous considering congressman Matheson is the only one to have kept his seat in the 8 years since. This was my first opportunity to influence messages. I must admit that I was caught off guard and went with the conversation rather than critically thinking about the questions and a proper way to frame the answers. As time went on, I got more comfortable and was able to take a more critical approach to messaging, but, as with most things for me on the campaign, my first opportunity was a baptism by fire.
Over time I realized that campaigns have different sections. This beginning part was dominated by rallying the base and organizing the grass roots, then followed the events portion, and finally the home stretch. During the rallying section we continued meeting with sympathetic groups from around the district for the next few weeks. The people with whom we met during this portion of the campaign are very involved in politics and don't have an off-season, as it were. They were the political opinion leaders and were ready to talk politics always. We had multiple meetings every week. At every meeting Morgan had to give another speech. About an hour or two before the event Morgan would begin to ask for input into what he should include in his speech. This process would continue during the car ride to the event. Morgan's style of speech preparation is interesting. He brainstormed with us for a while. Then he would just stand up and give a speech that none of us had been prepared for at all. Sometimes our ideas were included and other times they were not at all. One thing that did make it in to almost every speech, however, was the tone that we wanted him to portray. Once we agreed upon a tone and overall feeling we wanted him to elicit he tended to do well at sticking to that. As the campaign continued, our message and tag lines also became staple parts of his speaking. Morgan also matured as a speaker and as a candidate. He became a more polished speaker, a more formal statesman, and more reserved in his positions. He quickly learned how to deal with the media and effectively answer tough questions.

Once the Primary was over, that signaled the tentative end of the first section of the campaign, and we were on to the events portion of the campaign.
In July and August there is a never-ending stream of parades, fairs, and other community events that provide an opportunity to get your name out in the general public's eye. The target audience and message for this time shifts from politically active people to the general public. The message also shifts at this time because regular people don't particularly worry about politics during the summer time. The objectives were to get Morgan more name recognition and add to that a positive feeling. We wanted people to know the name Morgan Philpot and have a generally positive impression of him. In parades we didn't have the best float, so we weren't the best to look at. The way we compensated for our float was with candy—hundreds and hundreds of pounds of candy. Morgan and several others would pass out candy along the parade route. Morgan would shake hands and talk briefly with parents of children to whom he had given candy while the other people with candy would simply pass the candy out. After our first two parades, both on the same day, we realized that we needed to have handlers with Morgan to keep him moving because he would frequently stop to talk for too long.

As the summer wore on, we added hundreds of water bottles with Philpot stickers on them to our hundreds of pounds of candy. After all, the voters were not as interested in a pack of Smarties as they were in a cold bottle of water. The county fairs came along with booths at which we gave out balloons that said “Likes Philpot” with a thumbs up similar to the Facebook® icon this idea was championed by Aaron Browning. Balloons at fairs were a huge hit. Kids all want a balloon, and something free that appeases the kids at the fair is always a winner with the parents. The balloons inevitably ended up going flat or getting popped at
home but at least the name Philpot was seen several times by the adults in the house. This time of the year was wild and busy. We traveled extensively. Most trips included multiple stops as we worked our way through an area of the district. One weekend we spent Friday night at the UBIC (Uintah Basin in Celebration) fair handing out balloons and talking to people. The following morning we were in the UBIC parade in Roosevelt that ended at 10:30 a.m. From the parade, we showered and then headed to a senior luncheon at 11:30 a.m. From there we had to drive three hours to Castledale for the annual Lamb Fry where we had a booth. Morgan served up food during the actual lamb fry. I left on Saturday, but after the lamb fry Morgan stayed Sunday and on Monday he took a tour of land over which the federal government was trying to assume control. This is just one example of the many and frequent trips that we took during the summer.

