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Campaigns Online: The Profound Impact of the Internet, Blogs, and E-Technologies in Presidential Political Campaigning

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Abstract

This report examines the phenomenon of online campaigning and studies the trends evolving in the 2004 Presidential election that are redefining campaigning, most notably, the use of weblogs (commonly known as blogs), Meetups, social software, and online fundraising. This report details and evaluates the use of technology and assesses its use to communicate, gain grassroots support, and raise funds in the year leading up to the 2004 Democratic presidential primary and general elections, and questions what type of impact the Internet is having.

The report concludes the Internet and emerging technologies has proven to be a powerful breakthrough in presidential campaigning and will continue to evolve through future campaigns and innovations. Americans are embracing the Internet to connect to the political process. But like any technology, the Internet cannot replace a person's motivation to become more politically active; it can, however, help educate, inform, and activate citizens. As the Internet grows in importance, campaigns must adapt to this new technological environment. Candidates who fail to recognize the power of the Internet will be left behind.

In 2003, Howard Dean transformed politics by utilizing the Internet as an integral part of his campaign. Dean was the first candidate to use blogging, Meetups, and other innovative technology tools as part of his campaign strategy. Considered a long shot when he first entered the Democratic race, Dean now leads several polls. A key to Dean's success is the use open-source politics; a decentralized Internet-based campaigning that relinquished a level of control over message, technique, and organization; yet created a successful and loyal grassroots network and fundraising base.

I. Introduction

The Internet and emerging technologies have made a profound impact on Presidential campaigns. Online campaigning has revolutionized political communication, grassroots activism, supporter outreach, and fundraising. Ten years ago, the Internet was barely used in politics; today it is an innovative, informative, interactive, and a creative tool that transformed Presidential campaigning.

In the Internet's early years, most users were academics, military, or technology enthusiasts; today, the Internet is a common part of American life and has gone mainstream. Since the mid-1990s, the Internet has been the fastest growing resource in American politics. With more than 55 percent of Americans utilizing the Internet frequently, and nearly 70 percent having Internet access, campaigns are investing millions of dollars into developing websites and emerging technologies to reach supporters, target voters, shape public opinion, and raise funds.¹

In recent years, advances in high-speed Internet access and price decreases, low price dial-up Internet access, and growth in home computer ownership, have increased Internet usage. High-speed Internet, for example, enables people to look for information faster and perform more complex online tasks without tying up a telephone line. The use of high-speed broadband is also increasing overall Internet usage.²

¹ Cornfield, Michael and Jonah Seiger, "The Net and the Nomination," Spring, 2003: http://www.ipdi.org/net_nomination.pdf.

² Cornfield, Michael, Lee Rainie, and John B. Horrigan, "Untuned Keyboards Online Campaigners, Citizens, and Portals in the 2002 Elections," *The Pew Internet & American Life Project and The Institute for Politics, Democracy, and the Internet*: 21 March 2003: <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports>.

Campaigning Online

For campaigns, the Internet is a low-cost medium that allows two-way communication; anyone with Internet access can connect, organize, and share their ideas and opinions.³ The use of discussion forums, weblogs (commonly known as blogs), and online discussion groups, allow ongoing dialogues between the candidate, campaign staff, volunteers, and supporters. The Internet's virtual nature enhances the number and diversity of people participating in campaign discussions, creating "global conversations that previously would have occurred only in local groups and conferences."⁴ Campaigns are utilizing e-mail and blogs to rally and communicate with their supporters and solicit donations.

Since the Internet's emergence in the 1996 presidential campaign, websites continue to get more sophisticated as technology advances. Campaign sites have evolved and are more than just an online brochure. The election of Jesse Ventura as governor of Minnesota in 1998 demonstrated the power of the Internet. Ventura, a third-party candidate with little party structure or endorsements used the Internet to present his message. In the early stages of his campaign, Ventura had no physical headquarters—just an ever-growing e-mail list. Two thirds of his fundraising pledges arrived via the Internet. His final three-day get-out-the-vote bus trip was organized by e-mail. Ventura's website was a simple, text-based community of Ventura fans. The network generated a surge at the end, especially

³ Jim Drinkard, "E-politics One Click Can Reach Millions," USA Today 31 August 1999: 1A.

⁴ Jeffery Sadow and Karen James, "Virtual Billboards? Candidate Web Sites and Campaigning in 1998," Prepared for delivery at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA: 4 November 1999:

<http://www.lsus.edu/faculty/~jsadow/pages/other/papers/apsa99.htm>.

among younger, new voters. Ventura won half of the under-30 vote in a three-way race.⁵

In the 2000 Republican presidential primary, John McCain developed a grassroots Internet following and received a huge boost from Internet-based donations after winning the New Hampshire primary. “We used the Internet in the McCain campaign because we didn’t have any money and we had to try to get our message without being able to spend any money, and so we were looking at the cheapest possible way to reach the largest amount of people,” said R. Rebecca Donatelli, President of Campaign Solutions and lead Internet consultant to the McCain’s 2000 campaign.⁶

But when McCain’s campaign fizzled, so did some expectations for the Internet. During the 2000 Presidential election, George W. Bush and Al Gore created websites, sent out e-mail updates, and accepted online donations, but they still ran their campaigns in a conventional manner with the added use of technology—but not defined by it.

Dean’s Internetization Campaign

In 2003, Howard Dean’s 2004 Democratic presidential primary campaign launched a new age of Internet campaigning. Dean’s Internetization campaign approach proved that the Internet could be utilized as an effective organizing tool. The Dean campaign was open to new strategies and forming an “untraditional” campaign, including creating a campaign blog, developing a massive e-mail list of supporters, using online forums and tools such as Meetup.com and his own

⁵Howard Fineman, Gregory Vistica, Martha Brant, and Jonathan Alter, “Pressing the Flesh Online,” *Newsweek* 20 September 1999: 50.

⁶ R. Rebecca Donatelli, “The Internet and Political Campaigns- What Impact Will it Have in 2004?” Symposium at John Hopkins University, Washington, DC: 19 November 2003.

DeanLink to organize events, rallies, and allowing volunteers to take a key roll in the campaign by developing technology tools and organizing events. These strategies helped Dean collect more money than any other Democratic presidential hopeful, recruit more than 500,000 campaign supporters, and propel him to frontrunner status.⁷

Because the Dean campaign looked at previous Internet success and then incorporated new and emerging technologies (especially blogs and social software tools), the campaign created a new model to reach out to supporters, fundraise, and communicate. Additionally, the media noticed Dean's Internet success and wrote extensively about his use of technology, creating even a bigger buzz and generating plenty of earned media that none of the other Democratic candidates were receiving. With all of the publicity, the Dean campaign attracted even more individuals to visit his website, participate in the campaign blog, and attend Meetups.

With this use of technology, Dean appealed to the technology community by developing a "wire-friendly" campaign and philosophy, creating many open-source programs and having volunteers play a key roll in the development of campaign technology.⁸ However, Dean focused not only on the technology community, the campaign reached out to ordinary citizens of all different backgrounds to get involved and once Dean showed his ability to fundraise and began leading in several key polls, more support came as he was deemed the frontrunner, including union endorsements.

⁷ Alexander Bolton, "Dem Presidential Rivals Suffer 'Growth Pains' Chasing Dean," The Hill 8 October 2003: <http://www.hillnews.com/news/100803/growthpains.aspx>.

⁸ Open-source is a term applied to software whose code is available for users to look at and modify freely.

Dean's Internet-powered campaign has been called "open-source politics," relaying a new political philosophy of a "two-way campaign in which the supporters openly collaborate with the campaign to improve it, and in which the contributions of the "group mind" prove smarter than that of any lone individual."⁹ Dean's campaign incorporates the Internet in every way possible. Max Fose, an Internet consultant to the McCain's 2000 campaign, said "[t]hat's why [Dean's] so successful. People on the other end of the computer feel connected."¹⁰

Dean campaign manager Joe Trippi has been credited with developing the technology-friendly Dean strategy. Trippi, a veteran political consultant who has been Dean's campaign manager since February 2003, is a partner in Trippi, McMahon & Squier. This Democratic political consulting firm has handled Dean's campaigns since his first campaign for governor of Vermont in 1992, but in the last few years Trippi disappeared from politics to work for high-tech companies in Silicon Valley as a marketing consultant.¹¹

Trippi has acknowledged that his Silicon Valley experience altered his views on political campaigning. Seeing the collaboration that transpires in Linux and in other open source software, Trippi applied this philosophy to politics, creating open source politics. Trippi has described the Dean campaign as "the first campaign of the modern era" and stated the rival campaigns are still operating in

⁹ Chris Suellentrop, "We'll See if it Happens: Will Howard Dean Do What He Just Said He Would?" Slate.com: 6 November 2003, <http://slate.msn.com/id/2090927>.

¹⁰ Glen Justice, "Howard Dean's Internet Push: Where Will It Lead?" The New York Times 2 November 2003: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/02/weekinreview/02JUST.html?ex=1068354000&en=9b54fd21f77bc684&ei=5062&partner=GOOGLE>.

¹¹ Paul Farhi, "Tiny but Trusted Inner Circle Surrounds Dean," The Washington Post 2 December 2003: A01.

the “old politics”. Trippi noted during an online discussion on Washingtonpost.com in August 2003 that:

The rules are changing and they (other campaigns) are still operating in the old politics. We are building a new politics that probably every campaign will be using years from now. I think you will see more campaigns doing it our way.¹²

Following Dean’s Success

Rival campaigns are struggling to catch up and emulate Dean’s online success by creating blogs, e-mail lists, sophisticated websites, Meetup groups, and concentrating on online fundraising.¹³ But many campaigns are apprehensive of creating an “open-source politics” campaign and have developed more structured Internet based strategies.

However, another campaign has received success online, even before their candidate was in the presidential race. The “Draft Clark” Internet movement began to encourage Wesley Clark to enter the Democratic primary, groups of grassroots volunteers spent months creating the “Draft Clark” Internet-based movement, developing a loyal grassroots network and obtaining donation pledges if Clark ran.¹⁴ The DraftWesleyClark.com organization established offices in all 50 states, ran radio ads in New Hampshire, and recieved nearly \$1.6 million in

¹² Online Discussion with Joe Trippi, [Washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com/): 27 August 2003: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

¹³ Joanna Weiss, “Net Gains for Dean Candidate Increasing Funds, Support Via the Web,” [The Boston Globe](http://www.boston.com) 11 August 2003: A1.

¹⁴Michelle Goldberg, “The General and His Ground Troops,” [Salon.com](http://www.salon.com/) 23 October 2003: <http://www.salon.com/>.

pledges for Clark. When Clark decided to officially run in September 2003, he credited the successful Internet draft movement as a key motivation.¹⁵

II. The Blogging Phenomenon

Blogs, short for Weblogs, are frequently updated Internet journals that have become a growing Internet subculture. This once techie phenomenon is now an invaluable tool in the 2004 presidential election, adding another innovative Internet component to campaign communications.

While blogs have received much attention in politics, in their use to spread opinions and views about the war in Iraq and concern over Senator Trent Lott's comments at Senator Strom Thurmond's birthday, they actually are one of the earliest publishing practices on the Internet. One of the first mainstream blogs was "The Drudge Report," which focused on news and political gossip.¹⁶ Blogger Matt Drudge proved with his coverage of "Monicagate," among other stories, that an individual blog can provide a direct and unfiltered news source.

