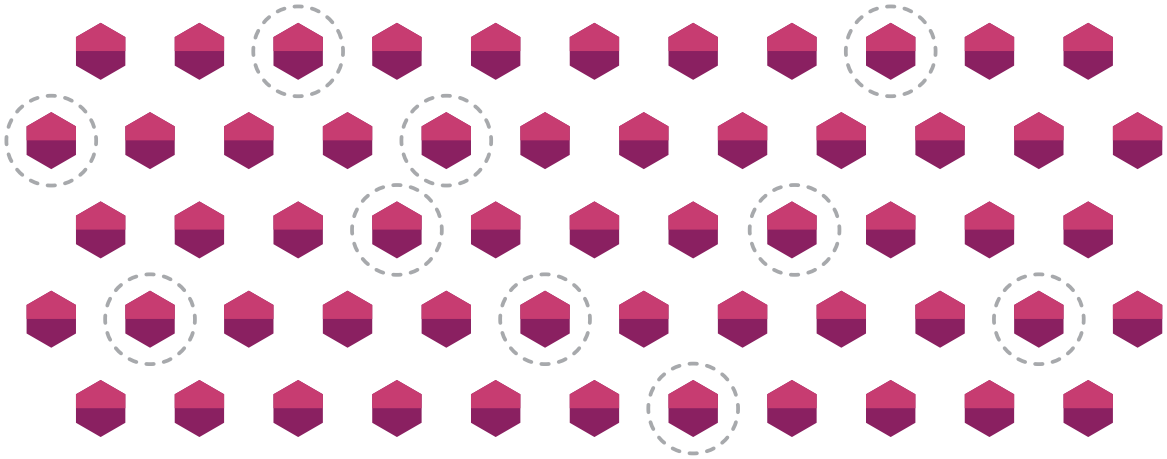
Contemporary Analysis
Work smart.

Political Campaigns & Predictive Analytics:

Rallying Voters

Get in touch. Call us at 1.866.963.6941 or write us at info@canworksmart.com.

Elections are won based on the individual decisions of thousands of individual voters.



With Predictive Analytics, your campaign is able to micro-target the voters you need, talk about the issues they care about, and excite them enough to turnout and vote, all without excited those who would turnout and vote against you.

Conventional wisdom states to win a political campaign you have to out-spend your competition. For years this wisdom rang true--those with the most money could run bigger campaigns with more flyers, more commercials, and better campaign swag.

Thankfully, this is beginning to change. With the invent of tools like social media and data driven messaging, campaigns are finding themselves able to campaign on merit and beliefs of how to improve our government. A large deficit between campaigns still is an uphill struggle, but now more than ever, tools exist to help offset the gap.

The use of predictive analytics will give you the ability to know:

- How many votes you need to win
- How each voter is likely to vote
- How likely each voter is to turnout
- Which issues are motivating voters

Now, using predictive analytics, a campaign with a smaller budget can effectively reach the same potential voters that use to take a larger budget to reach. This is accomplished by understanding with pinpoint accuracy how many votes are needed to win, who has a high likelihood to vote for you, and how many you still need. Additionally, you will be able to see how likely those voters are to vote and know which voters still need some excitement to get them to the polls.

Once framed this way, messaging to these voters (which you will know by name) becomes much easier. No longer will you have to send out thousands of flyers to drum up 500 voters. You can now effectively

micro-target them with impactful messages and personal connection significantly lowering the cost of campaigning.

This case study is to show how in two separate campaigns-one a large gubernatorial race, one a small county commissioner race, both underdogs-used data and analytics to level the playing field, giving them much needed insight to do individual messaging, and to compete in races where 5-10 years ago, the monetary gap would have been too much to overcome. With predictive analytics, both candidates got to run on merit, winning or losing on their ideas and not on their bank account statements.