One of the last big things that happened before the end of the summer section of the campaign is something that all challengers to incumbents hate. A big set of Franked mail went out from Jim Matheson. Franking is the process by which Senators and Representatives are able to send out mail to their constituents that is paid for with tax dollars and sent for free merely with the Senator or Representatives signature in place of a stamp. Now there are strict rules about what can be franked and what can't. Those rules include a prohibition on bulk franking within 90 days of an election, the number of times that the representatives name may appear, and the piece can't be a campaign piece. But when you receive a piece of mail that is full color front and back by fold on glossy
paper that has pictures of the congressman and touts his accomplishments exactly 90 days before an election it’s little wonder what he/she is trying to accomplish with it.

Another important thing that happened for the couple of months after the primary was that we started to increase our size of core full-time volunteers. Prior to the primary, the core campaign had consisted of 6 people: Morgan Philpot, Lyall Swim, Michelle Sharf, Aaron Browning, myself, and Tobias Emory. As we worked through that time, we grew to between 12-15 core staff members at any given time. There were always personnel challenges, especially since not one person on the campaign was paid. One challenge is getting things done that aren’t glamorous. For example, I showed up to the Fire Pelosi bus rally, which is where the RNC came into town in their big red bus that said “Fire Pelosi”. RNC leadership got off and campaigned for Philpot because he was running against an incumbent democrat. I was setting up our helium tanks and blowing up balloons when Toby asked me to leave right as the event was starting to take some materials to a fundraiser that was after the rally. I told him I wouldn’t do it. I wanted to be at the rally and I had done more to set up the rally than anyone else. Toby wasn’t able to get anyone to take the materials to the fundraiser. Lyall found out what needed to be done and asked me if I would do it. I would do anything for Lyall, so I ended up missing the rally so that we could have all the needed materials at the fundraiser. The larger problem behind this situation is that no one had taken the materials earlier because they had wanted to be in the limelight. There were other interesting battles as well. Most of the turnover was
people who had worked for Mike Lee up through the primary and went back to his campaign once they started back up in October. For the most part, we did amazing things with the resources we had.

In September, the campaign kicks up a notch and the message begins to get significantly more political. By this time, kids are back in school, vacations are mostly done with, and people start settling in to life again. As this is happening, people begin to care more about, or at least become more receptive to, politics. This is when cottage meetings begin to dominate the evenings. All of the devoted individuals from the first section of the campaign invite all of their non or less political friends over for some refreshments and the opportunity to listen to and ask questions of Philpot. Cottage meetings are quite simple. They are held in homes of supporters. Philpot usually showed up, spoke for 15-20 minutes about his background, took questions for 10-15 minutes and then left. The entire event would last no more than 45 minutes with the individuals left at the house to discuss politics and eat finger foods. Philpot’s speeches at cottage meetings were biographical to begin with and then ended on political terms. The questions seemed to center around politics as well.

This is also when the sign game started. The role of signs in any campaign is a world all its own. There is a litany of sign laws that vary from county to county, city to city, and that is on top of state political sign laws. Besides that, there are differing ideas about how effective yard signs are. One truism that floats around the political world is that every sign is worth 2 votes,
which is used as an argument for having them. The problem with that logic is the fact that to win we needed a little over 160,000 votes, and, at $1.50 per sign, that would come to $120,000.00 or just over a third of our entire budget. Needless to say, we didn’t print that many signs. As we were printing and distributing signs, Freedom Works, a large tea party organization, designed and distributed 10,000 signs the bulk of which said Matheson=Pelosi. These signs began showing up everywhere. I call it the sign game because it is really like a game of chess. Signs blitzes are almost always at night so that supporters of the opposition have to leave them up all day until the next night when under the cover of darkness they can pull them down. All of this is done of course by supporters who are “not directly” connected to the campaigns. To illustrate this point here is a story. One weekend three people were stopped by police in three different counties after our supporters caught them stealing our signs. All of the people stopped had the same story “I saw these signs placed illegally and so I took them down and was planning on taking them to the city offices on Monday” The problem with this story, besides the obvious coordination across the state, was that the signs had been removed from heavily signed areas. Herbert, Lee, Granato, Coroon, and Matheson signs were all placed at the same locations and none had been removed but ours. The individual in St. George who was caught had 20 signs in his vehicle when he got pulled over. Freedom Works pressed charges since he had stolen some of their signs. Upon further investigation, it was found that he had another stack of signs at his house. In total, he had stolen as many as 60 signs. Though most people who stole signs didn’t go as far as that particular
individual in St. George, there were quite a few signs stolen. The most stolen sign of the political cycle was the Matheson=Pelosi sign.