Blogs were relatively unknown until recently with increased publicity about them and availability of free, easy-to-use blog publishing tools. Blogs enable Internet users to publish and connect to a worldwide audience. Today, there are an estimated two million "bloggers" globally, and that figure is growing steadily.¹⁷

¹⁵ Suneel Ratan, "Clark's Run: Net Made Him Do It," Wired News 17 September 2003: <http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,60470,00.html>.

¹⁶ Leander Kahney, "The Web the Way It Was," Wired News, 23 February 2000: <http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,34006,00.html>.

¹⁷ Mike Butcher, "'Bloggers' Aim to Make an Impact in the Real World," The Irish Times 8 August 2003: 53.

According to an April 2003 report by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, only four percent of Americans who use the Internet report visiting blogs. The report discussed blog demographics:

The overall number of blog users is so small that it is not possible to draw statistically meaningful conclusions about who uses blogs. The early data suggest that the most active Internet users, especially those with broadband connections are the most likely to have found blogs they like. In addition, blogs seem to be catching on with younger Internet users – those under age 30 – at a greater pace than with older Internet users.¹⁸

While blogs generally follow a similar format, they come in many varieties and subject matters including politics, technology, current events, culture, entertainment, and specific hobbies and interests. Blogs are an interactive dialog; Internet users can read a blog and then submit their own comments. Blogs entries are dated, with the newest ones posted on top of the page. Most blogs are postings of thoughts, opinions, and links to related news articles, other blogs, and websites. While the use of blogs in political campaigns, organizations, and businesses has become increasingly popular, allowing these institutions to communicate informally, the majority of blogs are published by individuals.

Blogging in Presidential Campaigning

Blogs have already become a power tool in the battle for the Democratic presidential nomination. Currently, five of the nine Democratic presidential candidates have an official blog.¹⁹ The use of blogs has brought supporters together to form a new online community and reinvented campaign fundraising,

¹⁸ “The Internet and the Iraq War: How Online Americans Have Used the Internet to Learn War News, Understand Events, and Promote Their Views,” Pew Internet & American Life Project Website 1 April 2003: <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports>.

¹⁹See chart one

shifting it from a few big donors to countless small donors. Blogs bring a new dimension to communications by giving candidates their own virtual and interactive community that provides an instant forum to share their views in an unfiltered way. Visitors to most campaign blogs are able to comment, sharing their opinions, concerns, and feedback.

Additionally, many candidates' grassroots supporters have created their own blogs to show their support, devoting their time and energy to promoting their favorite candidate. Other blogs have popped up as commentary and opinions about the presidential candidates and there are plenty of negative blogs against presidential candidates. Just like making media appearances, candidates now are "guest blogging" on lead blogs to reach out to voters.

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) has even started a blog (<http://www.democrats.org/blog/>) called "Kicking Ass: Daily Dispatches from the DNC". The blog's "About This Blog" section explains the DNC's rationale for using this new type of informal communication tool:

Blogs are popping up all over politics. Most of the Democratic candidates for president have added them to their websites.

Why? What's so different about blogs that so many people have turned to them as a source of news and community? Is this just another Internet fad (remember push media?) that will be nothing but a fond memory in a few years?

We don't think so. One of the most common complaints about politicians and political parties is that there's no real communication between those of us in Washington and the rest of America.

We put out press releases, email newsletters, fundraising appeals, form letters, and advertisements. You write letters, volunteer, and donate.

But where's the frank, one-on-one communication? Blogs make that possible. On Kicking Ass, you're going to meet real people at the DNC and hear our real thoughts. And we're going to listen to you.²⁰

2004 Presidential Candidates Blogging Activity

Howard Dean

In the 2004 presidential campaign, the leading candidate in the blogging revolution is Dean. Through a network of websites and blogs, he has created a dedicated Internet following that helped him lead all Democratic candidates in fundraising over the past two quarters. Dean was the first Presidential candidate to create a blog, called "Blog for America" (<http://www.blogforamerica.com>), as part of his Internet communication strategy in March 2003.²¹ The Dean campaign also created a blog, called "Generation Dean Blog," targeting younger voters (<http://www.gendeanblog.com>). While Dean's "Blog for American" gets numerous comments for each blog posting (most times more than 200), their "Generation Dean Blog" is rarely receiving more than ten comments for each posting.

Dean's "Blog for America" is the "the nerve center for the campaign."²² The blog contains a stream of information concerning the campaign, including information of upcoming events, review of events, campaign updates, volunteer activities, open-thread dialog, fundraising goals and returns, reviews of debates and press coverage, and pictures. It offers a campaign diary and an opportunity for supporters to share their views on the blog. With each blog entry, readers can

²⁰ "About This Blog," Kicking Ass: Daily Dispatches from the DNC 12 October 2003: <http://www.democrats.org/blog/about/index.html>.

²¹ The first official Dean blog was started on March 14, 2003 and was located at <http://www.deancalltoaction.blogspot.com>. The campaign used Blogger, a free online product from Pyra Labs. Since June 1, 2003 the blog has run on the campaign's own servers, using the highly-customizable Movable Type software from Six Apart.

²² Edward Cone, "The Marketing of a President," Baseline 14 November 2003: <http://www.baselinemag.com/article2/0,3959,1386051,00.asp>.

post their own comments, send the entry to a friend, and link to other blogs that reference the entry (a feature called Trackback). Dean's site adheres to the formula of many popular blogs, with many insightful updates from the campaign trail from the candidate himself, as well as contributions from campaign staff and volunteers. The blog also features influential bloggers as guest contributors to the site. The site has become extremely popular, as the blog started out earlier this year with 3,000 daily readers, but by September 2003 that number jumped to 30,000 visitors per day.²³

Dean has embraced unofficial campaign blogs, creating a "blogroll" linking to numerous unofficial pro-Dean grassroots blogs and to popular blogging sites.²⁴ Dean also successfully used his blog to increase online fundraising. For example, before the third quarter fundraising filing deadline, Dean's blog provided updates on fundraising totals and encouraged blog readers to donate to the campaign.

Lawrence Lessig, Professor of Law at Stanford Law School, founder of the school's Center for Internet and Society, and an expert on blogging, noted of the campaign blogging phenomenon:

Enter the blog, a space where people gab. As implemented by most campaigns, it is a place where candidates gab down to the people. But when done right, as the Howard Dean campaign apparently is doing, the blog is a tool for building community. The trick is to turn the audience into the speaker. A well-structured blog inspires both reading and writing. And by getting the audience to type, candidates get the audience committed. Engagement replaces reception, which in turn leads to real space action. The life of the Dean campaign on the Internet is not really life on the Internet. It's the activity in real space that the Internet inspires.

None of this works unless the blog community is authentic. And that requires that members feel they own their gabbing space. A managed community works about as well as a managed economy.

²³ Joanna Weiss, "Political Player: The Chief Blogger: A Hired Gun Who Muses With Fingertips," The Boston Globe 7 September 2003: <http://www.boston.com>.

²⁴ Blogroll is a list of links to other blogs.

So the challenge is to find a way to build community without the community feeling built.²⁵

During an online discussion on washingtonpost.com with Dean campaign manager Trippi, one individual asked: "Is it true your campaign chooses what goes up on the blog or is it really open for free discussion?" Trippi answered:

It is open for free discussion. I have seen a lot of comments on other blogs that we monitor it and take some stuff down, but that is just not true. On occasion we take down profanity and things that are just too over the top. In fact now we have so many comments that I am sure that there is stuff that someone has posted that we haven't even seen yet. In the early days we had a guy that would come on and say "Howard Dean sucks" for pages. We would take it down because you would have to scroll forever to see anything interesting. Even now some stuff gets by us, but we try to let everyone post. Negative comments that are challenging or questioning Dean are left up all the time, it is only when they are super obnoxious that we have taken it down - and that happens very rarely.²⁶

Many other candidates have taken note of Dean's online success and the publicity generated by his blog. Other Democratic candidates have rushed to create their own official blogs. Clark, John Edwards, and John Kerry have launched official campaign blogs in recent months.

Wesley Clark

Clark, who entered the race on September 17, 2003, received a lot of help before entering the race from the "Draft Clark" Internet movement. Ten days after officially launching his campaign, Clark started an official blog (formally located at <http://blog.clark04.com/>) entitled "Generally Speaking". The blog allowed for

²⁵ Lawrence Lessig. "The New Road to the White House: How Grassroots Blogs Are Transforming Presidential Politics," *Wired Magazine* November 2003: <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.11/view.html?pg=5>.

²⁶ Online Discussion with Joe Trippi. *Washingtonpost.com*: 27 August 2003: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>.

open threads and comments, creating an interactive virtual community.²⁷ The blog also listed unofficial pro-Clark websites, blogs, and Yahoo groups. In November 2003, Clark, mimicking Dean, started the “GenClark Blog” (<http://www.genclark.com/blogs.htm>) targeting younger voters. But the “GenClark Blog” has been slow to attract visitors and averages only 28 visitors a day.²⁸

In November 2003, the campaign launched the “Clark Community Network” (<http://www.forclark.com>), an integrated system of blogs and Internet tools.²⁹ The new site combines a content management system, web bulletin board system, and blog system, to create a “collaborative media application,” which is built on top of an open-source community management tool called Scoop. The system empowers Clark supporters to be the producers of the site, contributing news and discussion, and enrolling in several online communities, each with a blog of its own. Users can post to blogs or even develop their own personal blogs, polls, and e-mail lists through the system.³⁰

When the Clark Community Network system was launched, the campaign retired the “Generally Speaking” blog and redirected all traffic to the new network. A message on November 19, 2003, discussing “phase one” of their blog strategy, noted:

Sometime within the next 12 hours, we’ll be redirecting all requests to blog.clark04.com to www.forclark.com, thus completing the first phase of our blog strategy. Since September 27, this blog has received over 52,000 comments from thousands of individuals. We’re

²⁷ An open thread is a blog posting that ask readers for their comments and opinions. Sometimes a specific question is posed in a posting that a blog is asking feedback about.

²⁸ “GenClark Blog Site Summary,” [Site Meter](http://www.sitemeter.com/default.asp?action=stats&site=sm3genclark) 20 December 2003: <http://www.sitemeter.com/default.asp?action=stats&site=sm3genclark>.

²⁹ Chris Ulbrich, “Clark Campaign to Debut Big Blog,” [Wired News](http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,61142,00.html?tw=wn_tophead_4) 10 November 2003: http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,61142,00.html?tw=wn_tophead_4.

