

mobile voter



TXTVOTER '06

For TxtVoter '06, we created a suite of mobile, internet, and supporting services that we then offered to nation-wide organizations for the purpose of voter registration, list building, and voter mobilization. These services were:

- **Run Your Own Campaign:** allowed an organization or individual to reserve a mobile keyword which could then be promoted among the group's constituency. After texting the keyword, the end-user would enter into the process of requesting a voter registration form via email or USPS. The organization or individual could then track all responses via the web site. The site also provided tools such as customizable post cards and MySpace tags.
- **Register Your Friends:** an online tool that allowed an end-user to enter in mobile numbers of friends. Friends would receive an invitation to enter into the process described above.
- **GoVote.org:** a web based voter registration tool that allowed users to enter in their personal information and to print out a customized PDF voter registration packet. Worked in tandem with the above 2 tools.

Results

Over 200 organizations and individuals used the software and services in 2006. These organizations used the services in different ways. Primarily, they put links to Register Your Friends or GoVote in their mass emailings or web sites. Some notable exceptions used the text services to a more robust degree such as Forward Together and League of Young Voters-PGH. Overall results are shown below:

Applications Started Online	114,103
Applications Completed Online	70,691 (61%)
Applications Started via Text Message	4581
Applications Started via Text Message and Completed	753 (16%)

As you can see, GoVote.org performed admirably and the text-in program was a disappointment. We estimate that close to 7 million impressions were generated in order to achieve about 4500 text-ins with 753 completed applications (accepted applications will, of course, be lower yet).

Text-only results for the top 15 groups are shown below:

Org Nickname	Total TxtIn	Gave Email	Completed Process	Complete via Email	Complete Via USPS
BlackYouthVote	19	11	6	5	1
Rtv	26	7	5	3	2
ONE	44	21	15	9	6
Mobile Voter-alt	45	14	16	6	10
VotoLatino.org	60	14	13	4	9
Mfa	80	26	23	14	9
Youthroots (Warner)	123	27	12	5	7
VL	131	46	22	10	12
CRCM	134	82	32	31	1
Mobile Voter - Alt	141	76	70	67	3
SF Jobs	194	65	31	22	9
League PGH	308	231	132	124	8
Am.Blackout	556	142	13	13	
WWE	1089	338	106	63	43
Mobile Voter	1331	490	176	144	32

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Preliminary Analysis & Findings

- **Web based voter registration is alive and well**
- **Incentive mix needs improvements:** the incentives for texting-in need to be better than what we offered for TxtVoter '06. Bono projected names on a jumbotron – we needed something more compelling.
- **Compelling messenger:** the best results came from American Blackout and the League PGH, where the messenger of the call to action gave a compelling and trusted pitch.
- **Process was too complex:** Our process may have involved too many steps. This hypothesis does not address the primary failure point (text-in response rate), but at least among those who did text-in, the drop-off to registration was significant. Reducing the robustness of the offering would enable a more streamlined user experience.
 - Typing in an address via text was too prone to error and required too much back-end manual correction to be cost effective
 - Some groups used text when there were easier methods to register voters, such as on the web or in small groups. Text should be used only in those situations in which it confers advantage – which is usually among a very large group or in no-human-present scenarios.
 - Text-for-service is a new concept in the U.S. The concept was often mis-understood during usage, but may also have damped initial response.
- **People used text even when sitting in front of computer**

Very interesting finding: when sitting in front of a computer at the WWE site, people texted in, despite the fact that there were easier methods to register to vote. Curiosity perhaps? Following instructions from a trusted messenger?

Recommendations & Future of Mobile

- **Text is not going anywhere...for now**

Despite the fact that our numbers for text-based voter registration were a disappointment, text is growing as the means of communication among youth. We may not have figured out the best way to use it in 2006, but it will continue to present an opportunity for outreach, organization, and mobilization. The landscape may change with developments in mobile technology, but not until after 2008 at the least (see 'Beyond Text' below).
- **Text: 2008**

Text will play a role in 2008; candidates will use it. Given our experience in 2006, our best idea for how to use it in 2007/8 is as follows:

 - **Recruitment**

Text is easy to use, inexpensive, and effective at recruitment given the following variables:

 - There is no other easy way to reach a large number people – such as at concerts, TV, Radio, large events.
 - The messenger is charismatic, well trained, trusted.
 - The messenger must deliver a message that is relevant to the audience or provide a compelling incentive.
 - **Voter Registration**

We envision that the best way to use texting for voter registration is for recruitment (given that the variables listed above are in place). Once the email address or phone number is collected, the voter can be emailed with the form or a link to an online voter registration tool – or can be called back by a volunteer/phone bank to take a dictated address for the purposes of mailing out a form.
- **Beyond Text**

Mobile phones are quickly evolving. When we started in 2004, texting was the only reliable base-line application. This fact still holds true. However, advanced features are trickling down to the lower-end phones owned by most young people. If Apple's iPhone makes as much headway as its iPod when it launches in June, the mobile landscape will change dramatically. Full featured mobile web browsing will then be possible and will open up many new avenues for en-situ civic action.