A tale of two campaigns:

In the 2014 election cycle, Contemporary Analysis found itself helping two completely different types of campaigns. One was left, one was right. One was a large, state-wide race, one was a small, local race. One spent millions to win, one spent less the $15,000. One had name recognition, the other also had name recognition (but not exactly the kind he wanted). One was going to be outspent, one was going to spend about the same. One was really good at raising money, one was not. One was good at grassroots campaigns, one was not. In fact, about the only thing they had in common was that they were both male.

Yet we found ourselves working with these two candidates and doing eerily similar analytics. We found that both campaigns needed the same questions answered, but that each needed to approach the question of "How do I win?" quite differently. It was at this point we realized that predictive analytics was not just for the wealthy,

large candidates. It had only been so because the cost of individual decision prediction on the scale needed to win was previously too costly for smaller campaigns.

The Governor.

In 2014, CAN was asked to be part of an election cycle where there was no clear front-runner. The incumbent had reached their term limit, and neither party had a clear candidate. The race was full of opportunity, but also attracted fierce competition from newcomers, junior politicians, and senior hopefuls.

CAN was approached by a politician with a great chance of winning on the merits of his ideas. However, his competitors, many self-funded, were going to be able to outspend his campaign. He asked CAN to provide a micro-targeted list of potential voters segmented by behavior. He wanted to deliver the correct message to the correct potential voters. Traditionally, this was done by aggregating data on groups of voters by behavior and then messaging to each group with a tested message.

CAN, however, knew that this kind of messaging is expensive and leads to excitement of the other candidate's voters. Instead, with the use of predictive analytics, we could develop a much more complex and more accurate way to reach potential voters. Instead of providing groups, we created a prioritized list that provided a multi-dimensional view of every voter. We could predict, for each voter, with no aggregation of data, how likely they were to vote. Once we determined how each potential voter would vote, we could build models to determine what messages motivated them, and what messages would draw them to the candidate. In total, for our candidate, 12 predictive models were able to be built. We used data from our candidate's party, data collected from polling, data from mobile donation solutions, and social media data.

The models predicted the likelihood of an individual to:

1. Vote in the primary election

2. Vote in the general election

3. Vote for a specific candidate

4. Vote via absentee ballot if encouraged

5. Make a donation and in what amount

6. Be to volunteer and in what capacity

7. Position on Healthcare Reform

8. Position on Gun Rights

9. Position on Immigration Reform

10. Position on Marriage Equality

11. Position on the Death Penalty

12. Position on Voter ID

In addition to the motivations of each voter, we also modeled the race itself. We found that our candidate had rudimentary numbers when it came to number of votes needed to win the race. We decided that we would predict the total voter turnout and the number needed to win the primary. At first, this might seem like a easy 51% math problem, but it is not. In this case, as in many cases, there were more than two candidates running for the primary.

When combined with the motivation model, and projected onto a war-room type dashboard, our candidate now had multiple views of their candidacy and what the next steps should be. The dashboard had:

1. The likely Voter turnout with a prediction as to the winning number of votes needed,

2. The likely number of votes the candidate has currently that are predicted to turn-out,

3. The likely number of votes the candidate has that are predicted not to turn-out, and

4. The ability to select any of the necessary groups and export them directly to a .csv file in order to incorporate into a walking app, mail campaign, or phone bank.

With these results, the candidate was able to focus their money on those voters most likely to connect with their message and scale each

Results

Pinpoint Accuracy

In this Gubernatorial Race, CAN predicted who was going to vote and who they were voting for with pinpoint accuracy.

Three weeks from the primary, CAN correctly predicted:

- Voter turnout to within 0.27%
- Voter count to within 2.8%

With this kind of accuracy, as time winds down, you can know with authority, who you need to focus your campaigning on to win-by name, by vote.

Predictive Analytics gives you the necessary edge to win.

campaign to how much money they had on hand. This intelligence allowed them to spend each dollar raised on the voter with the highest chance to make the most impact.

The 13 predictive models also created a nearly 360-degree, complete view of an individuals political life. CAN's models allowed our the candidate to focus their campaign efforts based on the issues that potential voters care about most, encourage the faithful voters, convert the fence sitters, and activate volunteers to teach people how to vote early all while spending the minimum amount of money to do so.

