

September 11, 2024

Election Communications Back to the Basics: In-Person Outreach: Developing Voter Relationships

The first session of the *Back to the Basics* series brought election communication experts together to talk about developing voter relationships – specifically developing voter relationships *in-person*. This panel of experts consciously focused not only on the “how” of in-person outreach, but placed special emphasis on the “why” behind these efforts. “There’s a lot of empirical research in psychology that’s found that people are more trusting of someone when they hear that person speak,” explains Nick O’Donnell, an associate behavioral designer with ideas42. He goes on to explain that in-person interactions:

1. Have a better reach for those who can not or do not use technology,
2. Foster trust and can help establish election officials as the trusted source of information, and
3. Are an opportunity to call people to action

These realized gains can be particularly valuable for election officials who may need to provide voters with important election information like registration deadlines, poll worker recruitment information, early voting locations, and more.

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Nick O’Donnell, ideas42

The experts also discussed proven in-person outreach strategies. Alton Dillard, who serves as a communications advisor with The Elections Group, shares *where* election officials might consider facilitating in-person outreach. He references his prior experience working with the Denver Elections Division – highlighting successful initiatives and previous efforts. Some potential locations shared were:

- Major public events like farmer’s markets, street fairs, sporting events, community festivals
- College and high school campuses

- Cultural or identity-based groups or organizations
- Civic organizations or even political party meetings

The importance of in-person outreach



- Face-to-face conversations foster trust and establish you as authorities of election information
- In-person outreach can reach those who may not use technology
- These moments of connection are also an opportunity to focus people's attention on actions they should take

When showing up to an in-person event, come prepared. You can bring voter information pamphlets, voter registration forms, poll worker applications, and any other promotional materials that offices may have. Face-time with voters is one of the best times to encourage them to take action, whether it is registering to vote or signing up to be a poll worker.

Election officials should remember that elections can be a controversial topic for some voters and future voters. "...it is what it is, but we have to be realistic about that fact. These are simple conversations, but they can be difficult conversations..."

emphasized Dillard. He explains that one of the

best techniques he has seen is for election officials to make the information relevant to the person with whom they are speaking. Additional recommendations include, listening with respect and responding with empathy to all, but especially to those with strong feelings, and remembering that not every interaction will be positive or result in an opinion or behavioral change from the person – and that is okay!

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Alton Dillard, Communications Advisor

Featured Resources

- [VoterCast](#) presented by ideas42
- The Elections Group's [Communications Resource Desk](#)
- [Standards created by the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence](#) for excellent in-person communications

Original link: <https://electionsgroup.com/election-communications-back-to-the-basics-in-person-outreach-developing-voter-relationships/>