FORWARD

The change
Labour still needs

Edited by Marcus Roberts
Foreword by Iain McNicol

With Polly Billington, Mark Beatty, Arnie Graf, Claire Hazelgrove, Mary Hough, Marlon Marshall, Kirsty McNeill, Fran O'Leary, Olly Parker, Katherine Richards, Frank Spring and Will Straw

FABIAN SOCIETY

ABOUT THE FABIAN SOCIETY

The Fabian Society is Britain's oldest political think tank. Since 1884 the society has played a central role in developing political ideas and public policy on the left. It aims to promote greater equality of power and opportunity; the value of collective public action; a vibrant, tolerant and accountable democracy; citizenship, liberty and human rights; sustainable development; and multilateral international cooperation.

Through a wide range of publications and events the society influences political and public thinking, but also provides a space for broad and open-minded debate, drawing on an unrivalled external network and its own expert research and analysis. Its programme offers a unique breadth, encompassing national conferences and expert seminars; periodicals, books, reports and digital communications; and commissioned and in-house research and comment.

The Society is alone among think tanks in being a democratically-constituted membership organisation, with almost 7,000 members. Over time our membership has included many of the key thinkers on the British left and every Labour Prime Minister. Today we count over 200 parliamentarians in our number. The voluntary society includes 70 local societies, the Fabian Women's Network and the Young Fabians, which is itself the leading organisation on the left for young people to debate and influence political ideas.

The society was one of the original founders of the Labour Party and is constitutionally affiliated to the party. We are however editorially, organisationally and financially independent and work with a wide range of partners from all political persuasions and none.

Fabian Society
61 Petty France
London SW1H 9EU
www.fabians.org.uk

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Acknowledgements

This report began as an homage to the Fabian's seminal publication 'The Change We Need' in 2009 edited by Nick Anstead and Will Straw. My thanks begin with them and with my then co-author Karin Christiansen who gave me my first chance to publish for the Fabians - a fact which to this day makes me smile.

Putting this sequel together has been the work of superb Fabian colleagues Andy Harrop, Natan Doron, Rob Tinker, Daniel Stevens, Giles Wright, Deborah Stoate, Kate Godfrey and Obama hoodie-wearing Phil Mutero. The sterling efforts and patience of Sofie Jenkinson, Anya Pearson, Richard Speight and Ed Wallis deserve particular praise.

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The authors of this collection, as discussed in the conclusion, have done a superb job of covering campaigns, technology, voters, policy and much more besides in a way that conveys both the excitement of politics and adds value to its analysis. Thank you for each of your ace chapters.

Lastly, this collection was made possible with the generous support of the Canary Wharf Group: thank you.

About the authors

Polly Billington helped to get Ed Miliband elected as leader of the Labour party before turning her hand to leading campaigns at Citizens Advice and fighting to win back Thurrock in Essex for Labour. Her US convention highlight was meeting Eva Longoria in the loo. She tweets at @thurrockpolly.

Mark Beatty is a founding partner with 270 Strategies and served as deputy battleground states director for the Obama campaign. He had primary responsibility for the election plans for the battleground states and managed the $150 million state budget.

Arnie Graf has been an organiser for over 40 years. He began in the U.S.Civil Rights Movement when he was 19 years old and he has kept going.

Claire Hazelgrove was Labour party HQ's social media lead at the 2010 election. She spent three months helping keep the swing state of Virginia blue last year after getting involved in 2008. She now works in the USA, galvanising grassroots support in the fight against extreme poverty in Africa.

Mary Hough was the online content lead for Obama 2012. After delivering her first Labour party leaflet at age six, Mary worked in politics on both sides of the pond before heading to Chicago to re-elect Barack Obama. She's now living in New York.

Marlon Marshall served as deputy national field director for Obama's re-election campaign where he helped lead its unprecedented targeted voter registration and get-out-the-vote programs.

Iain McNicol is general secretary of the Labour party.

Kirsty McNeill is a former Downing Street adviser and a strategy consultant for campaigning organisations. She tweets @kirstyjmcneill.

Fran O'Leary is director of strategy and innovation at Lodestone Communications and volunteered on the Democrat's campaign in Las Vegas in 2012.

Olly Parker used to head up events at the Fabians and now does the same at the Co-operative party alongside training a new generation of activists. The time he spent working on the Obama campaign were among the best in his life.

Katherine Richards was the deputy regional field director for Organizing for America in Toledo, Ohio. She loved every minute.

Marcus Roberts lost many elections in the US before hitting a lucky streak after backing Barack Obama. He now serves as deputy general secretary of the Fabian Society and is still a happy man.

Frank Spring is a political consultant who has advised and served campaigns and candidates on both sides of the Atlantic. He is a Political Partner of the Truman National Security Project.

Will Straw is Labour's PPC in Rossendale and Darwen. He is an asssociate director at the IPPR and a visiting fellow at the Center for American Progress where he worked during the 2008 presidential election. In 2009, he co-edited the Fabian pamphlet 'The Change We Need: What Britain can learn from Obama's victory'.

FOREWORD

Iain McNicol

The British Labour party has always taken inspiration from our sister parties and our progressive allies around the world. This is especially true when they can teach us new and valuable insights about winning popular support. Harold Wilson's Labour party learned lessons from John F Kennedy's narrow success in 1960. In the 1980s, Labour looked to Labour parties in Sweden, Norway and Australia for advice on how to win, and how to govern.

In 1992, a team of Labour staff members, including my predecessor Margaret McDonagh spent time with the Clinton campaign in Little Rock. Their report laid the basis for Labour's move to a new campaign HQ in Millbank Tower, with its open-plan 'war room', 'rapid rebuttal' and other effective campaigning methods. After the 1997 landslide, progressives from across the globe came to London to find out the secrets of our success.

Of course, the political cultures in other democracies are different from ours. Their ways of working, fundraising and campaigning are never identical to those in the UK, and cannot be transplanted wholesale. There are no magic formulas. Yet there is much we can still learn, especially in opposition, following a major electoral reversal.

As we near the 2015 general election it is right that we seek every advantage we can to out-campaign the Tories and Liberal Democrats. We're re-engineering our local parties, turning them outwards to local communities and making them engines of local change. We're reaching out to voters who for too long have felt excluded and ignored. We're using the insight of people such as Arnie Graf to become community organisers. We're winning elections once again, at local council elections and parliamentary by-elections. But no-one knows how much we have to do more than me.

Barack Obama's electoral successes in 2008 and 2012 were an inspiration to progressive people across the globe. For the Labour party, with our close links to the Democratic party, it brought particular joy. Since 2008, we have studied Obama's electoral methods, and tried to learn from the Democrats' successful campaigns. In this collection of essays, the authors review several aspects of Obama's campaign: from fundraising to field ops, from the Convention, to getting out the vote. It makes fascinating reading.

There is a danger that Obama's victories can be misunderstood and misinterpreted. It's not merely a case of effective local campaigning, nor of harnessing social media to reach voters. On this latter point, there are huge misunderstandings about the role of social media. The campaign's use of databases, Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms were not a substitute for traditional forms of political interaction and engagement. They were an effective tool to

enable traditional types of political activity, especially face-to-face conversations, community meetings and meetings hosted in people's homes. These personal interactions are far more effective than littering a neighbourhood with leaflets and posters, or bombarding people's inboxes with messages, texts and tweets. In politics, the personal is what counts.

This was especially true when the Obama campaign was fundraising the millions of dollars which came in in denominations of five, 10 and 20 dollars and helped to liberate the campaign from reliance on a small number of high-level contributors.

Most of all it's about having the right policies and values underpinning them. Fundraising, getting out the vote (GOTV), community organising: these things are tactics. They are ineffective without the big picture strategy. As well as the tactical approaches the authors here also look at the Obama campaign's strategic approach, including the importance of the economy, welfare reform, healthcare and foreign policy.

I have set a simple goal as custodian of the role of general secretary of the Labour party. I want to be judged on it. I want the Labour party to enter the 'short campaign' in early 2015 with the best organised, most effective political machine we've ever had. I want us to use that machine not to harvest votes, but to forge relationships. I want our campaigners and activists not to be used as unpaid leaflet distributers and data collectors, but as the human face of a political movement of change and reconstruction.

Politics in the 21st century won't be about shouting through megaphones, to stir up an uninterested citizenry, and then herding them down to the polling station. It will be about tapping into their creativity and imagination, their energy and anger. It will be about listening and understanding. It will be about leading local campaigns to win change in communities, not waiting for someone else to come along and do it. It will be about common goals and common endeavour.

Of course, Labour is focussed on winning the parliamentary seats from the Tories, Lib Dems, Greens and nationalists that we need to form a parliamentary majority, and getting Ed Miliband into Number 10. We're progressing with our selections for those vital seats, and getting some brilliant candidates in place. We're recruiting new local organisers. We're training our members, especially all the ones we've welcomed since 2010. We're doing everything we can to defeat this coalition government, and defy the conventional wisdom that says once a governing party goes into opposition, it stays there for a sustained period of time.

Victory will come, not merely from a rejection of the government, but from a reconnection of the Labour movement and the people we seek to serve. That's the historic feat we're attempting. We're some of the way there, but be in no doubt of the scale of the mountain. That's why this Fabian pamphlet is both timely and helpful, and I have no hesitation in recommending it to all Labour campaigners and supporters.

1 INTRODUCTION

Marcus Roberts

Barack Obama changed the rules of politics. Now Labour must do the same. Obama 2012 is the model for building an organisation based around a singular focus on winning.

Does Labour have that same drive? Are we capable of that same single-mindedness? Can we change our party as dramatically as we must to beat our own history and keep the Tories to a one term government?

The writers of this volume think so. But their faith is not unconditional. Rather, from field to data, from stories to policy, from events to online, these writers challenge Labour to go further and faster in embracing the change we need to win in 2015.

Obama changed from 2008 to 2012. For if 2008 was encapsulated by the mantra 'respect-empower-include', 2012 was purely about the addition of one word to that campaign motto: win. And it is this lesson that is imperative for Labour in the next general election.

To win, the campaign began with numbers. Numbers that told them which states they needed to win, which voters would win those states, and the balance between existing supporters, new voters and persuaded voters in each state. The campaign knew how many organisers were required and how many volunteers. Policy interventions, communications, even candidate time were all geared towards achieving those numbers.

So everything became about getting to the winning number of 270 electoral college votes. Budgets, those most honest indicators of priorities, were determined by that goal. And with that overriding strategic precept in place, the campaign unleashed the army of organisers and volunteers needed for victory.

Consider the rawness of that focus. Instead of the traditional model of making strategy by managing factions, stroking political egos, genuflecting before the gut instinct of gurus and the past prejudices of the commentariat, Obama 2012 worked out what voters they needed, in what numbers and in what places, and then plotted a course to get them.

When we compare that focus to our own Labour party - with its love of unending policy discussion, obsession with the media wars of yesteryear and outdated addiction to leaflets - we see the distance we have yet to travel.

With experience on both sides of the Atlantic, our writers explore the implications of this numbers-based, win-focused strategy and the when and how of applying this to Britain. Mary Hough on storytelling and Katherine Richards on field, or local activism, draw on their real-life experience to draw out the lessons for Labour of Obama 2012. Rarely does a collection of political writing seek to consider strategy from all its different angles.

But in doing so they expose some myths about the campaign (it was not

the great citizen empowering experience it was cracked up to be), explore some secrets (just what is 'voter propensity modeling' anyway?) and even highlight some potential dangers of the Obama approach (what does it say about your politics when you segment voters in this way?)

Labour is already feeling some of this change. The pluralist leadership of Ed Miliband has allowed for much of the 'cultural glasnost' called for by Nick Anstead and Will Straw, editors of the 2009 Fabian pamphlet 'The Change We Need: What Britain can learn from Obama's victory'. Meanwhile Karin Christiansen's argument for a politics of respect-empower-include is reshaping both the Labour and Co-op parties alike. And as policy review chief Jon Cruddas has said, Iain McNicol's general secretaryship is nothing less than a quiet revolution in the way Labour does politics. McNicol's focus on winning has led to the selection of scores of candidates and the recruitment of dozens of key seat organisers years in advance of Labour's previous achievements.

But these writers would be the first to argue for still more change, with Polly Billington and Olly Parker calling for a complete rethink of Labour conference, Arnie Graf showing the 'get out the vote' power of community organising and Frank Spring tracing the evolution in electoral tactics between 2008 and 2012.

For Labour party organisers, activists, strategists and candidates, this volume offers astute analysis, practical suggestions and - most important of all - challenges all of us to be yet more ambitious for our party in all that we do.

This is the change we still need.