³⁰ “What Is Scoop?” [Scoop](http://scoop.kuro5hin.org/special/whatisit) 24 November 2003: <http://scoop.kuro5hin.org/special/whatisit>.

working on some scripts which will import all 52,000 comments and 150+ blog entries into the Clark Community Network.³¹

Another blog posting about the new blog explained:

We understand that change is hard, but we also recognize that we've outgrown this old blog format. While many people like the open, chat-like nature of this blog we know that in order to scale to hundreds of thousands of community participants, we must provide a more structured and organized community architecture. The CCN is the result of this.³²

On the new network system supporters are able to create their own blog. Additionally, Clark has his own personal blog on the network (<http://wes.forclark.com/>), but the campaign cautioned, "Knowing how hectic his schedule is, we still only expect it to be about once a week, though we always hope for more. He recognizes the benefits of online community and has worked with us closely to make sure his message comes across clear and strong."³² The new blog also displays site statistics, listing the total number of postings, comments, and members in the network. As of December 4, 2003, the site had 3,076 postings, 25,230 comments, but only a mere 1,797 network members.³³

John Edwards

John Edwards' blog (<http://share.johnedwards2004.com>) is described as "a community designed to encourage supporters of Senator Edwards to communicate

³¹ Cameron Barrett, "Phase 1: Generally Speaking," Generally Speaking 19 November 2003: <http://blog.clark04.com/archives/000190.html>.

³² Cameron Barrett, "Clark Community Network," Generally Speaking 17 November 2003: <http://blog.clark04.com/archives/000185.html>.

³³ "Site Statistics," Clark's Official Campaign Blog 4 December 2003: <http://campaign.forclark.com/>.

with one another and express their opinions about today's important issues."³⁴

Edwards noted while guest blogging on Larry Lessig's blog that he really enjoyed writing on his campaign's blog: "It's a chance to exchange about ideas instead of soundbites and speeches."³⁵

Users of the Edwards blog are encouraged to create an account that enables them to post links and rate comments, but comments may be posted without an account. When the blog began in August 2003, it was more campaign-controlled and less free-spirited than other campaign blogs. For example, the blog was designed more like the Edwards website and less like a traditional blog, as there were no links to unofficial Edwards blogs or websites, but there is a section for state supporters in the official blog.

Some visitors to the Edwards site grew increasingly frustrated with the blog's style and controlled atmosphere. One user, identified as "Drack26," posted the following comment: "What is going on with the blog? My previous comment was deleted. I think this blog is too hard to get around. I'd like to see comments posted chronologically. I'd like to see an open thread. That would lead to more discussion about the campaign and ideas and bring supporters together."³⁶

Another anonymous individual replied to Drack26's posting by saying, "Yes we need an open thread. The Dean website has it...why can't we?"³⁷

In mid October 2003, Edwards redesigned his blog and addressed some of these concerns including: creating links to grassroots pro-Edwards blogs and

³⁴ "What Is the John Edwards Blog?" John Edwards for President Blog 20 September 2003: <http://share.johnedwards2004.com/links.pl?op=faq>.

³⁵ John Edwards, "Thanks to Larry Lessig," Larry Lessig Blog. 3 November 2003: <http://www.lessig.org/blog/archives/001550.shtml> - 001550.

³⁶ Drack26, "I Also Wonder..." Edwards for President Blog 28 September 2003: <http://share.johnedwards2004.com/>.

³⁷ anonymous. "Re: I Also Wonder..." Edwards for President Blog 28 September 2003: <http://share.johnedwards2004.com/>.

websites, allowing open threads, having a comment counter, and allowing supporters to create their own blogs on the site. These changes led to a more user-friendly and community-sharing blog. While it is great that Edwards revamped his blog, it is puzzling why the blog was so restrictive and non-user-friendly in the first place, when it was started less than two months earlier.

John Kerry

John Kerry began his official blog (<http://blog.johnkerry.com/>) in August 2003. The blog, entitled “We Will Beat Bush: Daily Updates From The Campaign Trail,” takes the Dean style of blogging and creates a very interactive and user-friendly blog. The blog links to “Unofficial Kerry Sites,” including several blogs, Yahoo groups, and websites.

But Kerry’s blog has had some trouble because it did not require users to register before leaving comments. This led to numerous spam postings, and in November 2003, the blog said it was experiencing “increasing trouble with trolls and other people intent on disrupting our blogging community.” Therefore, the campaign had to close down the comments section to install new software.”³⁸ ³⁹

A posting on Kerry’s blog described the new comment system that would require registration:

We have come up with the first registration system for Moveable Type, which will give us more options for moderating discussions on the blog. Starting today, you will need to register with a valid email

³⁸ DickBell, “Register to Comment on the Blog,” John Kerry for President Blog 13 November 2003: <http://blog.johnkerry.com/blog/archives/000705.html> - 000705.

³⁹ A "troll" is a person who posts messages on the Internet (specically blogs and message boards) that create controversy or an angry response without adding content to the discussion, often intentionally.

address in order to post comments. Visitors who do not want to register can still read all of the blog posts and comments.⁴⁰

Bob Graham

Bob Graham, who ended his campaign on October 6, 2003, had an official blog (<http://www.grahamforpresident.com/blog/>) that started in August 2003. When Graham ended his campaign, he posted a message on his website thanking his supporters and directed them to share their comments on his blog. Graham had the same message posted on his blog and additional postings from campaign staff, volunteers, and his daughter reflecting on the end of the campaign. Hundreds of comments were posted from supporters noting their disappointment that Graham was leaving the race.

Matthew Klein, who started a grassroots Graham blog, noted in a posting at the end of the campaign, “Back in June, I started up an independent Weblog, the BobWire, to spread the word about a great candidate and great American, Bob Graham. I was later thrilled to have the opportunity to meet and communicate with the rest of you here, on the official blog, and review why the Senator should be our next president.”⁴¹

Joe Lieberman

Joe Lieberman’s campaign resisted having an official blog, instead creating on his website the “Joe and Hadassah Campaign Diary” (http://www.joe2004.com/site/PageServer?pagename=campaign_diary). While this conveys some blog ideals, such as posting activities and opinions of the

⁴⁰ DickBell, John Kerry for President Blog [http://blog.johnkerry.com/blog/archives/000705.html - 000705](http://blog.johnkerry.com/blog/archives/000705.html-000705).

⁴¹Matthew Klein, “The Best President That Never Was,” Blog Graham: Bob Graham’s Official Weblog 6 October 2003: <http://www.grahamforpresident.com/blog>.

Liebermans, it is not a blog and does not create an interactive communication forum. An additional problem with the campaign diary is it only has a few postings. Since Lieberman started his diary back in May 2003, he has only posted a disappointing 15 times.⁴² On December 9, 2003, Lieberman abandoned the use of a diary and launched an official blog (<http://www.blogforjoe.com/>). The blog links to area's of the Lieberman website and to supporter's sites. Unlike the diary, the blog is being updated daily. The blog allows anyone to post comments on the site (without having to sign-in) yet, few have posted to the site. A December 11, 2003 open thread yielded no comments, while December 16, 2003 open thread only received four postings, but on January 07, 2004 when the blog noted that *The New Republic* endorsed Lieberman, there were 117 comments posted to that specific posting.⁴³

Democratic Presidential Candidates Not Using Blogs

Dick Gephardt, Carol Moseley Braun, Dennis Kucinich, and Al Sharpton do not have official campaign blogs, but some have unofficial blogs created by their supporters. None of these candidates' official websites link to unofficial blogs. Without an official blog, these campaigns lack a useful communication tool to get out the campaign's unfiltered messages and create an interactive dialog by directly communicating with supporters.

The major unofficial Kucinich blog, "Kucinich Blog & News" (<http://www.denniskucinich.us>), looks very official. It has messages posted by Kucinich and links to sections of his official website, but in small type on the

⁴² As of December 5, 2003

⁴³ "Blog for Joe." Blogforjoe.com: Official Web log of Joe Lieberman for President Campaign 12 January 2003: <http://www.blogforjoe.com/>

bottom of the site it notes: “This site is produced by friends of Dennis Kucinich and is not the official campaign site.” The blog was created by Henri Poole, “a software activist, Internet campaign consultant, and personal friend of Dennis Kucinich”.⁴⁴ The official Kucinich website does not link to this unofficial blog.

George W. Bush

While many Democratic candidates have embraced blogs, Republican President George W. Bush re-election website takes a more cautious approach to this new communication technology trend. When the Bush-Cheney site launched in August 2003, it did not feature a blog. Instead, the website featured a newswire (<http://www.georgewbush.com/WStuff/newsfeed.aspx>) that allowed bloggers to place a news feed box on their website that instantly posts news items from the Bush website onto their blogs. On October 6, 2003, the campaign launched an official blog (<http://www.georgewbush.com/blog/>). The site’s first post said the blog offered “the latest news and views from outside the Washington ‘Beltway’ and from Bush-Cheney ’04.” The post went on to say:

Each morning we will update you on the day’s top stories as well as give you a quick summary of what Bush-Cheney ’04 has planned for the day. We’ll also help you follow President Bush and Vice President Cheney. We will regularly deliver breaking news notices of when President Bush and members of his team will appear on TV and action alerts to guide your efforts to help re-elect President Bush and Vice President Cheney.⁴⁵

Although the Bush-Cheney campaign has embraced blogging, the site is more of a newswire than a blog. For example, the blog does not allow for

⁴⁴ “Who Maintains This Bulletin Board?” Dennis Kucinich For President National Discussion Forum for Kucinich Campaign Supporters 5 December 2003: <http://us.denniskucinich.us/phpBB2/faq.php> - 36.

⁴⁵ “Official Bush-Cheney ’04 Blog Now Online,” Official Bush-Cheney ’04 Blog 6 October 2003: http://www.georgewbush.com/blog/archives/2003_10.html - 000013.

comments, a key element of most blogs. And while many Democratic candidates provide links on their blogs to grassroots supporters' sites, the Bush-Cheney blog does not. One article reviewing the Bush-Cheney blog critiqued: "Although weblogs are often used as an opportunity for writers to post interesting links and opinions, many regard the Bush-Cheney weblog as a series of tacked-together press releases made to look like a weblog."⁴⁶ Another assessment noted, "The tone is buttoned-down. The campaign does not post supporters' comments. And the entries are more impersonal than posts on most of the Democratic sites."⁴⁷

Chuck DeFeo, Bush-Cheney's e-campaign manager, defended their blog and Internet strategies:

We're at a very different stage than what any of the other candidates are. They've got votes being cast in two, maybe three months, but [votes] won't be cast for president for another year. As our grass-roots organization starts to build up, we will start to build up more of a grass-roots face of our blog.⁴⁸

III. The Use of Technology and Social Software to Create Grassroots Networks and Support

Campaigns have always been creative in establishing grassroots networks and gaining new supporters, but in the Internet age, creating and communicating with supporters has gone high tech. The use of new Internet services, e-mail, social software, and innovative emerging technologies are an effective, simple, and cost effective way to mobilize supporters. During the last decade, many people

⁴⁶ "George W. Bush Weblog Launches," *Internet Magazine* 8 October 2003: <http://www.internet-magazine.com/news/view.asp?id=3752>.

⁴⁷ Brian Faler, "Add 'Blog' to the Campaign Lexicon," *The Washington Post* 15 November 2003: A04

⁴⁸ Faler, *The Washington Post* A04.

proclaimed the Internet's potential to transform political campaigning, but others were skeptical of its true power to mobilize support until Democratic presidential candidate Dean's campaign utilized it to propel him to front-runner status this year.