Plausible deniability is the name of the sign game when it comes to sign stealing and sign placement. One of the reasons for knowing the laws is so that you can violate them in ways that could plausibly be construed as legal, or at least ways that the majority of voters would not think is definitely illegal. As the campaign progresses, the sign game progresses into the sign war. One of the last things I did was to go out at 3:00 a.m. on Election Day and place signs as close to polling locations as possible.

Debates, commercials, and the last stretch

The final three weeks of the campaign is like the eye of a storm. You go from traveling like crazy and attending every event you can find out about to spending a lot of time planning, preparing, filming, and recording. The candidate makes token appearances to important events but more than anything it is time out of the public eye directly and ramped up exposure to the public eye through advertising.

This point in the campaign also involved lots of phone calling. We used an online service, which allowed us to upload lists of people that needed to be called. Then our volunteers could log in to the program and an auto-dialer would then first call them and then once connected begin sending them calls. Then each volunteer could record the outcome of the call, which would then compile
data as well as remove names from the list. This resource is invaluable because the data of who is being called is kept private so it can't be used for other purposes and data can be retrieved giving the campaign some numbers that we were looking for. Every spare minute was spent on the phone making calls to get the message out one last time.

Lessons

In political circles there are at least two things that are believed to suppress Election Day turnout. Those things are lopsided polls and negative campaigning. There are commonly held reasons for this voter suppression as well. The common understanding as to why lopsided polls suppress turnout differs depending on what side of the poll you find yourself. Those on the winning side of the lopsided poll feel as though their vote is not needed to secure a victory for their candidate, while those on the losing side of the poll feel like their vote will not help overcome such a huge gap and therefore is useless. In this situation, the bandwagon effect doesn't really apply in the traditional sense. People don't jump onto the winning bandwagon. However, they will jump from the losing bandwagon and simply not vote.

The popularly understood reason as to why negative campaigning suppresses turnout is that people grow tired of hearing negative things about the candidates. By the time Election Day finally rolls around, the people are so fed up with it all that they don't vote. This conventional wisdom, however, is not supported by research. Pinketon et al. shows that even when there is sustained
negative campaigning, there is no increase in voter apathy (Pinketon, Um, & Austin, 2002). Despite the facts, the conventional wisdom also holds that the suppression applies more to sustained negative advertising campaigns than one time hit pieces that come either at the beginning or end of a campaign. This understanding of negative campaigning is however a very narrow view. The negative campaigning that most politicians engage in is dominated by doom and gloom messages about the opponent.

Now there are benefits to negative campaigning, but it is a risky road. If your attacks are believed then they will at least cast doubt into the mind of your opponent's supporters as well as undecided voters. If, however, your attacks are not seen as credible then you just look like a jerk slinging mud. Another reason that politicians engage in negative advertising is that part of their strategy to win is voter suppression. If you have a minority support base that is very committed then voter suppression could be the way to go. If you can suppress overall turnout while keeping your turnout high then you can win even though you don't have a majority support overall, because you will have support of the majority of voters who show up. In this situation, whether your negative message resonates or falls flat, you would at least suppress turnout, if negative campaigning actually suppressed turnout.

There might be a way to present negative messages in such a way as to minimize the effect of backlash if the message falls flat. This way is by using the subtler message designs. We have seen that people respond to subtle negative
messages better than the blunt messages. This seems to me a great place where intellectual knowledge and practical application could come together effectively.

Within the world of campaigning there seems to be a lack of surgical precision. When an individual is attacked it is with a sledgehammer, not a scalpel. The typical attack ad tries to get the audience to believe that the person is not just wrong but bad and trying to destroy everything the audience stands for. It is interesting that the sophistication that goes into positive messages about a candidate is so much greater than the brute unvarnished negativity that goes into attack ads. There is a great need for surgical and sophisticated attack ads within politics.