2 WHAT CHANGED BETWEEN 2008 AND 2012?

Frank Spring

As the makeup of the American electorate is increasingly characterised by black and ethnic minority voters, new voter registration became a core element of Obama's strategy in 2012. Using an integrated and technologically sophisticated approach, campaigners took to the streets armed with the simple calculus 'newly registered voters + persuaded voters + a turned-out base = victory'.

The national mood changed. Voter enthusiasm changed. The opponent – in profile and professionalism – changed. Obama for America changed at levels ranging from the strategic to the technical. There are lessons in all of this – some of which are covered in this publication by the authors of those changes themselves – and more besides.

The changes between the elections of 2008 and 2012 began before most voters outside of Democratic circles had heard of Barack Obama. The electorate itself changed, and as it did, a new front opened in the political battle – elections are no longer solely about who will vote and how, but increasingly about who can vote. This is a particularly important lesson for Labour to learn.

Some of the changes to the electorate were simply organic; certain demographic groups in the United States grew more quickly than others, and assumed a larger share of the electorate, while migration within the US meant that progressive voters started cropping up in states that had been historically conservative, such as Colorado.

Those phenomena do not entirely explain what happened from the period right before Obama's rise to prominence through the end of his re-election campaign. The electorate of the United States became more reliably progressive, particularly in states critical to winning the electoral college, during the period 2006-2012 through an energetic, resourced, and dedicated campaign of voter registration strong enough to not just add to the tidal wave of 2008 but, critically, to withstand the ebb of the tide between 2008 and 2012.

The principle behind political-party-based voter registration is simple: if you are not sure that you can persuade and turn out enough existing voters to win an election, go out and create more. Progressive organisations in particular stand to benefit from voter registration because unregistered voters (a term that here refers to an eligible voter who has either never registered or who would not cast a permissible ballot without filing registration papers before the next election) are disproportionately ethnic minority, highly mobile (such as students), or lower income – essentially, voters who are more likely than not to support progressive candidates.

This point became particularly salient after the 2004 election. Though

barely two years removed from a disastrous mid-term election, Democrats were buoyed by tremendous public anger at the incumbent administration, principally over the Iraq war.

They had momentum. They had a war-hero candidate in an election about national security. And they had a campaign that was, if not always thoroughly-resourced or perfectly-executed, vigorous and professional. The resulting effort increased the aggregate number of Democratic votes by 20 per cent over 2000. Republicans duplicated the feat, and the Democrats lost a second agonisingly close election to George W. Bush.

Today, when Democrats have won three of the last four elections (2006, 2008, and 2012), it can be difficult to imagine or recall the feeling amongst their party in late 2004, even for those who endured it. Hard questions were asked: were Democratic institutions properly organised? Resourced? Professional? Was the party intellectually vital, even relevant?

There were answers. Think-tanks sprang up to refresh progressive thought and policy, politically-left fellow-travellers such as unions and Political Action Committees invested in new campaign architecture, and the Democratic National Committee, under new Chair Howard Dean and executive director Tom McMahon, reformed radically (beginning with requiring the resignations of the entire DNC top-tier of staff, and accepting most) under the 50 State Strategy.

Think tanks

Progressive organisations also asked perhaps the hardest question: were there even enough Democratic voters to win close national elections? The answer was doubtful, and unions, advocacy groups, and the DNC, through state-level parties, set about changing that. They devoted financial resources and personnel hours to dedicated voter registration, primarily via door-to-door canvassing and 'trawling', which refers to the practice of volunteers or staff setting up in a public area and asking passers-by if they are registered to vote, providing the requisite paperwork as needed.

Voter registration has a utility beyond increasing the number of potential ballots for a party; it is a fair test of the party's ability to conduct operations in an election, an opportunity to train volunteers and staff, and a chance to identify super-volunteers who can play an important role in the election campaign. If a party cannot efficiently conduct a coordinated voter registration drive, it does not bode well for its chances in the election. Assuming any weaknesses are discovered in a timely fashion, there is an opportunity to correct mistakes before the election cycle starts in earnest, when the official party at the state level and below tends to be folded into larger, better-funded candidate-campaigns (such as a congressional, gubernatorial, or presidential).

Perhaps as a result of this, voter registration had traditionally been viewed as something conducted by state and county-level parties and advocacy groups or unions, and not as a primary activity of a candidate campaign. Parties registered voters until the election cycle began, and then both party and campaign would turn to the real business of persuading and turning out the vote.

It is not clear whether this would have continued as the model for the Democratic party after Dean's reforms of 2005-2006 if the candidacy of Barack

Obama had never happened. What matters is that that candidacy did happen, and it elevated voter registration from a training exercise and second-tier campaign activity to a strategic imperative.

Prior to Organizing for America (OFA, later named Organizing for Action), the model for a campaign building a winning majority involved two primary activities: persuasion and turnout. Voters who were undecided would need to be convinced; voters who supported the candidate would need to be driven to the polls (sometimes literally). To these two activities, OFA added a third strategic approach: voter registration. Newly registered voters + persuaded voters + a turned-out base = victory, was the calculus. By creating a statistically significant populace of new voters, OFA was not only supporting this calculus, but generating a new universe of potential volunteers and donors which, in turn, fed the needs of the larger campaign machine.

It is difficult to overstate the ambition of this project. Voter registration takes resources; with 70+ per cent of eligible voters in the United States registered, the potential universe is small, and every success, by definition, shrinks it. If a voter has never bothered to register then clearly voting is a not a habit for them, which creates a real question about whether, once registered, they will vote at all; committing to turn them out requires extra effort. Voter registration efforts invariably end up registering votes for the opponent. And the methodology can be painfully imprecise; contrast canvassing a list of known Democratic voters to make sure they are still on-side with standing in a public space with a clipboard and a stack of papers hoping to find an unregistered voter willing to talk to you.

Not all of OFA's voter registration techniques were as time-intensive as trawling (though, in the interests of fairness, it should be noted that this technique, properly deployed in targeted areas, is still popular with advocacy groups and political organisations for the simple reason that it works). Applying the same integrated and technologically-sophisticated approach used throughout the campaign to voter registration, OFA was able to bring new efficiency to the process of identifying unregistered voters and getting them on the rolls. The campaign even developed a voter-registration app.

The story of OFA's technical evolution across the board is intensely compelling (and a discussion appears in this publication), but the critical point here is not so much innovation in methodology as the decision to elevate voter registration from an ancillary campaign activity to a core element of the victory plan. OFA volunteers conducted intensive voter registration activities – some technologically sophisticated, some as simple as a clipboard and paper – until the last day before the election on which unregistered voters could be brought onto the rolls, dedicating time and resources that in previous campaigns would have been devoted to voter ID and turnout.

The results spoke for themselves. For example, OFA and other groups registered 600,000 new Democrats in Florida before the 2008 election, a state Obama won by 200,000 votes. They registered almost 600,000 new Democrats in Pennsylvania, a figure which was also the winning margin. In all, 15 million people cast their ballots for the first time in 2008, and 70 per cent of those did so for Obama.

The irony, of course, is that Obama did not need the massive voter registration effort in 2008. Voter dissatisfaction with the presidency of George W. Bush and the unfolding economic crisis meant the electorate favoured a Democratic politician promising change. Obama himself was and is an immensely talented political athlete, backed by the best-resourced and most professional

campaign in Democratic history; the opponent, John McCain, was a tired silver medallist from the previous Republican primary whose campaign was, at best, desperately uneven and frequently threatened to devolve into outright farce.

Had the Obama campaign not adopted the 'voter registration + persuasion + turnout' strategy, it would still almost certainly have won in 2008. But those new voters proved to be pivotal in 2012.

The re-election campaign was always going to be hard. The damage to the economy was too deep to fix in four years, and it was unrealistic to believe that the unprecedented enthusiasm of 2008 could be replicated. It is impossible to govern a nation without making compromises and facing setbacks, each of which will sap the devotion of one segment of the electorate or another.

Even so, the political turnaround that occurred in the United States between 2008 and the 2010 midterm election was surprising; triumphant in 2008, Democrats were badly thrashed in 2010, with the Republican party reclaiming the US House of Representatives. The tidal wave of 2008 was already starting to recede.

Shortly after the election of 2008, the infrastructure of the Obama for America campaign was folded into the Democratic National Committee as 'Organizing for America', with the mission to build support for Obama's legislative agenda. In April 2011, six months after the devastating midterm election, that infrastructure left the DNC and became Obama for America again.

There were new faces. There was a new creed within the organisation – 'Respect. Empower. Include.', the directive for how OFA would conduct itself with volunteers and supports, became 'Respect. Empower. Include. Win.', signally a perceptible culture shift. There was new technology and new methodology. The calculus, however, remained the same. Voter registration activities resumed on a national scale.

They remained a key part of OFA operations until the last possible day of the last campaign Barack Obama would ever run. It was not always politically successful. Even the most herculean voter registration effort could not save the Democrats' chances in North Carolina, which Obama had narrowly won in 2008 and where the party had held its 2012 National Convention. OFA registered 250,000 new voters in that state between April 2011 and October 2012, and Obama still lost; the Republican leadership of that state is currently executing one of the most conservative legislative agendas in the country.

In others cases, however, voter registration efforts effectively undid the reversal of fortune of 2010. In Florida, Democratic registration fell from 4.72 million in 2008 to 4.6m in 2010, then rallied, with 4.78 million Democrats registered in 2012. Florida would prove unnecessary to Obama's electoral college victory, but his narrow victory there in 2012 (70,000 total votes separated him from challenger Mitt Romney) demonstrated the value of the voter registration efforts up to that point.

That trajectory of voter registration is not uncommon in swing states (or former swing states) such as New Mexico and Pennsylvania – there is a significant increase in Democratic voter registration between 2004 and 2008, then a dip in 2010, and then a return not to the 2008 level, but to something higher than 2004 and 2006. The tide rolls in strongly in 2008, then rolls out again, but the watermark for Democratic registration is higher.

It is worth noting that the percentage of Americans eligible and registered has not actually changed significantly over the past three presidential elec-

tions, remaining relatively constant at 71-72 per cent. What has changed, however, is the makeup of that electorate. Registration and participation by members of ethnic minorities has increased, and they have tended to vote heavily Democratic. This is not simply due to the fact that the population of some minority groups (Hispanics are a good example) has increased over the past ten years; one would expect an aggregate increase in the number of Hispanic voters due to population growth, but the increased percentage of eligible Hispanic voters who are registered (at least in states that record the relevant data) must have another explanation. The aggressive voter registration effort of OFA and other groups is an extremely likely candidate.

By adopting 'voter registration + persuasion + turnout' as a strategic calculus, OFA began a process that ultimately brought millions of Democratically-inclined voters onto the rolls to stand as a bulwark against political setbacks, such as 2010, and to form a reliable base of volunteers, donors, and supporters in future elections. In doing so, these voter registration efforts created an electorate that more accurately reflects the country (the percentage of black voters registered is now within 4 per cent of the percentage of white voters, for example).

Now, the battle over who can vote is shifting to a new field – legislation. Unable to match progressive organisations' success in registering and turning out new voters, Republicans at the state level have attempted to pass laws restricting who is able to vote, usually in the form of laws requiring certain types of official voter identification, or attempting to roll back existing legislation designed to ensure open and equal access to the ballot (such as Section 5 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, now before the US Supreme Court). They may be successful.

The principles of 'voter registration + persuasion + turnout' are not going away, however, and for the moment that calculus, and the change in the electorate that has come along with it, strongly favours Democrats.

The Labour party must learn from this. In April 2013, various elements of the party disagreed in the public prints about whether Labour is capable of winning the next general election with 35 per cent of the vote or whether it needed 37.5 per cent. Voter registration was largely and conspicuously absent from this discussion. Labour must move on from thinking of elections in terms of 'persuasion + turnout' and add 'voter registration' as a third angle of approach to victory.

The fact that Britain has a higher registration rate amongst eligible voters than the United States means that more effort and resource will be required to identify and register new voters. However, the same essential principles apply. Individuals who are not registered to vote are generally more likely to belong to ethnic minorities, to be highly mobile (again, such as students), or to be lower income – all groups likely to support Labour. If the difference between 35 per cent and 37.5 per cent of the vote is sufficient to cause a public squabble within Labour, the party's leadership must ask itself if it can afford to overlook any pool of potential voters.

This effect is compounded by the shift to individual voter registration, which will occur in 2014. Good work on the part of the Electoral Reform Society and others has blunted the worst aspects of the policy, which in one incarnation threatened to disenfranchise millions of voters. For the purposes of the 2015 general election, IVR now threatens the ballot of postal voters who have not individually registered.

This is an excellent test. Labour knows who is registered for a postal ballot;

it should conduct a campaign to make sure postal voters are individually registered so that their postal vote in 2015 will count. Beyond being a worthy end unto itself, this small campaign would as a trial run for the broader voter registration effort that the party cannot afford to neglect.