Larry Sabato, director of University of Virginia's Center for Politics, confirmed the emergence of the Internet in politics: "People have been pooh-pooing the Internet and saying it has never lived up to its promise and it never would. Well, guess what? They're wrong, and it is living up to its promise. And it's going to be one of the primary vehicles for both organization and coverage from now on."⁴⁹

In 2003, Dean was at the forefront in using the Internet as a grassroots-organizing tool. Dean revolutionized the use of an online grassroots network by merging traditional campaign organizing tactics with technology tools, creating a new standard that other campaigns are trying to emulate. Dean has mobilized a strong network, creating a large e-mail list of supporters, using online forums such as Meetup.com to organize, and creating detailed online activist materials.

Dean has taken the Internet grassroots-mobilization model—first used successfully by Ventura's third-party campaign for Minnesota governor in 1998 and later utilized by McCain in the 2000 Republican presidential primary race—to a new level. The Dean campaign adopted an independent and laissez-faire philosophy in local organizing. Dean's grassroots network has an advantage in states where he does not have an official presence. In many cities, local organizers simply mobilized on their own through the use of Dean's online tools and

⁴⁹ Julia Malone. "Dean Shows How to Catch Cash with Net," The Atlanta Journal and Constitution 4 July 2003: 2F.

resources. Trippi noted that the Dean campaign wants “to let [grassroots volunteers] have control, let them help the campaign how they want to help the campaign.”⁵⁰ Cornfield said that Dean’s campaign has utilized the Internet’s peer-to-peer technologies, noting, “Dean’s was the first campaign that encouraged people to organize themselves and do things for the campaign on their own.”⁵¹

Dean has been very successful in recruiting supporters. On November 15, 2003, the number of supporters exceeded more than 500,000. Dean’s blog noted the milestone:

This morning you passed an astonishing milestone: 500,349 Americans are now standing with Howard Dean online to take back our country. At the end of January, there were 537--now more than half a million! What’s even more incredible that this number is the way it came to be. It wasn’t from the top down, from a politician giving a mandate. It came from you. You built this campaign through Meetup, through writing letters to voters in Iowa and New Hampshire, through contributing, and through personally inviting others to join with you.⁵²

Lois Romano in a June 2003 *Washington Post* article commented on Dean’s grassroots Internet success:

His rivals grudgingly concede that Dean, 54, has clearly tapped into something. He is attracting the largest crowds of the nine Democratic contenders -- which his staff attributes almost entirely to his campaign’s Internet reach. His supporters arguably are the most intense for this early in the process, tens of thousands of them self-organizing in about 300 cities once a month through their online contact, a Web site called Meetup.com.⁵³

⁵⁰ Cone, *Baseline* <http://www.baselinemag.com/article2/0.3959.1386051.00.asp>.

⁵¹ Stephanie Schorow, “Net Life; Dean, Clark Elect to Use Internet as Campaign Tool,” *The Boston Herald* 24 September 2003: 52.

⁵² Mark Sundeen, “More Than 500,000 Americans for Dean!” *Dean Blog for America* 15 November 2003: <http://blog.deanforamerica.com/archives/002270.html>.

⁵³ Lois Romano, “Internet Becoming Candidates’ Domain; Dean Leads Democrats in Using Web,” *The Washington Post* 29 June 2003: A4.

Trippi promoted the campaign's utilization of Internet strategies to organize: "We have the largest grassroots organization in America right now, and we are going to try to utilize it. If television took the grassroots out of politics, the Internet will put it back in."⁵⁴

On December 9, 2003, Gore endorsed Dean and in his endorsement speech for Dean, Gore noted how impressed he was of Dean's grassroots mobilization effort stating, "...Dean really is the only candidate who has been able to inspire at the grassroots level all over this country the kind of passion and enthusiasm for democracy and change and transformation of America that we need in this country."⁵⁵

Kenneth S. Baer, author of *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton*, said the Dean campaign is "running the most radical campaign in a generation," and that they're "reinventing how campaigns are run, rejecting a decade-long trend toward near-Orwellian campaign centralization (which has reached its apotheosis in the Bush administration) and trading that control for a more energized group of supporters." Baer asserted that:

While thousands of supporters of campaigns from Clinton '92 to Bush '04 had the heady feeling of being part of something larger than themselves, the Dean operation has offered them more. It has been able to use the Internet to enable its supporters to take an active role in the campaign - a luxury once reserved at this stage to voters only in Iowa and New Hampshire and political junkies willing to move there.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Romano, *The Washington Post* A4.

⁵⁵ "Al Gore Endorses Dean for President," *Dean Press Release* 9 December 2003: <http://www.deanforamerica.com/>.

⁵⁶ Kenneth S. Baer, Editorial, "Dean Campaign Empowers His Supporters Via Internet," *The Baltimore Sun* 9 November 2003: <http://www.sunspot.net/news/opinion/oped/bal-pe.dean09nov09,1.7072358.story>.

The “Draft Clark” Internet movement (see page 8) is another example of using the Internet to create a grassroots movement, in this case one that encouraged Clark to enter the race. Phil Noble, a political technology consultant, said the movement to draft Clark, combined with the Internet-based momentum of the Dean candidacy, has redefined political campaigning: “The Internet is increasingly becoming the place where politics happens in America. Wesley Clark was at least partially persuaded to run because of the response generated online in a remarkably short period of time.”⁵⁷

However, when the Clark campaign officially started, there were concerns that the campaign’s Internet grassroots movement was not a key element of the new official campaign. In October 2003, Donnie Fowler, Clark’s campaign manager, resigned just weeks after he was hired, complaining that the views of Internet-based supporters were not being taken seriously by top staff members and consultants.⁵⁸

Internet Creativity

Campaigns have made their websites interactive to mobilize and attract supporters. While this is not new strategy, websites are more popular and imaginative than in past elections. Many campaign websites have developed online activist kits that assist supporters how to get involved in campaigns and are promote their Meetup networks, volunteer sign up forms, and upcoming events to encourage more supporters to get involved in their campaigns.

⁵⁷ Ratan, *Wired News* <http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,60470,00.html>.

⁵⁸ “Wesley Clark’s Campaign Manager Quits,” [cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/10/07/elec04.prez.clark.manager.ap) 7 October 2003; <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/10/07/elec04.prez.clark.manager.ap>.

Dean created an online “Grassroots Organizing School,” that helps supporters learn the “nuts and bolts of grassroots campaigning.” The site also created “Get Local!” (<http://action.deanforamerica.com/meet/>) as a way for supporters to find Dean events in their area and to plan their own Dean event.

The Kerry campaign set up weekly live chats. Dick Gephardt created a “Virtual Kitchen Table,” that asks individuals to share their stories with the campaign. Bush has an Action Center to get supporters involved in his campaign.

Clark created “Clark Corps,” a volunteer group that spreads the campaign’s message. Clark Corps encourages participants to organize debate-watching parties, host fundraisers, staff tables at local events, and go door-to-door with information about Clark.⁵⁹ For Halloween, the Clark website offered instructions on how to create a “Clark-o-lantern,” which included printable templates. Additionally, the Clark website encouraged supporters to host a “Clarktober Fest,” with the message: “Give your guests a treat after three years of being tricked by the spooky Bush administration.”⁶⁰

John Edwards’ website has “The Rockin’ Robbins Corps,” named for his North Carolina hometown. Through the campaign’s website, the corps is encouraged to download an “action packet”, which lists ten things individuals can do to support the Edwards campaign,- However, the website does not ask individuals to actually sign up to be part of this group.⁶¹

⁵⁹“Join the Clark Corps!” General Wesley Clark for President Website 27 October 2003: <http://volunteer.clark04.com/>.

⁶⁰ “Clarktoberfest,” General Wesley Clark for President Website 27 October 2003: <http://clark04.com/halloween>.

⁶¹ “Volunteer Central,” John Edwards for President Website 27 October 2003: <http://www.johnedwards2004.com/volunteer.asp>.

The Lieberman campaign website asks supporters to create a profile to log on to and customize areas of the website. Users are able to filter content and view only material they are interested in. Users create a log in name and password and fill-in required information about themselves, including their mailing address and e-mail address. They are also asked optional informational including employer, phone number, and if they would like to receive snail mail.

Meetup.com

Meetup.com, a social software tool, was created in 2002 as an Internet service to assist face-to-face gatherings across the world for individuals of similar interest such as Harry Potter fans, science fiction enthusiasts, and even owners of English Bulldogs. The mission of Meetup was to change the stereotype that the Internet was an impersonal tool by creating an online and offline community. Meetup describes itself as “an advanced technology platform and global network of local venues that helps people self-organize local group gatherings on the same day everywhere.” By December 2003, Meetups were taking place in up to 604 cities in 45 countries and had more than 867,990 members signed up to meet once a month on 2,630 different topics.⁶²

Users of the service find other like-minded individuals by entering their zip codes and voting for local venues to meet. The service is “non-partisan, non-denominational, and enables all topics as our resources allow (with few exceptions for hate and adult-related topics).”⁶³ Meetup is a free service, but users can pay for “plus” services. Meetup.com’s business model earns fees from the

⁶² “Meetup Organizes Local Interest Groups,” Meetup.com 4 December 2003: <http://www.meetup.com>.

⁶³ “About Meetup,” Meetup.com 26 October 2003 <http://www.meetup.com/about>.

organizations, individuals, and restaurants and bars that pay to be listed as Meetup gathering places.⁶⁴

This tool has unintentionally become one of the most significant innovations in political technology, as this type of organizing is ideal for political candidates. In less than a year, more than 200,000 individuals have joined a Meetup network in support of a Democratic presidential candidate. As expected, the Dean Meetup group is the most popular one.⁶⁵

“Meetups are the latest and greatest hope for the Internet, drawing citizens into democracy,” said Bruce Bimber, a professor of communications and politics at the University of California at Santa Barbara. “But we won’t really know for some years whether it’s going to stimulate involvement in a new way.”⁶⁶

Meetup CEO and co-founder Scott Heiferman, who describes himself as a long-time computer geek, conceived the idea for the web service after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, made him question the importance of community socialization. Heiferman was influenced by Robert Putnam’s book *Bowling Alone*, which talked about the collapse of the nation’s sense of community, gathering, and socialization. Ironically, Heiferman said that he never really cared about politics and never envisioned Meetup would become such an important political technology tool.⁶⁷

For candidates, Meetup gives their campaigns the opportunity to have an informational meeting that brings undecided voters and dedicated supporters

⁶⁴ Meetup.com <http://www.meetup.com/about>.

⁶⁵ Meetup.com <http://www.meetup.com/about>.

⁶⁶ Alaina Sue Potrikus, “Website Engaging Lots of People in Politics,” *The Miami Herald* 14 October 2003: <http://www.miami.com/>.

⁶⁷ Christopher Lydon, interview with Scott Heiferman, 21 October 2003: <http://media.skybuilders.com/lydon/heiferman.mp3>.

together on a local level. On the Meetup site, supporters of a campaign can register on a mini-message board, view photos of past Meetup events, and view the agenda for upcoming meetings.