Attack ads are peculiar to politics, and political ads are only created and developed in and for a short amount of time. After the election cycle is over, all of the advertising gurus go back to promoting products, which capitalize on their strengths and their competitors’ weaknesses without usually directly mentioning the competition. Since 18 months out of every two years is spent on this, the attack ads tend to be poorly done.

Armchair quarter back syndrome

An interesting phenomenon that I became very well acquainted with during the campaign was that of everyday people magically transforming into political gurus. I don’t imagine that this happens with every profession, but it sure
happened a lot with campaigning. In every crowd there was at least one person who had “the one idea that would win the campaign for us.” Their statements always seemed to start with the phrase, “It’s simple, you just…” followed by any number of possible ideas.

Some examples of this phenomenon reflect ideas that are simplistic. The most common suggestions that I would get from people were advertisements or message-based ideas. “So you need to tie Matheson to Obama,” or “You need to do a commercial where you show that Matheson likes nuclear power and that involves federal government intervention.” Most frequently, these messages came from partisans who, quite frankly, wanted the campaign to give voice to their personal problems with Jim Matheson or government in general. If you got right down to it, they hadn’t even thought strategically or otherwise about how such a message would affect others, including undecided and democrat voters.

Some of the armchair quarterbacks did not have any suggestions; all they had was criticism. In their opinion, the campaign could do nothing right. These were the worst. At least the ones with suggestions were hypothetically trying to help. The critics didn’t even seem to want to help. They simply wanted to criticize and be done.

These individuals were so prevalent in the campaign, and since it was my job to get back to those who had contacted the campaign, I had to quickly develop a strategy for dealing with such people. The first thing that I learned was that rhetorical messages worked best and I could use them to defuse a tense
situation. With these people, it was important to not give them a platform on which to speak, while at the same time appeasing them enough that they wouldn’t damage the campaign. If I were to listen to them too much and tell them that their ideas were wonderful, I would have spent the rest of the campaign talking to the same people about their ideas or criticisms. If, however, they weren’t able to talk at all about their suggestions or criticisms then they might go elsewhere with their ideas, which could be detrimental to our campaign.

Ambiguous messages helped me walk the fine line between giving voice to the armchair quarterbacks and shutting down their ideas. An example of such a message is “That is an interesting idea. We are working very hard on some similar things (explain briefly what the campaign is doing). How would you implement that idea into the campaign? Thank you I’ll make sure and bring up your idea in our next meeting.” Using these ambiguous messages helped to defuse many situations. Some people refuse to be defused, though, and will not rest until the campaign is exactly how they think it should be. Those people eventually get blocked and any damage they do is a cost that is worth the time saved by not talking to them.

Intra-party communication

The one place where nuance and ambiguity were used quite a bit in the campaign was between the campaign and other republican groups including old guard republicans, PACs and special interest groups. The problem with these ambiguous messages is that they had very specific meanings. For example, one
question the Eagle Forum asked Morgan was “Do you support a road to citizenship for illegal immigrants?” If you take this question at face value, you would be hard-pressed to find anyone who thinks that there should not be a legal means of becoming a US citizen. What the message really meant, however, was “Do you support amnesty for illegal immigrants?” When Morgan answered the question and explained his position on illegal immigration and the fact that he supports a path to citizenship that involves illegal immigrants leaving the country and then applying to come legally after we have reformed the system, the Eagle forum took his answer of yes to mean that he supports amnesty. This showed a real specific example of McGee’s (1980) Ideograph at work. The ideograph is a word or phrase that has no specific referent but rather refers to an entire ideology. The phrase "path to citizenship" has come to encompass and represent the entire ideology of amnesty to the Eagle forum as well as other Tea Party organizations.