Voter registration efforts take time and resources. That is not a reason to delay doing them; if anything, it militates for starting a coordinated, resourced, and vigorous voter registration drive without delay. So far, the party's leadership, particularly Ed Miliband, have spoken with energy and understanding about the importance of this initiative. If Labour truly wants to learn and apply lessons from the OFA-driven change in the American electorate from pre-2008 to 2012, voter registration is an essential chance to do something about it.

3 PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Mark Beatty and Marlon Marshall

On 5 May 2012, in Columbus, Ohio, Barack Obama said: "If there is one thing that we learned in 2008, it's that nothing is more powerful than millions of voices calling for change". Empowering people - neighbours talking to neighbours, volunteer meetings in living rooms, people coming together to organise their towns - can build a 21st century path to victory.

When President Obama explained our strategy in his re-election campaign kick-off speech in 2012, he didn't talk about big data. He didn't talk about technology. He didn't talk about Mitt Romney's shortcomings as a candidate or the myriad other reasons pegged by the media as key factors to our victory in the many campaign post-mortems that followed the November 6 election. He talked about people.

President Obama believed that the best way to win the election was to mobilise regular people to engage fellow citizens. So our strategy – the plan we developed to win the election – was to empower people to participate fully in their democracy.

As the deputy national field director and deputy battleground states director, we saw firsthand how the strategy of empowering and engaging people on a personal, individual level serves as the crucial, driving force behind President Obama's re-election campaign. Whether you talked to someone at headquarters in Chicago or an organiser in a battleground state, everyone lived by the same motto: "Respect. Empower. Include. Win." This sentiment permeated and defined every aspect of the campaign, from the president's speeches to the ways in which we recruited each volunteer.

During the 2012 election, our goal was to reach 270 electoral votes. In order to achieve this, we had to find our pathway to victory. All of our decisions were made with this goal in mind – we knew our pathway to that goal was to win 51 percent of the vote in several key states, but a lot of effort went into deciding the best way to invest our resources and reach the most people to make the biggest impact.

We tackled this "270" challenge by expanding the electoral map to include more voters in each state. Rather than sticking with the traditional strategy of investing only in a limited number of battleground states such as Ohio and Florida, we opened up new pathways to 270 by mobilising grassroots organisations, airing paid media, and holding presidential events in not two but ten battleground states, including places like Virginia and Colorado.

Many pundits claimed that the economic recession had rendered any chance of an Obama victory in such states as Virginia and Colorado utterly hopeless. Yet on election night, Virginia voted Democratic for the second time in 50 years, and Colorado's electoral votes put us over 270.

We structured our campaign so even supporters in solidly blue states and red states – who have traditionally been sidelined in presidential campaigns – could play a role in the 2012 campaign. We empowered these supporters to participate in the campaign by incorporating important technologies like our online call tool, our digital organising site ("Dashboard"), and our Facebook targeted sharing app. No matter where supporters lived, they could – and did – support the president as part of a truly national effort.

Taking our strategy from idea to implementation, however, took some tactical elbow grease.

When people talk about campaign strategy, they tend to start by focusing on the nitty gritty – knocking on doors, calling neighbors, handing out bumper stickers. Although often mistaken for overarching strategy, these are actually the tactics that work to achieve your overall goal and make up the day-to-day execution of your strategy.

General campaign strategy, however, requires an emphasis on the mobilisation of people – voter registration, persuasion, turnout, and organisation building.

One of our key successes on the Obama re-election campaign was expanding the electorate through voter registration. The 2012 campaign registered more than 1.8 million voters nationwide – nearly double the number of voters the Obama campaign registered in 2008. When you look at the final results of the election state by state, there are countless examples across the country of the number of registrations we collected surpassing the vote margin in that state. Registration was a vital component of our strategy because we were working to include and empower more people so that their voices would be heard on election day.

Persuasion was another key component to our plan for mass mobilisation. Here, we had folks who were registered, but felt like their vote didn't matter or were still on the fence over whom they should support. In close races, these people are crucial – and we worked to make sure they knew just how much their vote mattered. We built relationships in communities so that people knew their concerns were being heard and we were reaching out to engage them in the democratic process.

The third element we used to maximise voter participation was turnout. Much like persuasion, every state differs in the amount of work that needed to get done, but turnout was a key component of our strategy for each state. In every state, there were voters we know supported our candidate but who didn't typically vote in every election. We needed to mobilise those voters to turn out on election day. Turnout amongst our base groups was also crucial to our success in the battleground states – there is little point in working to persuade undecided voters if you don't turn out your own base.

Our final strategic focus was organisation building. Voter registration, persuasion and turnout are all tactical components that involve voter contact. None of these initiatives are possible, however, if you don't build the organisation necessary to do the work. The size of your organisation should reflect the amount of work necessary to meet your goals for registration, persuasion and turnout. Building an organisation makes the other strategic components possible.

At the core of this four-part strategy was strong, effective messaging. We worked to overcome the media spin and the attacks from our opponent with a consistent set of messages. We focused on the president's commitment to fight for the middle class and create an economy where everyone plays by

the same set of rules. This approach resonated with voters because the core message emphasised respect, empowerment, and inclusion – whether it was about creating jobs, strengthening the education system, ensuring access to affordable healthcare, or fighting for equal pay and equal rights. The president was committed to working on those issues that mattered most to voters. As a result, we saw supporters mobilising to work to re-elect him in unprecedented numbers.

Our campaign's use of data also played a crucial role in the 2012 campaign, allowing us to find voters, get their attention, and predict which kind of appeal would persuade certain voters. Call lists in field offices, for instance, didn't just list names and phone numbers – they ranked voters by "persuadability," taking other demographic factors into account. We knew our necessary "win number" in each city, county, and state, and held ourselves accountable to reaching the number. Data was critical to making decisions and making our programs more effective. This use of data is a critical element of the modern campaign and is most effective when connected to the work that people are doing.

The lessons learned from the Obama re-election campaign, including our grassroots-centered strategy, are changing how campaigns are run today. Ultimately the 2012 campaign came down to empowering people – neighbours talking to neighbours, volunteer meetings in living rooms, people coming together to organise their towns – and that's a lesson others can, and must, take to heart to build a truly modern, 21st century path to victory.

4 RESPECT. EMPOWER. INCLUDE. WIN.

Katherine Richards

Local activism, or 'field' was vastly improved in Obama's 2012 campaign thanks to a highly evolved analytics department. Voter propensity modeling meant that each one-to-one conversation on the doorstep with potential voters was made to count and early votes were secured more readily.

In 2008 the mantra 'respect, empower, include' had infused the ground game, helping to create a vast volunteer base of enthusiastic, impassioned and skilled activists, many of whom were engaging in the electoral process for the first time. Stories of individuals coming together to elect a president from the ground up was a huge part of the narrative of the first campaign. Four years ago this was just one of a handful of such stories of how the president's first victory had revolutionised elections forever, including his innovations in capturing small donors and digital engagement. It was a game-changing field campaign but it was not essential to win. In 2012, local activism, or field, was essential.

After the 2010 "shelacking" the Democrats received in the mid-term elections it was clear that Organizing for America (OFA) would have to make significant improvements to prevent the Republicans from catching up. It would not have been possible to make the campaign significantly bigger than it had been in 2008, so the only way to keep the advantage over the Republican side was to make it better. The fundamental structure of the field campaign remained the same, with volunteers assigned distinct roles forming teams led by neighbourhood team leaders, in turn managed by field organisers and regional field directors. Instead the campaign sought, through thorough analysis of a wide variety of data sets and random control experiments in the field, to improve every aspect of the campaign and, crucially for field, every interaction between volunteers and voters.

Propensity

Well in advance of the bulk of contact with voters, the analytics department created models of voter propensity. Lists of voters the campaign wished to contact were devised centrally, based upon these predictions of who would support the president, rather than using traditional voter ID with volunteers canvassing an area to build a supporter universe manually for use in getting out the vote (GOTV). This meant that field staff and volunteers in Ohio were liberated from intense voter contact until the final few weeks of the campaign during the turnout phase, so leading up to the election they could focus solely on volunteer recruitment and team building: traditional community organis-

ing. The goals set for staff and teams were instead focused on activities where field would be most effective, with phone calls to prospective volunteers and one-to-one meetings being prioritised until just over a month before election day, so that by GOTV they had built a volunteer machine capable of the huge turnout operation necessary to win the bellwether state.

By the time volunteers on the ground were sent out with walk packets plotting the location of targeted voters, each person on their list was tagged as either to be persuaded to vote for Democratic, or as being a likely supporter to be encouraged to vote early. It was even indicated when houses were split and some family members deemed likely to vote for the president, and some undecided. This meant that a volunteer already knew before they even rang a doorbell which of the two available leaflets, one for persuasion and one for voting early, they should offer to the voter and how to approach the conversation.

The likelihood of a volunteer returning depended heavily on their experience canvassing. A volunteer coming back for a second volunteer shift was important not only for having a large canvassing base but also for building a solid core of canvassers with previous experience, who could complete a packet faster and who could be relied on at a certain point to take over the responsibility of recruiting and training other volunteers. Volunteers who dealt with irate targets who were either hostile to the Democratic platform or who were over-saturated with contacts were much less likely to return for a second time, losing the campaign valuable person power. Propensity targets ensured that a staff member could ensure first time volunteers would be given packets that would contain a high percentage of supportive voters, allowing for an easier transition into dealing with persuasion-dense turf packets. Propensity targeting afforded volunteers the confidence of knowing the likely degree of acceptance they would receive at a target house, and the level of aggressiveness they should pursue with the occupants. This ability to determine the level of difficulty a canvasser would receive allowed a staff member to tailor a volunteer's first time experience with a high degree of certainty, and increase it incrementally the more experience the volunteer received.

The exact methodology and reasoning behind the designation of each voter was all kept behind the scenes, but in the tradition of 'respect, empower, include' volunteers were well trained in the segmentation of the voter pool with a simple grid comparing support with likely turnout. The campaign understood that it would be wasting time and money trying to speak with the strongest Democrats who would vote for the president without any urging from the canvassers, as well as people who were highly unlikely to vote regardless of political leaning. The campaign taught volunteers that it was most valuable to speak with those who would be most likely to change their mind about who to vote for or voting at all as a result of their intervention. Propensity targeting identified voters that were likely to be undecided about which candidate to support, and voters that were on the fence about going to the ballot box at all. A canvasser would then be provided with a target sheet with one of these two possible voters, as well as a category they belonged to, and sent out to bring home votes for the president.

Scripts

There were whole advert breaks on local TV stations in the battleground of northwest Ohio that only featured commercials for political candidates and advocacy groups. Voters in such areas are inundated with the political media and phone calls that roll around every election cycle, so it is essential to cut through this barrage of information with the most effective message possible. At the same early stage as voter intentions were being modeled, the campaign set about conducting random controlled experiments for different types of scripts with different behavioral prompts to establish what worked most effectively to persuade and turn out voters. A balance was also sought between what script would be best for voters, and what volunteers would find manageable. While a more elaborate script with detailed policy rebuttals may be better to persuade voters, it becomes useless if it is too complex to train volunteers to use it relatively quickly and effectively.

The final script that was used in key states was simpler than others that had been tested, and emphasised the communal, civic responsibility of voting, voting early and making a plan to do so, all key prompts which had already been proven to be more likely to change behavior and the likelihood of somebody actually voting. Volunteers were trained to talk about their personal reasons for supporting the president, such as the positive effects his healthcare reforms have for them and their family, rather than headline policy achievements, because the campaign had already established that the personal story of a neighbour speaking to a neighbour was a better way for a voter to relate their own situation to the president's message. Knowing that the scripts had a quantifiably positive effect on interactions with voters made it easier to train staff and volunteers to be disciplined in using them too.

The adaptation of the script to become as effective as possible was also something that occurred naturally in the field as well. Single pages of policy points, including listing the hospital where the president was born in Hawaii to try to refute 'birthers', were provided to canvassers, but as the campaign progressed they were often not used because volunteers found it more cumbersome than it was worth to go into such detail with voters. Canvassers were trained to quickly decide when to move on to the next house if it became clear that persuading a voter would take too long.

Early vote

The campaign put in a huge effort to encourage people to vote early. The exact rules and processes for doing so varied from state to state, but the essence was universal:

- The voter could schedule their visit to the ballot box at a time that was most convenient to cut down on an unexpected event disallowing the visit
- Once the vote was in, a voter was excluded from the voter database cutting down on the amount of voters on an organiser's list
- If there was a problem with a voter's registration or address it could be resolved before election day making sure that the vote can be counted

- The GOTV period was spread out over a much longer period, allowing a canvasser to persuade a voter to get their vote in immediately
- The vote is banked

Research on behalf of the campaign showed that the greater the detail the canvasser went into with the voter for their plan the more likely the voter would follow through with it. A canvasser was instructed to ask a voter if they were going to walk, cycle or drive to the polls and if they were going before or after work, or church or a family occasion. They were encouraged to bring along a spouse, child, parent, friend or co-worker. A voter would be eliminated from the turnout list after the vote was in, meaning if the voter failed to follow through with the plan, a canvasser could return to that voter and reschedule a visit to the polls.