“What eBay did to online auctions, Meetup.com has done with linking activists together,” said John Green, a professor of political science at the University of Akron. “There are plenty of candidates who have 80,000 to 100,000 supporters, but it took them years to build them up.”⁶⁸

The Dean campaign and its supporters started the Meetup frenzy. Dean was the first presidential contender to embrace Meetup, and now thousands of supporters gather at Dean Meetups each month. Dean has successfully used Meetup, and in less than six month period he has tripled the amount of individuals in his Meetup network.⁶⁹ The campaign considers the Meetup network “the backbone of their surprising early success”.⁷⁰

Dean supporters independently formed a Dean Meetup group in January 2003. The next month, when the Dean campaign saw the amount of individuals rapidly joining the Meetup group, the campaign endorsed the idea and formed a formal association with Meetup. They payed the company an undisclosed amount a month for additional services including cross-links to Dean’s campaign site and the ability to offer Dean fliers and resources for downloading.⁷¹

Dean campaign spokesman Garrett Graff said Meetup recreates “how campaigns used to be run. They were run on the local level, organized by people.

⁶⁸ David Goldstein, “Web Site Proves Powerful Avenue for Political Campaigning,” The Kansas City Star 15 August 2003: A1.

⁶⁹ In June 2003, Dean had more than 41,000 in his network while in October 2003, his network had grown to more than 123,000.

⁷⁰ Douglas Kiker, “Howard Dean’s Internet Love-In,” CBSNews.com 4 June 2003: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/06/04/politics/main557004.shtml>.

⁷¹ Romano, The Washington Post A4.

These are people who are winning the campaign at the kitchen table, over their neighbor's fence and at the general store."⁷²

Before each Meetup, the Dean campaign gives local coordinators a meeting kit with recommended topics and activities and provides an Internet downloadable streaming video message from Dean to play at the meeting. The campaign also holds monthly conference calls with large groups of Meetup organizers before the scheduled Meetup.⁷³ "The largest component spreading the word – both in money and organization – are the Meetup folks," said Trippi. "Meetup has been incredible. Just incredible."⁷⁴

The Dean campaign used Meetup to assemble a large grassroots effort: "In this new calendar, where that whole first 15-state process happens in a matter of weeks, we couldn't do it without the Internet and without something like Meetup," Trippi said. "It would cost millions of dollars in campaign field staff to do what you need to do this time. In the past, you moved key staff like chess pieces, but that cannot happen this time. There's not enough time or money."⁷⁵

Five of the nine democratic presidential candidates—Clark, Dean, Kerry, Kucinich, and Moseley Braun—encourage individuals to join their Meetup network on their websites and several have a formal and paid relationship with Meetup. While the other four Democratic candidates and President Bush are not officially promoting Meetup, their grassroots supporters have started groups.

Several candidates promote their Meetup on their websites, blogs, and in e-mails to supporters. Dean frequently updated an image on his website noting how

⁷² Andrew S. Hughes, "Grassroots campaign; Dean's 'Meetups' Entice Supporters, Undecided Voters into Election Process," *South Bend Tribune* 28 September 2003: F1.

⁷³ Hughes, *South Bend Tribune*. F1.

⁷⁴ Kiker, *CBSNews.com* <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/06/04/politics/main557004.shtml>.

⁷⁵ Kiker, *CBSNews.com* <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/06/04/politics/main557004.shtml>.

many people signed-up to be a part of his Meetup group. Kerry publicized upcoming Meetups using his blog, such as this October 2003 post:

Tonight's the night! People have been emailing me with their plans and suggestions for tonight's MeetUp and you can really feel the excitement. Let's make this one the largest MeetUp yet! Build the future by building John's campaign. Your challenge is to walk one person through the registration process on Kerry2004.meetup.com TODAY.⁷⁶

While the Dean campaign has had great success using Meetup—more than 151,700 individuals joined his network—other candidates have also been successful. Clark has a network of 48,900, while Dennis Kucinich has almost 20,600.⁷⁷ Other candidates have had a difficult time recruiting supporters. Trying to follow Dean's lead, the Kerry campaign entered into a partnership with Meetup in June 2003. But Kerry has not been able to emulate Dean's success, and only has 17,200 members in his network.⁷⁸ The Kerry campaign received substantial media attention after canceling a September 2003 New Hampshire Meetup due to lack of support. If fewer than five people have signed up for an event, Meetup's policy is to cancel the event 24 hours before the arranged time; this prevents some candidates from holding Meetups in key locations.

The New Hampshire cancellation was part of a dismal showing by Kerry supporters at Meetups around the country. In July 2003, nearly 500 Meetup events were planned; 352 were cancelled, while the 125 events that did happen only attracted 3,000 supporters. In August, 2,100 supporters attended 114 events, while 300 were canceled. And in September, less than 1,500 attended 89 events, with

⁷⁶ ErinH, "Kerry2004 MeetUp Tonight @ 7pm," [John Kerry Blog](http://blog.johnkerry.com/blog/archives/000529.html) 23 October 2003: <http://blog.johnkerry.com/blog/archives/000529.html> - 000529.

⁷⁷ [Meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) <http://www.meetup.com/about>.

⁷⁸ "Top Topics in Politics & Activism," [meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) 5 December 2003 <http://www.meetup.com/browse/polact>.

481 events canceled. Dean's Meetups, in contrast, shows an opposite trend: In July, nearly 25,000 people attended 315 events, with 213 canceled; In August, 33,000 attended 384 events, with 222 canceled; And in September, more than 40,000 attended 664 events, with 205 canceled.⁷⁹ As one editorial comparing Kerry's Meetup problems to Dean's success noted, "stealing the idea doesn't exactly translate into stealing the success."⁸⁰

Other Democratic candidates have had trouble assembling a nationwide Meetup network: Al Sharpton's network has only 100 individuals, Joe Lieberman's 400, and Dick Gephardt's 500, but these candidates are not officially pushing Meetups.⁸¹

Friendster

Friendster is "an online social networking community that connects people through networks of friends for dating or making new friends."⁸² Friendster is currently on a beta trial and is free service. After the beta trial is complete, basic membership will continue to be free, but some additional features will require a subscription.⁸³

While Friendster was never intended to serve as a political technology tool, it has become an element of Internet campaigns. Friendster became a grassroots tool by users who established profiles for their favorite Democratic presidential candidates solicited their friends and other campaign supporters to join a

⁷⁹Dana Milbank, "Lost in Cyberspace: Playing Catch-Up @ Meetup," The Washington Post 28 September 2003: A05.

⁸⁰"Pols & Politics," The Boston Herald 28 September 2003: 21.

⁸¹[meetup.com http://www.meetup.com/browse/polact](http://www.meetup.com/browse/polact).

⁸²"What Is Friendster?" Friendster 15 October 2003 <http://www.friendster.com/info/moreinfo.jsp>.

⁸³"Friendster <http://www.friendster.com/info/moreinfo.jsp>.

network.⁸⁴ Unlike Meetup, the campaigns can not set up a formal relationship with Friendster; thus, there is no money to use the service as a grassroots support tool. Additionally, since friends are linked to other friends, some people connected to a candidate may not even be a supporter of that candidate, but a friend of a friend who is. And because Friendster was designed principally for dating instead of political activism, it is not the most user-friendly way to organize.

Edwards' campaign promotes Friendster on its blog and notes that Edwards' profile is connected to more than 300,000 people.⁸⁵ But one comment on the Edwards blog about Friendster noted, "This seems geared towards dating - nothing like say Meetup."

Campaign-Created Tools

The Dean campaign took the Friendster concept a step further by creating its own social software system in late August 2003 called Deanlink (<http://deanlink.deanforamerica.com>). The service calls itself a "people-powered network". It helps Dean supporters find other Dean supporters and assists volunteers in organizing at the local level.

Deanlink was immediately successful, attracting more than 10,000 supporters in a two-week period.⁸⁶ Deanlink works similar to Friendster, as users link to one another and find other Dean supporters in a similar location. The network has 26,557 members⁸⁷. By creating this electronic system, the campaign requires less involvement in local organizing. If Dean supporters want to hold up

⁸⁴Michael E. Grass, "For '04 Contenders, a New 'Friendster' Factor," Roll Call 29 September 2003: 3.

⁸⁵Chris Winn, "Edwards Supporters Using Friendster!" Edwards for President Blog 21 October 2003: <http://blog.johnewards2004.com/article.pl?newsid=&sid=03/10/21/2216257&mode=nested&commentsort=1>.

⁸⁶Romano, The Washington Post A4.

⁸⁷As of December 5, 2003

signs and wear T-shirts as a group at a street festival, they can simply organize through Deanlink.

The concept for Deanlink actually came from a Dean Meetup event when technology-savvy Dean supporters in a New York City group proposed Deanlink as an ideal way to create an online volunteer network and database.⁸⁸ Thus, the use of personal community meetings led to even more ideasharing and campaign creativity.

In a posting to Dean's blog, Zephyr Teachout, the campaign's head of Internet outreach, discussed Deanlink's advantages:

The Dean campaign is about breaking down barriers and bringing people together in a new American community -- and engaging Americans again in the political process. Deanlink allows you to find other Dean supporters in your area to set up Get Local events and invite to your Dean Get Local events. It also allows you to reach out to other Dean supporters with similar political interests and work together on organizing around those interests. Even though we're still in testing, we've heard three stories already of people finding other supporters through Deanlink to help organize Get Local events.⁸⁹

Teachout favorably compared Deanlink to Friendster, arguing, "social software is far better for organizing than it is for dating."⁹⁰

Clark created the Clark Community Network (see page 14), which is a blog and a community organizing tool, where supporters can have their own blog. The Clark campaign placed their blog and grassroots network and tools in one user-friendly area. Cameron Barrett, director of the Network, criticized Dean's Internet community building strategies, noting, "The Dean campaign has a lot of

⁸⁸ Weiss, The Boston Globe A1.

⁸⁹ Zephyr Teachout, "Deanlink," Dean Blog for America 1 September 2003: <http://blog.deanforamerica.com/archives/001317.html>.

⁹⁰ Felix Schein, "Behind Dean's Win on the Web," MSNBC.com 21 October 2003: <http://www.msnbc.com/news/981643.asp>.

momentum and they're utilizing it well, but they are missing the key aspect of online community, which is a sense of ownership to a group or affiliation -- geographic or special-interest -- providing a little bit of ownership of the campaign to every person who wants it, and providing a robust set of communities online that allow people to talk and plan events and do grassroots campaigning."⁹¹

Volunteer-Created Tools

DeanSpace (www.deanspace.org) is an all-volunteer development community, created to assist the development web-tools, technology support, and expert advice to Dean's grassroots supporters. It is not an official site of the Dean campaign and notes that it is "not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee," but the Dean campaign promotes DeanSpace and links to it from its website and blog.

DeanSpace links the numerous independent Dean websites together in one place on the Internet. DeanSpace permits the campaign and volunteers to monitor grassroots sites and blogs, essentially functioning as an internal polling unit that distributes ideas and tests policy proposals.⁹² DeanSpace is another tool designed by Dean volunteers. University of Illinois student Zack Rosen, a Dean volunteer, created the original model for DeanSpace and now serves on the Dean campaign staff.⁹³

The blog and community network system operates on Drupal, an open source content management system. This platform offers Dean supporters an easy way to crosslink their sites. The system operates on Really Simple Syndication

⁹¹ Ulbrich, Wired News http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,61142,00.html?tw=wn_tophead_4.

⁹² Schein, MSNBC.com <http://www.msnbc.com/news/981643.asp>.

⁹³ Cone, Baseline <http://www.baselinemag.com/article2/0.3959,1386051,00.asp>.

