



## Increasing Opt-In Email Rates, a Test

After every program we analyze what happened, what worked, and what didn't. Often times there are clear answers. Other times we must assume we understand what went on, with long time truisms reinforced in the process. Although this has proved useful over time, the political landscape is more complex than in years past. There are more communication mediums, cell phones, the proliferation of cable channels, fragmented audiences, and a citizenry that is skeptical of government and politicians. These changes have prompted us to put in place a more quantitative, systematic method to analyzing strategy and message.

Recently, partnering with a Democratic House member in a southern state, we set out to test the effectiveness of message and repetitive contact scenarios in getting individuals to opt-in to the Congressman's electronic newsletter. We've always known that repetitive consistent messaging works, but in the changed media and Internet landscape what mix of contacts and mediums maximizes the number of individuals taking an action, especially with the pedestrian objective of signing onto a civic minded newsletter?

Our first test consisted of one message going to four separate randomized groups of 1,000 email addresses each; however, each group received a different contact pattern (e.g., group #1 received an email only, group #2 received a set-up automated call from the Congressman followed by the email, etc.) All groups received the same opt-in email, but they differed in that the placement of that automated call in the contact pattern. The results were negligible among all the groups – none showed any real statistical difference to the group only receiving the email. In fact, only a handful of people chose to opt-in at all.

Seeing that simply adding more contacts to a communication did little to increase opt-ins, we next tested targeted messages and varying contact patterns. We used an environmental message in an opt-in email along with a recorded telephone message from the Congressman specifically related to this issue area. Two groups, each containing 508 email addresses, were randomized and targeted because they were likely to be interested in the topic. These results were remarkable:

- 6% of the group which received only the email contact chose to opt-in
- Of those receiving the targeted email as well as the targeted recorded message, an impressive 24% chose to opt-in

Targeting the message to the audience and lengthening the contact pattern dramatically increased the number of people volunteering to opt-in.

We plan to do more and more of these types of studies in the coming months, including measuring the effectiveness of word-of-mouth tactics and the dynamics of individual conversations. I hope to share with you an abstract of the results. These studies are a good source of information for us, and it's always beneficial to have our political hypotheses tested in real-world situations.