Web Sites For Advocacy and Community Organizing: Basics, Essentials, and Best Practices

Emerging Technologies

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Learning Goals

► Survey new technologies which will impact electronic advocacy and organizing
► Understand basics of cell phone text messaging, often referred to as SMS
► Learn about “Voice over Internet” technology and its potential for eAdvocacy
► Explore the value of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in campaigns and advocacy
Cell Phone Text Messaging: SMS

► Cell phone have higher penetration in low-income communities than computers
► Text messaging is fast becoming a standard form of communication
  ▪ “SMS” stands for “Short Message Service”
► “Texting” is particularly popular among youth
► SMS messages reach targets in “real time”, are more immediate than email
Cell Phone Text Messaging: SMS

Opportunities for leveraging SMS

- Allows for recruitment and engagement outside of traditional online environments
  - Concerts, rallies, billboards
- Allows for real-time interaction in the “real world”
  - Elections monitoring, logistical coordination, volunteer deployment
- SMS “blasters” offer new, real-time one-to-many communication
Cell Phone Text Messaging: SMS

- Challenges in leveraging SMS
  - Phones companies control access to sending
    - Especially tough for 2-directional communication
    - Interactive applications require telco approval
  - Large-scale, dependable tools are still expensive
    - Per-message cost model is still a barrier for many
    - “Recipient pays” model is not optimal, and may offend
  - US uptake with SMS still lags behind other countries
Cell Phone Text Messaging: SMS

Text Messaging Resources

- MobileVoter.org – Non-partisan mobile activism
  - TxtVoter.org – Voter registration service
- UPOC – Corporate service for SMS communities
- TxtMob.org – SMS “groupware”
  - Delivery may be an issue
- MobileActive.org – Blog on mobile activism
Voice over Internet (VOIP)

► Provides support for
  ▪ Phone calls to be placed over internet
  ▪ Phones to interact with databases and web apps
  ▪ Low-cost domestic and international calls

► Reality Check
  ▪ Still “in the future” in terms of eAdvocacy
  ▪ Requires greater telco infrastructure
  ▪ At risk in “Net Neutrality” debate
Voice over Internet (VOIP)

Potential uses in eAdvocacy

- Distributed phone banking
  - Supporters dial supporters through web site
- Automated surveys of supporters
- Automated event reminders
- Emergency response networks
  - “Robo-dial” many numbers at critical moments
- Ad-hoc interactive “info” lines
  - “Press 1 for ..., press 2 for...”
Voice over Internet (VOIP)

Tools survey

- Skype.com – Excellent free personal VOIP
- Asterisk – Powerful open source VOIP PBX
  - “Phone system in a box”
  - Allows call data to interact with web apps
  - Still maturing
- Vonage – Cost effective VOIP for office / org voice lines
Geographic Information Systems

► Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have been around for a while

► The web, and tools like Google Maps and Google Earth, have broadened their relevance and accessibility to nonprofits

► Tools allow you visualize supporter and campaign data in order to broaden reach and focus strategy
ClustrMaps+ World Map of visitors to http://www.wndw.net

Navigation: Map with smaller clustrs | Click on the map to zoom in | Maps Archive | Notes | Full Map Key

ClustrMaps for http://www.wndw.net

2912 visits since 2 Sep 2006, total visits 61374 since 25 Jan 2006, updated daily
Geographic Information Systems

Tool survey

- Google Maps – maps.google.com
- Google Earth – interactive desktop app
- YAHOO maps – maps.yahoo.com
- Geocoder.us - latitude/longitude of any US address
- DIY Map – backspace.com/mapapp/
  - Flash-based mapping application
End Of Section

► Questions?
► Comments?

Thank You!

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