(RSS), a web syndication protocol that allows DeanSpace bloggers to subscribe to other blogs and read them as a news feed, without the need to check the corresponding blogs.⁹⁴

The site describes itself as a place to develop new Internet technologies for the campaign: “Dean’s online grassroots campaigners are more savvy, nimble and numerous than those of any other candidate - our wired ranks now number in the hundreds of thousands and continue to grow. We want to keep that growth accelerating and allow the energy generated online to erupt into real-world campaigning.”⁹⁵ DeanSpace allows “a multitude of web sites to share content easily and automatically, to foster community through grassroots participation and to expand online campaigning. A system that allows us to bring the monthly Meetup into our daily lives.”⁹⁶

The Dean campaign and DeanSpace have developed “Web Community Kits” (<http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/PageServer?pagename=WebCommunityKits>), based off DeanSpace’s open source software for grassroots supporters to use in community building. These kits provide their members with powerful web tools for organizing their “People-Powered-Howard” campaigns. The graphics for these sites were created by the Dean gSquad, another volunteer group.

These kits are used to organize grassroots campaigners for outreach and action and create engaging and interactive public websites. They also provide users with completely customizable websites that feature searchable forums, blogs,

⁹⁴ Cone, Baseline <http://www.baselinemag.com/article2/0,3959,1386051,00.asp>.

⁹⁵ “Introducing DeanSpace,” DeanSpace 30 October 2003: <http://deanspace.org/node/view/4>.

⁹⁶ DeanSpace <http://deanspace.org/node/view/4>.

picture galleries, and an event calendars. Many grassroots Dean websites, including the Upper Valley for Dean (<http://uppervalleyfordean.com/drupal/>) and Seniors for Dean (<http://www.seniors4dean.com/>) and Connecticut for Dean (<http://www.ctfordean.com/>) are using these kits.⁹⁷

E-mail

E-mail is very popular in political campaigns. In this new age of communication technology, e-mail offers campaigns a low cost way to communicate with individuals, groups, and supporters. While e-mail is not particularly new, it is being used more often as campaigns concentrate on sending messages to as many individuals as possible. During the 2002 election cycle, two-thirds of politically engaged Internet users sent or received e-mail related to political campaigns.⁹⁸

E-mail is called the “killer-application” in the digital age of politics. Candidates can use e-mail to inform supporters about upcoming events, solicit donations, organizing volunteers, publicize recent press releases, and mobilize their get-out-the-vote effort.⁹⁹

Of the nine Democratic candidates, all invite individuals to join e-mail lists on their websites. The Bush campaign is additionally utilizing e-mail. Users can easily join these lists through the main page of a campaign website. Some campaigns simply ask for an e-mail address to receive updates, while other candidates ask for additional information to allow for customized messages. Edwards, Gephardt,

⁹⁷ “How to get started with your Dean Community Site,” *Dean for America* 4 December 2003: <http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/PageServer?pagename=WebCommunityKits>.

⁹⁸ Michael Cornfield, Lee Rainie, and John B. Horrigan, http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/pdfs/PIP_IPDI_Politics_Report.pdf.

⁹⁹ Michael Cornfield and Jonah Seiger, http://www.ipdi.org/net_nomination.pdf.

Dean, Kerry, and Kuchich ask users for a zip code to sign up for e-mails.

Campaigns also encourage supporters to forward campaign e-mails to get friends and family to join the list, hoping they will become supporters as well.

Campaigns maintain multiple e-mail lists that target an individual's interests and location. Gephardt, for example, has an additional e-mail list service for his "hard core" activists that want to stay "in the know" and receive real-time "Instant Updates." The Bush campaign has a similar e-mail service.

Lee Rainie, director of the Pew Internet & American Life Project, described the use of the Internet and e-mail in campaigning in 2003:

Email and the Web are tailor made for political communication and voter mobilization, so it's safe to say that every trend we've seen since 1996 will grow dramatically during the 2004 presidential election. In the next campaign, more people will use the Internet to get political information. Billions more emails will fly back and forth.

On Clark's website, users can visit the "Tell Your Friends" page on the site to send e-mails to friends and family encouraging them to learn more about Clark, volunteer, attend events, or make a donation to the campaign. Dean, Bush, and Gephardt have similar pages on their websites.

On the Dean's website in November 2003, it stated on the front page, "At the end of January, 537 Americans had joined our campaign online. Now we are more than 500,000 strong, and growing every day. How many more Americans can you bring to the greatest grassroots campaign of the modern era?" and linked

¹⁰⁰ "Email is a Main Channel for Politics," Pew Internet and American Life Press Release 20 March 2003: <http://www.pewinternet.org/releases>.

to “Invite 5 friends to join our campaign,” which directed supporters to a form to e-mail friends about the Dean campaign.

While Dean’s support list is impressive, the Bush campaign boasts an e-mail list of more than 6 million individuals, which has been assembled over the last four years.¹⁰¹ Several presidential campaigns have volunteer forms on their websites that ask for addresses, e-mail, and interests that are compiled into a database. This allows campaigns to create custom messages based on a volunteer’s location and interests.

Discussion Forums

Candidates are also using discussion forums as another community-building tool. Of the nine Democratic presidential candidates, three of them utilize discussion forums.¹⁰² Bush does not use forums on his site. While these interactive forums are not new for 2004, they are being used in campaigns to manage volunteers and expand campaign dialog.

The Dean (<http://forums.deanforamerica.com/>) and Kerry (<http://forum.johnkerry.com//index.php?act=idx>) campaigns have created discussion forums in addition to their blogs. The Kucinich campaign does not utilize an official blog, but links to a discussion forum for volunteers (<http://us.denniskucinich.us/phpBB2>) from the official campaign site. The discussion forum is not managed by the campaign; instead, the Kucinich Blog & News site maintains it. It is interesting that the Kucinich campaign feels

¹⁰¹ Dan Balz and Mike Allen, “Election Is Now for Bush Campaign,” The Washington Post 30 November 2003: A01.

¹⁰² See chart 2

comfortable enough to link to a discussion forum but not to the Kucinich Blog & News site.

In the welcoming message on Dean's Forums for America, Trippi noted the importance of forums in campaign communications:

Welcome to Forums for America. You're building the largest grassroots campaign in American history, and these forums are designed to help you do it. Each one focuses on some aspect of your grassroots work – Get Local events, Meetups, House Parties, Team Leader fundraising efforts, and Generation Dean activity.

These forums have the potential to dramatically increase the effectiveness of your work. You can help other organizers by talking about what works and what doesn't. You can report back after your events. This site is the place for you to talk about your experiences on the ground building this campaign.

Your real impact on this race is greater than the sum of all the individual activities taking place across the country. You are changing politics by shifting power from backrooms and boardrooms to living rooms and communities. By sharing your knowledge and developing your methods you will become an even more powerful force. These forums are yours. Use them for information, use them for inspiration, and put the power of the grassroots to work.¹⁰³

Mobile Communication

Another innovative tool used by the Dean Campaign is Dean Wireless (<http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/PageServer?pagename=Wireless>). Dean Wireless allows local wireless communities to communicate with supporters about events, news, and information, and change meeting details at the last minute. The Dean campaign uses the mobile service tool Upoc to create its mobile network. Upoc lets users send text messages to mobile friends and even start mobile groups.

¹⁰³ Joe Trippi, "Forums for America Welcome Message," [Forums for America](http://www.forumforamerica.com/index.php?s=246fe64d8e325b47c175bc74b29b4f1f&showtopic=29) 24 September 2003: <http://www.forumforamerica.com/index.php?s=246fe64d8e325b47c175bc74b29b4f1f&showtopic=29>

The Dean campaign's website promotes the benefits of its wireless service, noting, "Text-messaging through Dean Wireless is a great way to keep in touch with the campaign and to communicate with other Dean Supporters in your area." The campaign has national general and student groups, as well as specific regional and interest-based ones. The site also encourages individuals to create a new group based on their interests.¹⁰⁴

Grassroots Listservs

Yahoo Groups is another popular way to create an online network. Yahoo Groups allows an online community to share photographs and files, plan group events, and create a calendar of events. The site calls itself "the easiest way for groups of people to communicate on the Internet."¹⁰⁵ Because Yahoo Groups is free and enables easy management of listservs and websites, many local groups use this service and campaigns link to Yahoo Groups to list local or specialized support networks.

Teachout praised the use of listservs and Yahoo Groups in the Dean campaign, defining these types of services as the "Internet" and noted, "There's the Internet, and there's the Web. The Internet is far more important than the Web. Geeks don't like them, but grandmas do. They're essential."¹⁰⁶

IV. Internet Fundraising- Reinventing How Campaigns Can Raise Money

Fundraising is a key element of campaigning. Candidates need money to run their campaigns and to advertise. Fundraising is considered "the first primary,"

¹⁰⁴ "Join Dean Wireless," *Dean for America* 27 October 2003:

<http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/PageServer?pagename=Wireless>.

¹⁰⁵ "What Is a Group," *Yahoo! Groups* 1 November 2003: <http://groups.yahoo.com>.

¹⁰⁶ Cone, *Baseline* <http://www.baselinemag.com/article2/0,3959,1386051,00.asp>.

where candidates can be helped or hurt even before any of the official primaries or straw polls take place.¹⁰⁷ In presidential primaries, nine of the past 10 major party nominations have gone to the candidate who raised the most money in the year before the election.¹⁰⁸

In the last decade, online fundraising has become increasingly popular among candidates. In 1996, Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole made history by mentioning his Internet site during a presidential debate. But when Dole said the address, he failed to say it correctly, omitting one of the dots. Even with that mistake, thousands of supporters went to his website overnight to contribute \$200,000.¹⁰⁹ In 1998, Ventura raised \$500,000 online for his gubernatorial election in Minnesota. In the 2000 Democratic presidential primary, Bill Bradley became the first candidate to raise \$1 million in cyberspace.¹¹⁰ That year, Republican presidential candidate McCain collected more than \$10 million online, including more than \$5 million in the weeks after his victory in the New Hampshire primary.¹¹¹ An estimated \$50 million was raised over the Internet in the 2000 election cycle, which is a relatively small amount considering \$3 billion was raised in total.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Thomas B. Edsall, "Bankrolling a New Path to the Primary," The Washington Post 10 November 2003: A04.

¹⁰⁸ Liz Marlantes, "Dean Sets a Record Pace for Cash," The Christian Science Monitor 2 October 2003: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/1002/p01s01-uspo.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Jeanne Cummings, "Behind Dean Surge: A Gang of Bloggers and Webmasters," The Wall Street Journal 14 October 2003: A1.

¹¹⁰ Karen Macpherson, "Need Another Political Fix? Try the Web," Pittsburgh Post-Gazette 3 October 2000: A1.

¹¹¹ Robert Gutsche Jr., "Dean's Cyber Campaign Clicks Web Nets Candidate Supporters, Cash," Newsday 6 October 2003: A13.

¹¹² Michael W. Lynch, "E-lection WRAP-UP," The Chief Executive January 2001: http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m4070/2001_Jan/70659358/p1/article.jhtml.