Over the course of the campaign cycle we reached out to many old guard republicans in search of support. There were many who gave responses that were almost unintelligible if you took them at face value, but when you looked at them to find the actual meaning, it was quite blunt. For example, one previous republican governor, when asked if he would support us, replied that he was “no longer in politics” and that he was “just sitting this one out.” This message rang loud and clear, especially when the same politician helped sponsor a fundraiser in Utah for Carly Fiorina just days later.
These messages were interesting because their phrasing was quite ambiguous but their meaning was quite specific and blunt. Within politics there is almost always a certain level of leaving people the ability to save face on both sides. If you ask for financial support, for example, you have to do it in a way that the person can refuse without it looking like they don’t support what you are doing. From the other perspective, if you are not going to help someone get elected, you have to be able to refuse to help him or her without actually saying, “I don’t like you and won’t help you.” After all, if that person gets elected you will likely have to want to work with them.

Jockeying for position

Due to the fact that no one was paid on the campaign, there had to be another currency on which they were running. There has to be something in it for you, in other words. By far the biggest reason that people volunteered full time on the campaign was in the hopes of securing a coveted position working for the congressman after he wins. It is so very interesting how pervasive this motivation is. The jobs that congressmen need to fill when elected are pretty good. For example, Jim Matheson's chief of staff makes around $160,000.00 a year. A legislative assistant is looking at $60,000.00 and that's about the lowest wage earned by any full time congressional staffer. The bigger draw than the money though is the power. In a non-elected capacity, congressional staffers have the most access to the congressman.
Interestingly, many campaign staffers would be unhappy if they didn't get to spend time with Morgan at public events. Many times people would entirely neglect their responsibilities to the campaign, their families, and anything else so as to have more interaction with Morgan directly. Managing who went where with Morgan became a chore. Morgan spent lots of time with campaign staff. However, the coveted time was public appearances.

The other part of the campaign that was interesting, to say the least, was the fact that there were no titles and not much of a hierarchy. The benefit of this was that no one besides the campaign manager had authority over anyone else within the core staff. To some extent this made intra-staff squabbles less frequent. However, there always seemed to be some power struggle going on between a specific group of staff. One of the staff members confided in me that he/she was frustrated because nobody was doing what he/she wanted them to do. Not all of the power struggles dissolved due to the flat corporate structure.

Another problem that arose due to the lack of official titles was that people would give themselves titles. The title game was ridiculous. We had a deputy campaign manager, campaign director, and vice campaign manager- all self-appointed. It was a huge mess. My way of managing this was to report to and accept assignments from the campaign manager, the accountant, the candidate, and no one else. I would help others with their projects when needed but I would not accept assignments from them. This frustrated a lot of people but it kept me out of the power struggles. Whenever someone tried to volunteer me to take on a
task I would simply say "Ask Lyall. I work for him." and then explain that if he asked me to do it then I would do it. Most of the time those assignments where just attempts at flexing muscles and expanding egos so I just politely sidestepped them and avoided being made any one's "assistant". One bit of evidence of the power struggle was that two of the staff members would sometimes refer to me as "the intern", never mind the fact that I had a position of authority as high as they did. As time went on, they discontinued the practice as they saw that I would not acquiesce to their desires.

Outside messaging

One of the things that I had learned prior to joining the campaign was that people voted for Jim Matheson because they thought of him as a nice guy. The vote had little or nothing to do with his politics, as most partisans hate him. Democrats hate him because he doesn't take strong stands on their issues and Republicans hate him because he doesn't take strong stands against democrat issues. This leaves the moderate masses and non-partisans to decide who wins. One of the major factors in who wins an election is likeability. Jim Matheson has not only figured out how to present himself as likable but also has learned how to make his opponents look as though they are not likable. For this reason, Morgan's messaging became critical.

Later, as I read the newspaper articles and thought about what strategy might be going on, I started to realize a few things, which I emailed to Lyall. Below is the text of that email sent on June 19th.
Lyall,