The campaign in Ohio used postcards as a way of reminding people of their plan to vote, and of their commitment to the president. On the back of the postcards was a calendar indicating when the county's early vote centre was open, and voters initialed the day when they would be able to vote. The canvasser would be instructed to fill out the address and the recipient's contact details on the card, and as they were doing it run through the details of the voting plan. While the canvasser was instructed to write down the information on the early vote card, as a way to make sure the information was both legible, and so they could control how long the conversation would take, the voter was asked to sign the card themselves. Research on behalf of the campaign showed that if a voter received a card with their own signature on it, they would be more likely to follow through with the card, instead of throwing away the card. The campaign even began to tailor their early vote cards to specific audiences, for instance using a 'lol cat' (humorous caption photo) card for college campuses or faith based card for church congregations.

It seemed like a complicated way to formally ask people to make a commitment to the president by voting early. But it became clear that it was working as effectively as the campaign had forecasted when the postcards were regularly spotted in the hands of those queuing at the early vote centre, and by the hundreds of thousands of Democratic early votes in Ohio.

Lessons for Labour

The Labour party still has lessons to learn from the rigid, performance focused structure and volunteer ethos that was established by OFA in 2008, but while it seeks to make those changes we can already begin to incorporate the innovations from the most recent election alongside this. Developing a fully operational analytics unit at the Labour party will take several years, but we can certainly begin to use such techniques in key seats for the 2015 election, before rolling it out nationally. It would also be fairly simple to incorporate lessons from scripting techniques that proved to be successful in the United States immediately for use before 2015, and then undertake detailed field research of our own to find the most appropriate turnout techniques for Britain. While we do not have the same system for voting early at a polling stations in the UK, the Labour party could easily replicate some of the advantages of securing our vote ahead of election day itself by more effectively organising the registration

of postal votes. By treating the postal vote period as an extended GOTV and encouraging as many voters as possible to vote in advance of polling day, we too stand a far greater chance of turning out all those we need to.

All of these innovations will help us run more effective campaigns, but we still need to maintain our focus on incorporating the most important lesson from both presidential elections of all: to respect, empower and include our activists and supporters.

5 SHIFTING THE ODDS

Fran O'Leary

A number-crunching electoral strategy wins votes in the US while never losing sight of the individual behind the polling card. Labour needs a five-point plan to understand and engage with the electorate on British soil.

From the clock-free casino floors to the perfume infused air conditioning, and from the hope laced playing cards to the ever shifting odds, Las Vegas is a town that thrives on dreams, desperation and data. Numbers are crunched 24/7, as 39 million visitors spend over $6.3bn gambling their time away on the Las Vegas strip. Volunteering a few miles away from the casinos, I had the opportunity to see how the strategic analysis of data was used to support a very different kind of high stakes endeavour: the 2012 election campaign.

The innovative approach taken by Dan Wagner, and his team of data analysts in the Democrat's 'Cave' has been widely reported. Numbers played a crucial role in the success of the grassroots campaign in Las Vegas, Nevada, as well as on the national stage. Having seen how the campaign's approach to information played out on the doorstep, I strongly believe that there are lessons that can be learnt for the UK. Drawing on this experience, I outline a five point plan for Labour to use data to 'get ready' for the next election, arguing that the party should: get integrating, get cross referencing, get social, get registered and get together – because, when it comes to data, what happens in Vegas doesn't have to stay in Vegas.

Understanding citizens

At the strategic level, the Democrats focused on two factors: the likelihood that an individual would cast a vote and the likelihood that they would vote for Obama. Analysts also looked at three other factors: susceptibility to being persuaded to support Obama, willingness to donate money and willingness to volunteer for the campaign. This approach focused on the voter as an individual with the potential to change their views and behaviour, rather than as a passive function of their demographics.

The Democrats conducted thousands of phone interviews in battleground states, like Nevada, in the run up to the 2008 election to identify people's propensity to vote and to vote for Obama. Combining lessons from consumer marketing in the corporate world as well as the social sciences, the campaign cross-referenced this information with data from voter registration records, consumer data warehouses and past campaign work. Splicing data and identifying patterns, the analysts found they could make compelling behaviour predictions.

Enhancing this approach for the 2012 election, the campaign looked for synergy between teams focused on fundraising, volunteering and those

focused on getting the vote out. Analysing the three additional factors outlined above produced a more integrated approach to understanding voters. It is believed that data integration helped the campaign to paint a clearer picture of each individual, understood as citizens with the capacity for agency and the ability to play an active role in the movement for change. In Las Vegas I saw the impact of this approach as sympathetic non-voters were targeted, became inspired and transformed into voters and volunteers.

The integrated approach to data also helped to take microtargeting and randomised control experiments to the next level. Yair Ghitza and Todd Rodgers detailed the role of these techniques in 'The Change We Need', published by the Fabian Society after the 2008 election. Since then, data has been used with additional experiment-informed programmes, which measure how effective different types of messaging are at shifting public opinion. This intelligence, along with local knowledge, informed the choices made on which campaigning materials to take out with 'walk sheets', or canvassing routes in Las Vegas.

The Democrats also cross referenced data on citizens with their TV viewing habits – allowing the campaign to better identify the time slots that could deliver the greatest number of persuadable citizens per dollar. In Las Vegas, I saw the impact of broadcasting TV advertising at different times to guarantee that a wide range of casino and hotel shift workers would have exposure to the message.

Engaging with citizens

The mobilisation of sympathetic non-voters was crucial to campaign strategy in states like Nevada. The Democrat's integrated approach to data gave the Las Vegas campaign team a clear sense of which citizens were non-voters and could, potentially, be persuaded to register and vote for Obama this time round.

Armed with this information, activists started engagement early, with targeted voter registration drives. The early vote campaign and the 'get out the vote' campaign helped the Democrats to register 1.8 million voters on the ground across the USA (not including every voter who downloaded a form online). Volunteering in Clark County, where unemployment stood at 12 per cent while the median Las Vegas income was $39,000, I was struck by the Nevada campaign's success in increasing voter registration amongst those who identified themselves as Latinos by 20 per cent since 2008. Between 2010 and 2012, the number of people who registered to vote in Nevada increased by almost 140,000, early turnout rose from 34 per cent to 49 per cent and overall turnout increased from 65 per cent to 81 per cent, with Obama successfully securing over 52 per cent of the vote.

Commentators such as Sonia Sodha have highlighted the limitations of the "sophisticated science of electioneering", while others have warned of the potential to exacerbate differences – in a divided country – through clinical application of micro-targeting. However, having seen how information can be used to help accelerate connections – and build friendships on the doorstep - I believe that integrated data can help to bridge divides and play an important role in a 'one nation' campaign.

Data, of course, can't do the job alone. A strategic national narrative – bringing the nation together – along with messaging delivered through authentic 'neighbour to neighbour' conversations is key. While activists high

fived as they brought in completed walk sheets, I was struck by the efficiency of the Nevada campaign in feeding fresh feedback data into the system. Driving a campaign as a two-way conversation – rather than an old school campaign in which messages are simply broadcast – gave the movement energy, evolving relevance, heart and soul.

Get ready: Five lessons for Labour from Vegas

1. Get integrating

Labour could further integrate data on members, donors, volunteers, supporters and sympathisers to provide a better organised movement and a more motivational experience for citizens. Additional investment in analysis and integration will pay dividends over the long-term.

2. Get cross referencing

Within the data restrictions at play in the UK, and taking account concerns about confidentiality, the Labour party could explore cross referencing a wider range of data to help to better understand citizens and better target those, in particular, who are non-voters.

3. Get social

The UK is home to some of the most innovative tech entrepreneurs and leading thinkers on social media sentiment. Labour could bring together sympathetic tech pioneers to help find ways to take information integration to the next level, looking for opportunities to better use social data. Drawing on the expertise of bodies like the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media, at Demos, is also advisable.

4. Get registered

The Labour party can get ready to encourage sympathetic non-voters to register to vote, drawing on techniques from the US as well as the UK, and helping to ensure citizens are aware of the new individual electoral registration regime. With almost 40 per cent of UK adults not voting, campaigners can use this time to build up a clearer picture of non-voters and their likelihood to vote Labour.

5. Get together

Labour should focus on how integrated data can be used, alongside a strategic national narrative and authentic citizen engagement, to get people talking, forge friendships, settle differences and further the one nation vision.

6 STORYTELLING

Mary Hough

From holding State of the Union house parties to relaying personal narratives on social media, the power of people within constituencies was harnessed in Obama's 2012 victory. Labour should not be afraid to put members at the heart of what they're trying to achieve in 2015.

One of the key principles of the Obama 2012 campaign was the power of people. People speaking to people, friends talking to friends, neighbours talking to neighbours about why they were voting for Barack Obama. We knew that our strongest messengers were people like Catherine, a volunteer leader in North Carolina, telling her story and asking voters to join her at next week's phone bank:

> "People talk about what issue you're concerned about and I can't pick them apart. For me, without the environment being clean what good is it? Without a job, what good is it? Without health care, what good is it? So I can't find one issue – for me it's a view of life, of what's important, of what I think is going to be best for my granddaughters' future."

Translating this principle online, we focused on telling the story of volunteers like Catherine, of the work President Obama was doing for Americans, and the story of the campaign to inspire people to sign up for a volunteer shift, to pitch in whatever they could afford, and to vote for Obama and Vice President Joe Biden in November.

We told these stories through blog posts, photos, videos, audio stories and social media. From April 2011 to November 2012, the campaign blog chronicled the campaign in a way that the national media couldn't or wouldn't. We were able to tell the story of the campaign in all 50 states, letting Democratic voters in Alaska and Alabama know that they weren't alone, and showing voters in Ohio and Virginia the difference that their efforts were making as we inched closer to election day.

Recruiting volunteers

One of the biggest differences between our campaign and the Romney campaign was our ground game. We were building the largest grassroots campaign in presidential politics, we'd been building it since 2007, and we weren't about to stop signing up volunteers now.

A crucial goal for the digital team was turning online supporters into

offline volunteers, taking people from reading the blog and following @BarackObama on Twitter to volunteering in their community. By sharing the stories of volunteers who talked about why they were involved and what they did for the campaign, we showed readers that it was people just like them, in communities just like theirs, who were using their time and talents to re-elect the president. People like Murph, a volunteer in Iowa who made over 16,000 phone calls to potential voters before the election, said:

> "I thought it was really important for me to get involved – it's the one voice we have about what is going to happen. I can go home and sit in front of the TV for four or five hours, or I can be down here trying to make a difference. This is what I love doing."

For national events like the president's annual State of the Union address to Congress or for national days of action, we would recruit supporters by telling the story of events from beginning to end – explaining the process, what was involved, and why you should take part.

The State of the Union house parties, where supporters came together to watch the address with friends and neighbours, were a key opportunity to plan the next stages of the campaign in their neighborhood. To encourage participation we followed a simple story and engagement arc:

1. Ask to host a party

   Feature an interview with a host explaining why she was so excited to sign up, and sharing top tips for organising your own party.

2. Ask to attend a party

   Post an an update from the host talking about how preparations were coming along and how many people were already signed up to attend.

3. Ask to spread the word

   Transmit live coverage of the speech and reactions from supporters at house parties using social media.

4. Ask to sign up to help support the president's agenda

   Report back from house parties using photos, audio, and interviews to show how successful and popular and how they were making a difference in the next stage of the campaign.

Through a mixture of individual stories like Murph's, and stories of big events like the State of the Union and weekends of action, we recruited thousands of volunteers who spoke to their neighbors, who knocked on doors, and who made phone calls to re-elect President Obama.

Raising money

In the summer of 2012, we were being outraised by the Republicans, their super PACs, and by the Romney campaign itself. Since 2007, the Obama campaign had been powered by millions of small donors giving what they could

afford, rather than being reliant on special interests or on the deep pockets of one or two individuals. As thousands of volunteers were spending their Saturdays knocking on doors and their weeknights making phone calls, we needed millions of supporters to pitch in what they could to help us close the fundraising gap.