Additionally, it was also found predictive analytics could predict which voters that if excited, would show up to vote for the other candidate. This was a new revelation had never been able to be seen with traditional data usage. Our candidate had the unique opportunity to build a campaign to reach only the people he wanted and purposely leave off those that might counter each new vote they found.

Now the campaign could focus effort based on priority and messaging could be optimized based on the available budget. CAN allowed the campaign to eliminate wasted efforts, and focus scarce resources on what had the highest potential for success.

Results:

By the end of the candidacy, CAN proved with pinpoint accuracy its modeling and ideology worked. Three weeks from the end of the primary, at a time when traditional polling breaks down from skewed, over-represented populations, CAN predicted:

The voter turnout to within .27% or 876 votes out of 324,227, and
The vote count for our candidate to within 2.8% or 1,577 out of 56,324.

The Local Campaign.

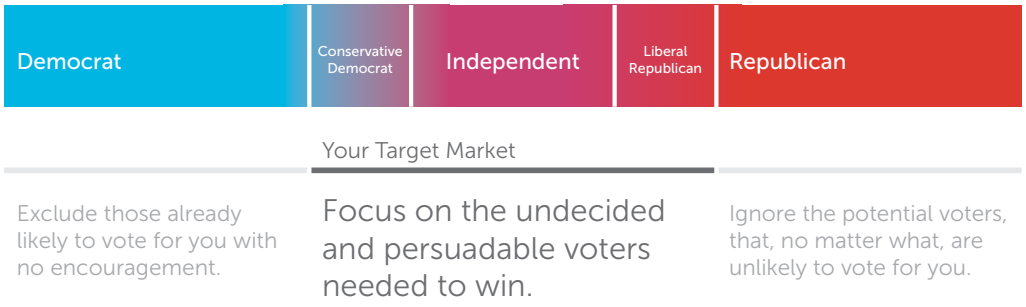
Shortly after the primary votes were counted, a local candidate reached out to Contemporary Analysis. His needs were very different in size and scope to the Governor candidate but similar in complexity. In this race, the two candidates vying for the general election were going to spend about the same money and he wanted to use predictive analytics as a competitive advantage. If CAN could

use the knowledge gleaned from the larger, well funded campaign to maximize the dollars and messages for the small, local campaign, the candidate had a better chance of winning.

Immediately it was realized, local campaigns could only afford one model. With the larger, state-wide campaigns, a model could be produced each week taking into account previous lessons, model updates, new data, and/or new polling. A local candidate's model had to be done once and at the front of the campaign. Instead of 3 weeks before the end of the race, the local candidates model was done 4 months before general.

This meant throwing out the 13 model, 360-degree view of each voter, campaign mindset developed in the larger campaigns. The campaign still needed to understand how a voter was going to vote and how likely they were going to vote, but in a much less complex fashion. Because small campaigns can reach every single person, in person, a new strategy was redeveloped.

When modeling the small campaign, CAN identified 3 distinct groups, each important to identify and prioritize for the use in one-on-one/door-to-door connections:



1. Staunch Voters

2. Conservative Democrats and Liberal Republicans, and

3. Independents

**Each of these groups is important to understand in order to prioritize messaging.

Staunch Voters: Traditionally, this is where a large portion of a

campaign's dollars are spent. These are the 4x4 voters. The voters that have voted in each of the last 4 elections. The voters are staunch in their thinking, rarely voting outside the party line. They are an important part of the campaign and should be focused on. However, staunches need a voter turnout campaign and less of a merit campaign.

Conservative Democrats and Liberal Republicans: These are individuals a campaign can lose to your opponent and thus can be stolen from your opponent. While not typically a large group, these are voters a campaign must protect fiercely, and try to win fiercely.

Independents: These voters are the growing number in the middle. These are voters a campaign cannot win simply because the represent one side of the other. This group is much more concerned about merit. Who you are and why you believe is what motivates the group of voters to turnout. These voters care about the candidate and their views on what they will do and how they will run government.