Internet fundraising displays many advantages over traditional fundraising because it has a farther reach than any other fundraising method. Unlike direct mail, (the traditional method for reaching smaller donors) Internet fundraising attracts people who are campaign volunteers, avid readers of campaign blogs, subscribers to campaign e-mail update lists, or just individuals who decided to check out a campaign's website and make a donation while surfing the Internet.¹¹³ Supporters can quickly donate online with little effort. Individuals are now more comfortable using credit cards over the Internet and less skeptical of submitting personal information online.

Internet fundraising is more efficient than conventional fundraising. For example, banquet events—factoring in expenses such as food, promotion, event planning time, and a venue—can raise less than 30 cents for each dollar donated. Even direct mail only nets 75 cents on the dollar. But Internet fundraising can yield more than 95 cents on the dollar.¹¹⁴ Additionally, online donations do not require as much of the candidate and campaign staff's time, allowing them to focus on other areas of campaigning. Online donations also provide instantaneous use of funds. Credit card processing over the Internet allows candidates to have funds deposited quickly into their bank accounts without the processing time required for checks.

But not every campaign has realized the benefits of Internet fundraising. In 2001 Cornfield noted that “[p]oliticians had not yet figured out [that] in order to get more money online, they need to ask for it ... [but] they're starting to catch on. It's

¹¹³ Peter S. Canellos, “Dean’s Internet Haul Required Less Effort,” The Boston Globe 2 September 2003: http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/09/02/deans_internet_haul_required_less_effort?mode=PF.

¹¹⁴ Cummings, The Wall Street Journal A1.

going to take a few more Venturas and McCains ... before more of them figure this out.”¹¹⁵

With previous candidates’ successes in online fundraising, a larger investment has been made by 2004 Democratic and Republican presidential candidates in website development. Campaign websites now not only inform citizens and create grassroots networks, they also raise substantial revenue for the campaign. Candace Nelson, a professor at American University and an expert on campaign finance issues, explained that the use of Internet campaign fundraising has already transformed presidential elections: “With every election, we are seeing the Internet more accepted as a fund-raising and organizing tool.”¹¹⁶

New Fundraising Strategies

In 2003, Dean maximized his online fundraising strategies with much success. In the third quarter of 2003, Dean raised nearly \$15 million — more than any Democratic presidential candidate ever has in a single quarter. Close to 50 percent of Dean’s donations came through the Internet as did the previous quarter when he raised \$7.6 million.¹¹⁷ In the third quarter the campaign received 110,786 online contributions from 84,713 supporters, with the average amount of \$61.14.¹¹⁸ By comparison, the Bush campaign raised \$50 million in the third quarter with about \$1.5 million coming from Internet donations — just three percent of his total.

¹¹⁵ “CAMPAIGNS: Campaign Experts See Slow Online Learning Curve,” National Journal’s Technology Daily 16 November 2001: <http://www.lexis.com/>.

¹¹⁶ Barton, Paul. “Net Donors Keep Clark in the Pink Online Donations Called Substantial,” The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette 3, November 2003: 1.

¹¹⁷ Bolton, The Hill <http://www.hillnews.com/news/100803/growthpains.aspx>.

¹¹⁸ “Howard Dean Uses Convio to Raise \$7.4 Million Online in Third Quarter, \$11 Million Via Internet Since April 2003,” Convio Press Release, 16 October 2003: http://www.convio.com/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=2600703&news_iv_ctrl=1164.

“The Dean campaign captured the nation’s attention at the end of Q2 [second quarter] by announcing it had raised a very impressive \$3.6 million online in only 90 days,” said Gene Austin, CEO of Convio, the technology company the Dean campaign uses for Internet services and online credit card processing. “By raising \$7.4 million online in the third quarter, the organization has demonstrated that it’s possible to not just sustain but significantly surpass this level of constituent support and participation over the Internet. Any group that wants to optimize its fundraising, marketing and constituent communications should be watching what Dean for America is doing online.”¹¹⁹

Farhad Manjoo noted in Salon.com of Dean’s unexpected rise to fundraising leader with the use of the Internet that:

In June, when Howard Dean surprised commentators by beating his opponents in the second-quarter fundraising race, it became clear he was using the Internet like no other presidential candidate in history. By building connections with the Web’s leading bloggers, the campaign created an online movement around Dean’s bid -- and it ushered the movement to get cash, mainstream media attention, and dominance in the polls.¹²⁰

Trippi described the Dean fundraising strategy, as a way to compete against Bush’s fundraising success:

How do you compete with George W. Bush’s \$200 million? We sat in the conference room in January saying to ourselves, ‘Well, we aren’t going to get \$2,000 checks from fat cats. It isn’t coming from Enron.’ Then came the total eureka moment. We realized in this modern world there was only one way that 2 million Americans would give Howard Dean \$100, and that was the Internet.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ “Convio Press Release

http://www.convio.com/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=2600703&news_iv_ctrl=1164.

¹²⁰ Farhad Manjoo, “Dean’s Army Goes Offline,” [Salon.com](http://www.salon.com) 9 September 2003: <http://www.salon.com>.

¹²¹ Mike Williams, “Internet Wiz Boosts Dean” [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](http://www.ajc.com/news/content/news/1203/07dean.html) 7 December 2003: <http://www.ajc.com/news/content/news/1203/07dean.html>.

The Dean campaign's innovative Internet strategies reinvented campaign fundraising. Nicco Mele, Dean's webmaster noted, "People feel very invested in the campaign, they know all the staffers names and they follow the campaign on the blog. Supporters feel they are on the inside of the campaign. ... When you feel you really are a part of it, then of course you're going to give money."¹²²

David Von Drehle and Brian Faler of *The Washington Post* reported in July 2003 that Dean's Internet fundraising success "stunned his Democratic rivals." The newspaper quoted an unnamed adviser to another Democratic candidate saying: "Ever since 1996, people have been talking about the potential of the Internet to organize and raise money, but no one figured out how to do it. Not even Al Gore. The thing about Dean is, not only is he using it, he is building an organization through it and he is raising money through that organization."¹²³

Glen Justice of *The New York Times*, in a November 2003 article, described the Dean fundraising phenomenon by stating:

Dr. Dean used the Internet to build a base of small donors and fundraisers, a strategy that transformed a former governor from the 49th-largest state with no national fund-raising network into the best-financed Democrat in the presidential campaign. It has also recast the way many in Washington think about how money is raised. In a world in which the highest-spending candidate wins at least three quarters of the time, the curiosity among politicians and big contributors is understandable.¹²⁴

¹²² Klaus Marre, "DNC Goal: A Lock on Internet Fundraising," *The Hill* 28 October 2003: <http://www.thehill.com/news/102803/dnc.aspx>.

¹²³ David Von Drehle and Brian Faler, "Online Fundraising Boosts Dean Effort; 2nd-Quarter Total Tops Democrats," *The Washington Post* 1 July 2003: A01.

¹²⁴ Justice, *The New York Times* <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/02/weekinreview/02JUST.html?ex=1068354000&en=9b54fd21f77bc684&ei=5062&partner=GOOGLE>.

On November 8, 2003, Dean announced he would not accept public matching funds. The campaign released a “declaration of independence by the people of Dean for America” to defuse criticism that Dean would align himself with special interests.¹²⁵ The declaration, signed by Dean and his supporters, promised to be “free and independent of special interests.” Dean himself said, “Our campaign has not been talk of campaign finance reform, it has been actual reform. Over 200,000 people have given an average of \$77 to bring us here and they have now overwhelmingly refused to be intimidated by George Bush and his cronies.” In three days of releasing the declaration, more than 13,000 Dean supporters had signed on. Dean also asked supporters to continue donating: “We support public financing, but the unabashed actions of this president to thwart our democratic processes with a flood of special interest money have forced us to abandon a broken system.”¹²⁶

Larry Noble, executive director of the Center for Responsive Politics and former general counsel for the Federal Elections Commission (FEC), discussed Dean’s decision on PBS’s *NewsHour*:

[W]e’re seeing with Dean campaign something we haven’t really seen before which is a very much Internet-driven campaign with a lot of small contributors. Now one of the things we’re going to be watching is to see that if this catches on and if Dean really goes out there and raises the \$100 million, whether he’s going to be able to do it all with small contributions, or whether he’s going to have to resort to the bundlers, the people who collect the \$1,000 and \$2,000 contributions, whether he’s going to have to look for bigger money.

¹²⁷

¹²⁵ “Declaration of Independence by the People of Dean for America,” [Dean for America](http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/PageServer?pagename=declaration_text) 8 November 2003: http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/PageServer?pagename=declaration_text.

¹²⁶ [Dean Press Release](http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=10389&news_iv_ctrl=1301) http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=10389&news_iv_ctrl=1301.

¹²⁷ Transcript of Newshour, 10 November 2003: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/july-dec03/dean_11-10.html.

The decision from Dean not accept matching funds was decided by a vote by Dean supporters. The campaign sent more than 600,000 ballots to supporters by e-mail, postal mail, and telephone, allowing them to vote once using a unique code. Of the 104,746 supporters who voted, 85 percent—or 89,533—voted for Dean to forego matching funds. During the two days of voting, Dean supporters pledged or contributed over \$5.3 million, with an average contribution or pledge of \$116.89.¹²⁸

Other Democratic presidential candidates are trying to duplicate Dean's Internet fundraising success. Of the nine Democratic presidential candidates, all of them accept online donations through their website. Additionally, the Bush campaign promotes online donations through its website.

Besides Dean's successful Internet fundraising strategy, the Clark campaign has been extremely successful in using online fundraising methods. In the two weeks after Clark declared his candidacy, his campaign raised \$3.5 million, with two-thirds coming from Internet donations. The campaign said Clark's fundraising success "demonstrated that he can use the Internet to bolster support for his campaign."¹²⁹

Several Democratic presidential candidates allow monthly contributions through their websites to attract small donors.¹³⁰ The Edwards campaign created "Primary Partners," where supporters agree to help with a monthly contribution

¹²⁸ Dean Press Release:

http://www.deanforamerica.com/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=10389&news_iv_ctrl=1301.

¹²⁹ "General Clark Raises Nearly \$3.5 Million in Just Two Weeks," [Clark Press Release](http://www.clark04.com/press/release/021) 15 October 2003: <http://www.clark04.com/press/release/021>.

¹³⁰ Jennifer 8. Lee, "Democrats Find Little Donations Go a Long Way on Internet," [The New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/19/politics/campaigns/19GIVE.html?ex=1067140800&en=9010f705a9830746&ei=5062&partner=GOOGLE) 19 October 2003: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/19/politics/campaigns/19GIVE.html?ex=1067140800&en=9010f705a9830746&ei=5062&partner=GOOGLE>.

that is comfortable for them throughout the primary season. The campaign's website offers several reasons for supporters to schedule monthly online payments, including:

- This will allow the Edwards for President campaign to sustain our critical efforts in the months leading up to the election.
- It gives Edwards for President supporters an opportunity to spread their support over time.
- It allows the campaign to reduce the number of fundraising solicitations you receive, reducing our fundraising costs and putting even more of your contribution to work.¹³¹

While individual candidates have actively pushed Internet fundraising, political parties have also taken notice. The DNC Internet fundraising effort for the third quarter of 2003 showed a 600 percent increase over the same period in 2002. DNC Chairman Terry McAuliffe said, "What we are seeing is virtually revolutionary when it comes to reaching new supporters. Through the Internet, we are communicating on a daily basis with thousands of new people who are responding by donating to the Democratic Party."¹³²

E-mail is also more frequently being used by candidates for fundraising, as campaigns flood their supporter mailboxes with fundraising appeals that link to the donation page on their websites. A November 4, 2003 Lieberman e-mail to supporters proclaims: "Only 84 Days Until New Hampshire- [Click here to make a contribution and help Joe buy TV ad time in New Hampshire.](#)"¹³³ An Edwards e-mail sent on the same day states, "Help John Edwards do what is right for our

¹³¹ "Contribute Monthly," [John Edwards for President Website](https://secure.ga3.org/03/EdwardsForPresident_Monthly) 7 November 2003: https://secure.ga3.org/03/EdwardsForPresident_Monthly.