Inspiring people to make a donation in the tough economic climate was challenging. We looked to three different narratives to help inspire people to give:

1. The stories of people who had already pitched in

> "I've supported President Obama since the 2008 campaign, but I chose to donate this time around because of his support for gay marriage. My partner and I recently bought a home and are beginning to set up a life together. Marriage is the logical next step, and the president's support makes us feel like that could happen, like it's no longer some crazy dream for me to actually marry the person I love."
> *Bob, a former sales associate in Pennsylvania*

2. The story of the campaign: We were being outspent and we needed your help

> "For the first time in modern American history, the incumbent (that's us) will get outspent in a re-election campaign – by some estimates as much as 3-to-1. Over the last 10 days of this month alone, GOP [Republican party] outside groups will spend $20 million attacking President Obama on TV. Think about that, then think about what they'll spend over the last 10 days in October."
> *Stephanie Cutter, deputy campaign manager in July 2012*

3. And the story of the small donations: How they were helping us win

One campaign video took a look at the key swing states and how many offices we'd been able to open, how many neighbourhood teams we'd built, and how many days of action we'd organised, thanks to the money raised during the previous quarter.

By showing people that their $5-$10 could really make a difference to the success of the campaign, we were able to raise millions of dollars through barackobama.com alone, helping to power Obama to victory.

Getting out the vote

Each of the 66 million people who voted for President Obama has a story to tell about why they supported were supporting him, and for many it was the difference he had made to their lives over the past four years. Supporters' stories helped to translate what could have been dry and abstract policy achievements into real, tangible results, answering the question of "why should I vote for Barack Obama?"

In Michigan and Ohio, where one million jobs were saved by the president's decision to rescue the auto industry, people like Karen, who was laid off in 2008 as the auto industry nearly went under, are now employed again:

> "When I got that phone call, I'll never forget, my kids and we were all sitting here and we hugged and screamed and all danced around like fools. Saying 'Mommy's going back to work.'"

By reforming the American health care system, 3.1 million young people can now stay on their parents' health insurance until they are 26. And, starting in 2014, insurance companies will no longer be able to deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions.

For Emily, a university student in Nebraska, this meant she could receive the treatment she needed when diagnosed with a rare and debilitating condition:

> "I'm the person they're talking about there. I'm the person with the pre-existing condition. I'm the person under 26 who is going to need that insurance when I graduate. For me health reform is the chance to do what I want to do because I want to do it, not because it's the job that's going to give me the best chance of having adequate health care."

With the end of the war in Iraq, President Obama brought mums and dads, brothers and sisters home, reuniting Americans with their loved ones.

> "Because [President Obama] ended the Iraq war, I have my dad back safe. Now I get to spend birthdays and holidays with my dad, and we can do all the things I've missed out on while he was away."
> *Ian, Las Vegas*

The president's key policy achievements – health reform, rescuing the auto industry, and ending the war in Iraq – were often controversial in the US and attacked from all sides. Health reform in particular was surrounded by spurious claims and counter claims in the media about what it would do and how it would affect ordinary Americans. By talking about what these issues actually meant for voters we were able to explain the most complex of benefits in the easiest way, giving millions of people a reason to vote for Barack Obama.

Telling your own story

Alongside the direct asks – the recruitment of volunteers, supporters, and donors – there was an intrinsic value to telling the story of the campaign. No one else was going to tell the story of our volunteers and supporters, no one else was going to tell the story of how the president's policies were helping ordinary Americans, and no one else was going to tell the story of our grassroots donors and the difference their money was making.

In chronicling the campaign we made sure that, outside of the daily media tumble, voters could see how the campaign was going, what the important issues were, what was happening in Iowa, in Ohio, in Virginia, and yes, in

Alaska. In creating this chronicle we told the story of the momentum of the campaign, the ups, the downs, from phone banks to the convention, from voter registration drives to the debates, we captured it all. And by asking people to care about this story we were telling, whether in a blog post, watching a video, or by following us on Twitter, voters moved one step closer to being a volunteer, to being a donor, and to voting for Obama-Biden in November.

Lessons for British politics

In every part and at every level of the campaign the importance of our supporters, volunteers, and small donors was paramount. It was their voices, their time, their talents, and their money that won the election.

What this means for UK politics is to not be afraid to put members' voices at the heart of what you're trying to achieve. Look to the hard work and dedication that's going on in constituencies every day and shine a light on it. Recruit new volunteers by telling the story of existing volunteers. Increase turnout at canvasses by telling the story of successful canvasses across the country. Raise money by telling the story of how that money will help build the party. Make the case for your policies by explaining what they'll mean to ordinary people like Karen, Emily, and Ian.

If you give people a reason to believe in what you're doing, there's no limit to what they'll achieve.

7 THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Claire Hazelgrove

Labour should take great inspiration from the innovative online strategy of the Obama 2012 campaign. Their use of digital platforms helped to encourage, facilitate and enhance more traditional field campaigning.

On the morning of 4th April 2011, millions of people woke to find an email from the president sitting in their inbox. It declared the start of his campaign for re-election.

But the video within the email didn't feature Obama. Instead 'It begins with us' initiated a theme that would come to characterise the campaign – ordinary citizens doing "something unprecedented: coordinating millions of one-on-one conversations between supporters across every single state, reconnecting old friends, inspiring new ones to join the cause. And that kind of campaign takes time to build".

This chapter will look at the role of digital in four key areas of use to Labour ahead of the 2015 election - movement building, organising, fundraising and getting the message out.

Movement building

From that very first email, the message was clear. The 2012 campaign was going to have to be bigger, better and – crucially – smarter than in 2008. Though in some ways he was the underdog once again, Obama no longer had the outsider status that had helped him garner momentum before. This time around, support had to be nurtured from the get go.

This was recognised in a targeted email from Joe Rospars, chief digital strategist, hiring analysts and scientists to head up a new data insurgency. Once on board, they worked out that around 85 per cent of under 35s whom the campaign wanted to target to turnout to vote were friends with a fan of the president on Facebook.

In asking those on their million strong email list to use Facebook Connect to say "I'm in", the very first action taken by supporters provided the campaign with the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of these friends.

These details were then matched with voter data on the campaign's database – Narwhal – to create a more complete profile. This database, created by Harper Reed, Chief Technology Officer, and his team synched all data on voters at all levels of the organisation – from Chicago down to local field offices.

The team used this matching throughout the campaign, and intensively on election day via Facebook notifications to ensure that fans had contacted

these friends in swing states, and urged them to vote.

Having such sophisticated systems meant that, in Virginia, with reliable data coming in at a pace to the state boiler room, we were able to turn cars and buses on a dime, redirecting them while they were still in transit from nearby states. With increased precision, this helped tip the balance towards underperforming regions in the final hours before the polls closed on this almost two-year long campaign.

Organising

On the ground, you could truly see the blend of digital and more traditional field campaigning bringing in more volunteers, and convincing voters to support the president. Without the online voter activation network (VAN) it would have been all but impossible to target or mobilise as efficiently.

VAN was the data entry tool used in 2008 too, and updates included better events and turf cutter tools (for creating canvass packets). As the campaign progressed, a new 'dialer' was brought in, auto dialing voters and only connecting you with ones who picked up. This saved hours and meant that thousands more voters were spoken with.

Dashboard was open to anyone and was, in essence, a new version of myBO - the 2008 campaign's own social network. In signing up, you'd get an email from your local organiser, initiating a relationship that was then cultivated by the field team. Events and call tools for organising locally were easily accessible here too; the call lists were just less critical than the ones held in VAN.

The team also weaved its way into regular social media networks, having conversations with voters through online 'town hall' meetings. The president also took part in a Google+ Hangout with 200,000 people, followed by an 'Ask Me Anything' on Reddit – giving the social network its biggest day yet with over 5 million page views.

Katherine Richards' chapter has more on organising in depth, but it was through this well-oiled machine that volunteer numbers grew as the campaign lurched forward. By September, Obama 2012 had already beaten its younger incarnation, both in terms of the number of voters registered and conversations held.

Fundraising

The campaign raised over $1.1bn throughout its duration. $690 million was raised through digital channels, with around 65 per cent of that through email donations alone. By the end of the campaign, more than 4.5 million people had donated at least once, with the average contribution sitting at $53.

The introduction of Quick Donate was an important milestone for the campaign. Originally invented to get around restrictions to SMS donations, Quick Donate enabled supporters to give up to $50 simply by texting in 'GIVE'. This gained Obama 2012 the accolade of becoming the first presidential campaign to take donations via text message.

From March 2012 this tool also turned what had been a longer online donation process into a one-click reality. Once a supporter had registered their credit card, clicking on a hyperlink in an email would automatically contrib-

ute their chosen amount.

It would be easy to misunderstand the lessons here - smart tech is not a solution to the challenge of giving. While Quick Donate made giving much simpler, people chose to give because they saw it as a valuable way to help the president and boost the movement they felt ownership of.

Headed up by Teddy Goff, digital was the largest team in Obama's Chicago HQ with 20 staff dedicated to email writing alone and an additional team responsible for email testing. In comparison, there were five staff in total on Labour's digital team in 2010. It's since dropped to four.

These staffers were able to pen dozens of draft emails and then narrow down and test a number of variations culminating in the message that eventually landed in a supporter's inbox.

The two most successful fundraising emails were sent out in the president's name at two pivotal moments – when Obama 2012 was on the brink of being outspent by the Romney campaign, and immediately after the first presidential debate (in which he was considered to have underperformed).

The debate night email simply lead with "Hey" - a subject line you might well find in your inbox from a friend, while the fundraising deadline email went with the frank "I will be outspent". This email highlighted the importance of testing, with a $2 million fundraising difference between the best and worst performing subject lines.

The capacity to test was vital here, but so was the relationship that the team had with supporters. A subject line does not in and of itself bring in millions; supporters responded to the sense of urgency, need and value in contributing that the team evoked.

Getting the message out

Rebuttal and message distribution were a core part of Obama 2012's artillery, with Labour party member Matthew McGregor heading up the digital rapid response team. While Twitter was just a fledgling social network at the previous election, it was now shifting the media landscape into real time, which meant that influencing talking heads and voters needed to happen almost instantaneously.

From turning around infographics and blogs within a couple of hours, to responding by video to attacks or mistakes from the Romney camp within 24 hours, McGregor's team's secret was this: a war chest of pre-prepared content ready to go or be tweaked when a ripe moment arrived.

An example of timeliness being key was Obama's "This seat is taken" tweet, which was shared more than 62,000 times shortly after Clint Eastwood held a debate with an empty chair at the Republican Convention. The record-breaking "Four more years" victory tweet on election night has been retweeted more than 800,000 times.

The sign off process was still rigorous, but super speedy to ensure opportunities weren't missed as a result of slow internal processes. If Labour is to excel online in 2015, then prioritisation coupled with a clear and quick sign off process will be vital.

However, none of this rapid response work would have been possible without the campaign's research team. It was this often overlooked group that not only carried out the fact checking, but went far beyond a policy remit and came up with the hard-hitting ideas for rebuttal – from identifying

which issues to go after, to ensuring the response travelled far and wide. This nimble team could be invaluable to Labour.

These tools and talking points were sent down the organisational chain and out to volunteers by local organisers. The team prepared 7,000 tweets for the debates, some of which were sent out in the same way. Out on the doorstep, having regularly updated talking points and easily digestible facts really helped to support and enthuse new volunteers.

The team was also helped enormously by organic rebuttal from supporters. As Sam Graham-Felsen, the 2008 campaign's chief blogger, put it to Mashable: "when there's a scandal or a gaffe — such as the 47 per cent comment — it's Barack Obama's supporters, not his staff, who are sending out that information to their networks of hundreds, if not thousands."

This was absolutely essential to getting the campaign's message out. Smart content is of no use if it isn't being seen, and voters were typically much more trusting of news and stories that came from friends rather than traditional media.

Where next for Labour online?

Though one of the smaller teams in HQ, the digital team are working hard to upgrade the online experience for party members and supporters. The team of four, headed up by John Miles, are currently responsible for all email drafting and testing, social media, issue-based campaigns, supporting the regional teams and shadow cabinet, along with filming and producing video content.

Backed by Iain McNicol, the digital team is starting to recruit additional staff. This smart and necessary move will see the team expand well beyond its peak of five during the last general election.

Over the next year, they will be offering a lot more, but will also need increased involvement and responsibility from local CLPs and members. Great video, storytelling and social media campaigns - such as during the Eastleigh by-election - are tough for the national team to create alone. A cultural shift towards digital has happened in Labour HQ in recent years, but we also need a cultural shift in the wider party.

By bringing Blue State Digital (BSD) we should see the Labour party shift up a gear online. As part of this, BSD's Matthew McGregor is advising Labour on digital and nearing the end of a full review of the party's digital presence, from the local level to shadow cabinet interaction with voters.

Data capture has long been at the heart of the digital team's aims, and moving over to NationBuilder shortly will mean that, among other things, CLPs will get weekly lists of new volunteers in their area. On the national side, campaigns will use BSD tools – including the same email system as Obama 2012.

Membersnet is being completely redesigned, aiming to become quicker, more user friendly and campaign driven. The virtual phone bank that many members used both online and via the iCampaign app in 2010 will be upgraded and placed at front and centre of this.