First of all I'll explain my idea of at least not directly attacking Matheson. Matheson wins because he's not that bad politically and he's a "good guy". The rational as far as I can tell is that Joe voter would rather vote for someone who is a nice guy that agrees with him 80% of the time than a jerk who agrees with him 100% of the time. Matheson's strategy is therefore to appear to agree with conservatives most of the time and be perceived as a "good guy". The way he sets himself up as a good guy is by getting his Republican opponents to attack him while he doesn't attack directly. All of his ads focus on what he has done for Utah. I think that you have to run as the "good guy" who agrees with the people's principles 100% of the time as well. The easiest way to do this is by not going negative. Which raises the question of how do you differentiate Morgan from Matheson without going negative? You show the differences by simply saying something like "if elected I will vote to repeal Obamacare whereas my opponent has said that he will not" and other such statements, thereby effectively showing the difference without directly attacking. The other option I think is good is an attack that doesn't seem like an attack. For a specific example I would use Tim Bridgewater's first radio add attacking Mike Lee for running a negative campaign. That add doesn't feel like an attack add even though it is, and Mike Lee knew that it was and so he started attacking back but more blatantly. Now Tim is running his campaign as if he's the good guy and Mike is a dirty politician.
Given all of that, we need to bait Matheson into attacking us or at the very least avoid looking like we are jerks when we attack him.

Now you said that whoever controls the debate wins the debate. This morning I was thinking about it and it seems to me that the entire campaign is like a long drawn out debate. And Matheson has already started his general election campaign and is baiting us into attacking him. For example he went to the editorial board at the Trib. knowing that they would probably come get our opinion on the subject. So he went to them with a non-issue that baits us into attacking him, which we did. So if the Trib. article is a debate we lose because he controlled the issue. The way we avoid that is when Matheson brings up an issue we simply don't bite. Morgan shouldn't have made the argument that they were fair to Matheson as evidenced by him keeping his seat for 10 years etc. First of all who believes that they didn't try to gerrymander Matheson out in 2001? Given peoples view of politicians these days no one is going to believe that the process wasn't motivated by partisanship. Second who cares? The answer I think Morgan should have given would be something along the lines of “I wonder why congressman Matheson is worried about this now?” With so many problems looming such as the oil crisis and the economic crisis you would think that he would be concerned about those things rather than thinking about his political future". Adding in something about how he hasn't even won the election so why is he worried about gerrymandering in 2011 when he might not even be the congressman
then. This way Morgan talks about whatever issue he wants to and avoids looking like a jerk for attacking Matheson about a non-issue.

If we attack in a full frontal sort of way I think it has to be on something really substantive and succinct that Matheson will have to respond too. Anyway, I hope some of this can be helpful. I will support you however I can. Have a good one.

Stuart

This letter crystallized my position on messaging for the remainder of the campaign. At many different points in the campaign I would have to argue my position with many different people. When stress runs high and people think they are right the campaign can get heated. When everyone feels like they are an expert discussions aren't always nice, though they are always political. Having a reasoned approach based at least in part on communication theory helped me in these discussions.

Conclusion

There are several things that really hit home for me during this experience. These lessons will shape my political dealings going forward. The first thing that I learned was to question conventional wisdom. There were many times where having come straight from academia and being engaged in research for this paper I would question conventional political wisdom and as a result we would all be able to look past what seemed obvious to what was right. At the same time, I
also was given the opportunity to look beyond my conventional wisdom when others asked questions that seemed at first to be obvious. Many times the conventional wisdom turned out to be correct. Many times conventional wisdom is based on evidence that people simply don't include in their explanations. However, due to the fact that a majority of the time the conventional wisdom is correct, it becomes easy to slip in unsubstantiated ideas which, if left unchecked, can be taken as fact when they are merely someone's half-baked hypothesis. Finding the unsubstantiated claims as well as learning the background and evidence behind substantiated claims are just two reasons to question conventional wisdom. This process of digging deeper into the data behind conventional wisdom is part of the marriage of academic and professional knowledge.

Finding unsubstantiated claims gives you the opportunity to avoid using unproven techniques while expecting proven results. These unsubstantiated claims may be legitimate claims that simply need further development. If that is the case then a more experimental method of their implementation can be undertaken, as opposed to simply implementing the claim and expecting success. The other advantage of questioning conventional wisdom is that there may be more to learn about substantiated claims. If we dig deeper into why a particular practice works we may find different ways of using the information as well as discrediting any false ideas we may have about why the practice works.
The Autoethnography provided an invaluable tool through which to examine the world of politics. I was able to bring a critical view to an insider's perspective. Rather than attempting to stay apart and objective, participating without disrupting, as it were, I was able to fully invest in the campaign through the use of the Autoethnography. Schrodinger (1935) had it right when he postulated that you can't measure something without having an effect on that which you are measuring. That principle applies to the social sciences as well as physics. By accepting and embracing the idea of influencing that which I was studying I was able to have and provide a much richer and more meaningful essay which is accessible to both the academic and professional world.

