



Memorandum

To: Interested Parties
From: Heather Smith, Kat Barr and Chris Kennedy, Rock the Vote
Christopher Mann and Liz Dunne, MSHC Partners, Inc.
Date: July 29, 2008
Subject: Executive Summary
Keeping Young Voters Engaged: 2007-2008 Re-Registration Test Program

Young voters' residential mobility means many voters under 30 who registered in 2004, 2006 or even for the 2008 primaries would not be eligible to vote in the 2008 General Election unless they re-register to vote at their new addresses. Given that 18-29 year olds move about three times as often as older voters – and often aren't aware they must re-register, forget to do so, or miss the deadline – re-registering these previously registered voters makes a vital contribution to maintaining and increasing young voter participation.

To determine if re-registration was effective, Rock the Vote conducted two phases of voter re-registration testing in late 2007 and early 2008 among voters under 30. The results from both phases of testing indicate that mail and email based re-registration is a cost-effective strategy for increasing young voter participation. A summary of the test program is in the appendix to this memo, with further detail on the testing program and results in separate memos on each program.

Phase I tested re-registration of young voters identified from the voter rolls in 5 states as having moved away from their registration address in the last 4 years according to the Post Office or consumer data. Phase II tested re-registration among voters who moved away from their registration address after previously registering with Rock the Vote or Project Vote. This memo reports the results based on registration applications. As outlined in *Next Steps* below, additional analysis of confirmed registrations and voter turnout will be added as the data becomes available.

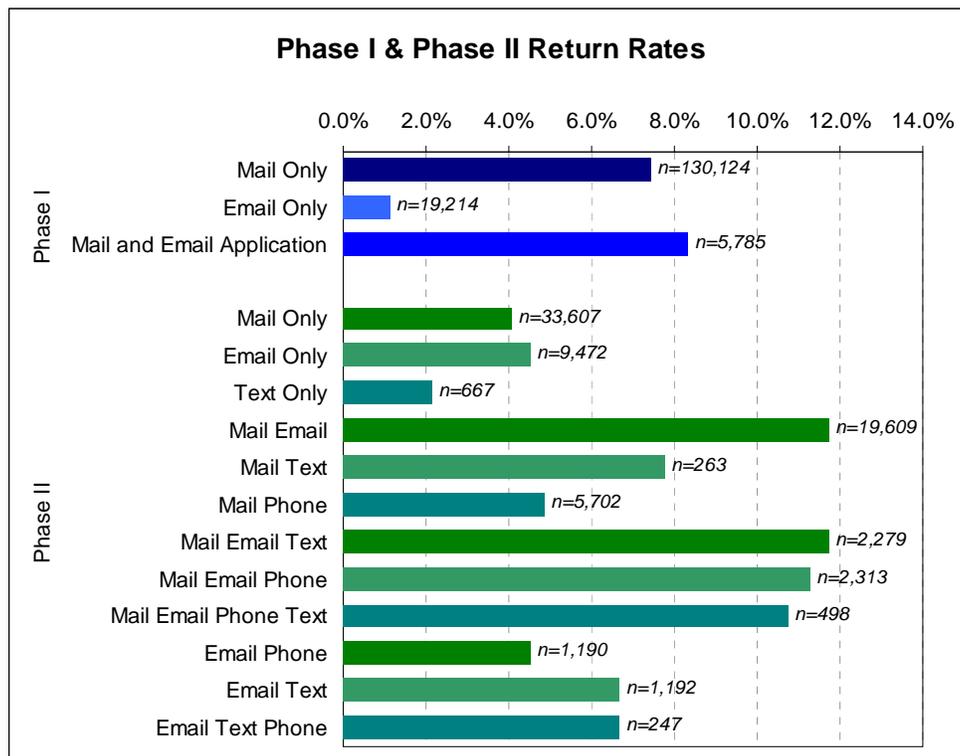
Testing in both phases determined that the de-politicized quasi-governmental "Official Notice" design was more effective than a Rock the Vote branded design at generating applications via both mail and email. This result is consistent with the results of similar programs to different demographic groups, and seems to reflect a generally higher trust in official-looking communication about voting.

In Phase I, the direct mail voter re-registration produced a 7.4% return rate of completed applications and the email voter re-registration produced a 1.1% return rate of completed applications. More importantly, the combined mail and email turnout generated a total return of 8% (see table below). For a 50-state national rollout program, this would result in a cost per completed application of \$5-\$7, depending on the availability of an email address.