Local campaign fundraising pages will also be at the heart of a redesigned Membersnet and, nationally, Labour is looking into tools that simplify giving, in the way that Quick Donate did for Obama 2012.

It is also worth remembering the differences between our systems here

and in the US when considering what Labour could learn from or adopt. The Obama campaign was a self-made operation and, while part of the Democratic party, it was largely independent in organisation and structure both online and on the ground.

In 2008, the Democratic presidential campaign had to all but start from scratch; there aren't local parties putting the work in years in advance of elections and it was a party leader without a single leader between 2004 and 2008. Labour may not have the novelty of a new operation, but we are in a position to offer members a far more inclusive experience as we work to earn our way back into government.

The 'Your Britain' website is one of the ways in which Labour's digital team is helping to open up the party. Actively offering supporters the chance to shape Labour's policy agenda is a world away from anything the more top-down Obama 2012 campaign was able to try online – a big cultural difference.

Conclusion

The efforts and innovation seen at the core of Obama 2012's online presence truly remain the standard to meet and beat in political campaigning. Digital had a legitimate place at the top table and, as a result, we saw tools such as Quick Donate and databases like Narwhal help local teams strike real blows against the Romney campaign.

This campaign was harder than 2008 in many ways, but Obama 2012 wasn't risk averse - an important cultural lesson for Labour. As an ethos, it was thought better to try ten things and get one wrong, rather than to just try three safer options and be satisfied with them.

The digital team's real success was in creating an empowering, integrated experience for staff and supporters alike - targeting swing voters, bolstering the campaign through simple fundraising, amplifying the message and facilitating meaningful relationships between local organisers and supporters.

Without so many committed supporters taking to the doorstep or picking up the phone, January could well have seen the inauguration of President Mitt Romney. Smart tech wasn't the catalyst for activism, but the dynamic online structure helped encourage, facilitate and enhance it.

If Labour heeds some of these lessons, and digital is invested in and truly given a seat at the top table, Labour's online strategy could be quite something to see unfold at the next general election - and hopefully be something the Democratic candidate's team can, in return, learn a few lessons from in 2016.

8 THE DOG THAT DIDN'T BARK

Will Straw

The 2012 presidential election was primarily a battle of candidates' characters. However, the clarity and consistency of the Democrats' key propositions must inspire Labour to develop its own policy offer, which is in touch with public opinion, true to its values and clearly communicated to the electorate.

Policy was the dog that didn't bark during last year's presidential election. Despite expectation to the contrary, the battle was fought on the basis of the candidates' record and character rather than on their policy proposals. This chapter examines how policy was expected to shape the election, how it failed to deliver on that promise, and what lessons can be drawn for the UK.

Going into the 'fall', three factors persuaded commentators that the election would be dominated by policy divides. First, the preceding four years had been characterised by partisan battles on a series of policy issues. Until the Republicans won Congress for the first time in 40 years in 1994, policy debates had been fought largely on a consensual basis with divides often falling across regions rather than parties. During the 1980s, President Reagan governed despite Democratic control of Congress and passed landmark legislation such as the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, which lowered income tax rates and the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which reduced revenues by close to $9bn.

During the Clinton years, the Democrats lost control of both Houses after the mid-term elections in 1994 but the president still managed to pursue a progressive legislative agenda. This included the Mental Health Parity Act of 1986, which ensured that as much could be paid out from insurance policies for mental health issues as for generic medical or surgical matters and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, which induced businesses to participate in a series of schemes to deliver skills and training. When George W Bush first became president, he did so with Democratic control of the Senate and was willing to sign progressive reforms like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which, although criticised for other reasons, supported disadvantaged students and the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 which regulated the financing of political campaigns. He also managed to pass conservative legislation including the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, which cut several income tax rates.

By the time President Obama took office in 2009, bipartisanship had largely ground to a halt. Within days of the inauguration, Obama sought to pass a Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The eventual $787bn package to stimulate the economy was supported by just three of 41 Republican senators and none of the 178 House members. The Affordable Care Act of 2010, which intro-

duced Obamacare could not manage a single Republican supporter. After Obama lost the House in 2010, the pace of legislation slowed dramatically with the Jumpstart Our Business Startups Act, which eased securities regulations for small businesses, perhaps the only piece of major legislation in the whole of 2012.

Second, much of President Obama's first term policy agenda remained unfulfilled. Despite the controversies over the ultimately successful Recovery and Healthcare Acts, a series of policy proposals lay on the cutting room floor. The American Clean Energy and Security Act (also known as the Waxman-Markey Bill after its two authors), which would have created an emissions trading scheme similar to the EU's, passed the House but failed to make it through the Senate in time before the 2010 mid-term election.

In 2008, Obama said that he would make immigration reform a "top priority" of his first term as president but was thwarted by Republicans refusing to countenance legislation until further resources were put into border security. Despite putting legislation, which had passed the House, to the Senate in the final weeks of the 2009-10 Congress, Obama failed to get enough votes to prevent a filibuster.

He also failed in his efforts to close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp due to fears from Congress about what would happen if detainees were transferred to American soil. These examples and many others suggested Obama would be keen to emphasise the sense of unfinished business during the election campaign.

Third, Mitt Romney chose as his running mate Representative Paul Ryan who was renowned as a policy wonk. Mr Ryan was, and is, chair of the House budget committee, a position he used to promote his approach to fiscal consolidation. The 'Path to prosperity' proposal (also known as the 'Ryan plan') included extensive spending cuts to Medicare and Medicaid budgets and the halving of all discretionary spending. Although heavily criticised by liberal commentators such as Paul Krugman, the proposal made Ryan a poster boy for the Tea Party movement. As a result the election was expected to focus on his ideas.

As other chapters in this book make plain, instead of becoming an election about policy ideas, the campaign was largely contested on the candidates' respective characters. Obama ultimately motivated his 2.2 million volunteers and 66 million voters by consistently painting Mitt Romney as being out of touch with ordinary Americans.

> "We did make a key strategic decision to define Romney early before he could define himself," said chief political strategist, David Axelrod. "We knew that Romney's 30,000-feet description of himself as a 'successful businessman' was going to be appealing to a lot of people who were worried about the economy, so it was really important that we defined what kind of businessman he was – we all knew that back in '94 he had lost his Senate race to another candidate in part because of concerns over practices of his firm."

In relation to policy, the two candidates ended up in stalemate. Obama was wary of making too many promises given the relative lack of delivery in his first term. He was also concerned about making new commitments, which would require new public spending given the need to deal with the fiscal deficit if re-elected.

Indeed, the Democratic party's platform (equivalent to a party manifesto in the UK) was silent on the specific spending cuts and tax rises that would be needed and, instead, referred to spending cuts that had already been "signed into law" rather than setting out any further policies to cut the deficit. The Republican campaign failed to capitalise on this absence of new ideas. By contrast, they attempted to frame the president as a radical socialist for his first term policies.

Meanwhile, to win the Republican primary, Romney had needed to distance himself from his own progressive policies as governor of Massachusetts. Notably Romney had passed state-wide healthcare reform, which acted in a similar way to Obama's policies by mandating most residents to obtain insurance coverage. In 2007, he had said, "If Massachusetts succeeds in implementing [Romneycare], then that will be a model for the nation" before calling in 2012 for Obama's reforms to be "repealed in its entirety". Romney also changed his mind on abortion, the causes of climate change, and gun laws.

To avoid further criticism about being a flip-flopper, Romney sought to avoid definition on policy during the presidential campaign. Damningly, one of his key advisers was quoted saying, "Romney doesn't want to really engage these [foreign policy] issues until he is in office."

Meanwhile, Paul Ryan and his plan quickly became a liability. For example, voters flocked away from the Republicans over their Medicare plans. In late August, Obama led Romney by eight points in Florida and 10 points in Ohio on the question of who would better handle Medicare. By the end of September, with Ryan established as the running mate, Obama's lead had risen to 15 and 16 points respectively. Much of this shift came from elderly voters whom Obama had struggled to win over until Ryan's plans were exposed.

Paul Ryan's tax proposals became a problem for Romney during the presidential debates too. During the first clash, which Romney was largely viewed to have won, the Republican was accused in retrospect of having avoided the truth on his policy platform on 27 occasions. For example, he refused to admit that his plans for a 20 per cent across-the-board tax cut on all federal income tax rates would cut revenues by $5 trillion over a decade, as Obama claimed. Romney later refused to admit that his tax cuts would add anything to the deficit.

What little policy was discussed during the campaign tended to focus on relatively minor issues such as whether or not China was a currency manipulator. Discussions on the economy were broad brush and generally focused on the causes of the continuing economic crisis rather than on potential solutions. And as has been widely noted, climate change did not come up once as an issue during the debates despite hurricane Sandy hitting the west coast in the run up to the third and final debate.

Deriving lessons for the UK is difficult because of the differences in the nature of a presidential election with far larger campaign budgets. Indeed, the main lessons for the UK from the 2012 election will fall in other chapters of this book around voter mobilisation, volunteer management, and uses of technology. Nonetheless, two observations stand out.

First, while challengers must be wary of revealing their policy hand too early for fear of providing ammunition to the incumbent, they cannot hope to win an election unless they are clear and consistent about the positions they do take. Given his record of changing position again and again, Romney's best strategy may well have been to avoid getting drawn on policy specifics

and instead focus on Obama's record. But this provided significant ammunition for Obama and his surrogates.

In a sense the die was cast for Romney as soon as the primary election became elongated and forced him to move away from the policy positions that had formed the basis of his successful tenure as governor of Massachusetts.

Obama's strategists were quick to spot this opportunity. As David Axelrod revealed, "we knew that flip-flop was a cause of concern to conservatives in his party. So we went out in the fall of 2011 – myself and David Plouffe – to start raising the questions about it, talking to reporters and reacting to [Republican primary] debates saying he had no core and was running away from his record … [Republicans] started picking up on it and that lengthened the primary process."

In previous election cycles, candidates like John Kerry and John McCain were – like Romney – exposed as flip-floppers. By contrast, candidates with a more tightly defined and consistent policy agenda like Bill Clinton and George Bush Jr maintained integrity on policy throughout their campaigns. The same was true for Obama in 2008 who retained extraordinary consistency in his campaign themes – healthcare, climate change, and Iraq withdrawal – between the announcement of his candidature in February 2007 until his victory in November 2008.

Learning from this, Labour must enter the 2015 election with a clear and consistent set of propositions. Those shadow cabinet members with a record in government must be wary of being exposed for holding contradictory positions in opposition unless they have a robust account of why they have changed their mind.

Labour may be tempted to distance itself from many of the policies of the 1997-2010 era but voters will ask why more wasn't done while the party was in power. That said, a 'Back to the Future' policy agenda, based on opposing cuts and repealing policy changes without alternative reforms, risks Labour being vulnerable to a 'Forward not Back' attack from the Tories.

The economy is a case in point. If Labour is to populate the idea of 'responsible capitalism' with cogent policy ideas, Ed Miliband and Ed Balls must be clear why this agenda was not enacted in government. What has changed about Labour's analysis of the economy today, which was missed in government or not possible to understand at the time?

So too, in its response to Gove's education reforms, Labour must have a consistent approach to academies, which it invented, and to free schools, which followed. Decisions about whether free schools will retain their independence, when new free schools will be allowed, and how new tiers of accountability will be introduced should include a clear assessment of the party's own education record, as well as a critique of the current education secretary, to avoid charges of hypocrisy.

A second lesson can be derived on what not to do. Opposition parties should not expect victory on the basis of reminding the public that the incumbent is unpopular and has broken its promises. Romney's attempt to revive yesterday's battles over healthcare and the stimulus did more to mobilise Obama's supporters than it did to persuade voters to switch sides.

Labour must be wary of relying solely on telling voters that the Tories are still the 'nasty party' or that they have been 'betrayed' by Liberal Democrats. The unpopularity of Osborne's austerity, Lansley's NHS reforms and the coalition's timidity on tackling bankers and newspaper editors will not

be enough to persuade disaffected voters to switch to Labour.

While ensuring that it does not fall into the traps set out in the first lesson above, Labour must have a clear and positive message of its own, supported by a policy agenda, if it is to prevail at the next election. At some point in the next two years, in each policy area, Labour will need to switch from a negative 'analysis and critique' mode to a positive 'solution and policy' mode. In some ways, the bolder the position, the less need for detail. For example, micro announcements from Labour like the reintroduction of 10p tax and means-testing of the winter fuel allowance suffered from being too specific. By contrast, the broad brush approach to reintroducing a contributory principle to the welfare system or providing a jobs guarantee for the long-term unemployed gives a clear sense of the direction of travel without the need for detail that can be picked apart.