¹³² "Record Breaking Fundraising Quarter Puts DNC in Position for Victory," [Democratic National Committee Press Release](http://www.democrats.org/news/200310010001.html) 1 October 2003: <http://www.democrats.org/news/200310010001.html>.

¹³³ info@joe2004.com, "Campaign Update: Joe Leading The Pack," [E-mail from Joe Lieberman for President 2004](#) 4 November 2003.

country. [Just \\$50 would go a long way to help John Edwards' campaign.](#) We've already raised more than \$14 million from people just like you. People who believe in a responsible government run for the benefit of all Americans, not just the rich elite. [Help by contributing now!](#)¹³⁴

Internet Challenges

Creativity is a big element of online fundraising. In August 2003, when it became known that Bush was interrupting his summer vacation for a Portland, Oregon fundraising dinner with a goal of raising \$1 million, the Dean campaign created the "Raise a Million against Bush challenge," urging Dean supporters to send their donations as part of a virtual fundraiser to equal the amount Bush was expected to raise. Within a week, Dean collected more than \$1 million from nearly 18,000 Internet donors, averaging a donation of \$50.¹³⁵

After the challenge, a Dean blog posting completed by Teachout declared victory:

You made the million dollar challenge, you got your friends to give, you brought the rallies their power, you are recreating American politics every minute. This week, you proved that the Dean grassroots can win this election and take back the White House.¹³⁶

While traditional fundraising methods, like the ones Bush employs, require planning an extravagant event with the candidate and staff present, the new model used by Dean allows the same amount of money to be raised with little effort.

¹³⁴ E-mail from Jennifer Swanson, Info@JohnEdwards2004.com, "Outrage at Halliburton Contract - Edwards Says No!" [Email from John Edwards for President](#) 4 November 2003.

¹³⁵ Mathew Gross, "Back on the Blog-- You Broke the Bat," [Dean Blog for America](#) 27 August 2003: <http://blog.deanforamerica.com/archives/001260.html>.

¹³⁶ Zephyr Teachout, "You Are Unbelievable!" [Dean Blog for America](#) 26 August 2003: <http://blog.deanforamerica.com/archives/001259.html>.

Peter S. Canellos of *The Boston Globe* gave the following analysis of Dean's use of Internet fundraising:

It's been well reported that Internet fund-raising is one of the most impressive innovations of Dean's Seabiscuit run for the presidency, proof that the former Vermont governor has formidable support. But there's been far less attention to the potential of the Internet itself to provide a cleaner, less time-consuming way for candidates to finance their campaigns.¹³⁷

Campaigns use their websites, blogs, and e-mail lists to create a perpetual pitch for online donations. Campaigns are posting fundraising challenges as a new and easy way to collect funds quickly. Challenges are especially popular at the end of a quarter when fundraising reporters are collected and announced. Before the 2004 Democratic presidential race, campaigns were reluctant to set fundraising goals and update donation totals continuously on their websites and blogs. For example, a posting to Edwards' blog on September 30 noted, "There is only about 12 hours left to contribute to the 'Boot Bush Back' campaign. As of Tuesday morning the game had raised \$522,000. This mark is just shy of the goal of \$595,000. Let's make this goal so that we can send Bush back to Crawford with a huge thud. Please contribute today!!"¹³⁸

On Dean's blog in September, at the end of the third quarter, hourly (and even half-hourly reporters on September 30) posts contained fundraising updates and asked supporters to continue donating, creating a blog fundraising telethon with a \$15 million goal. The same tactic was used in June as the second quarter

¹³⁷ Peter S. Canellos, "Dean's Internet Haul Required Less Effort," *The Boston Globe* 2 September 2003:
http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/09/02/deans_internet_haul_required_less_effort?mode=PF.

¹³⁸ Chris Cooledge, "Boot Bush Back!" *Edward for President Blog* 30 September 2003:
<http://blog.johnewards2004.com/article.pl?newsid=&sid=03/09/30/1739233&mode=nested&commentsort=1>.

came to a close. One report said Dean's fundraising strategies had a "faint resemblance to the woozy end of a Jerry Lewis telethon."¹³⁹

Now challenges are frequent and happen for a variety of reasons. On Halloween, for example, the Clark blog posted a message with this fundraising challenge:

A few people have requested a day-long fundraiser for today since it's payday as well as Halloween. There is no set limit to how much we should raise, but I've gone ahead and set the Clarkometer to \$10,000. The Clarkometer is a dynamic Flash file that gets updated automatically based on the donation tally.¹⁴⁰

With traditional fundraising methods, big contributors receive access to the candidate. In the new Internet model, strategies and gimmicks are created to meet the candidate. The Clark campaign in November 2003 launched the "Clark04 ZIP(code) Drive" challenge. This fundraising challenge was described on Clark's website as follows:

Do you want to meet with Wesley Clark in your community? Get started today by making a contribution to Clark for President! Then, recruit and challenge other supporters in your community to contribute to Clark04.com as well. The ZIP code that generates the largest number of online donors will earn huge bragging rights AND a visit from Wesley Clark during the upcoming primary season!¹⁴¹

The web page for the Zip (code) Drive gives daily updates of which zip codes are in the top ten of online donors. The challenge is three weeks long and counts all donations of more than ten dollars.

¹³⁹ Von Drehle and Faler, The Washington Post A01.

¹⁴⁰ Cameron Barrett, "Blog Fundraiser," Generally Speaking 31 October 2003: <http://blog.clark04.com/archives/000122.html>.

¹⁴¹ "Introducing the Clark04 ZIP(code) Drive!" Wesley Clark for President website <http://donors.clark04.com/zipdrive>.

Symbols are also popular in fundraising challenges. The Kerry campaign brings a hammer down when a goal is reached, while the Dean campaign uses baseball bats for certain fundraising challenges, and the Lieberman campaign has the “JoeMobile” asking supporters to “help fill up the tank”.¹⁴²

V. Conclusion

The Internet has proven to be a breakthrough in tool in presidential campaigning. Citizens are embracing the Internet to connect to the political process. But like any technology, the Internet cannot replace a person’s motivation to become more politically active; it can, however, help educate, inform, and activate citizens. As the Internet grows in importance, campaigns must adapt to this new technological environment. Candidates who fail to recognize the power of the Internet will be left behind.

While underdogs are more likely to try new technologies in campaigning, once these strategies prove to be successful, conventional campaigns will adopt them. Success on the Internet has nothing to do with party affiliation, as Democrats, Republicans, and third-party candidates have all utilize online campaigning successfully.

In 2003, Dean has transformed politics by utilizing the Internet as an integral part of his campaign. Dean, considered a long shot when he first entered the Democratic race, now leads several polls. He developed open-source politics and a decentralized Internet-based campaigning that relinquished a level of control

¹⁴² “Make Twice the Difference For Joe Lieberman,” Joe Lieberman for President website 23 November 2003: <http://www.joe2004.com/site/PageServer>.

over message, technique, and organization; yet created a successful and loyal grassroots network and fundraising base.¹⁴³

One of the major advancements in campaign technology this year is blogging, which Dean utilized first and most effectively. Blogging lends itself perfectly to campaigning. But for a blog to be successful, it must provide a user-friendly, interactive atmosphere—something not all campaigns fully embrace. While several campaigns have joined the Dean “Blogwagon,” some campaigns have forgotten that a blog is only one component of a successful online strategy. However, other campaigns have not adapted to using blogs and have failed to benefit from this new and innovative campaign communication tool.

In generating support and creating grassroots networks, the use of technology is less of a revolution and more of an evolution. The Internet and e-mail are no longer a novelty, yet these tools have been incorporated in the political communications environment and adapted with a new twist, such as Meetups and other social software tools to connect campaign supporters on and off-line.

Dean also reinvented campaign financing by developing a successful formula for Internet fundraising: a complete Internet strategy of utilizing his online grassroots network, blogs, e-mail, and web-based donations system. Dean, taking McCain’s fundraising success to the next level, counterbalanced the power of big money in politics with an army of small money donors empowered by the Internet. He has launched a new age in campaign fundraising. Even Dean’s

¹⁴³ Justice, *The New York Times*
<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/02/weekinreview/02JUST.html?ex=1068354000&en=9b54fd21f77bc684&ei=5062&partner=GOOGLE>.

Democratic primary opponents have used his proven online fundraising strategies and challenges to their advantage, with the most notable success being Clark.

The history of the Internet's use in political campaigns cannot be compared to its future. The use of technology in campaigning is a phenomenon in process. Researching the Internet in the academic realm is difficult because of the constantly changing and evolving utilization of the Internet. Assumptions made a few years ago are not acceptable now. Thus, the use of the Internet in 2004 Democratic primary campaigning should be viewed as a preview of things to come, not as a final portrait of the state of online campaigning and politics. Like McCain and Ventura, Dean's Internet techniques will be adopted and adapted by current and future campaigns, as has already been seen, and Dean's methods will be taken to the next level as emerging technology tools and creative new ideas will be utilized.

However, it is unclear if current and future campaigns will be willing to relinquish a level of control to engage in Dean-style open-source politics, still Dean has taken online campaign to the next level and shown the power and impact it has when used correctly and creatively.

Chart 1: Overview of Official Blog usage for 2004 Democrat and Republican Presidential Candidates

Candidates	Use of officials blog(s)
Democrats	
Carol Moseley Braun	No blog
Wesley Clark	http://campaign.forclark.com/ http://www.genclark.com/blogs.htm
Howard Dean	http://www.blogforamerica.com http://www.gendeanblog.com
John Edwards	http://share.johnedwards2004.com
Dick Gephardt	No blog
John Kerry	http://blog.johnkerry.com/
Dennis Kucinich	No blog
Joe Lieberman	http://www.blogforjoe.com/
Al Sharpton	No blog
Republicans	
George W. Bush	http://www.georgewbush.com/blog/

Chart 2: Overview of Official Discussion Forums Usage for 2004 Democrat and Republican Presidential Candidates

Candidates	Use of Discussion Forum
Democrats	
Carol Moseley Braun	No discussion forum
Wesley Clark	No discussion forum
Howard Dean	http://forums.deanforamerica.com/
John Edwards	No discussion forum
Dick Gephardt	No discussion forum
John Kerry	http://forum.johnkerry.com//index.php?act=idx
Dennis Kucinich	http://us.denniskucinich.us/phpBB2/
Joe Lieberman	No discussion forum
Al Sharpton	No discussion forum
Republicans	
George W. Bush	No discussion forum