In Phase II, the direct mail voter re-registration produced a 5.6% return rate of completed applications and the online voter re-registration produced a 5.4% return rate of completed applications. Combination treatments using mail and email achieved registration rates of almost 12% (see table below). The lower mail response than Phase I is most likely a product of the self-selected, technology-inclined voters in the RTV group in Phase II. This idea is supported by the vastly higher email response as well. Among the groups with the greatest gap in participation – minorities, low income, and low education young voters – “Official Notice” had above average effectiveness. Rock the Vote had particular success with email re-registration among young voters who had previously registered online, with costs per completed application of less than \$2. The cost per application via direct mail was consistent with Phase I. Among these Internet savvy voters, email was effective among all types of young voters, including those living in minority areas, low education areas, and low income areas.

As in Phase I, multi-channel treatments used in Phase II (particularly mail and email combinations) produced returns greater than the sum of the parts. Among records that had SMS phone numbers available, using combinations with text message treatments also increased the number of re-registrations but did not add to any combination already using mail and email. The combination of communication channels increased the impact of the program by re-registering more young voters who have moved while maintaining a cost per completed application below \$10. Recorded celebrity calls (robo calls) did not boost re-registration rates when tested in Phase II. Finally, extending “Official Notice” to the online registration landing page increased the returns in the final email test of Phase II.

The *Recommendations* section below summarizes best practices based on this testing for future re-registration programs among young voters.



Next Steps

The findings outlined here are only the first stage of analysis. As updated voter files become available in 2008, we can analyze from the voter rolls the number of confirmed registrations from Phase II. For Phase I, we can analyze the number of net additional confirmed registrants added to the rolls and the number of additional net voters who would otherwise not have cast a ballot in the KY, NJ, and VA 2007 General Elections. When updated voter files become available in 2009, we can measure the number of net additional voters who turned out in the 2008 general election based on the re-registration program. These levels of evaluation will provide a fuller picture of the impact of the program on civic engagement over and above what would have happened if Rock the Vote had not done this re-registration outreach.

Recommendations

Phases I and II of Rock the Vote's testing demonstrate that Rock the Vote can cost-effectively re-register young voters who have moved. Based on this testing, a large scale rollout of the voter re-registration program should generate cost-effective voter registrations of young voters.

Based on the results, we have several recommendations for any future re-registration outreach:

- Use the "Official Notice" design for both mail- and email-based re-registration, as it was the clear winner in all parts of the testing.
 - The highest performing subject/sender combination in all tests is "Voter Registration Center" (information@rockthevote.com)/"Notice: You must re-register to vote immediately."
 - Based on the timing of returns, mail re-registration applications should be sent 8-10 weeks before the registration deadline to maximize interest in the election but still allow sufficient time for as many registrations as possible to be returned.
- Extend the "Official Notice" design to the landing page for on-line re-registration.
- Use multiple treatments such as email-mail-email sandwiches where possible to increase impact while remaining cost effective.
 - Direct mail is most cost-effective single treatment among most young voters, except
 - Email is most cost-effective among those who have used the Internet for registration previously.
 - Text messaging boosts turnout above mail or email only, but does not add to the email-mail-email sandwiches.
 - Do not use recorded phone calls (robo calls) because they had no impact on the registration rate.

Appendix: Program Design

Phase I: In September of 2007, we designed two direct mail pieces and three email messages to be sent to recently moved 18-29 year-old voters in five states – Florida, Kentucky, Nevada, New Jersey and Virginia. For this test phase, we selected a random sample of voters for treatment by mail and email, and then randomly assigned the message in their respective communication medium.¹ We sent mail to 135,909 young voters and email to 24,999 young voters. Due to the overlap of the mail and email treatments, 155,123 young voters who no longer lived at their registration address were contacted with an additional 367,752 young voters in the control group that received no treatment.

Phase II:

In late February and early March 2008, we tested direct mail, email, text messages, and celebrity recorded phone calls to 18-29 year-old voters who had previously registered with Rock the Vote and Project Vote and who had moved since that registration. The lists for Phase II were provided by Rock the Vote, including email addresses, cell phones for text messages, and phone numbers for the robo calls. Polimetrix managed these lists and selected the records of those who had moved according to the US Postal Service's National Change of Address database.

For Phase II, we began with 96,304 young voters which were then randomly assigned to one of twelve treatment combinations using two mail messages, eleven email variations, text messaging, and two celebrity recorded calls in a multilayered research design. The email, text message, and phone calls were conducted across the entire nation. The mail re-registration program was limited to 24 states where we set up tracking for the test mailing.

Design of Registration Application Package:

A key element tested in both phases was the presentation of the re-registration application. The Rock the Vote branded re-registration package was designed to take advantage of Rock the Vote's brand identity in this population, while the "Official Notice" package was tested because previous testing by MSHC Partners for other voter registration programs indicated that this quasi-governmental presentation of an application generates the highest response rates.