It is true that governments tend to lose, rather than oppositions winning, elections and the coalition is certainly doing its best at the moment. But it is not enough for an insurgent, as Romney found out to his cost, to ignore its own record and focus solely on the incumbent's. True, much of the battle in 2015 will take place at the local level and will be underpinned by new organising and campaigning techniques covered elsewhere in this volume. But Labour must develop its own forward offer, which is in touch with public opinion, true to its values, and clearly communicated. Muzzling the policy canine will not help with that task.

9 TEN THINGS WE LEARNED FROM CHARLOTTE

Polly Billington & Olly Parker

In September 2012, Charlotte North Carolina and the Democratic party welcomed tens of thousands of journalists, delegates and volunteers to what is a small southern American electoral battleground. For two weeks the authors flew over and joined the staff of the Democratic National Committee. They were low ranking cogs in a machine charged with running one of the biggest media events on the planet.

It's the day before the convention starts and we're all being given a whistle-stop tour around the Time Warner Cable Arena. In between being the permanent home of the Charlotte Bobcats basketball team and playing host to bands like Fleetwood Mac, this will be home of the 2012 Democratic convention. As we're led onto the convention floor for the first time we stop and look around at the 20,000 seats, the 80-foot-high screen showing the Statue of Liberty, the campaign slogans, the glittering media boxes and the stage. The tour guide is probably telling us something we'll definitely need to remember later, but every Brit on the tour, used to windswept seaside towns and soggy sandwiches in tiny hotel conference rooms, is thinking the same thing: this is huge.

Over the next two weeks the Democratic national convention (DNC) made us reassess everything that we had all previously held dear about our Labour party conference back home. No one is suggesting Labour imports the US model wholesale – our two cultures and ways of doing things are different and our reticence and irony as a nation might make some of the glitzier elements hard to translate – but our definition of vibrancy and values rooted in people's lives can be translated.

Also, much has moved on in American political culture since some of New Labour's big beasts made their way stateside to bring home the lessons of Clinton and the third way. Times have also moved on here, so it's useful to re-assess and re-learn what could be done with our conference here in Britain. Below are 10 lessons the Labour party should take on board when hosting its annual political event.

1. Your conference message is your campaign message

Despite the popular portrayal of the Obama movement as an example of the 'new politics' – open, pluralist and free - the message discipline on show at the convention was nothing short of extraordinary. Barack Obama's campaign messages ran through the convention like a stick of rock - every flat surface, every TV screen, every speech and every media interview all came back to the same campaign slogan: 'forward, not back'.

Indeed it's worth noting that the Obama message was not some great leap forward in the field of political campaign messaging, and Labour's veterans of the 2005 general election campaign will remember this slogan only too well, having put out countless election addresses bearing the same words. Be that as it may, even in this age of the new politics, that old campaign adage 'when you're sick of saying the same thing over and over again then that's probably the first time the public has heard it' is still one worth repeating.

2. You're not putting on an event, you're running a TV channel

For four days the conference ran live on rolling news channels. When it came to scheduling, staging, speeches and running order everything was done for maximum impact with a potential television audience. And right from the start, this showed.

To win the election Barack Obama needed to build a voting coalition of college educated liberals, younger voters, ethnic minorities, trade unionists and women. Much like our own conference, different days and slots were given over to different themes, but instead of those themes being decided by policy areas, they were instead directed by the groups of voters the Obama campaign needed to reach out to.

One example is women voters. Campaign research showed that normally Republican leaning female voters were turned off by the Republican rhetoric on abortion. Focus groups then found that by framing the debate around women's health and choice there was a good chance that this group of voters would turn Democratic.

Therefore it was decided that a whole section of one day be dedicated to women's health. The campaign's choice of 'headliner' in this section was inspired. Sandra Fluke, an attorney and women's rights activist, was banned by Republicans from giving evidence to a House of Representatives committee on birth control, and was then subjected to smears and criticisms of her own private life. She spoke passionately on women's health, which had the double impact of highlighting the issue while reminding voters of the Republican's stance.

It struck us as remarkable that an issue which for so long Republicans had run on, and the Democrats had run from, was suddenly at the front and centre of the whole campaign.

There were other logistical choices that gave this the feel of a large TV event rather than a conference, and these could easily be incorporated here in the UK. The choice of venue - a basketball arena - made a huge difference. The venue was in the round with high seating so that the audience felt right on top of you. On television, this large but tight space, always gave the feel of grandeur. Even early on when the upper tiers weren't used, the camera cutaways always made the venue look full and vibrant. Speeches were all delivered straight to camera framed with the campaign messages in sight and the big speeches were timed to run when viewing figures were at their highest. Joe Biden's speech, for example, was moved so it didn't clash with a football game. Speeches alternated with professional campaign broadcasts fed directly to the TV; in essence they had days and days of free television advertising beamed to millions of viewers.

3. It's all about the big speech

There were a hundred reasons to come to this convention, but Obama was the reason we all boarded the plane. Let's face it, the big speech is the reason for every political convention and with an estimated 35 million Americans tuning in, the Democrats weren't about to waste the moment. Everything that day built up to the last 30 seconds of that speech and the TV pictures that followed.

The speech itself was a run through of the convention's key messages, ending with an impassioned plea for America to continue moving forward (not back). The TV pictures of America's two first families clouded in glitter as it rained down on a cheering audience were beamed around the world, with tens of millions more Americans seeing clips and highlights over the coming days. But don't forget about the undercard

Ok so we were all there for Obama, but did you see Michelle? Did you hear about Bill Clinton's master class in modern political oratory? Every night had a clear headliner that played its part in the creation of the overall narrative giving the Democrats three headline chances to ram home its core messages.

The lesson here is, while it's completely right that the focus needs to be on the leader's speech, are we missing a trick by almost completely ignoring the rest of our line-up? Bill Clinton's speech and personal popularity earned Obama another hearing with a set of swing voters the campaign had difficulty in securing. Michelle Obama's helped tell Barack's own personal story. Could the same be done here?

4. Motivate the troops

While it's true that the Obama campaign used the opportunity afforded by the convention to reach out to swing voters, it's probably also true that the majority who tuned in for the duration of the convention were the true believers, who were already voting for Obama.

Volunteer motivation was audible in everything that was said, and issues like a women's right to choose were as much about motivating the activists as they were about reaching out to the swing voters. In a campaign that aimed to put 2.2 million volunteers in the field, and raise hundreds of millions in small donations, throwing 'red meat' to those already solidly in your column was, and is a must.

5. The fringe matters

At the halfway point it's time to fly a flag for the way we do things here at home. One very noticeable feature of the convention was that once the main hall programme ended for the day everyone went home to sleep. At first this was through exhaustion, but as the conference went on we realised it was through design as well. There is no conference fringe to speak of – save for a few caucus meetings where speakers recite their stump speeches - and no place to join the debate or challenge the party's elected representatives on policy or strategy.

This is a real strength of our way of doing things. Once we're all inside the secure zone a certain equality can prevail and there are plenty of opportunities to speak to and question our representatives. While this may run counter

to the point surrounding message discipline, stifling political debate only leads to problems later down the line.

6. If it feels like a festival, why not treat it like one?

A gathering of like minds coming together over a shared passion to make new friends, see their favourites live and even buy a t-shirt. You could be talking about Glastonbury and personally speaking, our group of friends have always treated Labour party conference a little bit like a music festival.

There is serious business to be done at conference, but it would suit everyone to embrace a festival of political atmosphere. While some might consider it a bit like a music festival, that's not feasible or accessible for a large number of people. A better model might be a form of literary festival where discussion is the main attraction of the day and alongside formal business and speeches there is a focus on daytime activities, accessible to all with suitable activities for a wide range of age groups.

7. Don't be afraid of different ways to deliver your message

Arriving at our 'cages' (the metallic fenced off area that were our offices for three days) on the morning of Obama's speech we casually asked what the line-up for the day was. The answer was James Taylor, Mary J Blige, Foo Fighters, Scarlett Johansson and Eva Longoria. This was not the kind of answer we were used to getting back home.

There were 15,000 journalists in North Carolina making it the biggest media event on the planet. Alongside the country's leading politicians, the celebrities lifted the convention above a political event and into a cultural one. The artists were chosen as suitable conduits for the key messages the campaign wanted to deliver to different groups of voters. The net result was coverage in a hundred specialist, non-political magazines and media outlets that normally don't pay attention to elections.

So while the Democratic strategy was a success, it could so easily have gone the other way and the choice of celebrity – and their willingness to be part of the team - was very important. The Obama campaign spent six months trying to portray themselves as the modern, multi-cultural, new face of America and the Republicans as the old, out of touch and confused face of America's past. So even before Clint Eastwood started to angrily berate an empty chair at the Republican convention, Democratic strategists must have been punching the air in delight at the sight of an old, male and slightly confused pro-gun advocate confirming every aspect of the narrative they were trying to paint. Suffice to say, every word on the Democratic autocue was read and tacitly approved by senior Obama strategist David Axelrod. Even Bill Clinton's.

In the past the Democratic use of star names risked accusations the party was out of touch as 'the Hollywood elite' tried to tell the 'real America' how to vote. This problem was neatly sidestepped by the stars constantly referring to their own personal stories.

This wasn't something limited to just Hollywood stars either, as every speaker was fearless about rooting their politics in their personal story. Julio Castro (one of the Democrats' rising stars) talked about his Grandma and how he "holds this mic because she held the broom". Speeches from the

'stars' were also balanced by constant appearances and speeches from ordinary people - cue close-up of Castro's Grandma after mention from the main stage – including soldiers, car-workers and doctors.

8. Harness the power of your volunteers

This was a lesson for Labour's machine as a whole. The way Obama used volunteers was as effective at the convention as it was the doorstep. We worked with over a hundred and their task was pretty menial: delivering hard copies of speeches to journalists fresh out of the printer, running flights of stairs, dodging in and out of lifts and getting to know the back routes round the arena. We had a lot of students, and you'd expect that, but we also had retired, award-winning journalists, directors of communications, full-time mums and PR professionals. People juggled their shifts between their kid's birthday parties and getting the dinner on the table for their families, completing their shift at the store and then doing another shift for us. They sat with us in the cages in a darkened back corner of the arena waiting to do their bit. One lady apologised and asked if she could just do one floor since her replacement knee wasn't too clever on the stairs.

They did it because they believed. Their stories were all about how having a Democratic president made a difference and for the many African Americans working with us, it was the difference Barack and Michelle made by "just being there", as well in healthcare and all the other first-term achievements.

They also did it because they were cared for and felt that they belonged. Pizza and hot dogs and coke are all pretty important after long shifts running up stairs, however the party also made them feel valued and useful.

There are, of course, a number of volunteers who contribute to our conference, but we could harness the good will and talent of our supporters so much more if we asked them for help and did more to make them feel, and be, genuinely involved. The way the Obama campaign looked after its volunteers should be our biggest lesson, not just from the convention, but also from the whole campaign.

9. Politics matters: For three weeks in September the media have to take it seriously

Every year the media clarion call of 'what's the point of conference?' gets steadily louder. There are some legitimate concerns but drill beneath the bluster on news value and basically their reasons are three fold: it's exhausting; it's expensive to produce; it's easier to be cynical. The fact is, political parties and the decisions they make matter, and they affect us all. It's important that the media covers them extensively and it's important that politicians get a chance to make an uninterrupted pitch to the public once in a while. We shouldn't be ashamed of making this case to the press, in plain terms.

10. End on a high

The leader finishes speaking and we all go home. No ifs, no buts.

The Labour party should never consider buying the Democrat model 'off the shelf' and shipping it over here for a UK audience. It wouldn't work and we would have to abandon so much of what makes our own culture special and the media here would likely ridicule us.

However, logistically speaking, there is still a lot we can learn from the American model. One factor is financial: the amount of money that is spent in US politics has allowed them the space and time to innovate more than we ever can, and this research, if applicable, can be put to good use over here.

Also, in terms of anchoring their politics in the wider cultural context of their nation's own story, there is so much we can learn from the Democratic model. Our two parties share a number of values – community, fairness, progress - and it is these values that drive and inform the choices Democrats make while programming their convention. We have much to gain from doing the same.

10 DIVIDE AND RULE?

Kirsty McNeill

There are many lessons for Labour from across the pond, but the party should be wary of slicing and dicing the electorate at the expense of forming a 'one nation' government, or being sucked in to the theatre of electoral combat instead of formulating policies that people can believe in.

Barack Obama's re-election campaign was a marketing effort of unparalleled sophistication, but attempts to import it risk undermining Labour's 'one nation' project.

The mind-bending complexity of team Obama's data collection and analytics operation has obscured what was essentially a pretty simple political strategy: segment the electorate, identify a base, anger it and get it to the polls.

In sharp contrast with 2008, this was a campaign based on turning out a base, not on growing one, and a Labour mirror to it would mean abandoning precisely the switchers whose support enabled New Labour not simply to win big, but to govern well.

