

## Click with Millennials Through Multiple Channels

By Eric Reyes

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**The campaign:** Obama

**The tactics:** “Camp Obama” volunteer organization; slick outreach to iPhone and Twitter crowds.

**The business takeaway:** The Millennials market is motivated and has money, but offering them genuinely valuable services is key to winning their advocacy.

Senator Barack Obama’s campaign successfully tapped into one of today’s fickle markets — Gen Y. Today’s so-called **Millennials have been raised on Facebook**, are 80 million strong, spend an estimated \$200 billion a year, and are civic-minded to boot.

One of the campaign’s most effective efforts, launched in 2007, was Camp Obama, a four-day program to train young volunteers, state by state, on the fundamentals of campaigning. “We go through everything from canvassing, phone banking, volunteer recruitment, our campaign message, how to develop an organization locally,” Camp Obama director **Jocelyn Woodards** told *National Public Radio*.

The campaign sought to avoid the mistake Howard Dean made in 2004, when he recruited an estimated 1,200 young volunteers to Iowa before the state’s caucuses — and came in third. Hans Riemer, national youth vote director for Obama, told NPR that the key has been to keep in touch with the volunteers as plans roll out. “Winning an election is just a matter of breaking it down into manageable pieces,” he said. “So we show them what those pieces are, and then turn them loose.”

Another youth marketing coup for Obama: marketing through tech-based channels that Millennials can’t live without. The Obama ‘08 iPhone application, for instance, organizes the phone numbers in the user’s address book into a call list, sorted by Obama battleground states, and taps the iPhone’s GPS to pinpoint the nearest campaign office from wherever you are.

His campaign also **understood the power of social networking tools** — such as Facebook, MySpace, and microblog service Twitter — early on. By the end of February 2007, **Obama had signed more than 6,700 followers** on his Twitter account. The numbers steadily climbed; less than one week before the election, he now has roughly 115,000 followers on Twitter and follows 110,000.

By contrast, Senator Hillary Clinton had 1,200 Twitter followers at the end of February but didn’t follow any of them — an obvious and costly blunder. Said one user last April: “I thought it was bad PR on Hillary’s part. Like Obama, she should probably pretend she’s listening to all those people.”

So what is the private-sector takeaway from Obama’s successful connection to Gen Y? “Obama has a great multichannel approach to reach Millennials,” says David Erickson, director of e-strategy for

Tunheim Partners of Minneapolis. “Marketers need to talk to people in their own language and meet people where they are, like Facebook.” He adds, “Millennials are engaged through projects, and Obama has given them a project using the tools they use.”

The trick to reaching Millennials is to make marketing feel like more of a genuine service than an ad message, says Tammy Erickson, author of the Harvard Business School Publishing blog, [Across the Ages](#). “Millennials want to hear, ‘Tell me about your running problems so I can design a better running shoe,’” she says. They will tune out traditional pitches, for example, news about a new running shoe design. “Many of them want to do something more independent and entrepreneurial, they want to be involved, and Obama’s done a good job getting that,” she says.

*Additional reporting by John Maas.*