I was sitting in a hotel room in St. George talking politics with a congressional candidate, his campaign manager, and other staff. Everyone in the room was consumed by the possibilities. Strategy, tactics, messaging and other aspects of the election were the only topic of conversation. Not only was I there but I also had insightful comments to make. I was not some outsider who had been allowed to observe, but rather an active invited participant.
References

Bunker, S (Personal communication, June 19, 2010)


Utah has a problem (2010 September 8) "Morgan Philpot press release"

Wall Street Reform (2010 July 16) "Morgan Philpot press release"
There were several things that we tried to do to keep the campaigns social media presence effective. One day one of Congressman Jason Chaffetz campaign staffers told me about a social media training she had been to that was put on by the RNC. She then proceeded to give me the cliff notes version of how to maximize our social media exposure. The first tip is to post on Facebook and twitter at 10 am and 4 pm everyday. The reasoning behind that is that those are the highest traffic times on social media sites. So by posting when people are on the sites you increase the likelihood that they will see your message. The other important tip was to always ask questions in your post. The reason behind this was the fact that people naturally want to answer questions and so they are more likely to comment on a post or tweet a response if they have a question to answer. This becomes important because with Facebook specifically the more comments you get on a post the more hits your Facebook gets in the Algorithms and the more prominent placing your post gets thereafter. Comments increase hits to the post exponentially because for example I comment on a post that’s 1 hit and if someone else comments after me then the comment is a hit and also the message that I get that someone else has commented in Facebook and also in my email are both hits so you can see that if there are 3 comments on a post from 3 different people then the third comment is good for 5 hits. So one comment get you 1 hit 2 gets you to total of 4 hits, 3 gets you to total of 9, 4 comments gets you a total of 16 and so forth.

Last think and this should be studied more in depth, there are profound effects that social media is having on campaigning. The major effects that I have seen are first that social media is an equalizer when it comes to political campaigns. There is an incumbent advantage in any political race. This advantage is largely due to imbalance of fundraising ability. Social media provides a free means of advertising and message dissemination. The biggest reason money matters in campaigns is for disseminating messages primarily through Televison and radio. With social media and the internet beginning to gain ground in the places people encounter information the need to raise massive amounts of money is diminished.

Secondly fundraising is improved through social media. Whereas people used to only donate by mail or in person. Now many effective fundraising drives have occurred because of online campaigns. The Philpot of Congress campaign raised around 30% of the campaign budget of around $380,000.00 online. So social media and the Internet reduce the need for as much money while increasing the ability to collect it. This has a significant effect of leveling the playing field for those challenging incumbents.

Social media has provided what may be considered a quasi Public Sphere. With politicians increasingly mediating interactions with their constituents through tele-townhalls where questions are screened, to face to face town hall or other events where organic conversation is prevented from happening, social media provides a place where somewhat organic conversations can evolve in the presence of others. These interactions are still mediated in that they are constrained by the medium through which the ideas are shared but they are not generally mediated by an individual and the mediation applies equally. There are several important effects that I have noticed with the increase of the use of social media public sphere. The first is that civility generally tends to decrease in this sphere. Part of that I would attribute to the lack of instantaneous feedback. When you are isolated from the effects of your actions that changes your actions. So much like road rage where individuals are usually not forced to acknowledge the people they berate in the privacy of their car Social media provides the illusion of that same privacy. The difference is while in your car the message stays largely contained when on the Internet it does not. Another effect I have noticed is that once silent populations now are able to organize and discuss their ideas and effect public policy. Whereas people used to be constrained by geography and time in their discussions they are now free to participate or merely observe a conversation regardless of location and time.