Video 7: Canvassing and the Door to Door Campaign
With Alonzo

THE CANVASS

The canvass is the third and perhaps most important part of the campaign. It is the mechanism through which the campaign organization identifies those voters most likely to vote for your candidate and attempts to convert undecided voters to also support your candidate.

Dick Simpson emphasizes "While campaign techniques may differ in … elections, a careful canvass for favorable voters and getting those favorable voters to the polls remains a constant goal. The work is hard, the sacrifices are many, but the results on Election Day justify them."

"The canvass takes place about three or four weeks before the election and the function of this phase of the campaign is to locate all the voters favorable or potentially favorable to your candidate. A secondary, but still important, function is to mobilize lukewarm supporters.

"Precinct workers are often able to let voters know what their candidate is doing about the issues which concern them-from mundane matters like street sweeping to ideological questions such as freedom of speech and to answer questions the voter may have. You are, thus, the personal representative of your candidate. Many voters will judge the candidate by your appearance and by what you say. If they decide to vote for your candidate, they are in reality casting a vote for you, just as when they vote for your opponent they are often voting for his precinct worker."

At this point in the campaign, you should have ward coordinators and area chairs in every area with a precinct captain in most, if not all, of your precincts. You will continue to recruit precinct workers to assist each captain and to fill any holes in coverage. Your workers will have become accustomed to the reporting schedule and should expect to contact or be contacted twice each week for their "plus count" of voters.

30 days prior to Election Day, a training session should be held for all precinct workers to pick up their materials and learn how to conduct the door-to-door canvass for votes. Area chairs follow up on any workers unable to attend the meeting to bring them their materials and ensure they have a schedule for their precinct work. There is no time to waste at this stage of the campaign and a worker who waits until the last week or two to go out will certainly not be able to reach all of the voters in the precinct.

The following 2-page instruction sheet entitled "How to Win Elections" may be customized and reprinted for use by your campaign.

HOW TO WIN ELECTIONS

Most people think of precinct workers as strong-arm salesmen. Actually nothing could be further from the truth. What you say in a minute or two is unlikely to decide a voter's choice for the top of the ticket (President, Governor). However, your recommendations for local or less well known candidates are more likely to have an effect. Therefore, our aim is to locate and identify voters supporting our candidate and to be sure that those favorable voters actually do vote on election day.

Your canvassing material will include:

- A list of registered voters in the precinct (poll sheet or walk sheet)
- Literature
- Buttons, Posters, etc.
- Volunteer Cards

Locating the vote and selling our candidates:

1. Before you knock or ring the bell, make sure you know the names of the people who live there. Introduce yourself to the voter. You are a neighbor and/or a volunteer for the Independent Campaign Committee, or for a particular candidate.

2. Hand the voter the basic piece of literature and one or two supplemental pieces. "Sell" our candidates, emphasizing those most important to your campaign. About two or three sentences should be enough. If the voter wants to know more about any of our candidates, offer her/him any additional literature which you have, as you answer his/her questions.

3. Determine the voter's attitudes by asking a subtle but sufficiently direct question. For example: "May we count on your support on Election Day?" Usually, it is only necessary to ask one person in a family. Mark the other family members as you marked the voter you talked with.

4. Evaluate the voter:
    a. Mark a plus (+) in front of the voter's name on the poll sheet if s/he is for your candidate.
    b. Mark a minus (-) in front of the voter's name on the poll sheet if the voter definitely will not vote for the candidate.
    c. Mark a zero (0) if the voter is undecided or refuses to tell you.

5. Leave as quickly and courteously as you can. NEVER, argue.

6. Continue in this manner until every voter has been located, persuaded and evaluated. If no one is home, leave literature and call again.

7. Don't fake. If a voter wants further information or asks questions you are unable to answer, note the question, ask your ward or area chair for the answer, and then go

back to the voter once you know.

8. If you reach a voter who will be out of town on Election Day, let them know that they may vote at a county clerk's office or at the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners during normal business hours and Saturday mornings, 9 AM to 12 noon. There will also be "early voting" at various locations throughout the county – check your local Board of Elections for exact dates, times and locations before you go out. You may call the office to request absentee ballot applications which voters can-use if there is adequate time before Election Day.

9. Recruit as you work. If anyone seems enthusiastic about our candidates, ask them to help you with the canvass. If they are too busy to do that, ask them to help on Election Day. If they can't do that, perhaps they can do office work or make a contribution. Ask them to fill out a volunteer card. If they won't volunteer for the campaign, ask them to let you put a sign in their window. Be sure to tell your precinct captain or area chair about any possible helper, including address and phone number.

   In order to gauge voter response to our campaign, periodic checks will be made by your area chair or precinct captain. You will be asked for a count of plus, minus and zero on report nights, which are the four Thursdays and three Sundays prior to Election Day. Report your totals cumulatively on these dates.

   Work systematically. You should have:
   - One-quarter of the precinct completed by the 1st Sunday report night
   - Three-quarters of the precinct completed by 3rd Thursday report night
   - The entire precinct completed by the 4th Thursday report night.

   After you have finished your part of the Canvass, return the marked poll sheet (the Plus List) to your precinct captain or area chair. Keep the weekend before Election Day open to deliver sample ballots to all the voters and reminders to each "plus" voter as well as to contact those voters whom you may have missed during the original canvass.

   It has been said many times that elections are won in the precincts. Personal contact with the voters is the required ingredient for victory. You must realize that you, the precinct worker, will determine who will win and who will lose on Election Day.

GOOD LUCK!