

OTHER USES OF TARGET MARKETING: POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING

The Christian Coalition maintains what founder Ralph Reed calls a “voter ID file.” Volunteers and hired hands call voters in a given county and ask people three questions: whether or not they are in favor of raising taxes, whether they’re pro-life or pro-choice, and what they consider to be the most important issue facing their community. The information is then stored in a database and used come election time. In *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*, John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton describe how Reed’s clan pulled off a successful campaign for state legislator Ken Stolle in Virginia Beach:

First, the Coalition surveyed the electorate and discovered that the number one issue concerning district voters was the city’s inadequate water supply. Second, the Coalition helped Stolle, who “represented the most conservative pro-family and pro-business viewpoint,” send out personalized letters to potential voters.

The letters arrived the Saturday before the election. To those who had voiced concern about the water, Stolle declared himself to be the “water candidate.” To those voters who said crime was the most important issue, Stolle was packaged as the “crime candidate,” and so on. Consequently the Coalition, by picking and then exploiting the right issues, was able to elect Stolle, a right-thinking Republican, to a seat that Democrats had held since Reconstruction.



Politicians frequently convey different, even contradictory, messages to different audiences. Above (top to bottom), President George W. Bush appeals to middle-class women and families in Arkansas; young adult viewers of the David Letterman show; and African-Americans at a NAACP gathering.