Direct Mail: Each direct mail application package included the National Voter Registration Act voter registration application, a pre-addressed envelope to the election office in each state, and each of the five states' unique voter re-registration requirements. The applications were pre-populated with each voter's mailing address. There was a disclaimer included on the inside of the "Official Notice" package making it clear that the re-registration packages were sent as a service from Rock the Vote.

Although Phase I results demonstrated that the "Official Notice" package was more effective among the mover universe, we retested "Official Notice" against the Rock the Vote-branded design in the direct mail for Phase II, since Phase II included many young voters who had previously registered through RTV.

We made one alteration in both creatives between Phase I and Phase II. Each package was personalized with the name of the young voter and her previous address to inform the voter that she needed to update her voter registration. This personalization and reminder of previous registration address improves the response rate for the direct mail registrations.

¹ In order to ensure a clean and robust evaluation in the test phase, we selected only one voter per unique address.

Phase I Direct Mail



Phase II Direct Mail



Email: The email treatments allowed us to vary four elements: sender, subject, content, and landing page. Each email contained links to the Rock the Vote online registration tool. We tracked the email treatments for open rates, click through rates, and completed application rates. Subject and sender primarily impact the open rate, the content primarily impacts the click-through rate, and all four elements impact the completed application rate.

For Phase I, Rock the Vote created three email packages to be sent prior to the mailing. The first email was created to mirror the “Official Notice” mailing.

Official Notice Email

Sender: Voter Registration Center (information@rockthevote.com)
Subject: Notice: Keep your commitment to voting. Re-register immediately.



The two RTV branded emails were very similar in appearance; one version centered on young voters' specific interest in generation-specific issues of this election (“Action on the Issues”), while the other focused on motivating young people through “we’re all in this together” language (“Collective Power”). The subject line and sender for each of the three emails were branded accordingly.

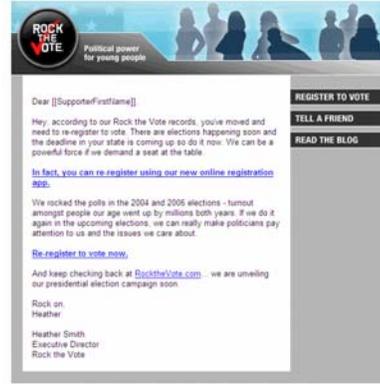
“Action on the Issues” Email

Sender: Heather Smith, Rock the Vote
 (information@rockthevote.com)
 Subject: Turn up the volume: Re-Register to Vote



“Collective Power” Email

Sender: Heather Smith, Rock the Vote
 (information@rockthevote.com)
 Subject: Make them pay attention: Re-Register to Vote.

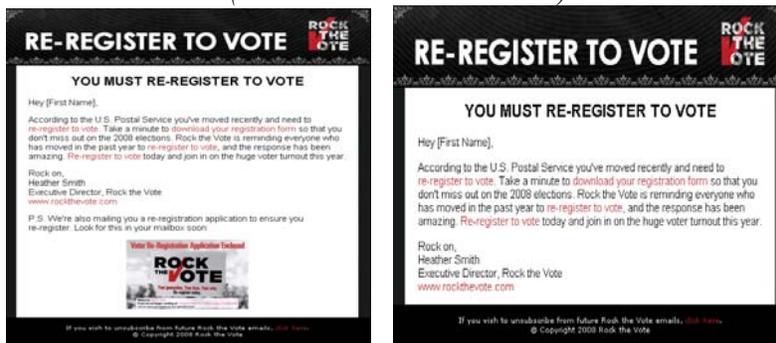


When a second wave of emails was sent after the mail in Phase I, we sent out only the “Official Notice” email content because of its superior performance. We used this wave to test different subject lines to maximize the open rates:

- Subject (original): Notice: Keep your commitment to voting. Re-register immediately.
- Subject 2: Re-registration Deadline: Young voters re-registering now.
- Subject 3: Reminder: You must re-register to vote.

Phase II tested the Phase I Official Notice subject, sender, and email content against variations in the subject and sender to try to the open rate and a Rock the Vote-branded creative to try to improve the click through rate. The RTV creative was randomly split among emails overlapping with the mail treatment to test whether including a thumbnail graphic of the mailing that would arrive in mailboxes increased the return rate of the mail application.

Phase II Rock the Vote Email
 (with and without mail thumbnail)



In the second wave of emails, the Subject/Sender tests were dropped again because of the strong performance of “Official Notice” in the first wave. With the early steps of the email registration process settled on the Official Notice subject, sender, and content, the second wave tested whether an “Official” looking landing page could improve the completion rates.