Additionally, framed against which group a voter falls into added to a likelihood to vote score, a campaign can now access the data and use it to know how much money to spend on voter turnout inside the Staunch Voters, how close that gets them to 51% of the vote, and how many independents need to be targeted to fill the gap. This intelligence gave our local campaign the necessary push to help them win the race.

Results:

Even 4 months before the general, our models held up and provided great insight for the campaign.

Our model predicted:

Turnout of 25,386--Actual turnout was 22,101.

The magic number to be 12,987 (51% of 25,386)--Actual magic number was 11,272. (12,987 would have been 59% of actual turnout).

By focusing on those individuals that were Staunch Voters that had a low likelihood to vote, and by focusing on swaying independents with a high

likelihood to vote to vote for our candidate, our candidate won 54.5% to 45.3%.

--One more example:

School Bond Issue:

Along side of our small, local campaign, a school board was getting ready to release its school bond for debate. They hadn't had a new bond issue in over 10 years and needed a large amount of work done to the schools. The bond was set to be very large and cover a wide variety of updates including a entire new high school. They were set to send out mail in ballots as that would give each person a simple and easy way to vote.

However, after some initial polling, the school found a few of the major donors were questioning the size, scope, and timing of the bond. Furthermore, at a few of the public bond meetings, there was a definite, vocal majority who did not want the bond to pass.

The school board wanted guidance had determined it was in their best interest to hire a team to poll and then correctly message the voters in the district. The team, which included Contemporary Analysis, set out to find who was likely to vote in the district and how they felt about the bond. Surprisingly, it was found the vocal majority voicing concerns at the bond meetings did not represent the vast majority of the constituents in the district.

After some initial analytics, it was quite clear a mail in ballot was a poor choice. The model showed a complete failure if the opposition was given the much higher mail-in turnout. The vocal majority, which turned out to be a vocal minority, was found to be non-voters. The majority of the voting population actually did want a reasonable bond to pass. The group's recomendations were to change the voting method from a mail-in ballot to a traditional voting method.

After deciding to put the bond on the general election ballot, we then set out to model each item on the bond wish list. This model was very similar to the motivating issue model used in the gubernatorial election. Each item on the bond was modeled as a separate issue,

looking for motivation and buy-in. From these results, a mix of issues was determined that would gain support from 60% of the voting population.

A mail and phone campaign was then created to educate the community on what the new size and scope of the bond. There was also a voter turnout campaign initiated based on a voter turnout model produced by CAN.

Results:

The bond passed with 61% of the vote.

The success was based on two things: (1)the opposition had to vote traditionally and (2) the school board removed items from the bond found to be unfavorable amongst a large percentage of those most likely to vote. It is the belief of the team that without predictive analytics, the bond would have failed.

Conclusion

--The tools we build today, will be a baseline tomorrow, and will never be good enough again.

Predictive analytics has gone from presidential level, to gubernatorial level, to state level, and now to local campaigns. Each one has varying complexities based on their data sets and budgets. Because predictive analytics is about understanding how individuals make decisions, and winning an election is about helping voters make an informed decision and getting out the vote, predictive analytics will become a standard in campaigns in the very near future.

Each campaign will need to know:

- How many votes do I need?
- How many votes do I have?
- How do I find and retain those votes to fill the gap?

and will use the intel from their data sets to learn how to best use that

information to formulate messaging and voter turnout campaigns.

With the right insights, campaign officials are able to ensure success by helping and motivating the right voters to make informed decisions.

Predictive analytics can help any campaign achieve their ultimate goal — winning.

What can we do for you?

We have more than seven years of experience working with political campaigns, small businesses, and large Fortune 500 companies. We understand that each organization has unique characteristics and we work to understand and apply your data in the most efficient and effective ways possible for you.

Contact us to today to learn how Predictive Analytics can help you campaign smarter — set up a free, no-obligation, consultation today!

Nate Watson
nate@canworksmart
Omaha, NE 68102