Obama's electoral coalition

As a relatively unknown insurgent in 2008, Obama was able to attract a breadth of support and degree of voter passion which even the legendary Clinton machinery, the most effective in the political business anywhere in the post-war west, was unable to better. By 2012, the incumbent had suffered a mid-term monstering and his team knew that key parts of their electoral coalition were in danger of drifting to the Republicans (in the case of older, white, blue-collar voters) or not turning out at all (in the case of minority and younger ones).

In '08 the campaign combined an extraordinary appetite for field innovation with a relatively light political and policy offering which enabled it to harvest pretty much anybody disaffected with Bush, the Clintons or 'Washington'. Four years later and with a White House record to defend, the president needed a clearer and more grounded story to close the enthusiasm gap and persuade his supporters to translate their latent support into active commitment.

The strategic shift between the two campaigns, perhaps best summed up in the move from 'Change we can believe in' to 'Osama bin Laden is dead and General Motors is alive', was the only one available in the circumstances (and beautifully executed from start to finish), but it is obviously not one Labour can or should replicate in terms of piecing together its own electoral coalition for 2015.

Obama's re-election strategy was essentially one of mobilisation rather than persuasion – the focus was squarely on those with a pre-existing propensity to vote Democrat. This was more than revisiting historic promises (in other words the same specific households which voted Obama in '08) – this was about finding new voters in 'banked' demographics. That meant a politics which put identity front and centre, with a battle plan focused on segmenting people on the basis of what they are rather than uniting them on the basis of what they think.

That focus certainly paid electoral dividends with the Democrats sweeping gay voters by a 54 point margin and counting 67 per cent of single women in their column. Likewise ethnic minority voters stood fast with the president, with 93 per cent of African Americans voting for Obama and support among Asian Americans and Latinos jumping to 73 per cent and 71 per cent respectively. The campaign bet big with their target demographics and held their nerve as their numbers dropped off with white and independent voters in districts which weren't part of their electoral college jigsaw. In fact, they were so confident of their propensity modelling that tech staff could playfully refer to polling day as 'model verification day' (thereby displaying both a bravado and level of jinx-tolerance you'd never find in a user of contact creator, Labour's campaign infrastructure).

The United States is on course to become a majority-minority nation sometime in the middle of this century and some analysts have predicted that this "rising American electorate" heralds a permanent realignment of US politics towards the Democrats. Anybody who remembers similarly deterministic claims in the 90s about Labour's inability to win after the decline of manufacturing will be aware how that turned out.

There is little doubt that Obama's particular 2012 voter patchwork was progressive in both intent and consequence and its electoral viability clearly held for that one race. I believe, however, that it is likely to be a one-off.

Three factors made this coalition of minorities and the socially liberal particularly easy to build in 2012. First, the relentless rightwards pressure of the Republican primary dragged Romney away from the mainstream which, combined with a litany of revelatory gaffes from Republican candidates around the country, meant Obama was handed clear dividing lines on everything from planned parenthood to the rights of migrant children. He didn't have to go looking for progressive beachheads – the GOP insisted on picking fights pretty much guaranteed to make the scrappy progressive infrastructure unite, organise and empty its pockets.

Second, the systematic subversion of the democratic process through voter suppression was both so blatant and so grotesque it enraged thousands of those who may otherwise have stayed at home. The Republican House majority leader in Pennsylvania openly admitted the partisan fallout of these efforts when listing GOP achievements in the state legislature, saying "Pro-second amendment? The Castle Doctrine, it's done. First pro-life legislation … in 22 years, it's done. Voter ID, which is going to allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania? Done." Any British woman who has ever been nudged to the polls with a reminder about Emily Davison can imagine the motivating effect, in living memory of the civil rights struggle, of voter qualification laws which created new barriers to minority voters casting a ballot.

Third, the Democrats fielded fewer 'pale, male and stale' candidates than ever before and delivered a 113th Congress of unprecedented diversity. Although some of the uptick in racial and gender representativeness came

from victorious Republicans, the overwhelming majority (including historic firsts like Tammy Baldwin becoming the first out gay senator) are Democrats. Likewise, in a country where staff and public appointments come under greater scrutiny than here in the UK, the president got credit for the diversity of his cabinet, White House and campaign teams.

Knowing how decisively these three factors played in the president's favour, it seems highly unlikely that their major donors and corporate vested interests will allow Republican politicians to mess up another campaign quite so badly. Even if their down ticket candidates stay stuck on the extremes on the first, it is inconceivable that the Republican presidential nominee won't now be hyper-cautious about backlash on the second and opportunistically seeking to neutralise the third.

Lessons for Labour

The next battlefield will be completely different, therefore, for a future Democratic challenger – and it will be completely different in turn for Labour in 2015. Nonetheless, Obama's demography strategy holds two positive lessons for Labour, alongside one big warning:

Dividing lines matter

It has become fashionable in political circles to dismiss 'dividing lines' as one of the things which turns people off politics, but the precise opposite is true. People stop voting when they think the parties are all the same: even in an era of valence politics, divergence drives turn out.

The need for differentiation shouldn't determine public policy, but it must always be a consideration in its presentation. Obama's digital rapid response, headed by Labour's own inimitable Matthew McGregor, supplied a constant stream of mutually re-enforcing attack resources which both informed the mainstream media narrative and fired up the president's supporters to give and do more. Labour, by contrast, seems incapable of coming to fast and clear decisions on which bits of the government's agenda it will oppose and then alerting our (increasingly effective) digital team far enough in advance to make a real difference.

Where, for example, was Labour's fundraising ask on the day of the last budget? Or on April 1st when ordinary families were clobbered by benefits changes and millionaires got a tax cut? The Labour party did not mobilise its base when the prime minister's reshuffle put an anti-choice MP at the head of the NHS, somebody with a terrible gay rights track record in charge of equality and somebody said not to even want the job into Labour's beloved Department for International Development.

It is hard to imagine Team Obama missing the opportunity to alert their supporters if opponents said, as David Jones MP did, that gay couples couldn't provide a "warm and safe environment for children" or dismissing a national event full of music of black origin, as per Aidan Burley MP, as "leftie multicultural crap". Compare, for example, the way the US left hammered 'Team Rape' after Indiana senate candidate Richard Mourdock called pregnancies resulting from rape "a gift from God" and Missouri's Todd Akin claimed that after "a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut

that whole thing down", with the lacklustre response from Labour when Richard Graham MP suggested women put themselves at risk of rape by wearing "a tight short skirt and high shoes".

Graham's seat, like Burley's, was Labour-held until 2010. Both are precisely the kind of constituencies where well-financed field operations and motivated volunteers will make a difference, but Labour seems bafflingly reluctant to organise nationally to take specific scalps locally.

The rules of the game matter

The Falls Church field office in Fairfax Country was one of the biggest in Virginia and equivalent in floor space to two or three Labour regional offices put together. Different sections were marked off for walk-in volunteers, materials storage, phone banking and training. My heart sank, however, to see that by far the biggest section was roped off for row upon row of seats and demarcated with a sign with just one chilling word: lawyers.

Voter protection is a huge strategic imperative in Democrat campaigns with one of the most valuable forms of volunteer service being staffing hotlines for those who fear they are being improperly denied their right to vote. While Labour's 2015 campaign will not need this sort of grassroots effort, we should be similarly vigilant about proposed changes to the process of elections themselves.

For example, Ed Miliband and Movement for Change have rightly made voter registration an organisational priority for Labour, but so far seem asleep at the wheel when it comes to the proposed switch from household to individual registration. We already have around 6 million people who are eligible but unregistered, with the highest concentrations among groups with historic Labour propensity. When individual registration was introduced in Northern Ireland, the register shrunk by 11 per cent, with the sharpest fall-offs among the poor, the young and BME voters.

Since 2010 there have been attempts to change the system of election, the boundaries under which they are conducted and the process of registration to participate. Each of these may have intrinsic merits, but it is the height of naivety to think these arguments have been picked or prosecuted because the coalition takes a disinterested view of the failings of our democracy.

A one nation government

Labour, therefore, should seek to replicate the success of the Democrats in both recruiting a progressive base and defending its right to participate on equal terms. We should be incredibly wary, however, of importing a crudely reductionist approach to demographic targeting. The campaign did what it needed to do, but its slicing and dicing of the electorate should be seen as a last resort, not an aspiration.

A few weeks after polling day I attended a conference at which the president's deputy campaign manager, Stephanie Cutter, was asked possibly the most American political question I have ever heard: "Apart from running Mitt Romney as the candidate, what was the biggest mistake of the Romney campaign?"

That one sentence, so natural in the mind of both questioner and respon-

dent, reveals perhaps the greatest danger in trying to draw too many lessons for Labour from Obama 2012: modern US politics is now characterised by a total disconnect between democracy as the theatre of electoral combat and democracy as a system of government.

To British ears the idea that Ed Miliband could be somehow eliminated as a variable when we analyse the 'real' components of Labour's general election campaign (be they our future offer, political positioning, fundraising capacity, ground operation or condition of Britain analysis) sounds completely absurd, because Labour's campaigner-in-chief is also head of Britain's government-in-waiting.

The interchangeability of Miliband's two roles, and the strategic primacy of the latter, is precisely what lies behind his one nation focus. At the moment Labour is the only party capable of governing for all the people of Britain, in all parts of Britain. From Edinburgh to Exeter, Labour has a footprint right across the UK and support from people of every walk of life. That cannot be said of any other British party – nor could its equivalent be said of the Democrats today.

That level of legitimacy across Britain's regions and classes is neither politically nor philosophically insignificant. Regular interaction with those of opposing sympathies is not simply a good progressive tactic – it is the essence of progressive practice, because the left's ultimate political project depends on getting highly diverse groups to cooperate for the common good.

So while it is theoretically possible to win by stitching together a rainbow coalition of micro-targeted interest groups instead of recruiting a broad swathe of Tory switchers, we need to remember that the nature of our victory will determine the character of our government and, with it, our long-term potential to transform our country.

That's why it matters that four in five of Labour's 106 battleground seats are Tory-held: getting under the skin of the south and the suburbs is not just important for the electoral maths of polling day, but for the governing imperative of the years which will follow it.

Ed Miliband is steadily creating the foundations for a one nation government – the Labour party must not weaken them by planning for a 'dividing Britain' campaign.

11 BEING PART OF A MOVEMENT

Arnie Graf

The Industrial Areas Foundation has mobilised thousands of people in low turnout areas. Built on a bedrock of committed volunteers and led by a small team of professional staff, its guiding principle is to establish meaningful, face-to-face contact with voters.

In 2008, Nathan Dear, a 60-year-old man with a heart transplant, walked 20 shifts in Columbus, Ohio to get out the vote for the US presidential election. Nathan was working as a volunteer with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the largest and oldest non-partisan network of community organisations in the US. Mr Dear worked with 1,413 other volunteers to door-knock in low voter turnout areas in sections of Lorain, Columbus, and Dayton, Ohio.

The IAF employed a total of four organisers to these three cities for approximately 10–12 months prior to the election.

What were the results of this effort? According to independent research, in 2008 the Ohio IAF mobilised the largest independent non-partisan campaign in Ohio. Those 1,413 volunteers recruited, trained, and mobilised by the IAF canvassed approximately 120,000 homes, and spoke face-to-face with 30,556 voters in low turnout areas. Some of the people were contacted more than once at their door and by phone. It was also found that 'unlikely' voters contacted by Ohio IAF volunteers were 80 per cent more likely to vote than those not contacted at all.

'Somewhat likely' voters were 20 per cent more likely to vote than those not contacted. These numbers were supplied through an independent analysis by the Information Services Group based on data entered into the voter activation network database.

So what were the guiding principles of the IAF voter work?

1. Volunteer-based voter contact

- Relationship precedes task
- Volunteers must be as local as possible to the neighborhood where GOTV ('getting out the vote') work takes place
- All voter contact activities – canvassing, voter ID, phone banking and election day get out the vote work – are done by volunteers
- Volunteers are better welcomed by their neighbours and can apply a level of dedication and creativity to their work that money can't buy.

2. Emphasis on face-to- face voter contact

- Voter contact means a face-to-face conversation with a voter or potential voter
- Literature drops, robo-calls and cold phone calls do not count as voter contacts
- Phone banking is only done to follow-up with face-to-face contacts.

3. Small, professional organising staff

- Paid staff should be small in each area, well trained, and professionally salaried and should focus on building relationships with community institutions that have a decent sized memberships, for example congregations, mosques, synagogues, temples, local union branches, schools, volunteer associations, etc.
- Paid staff recruit and train volunteers for voter contact work
- Co-ordinate the logistics of voter contact work.

4. Commitment to training

- Volunteers must be trained to maximise the quality of the contacts with voters, to create meaningful interaction that will create an impression that the potential voter will remember
- Canvass must be designed with the experience of the volunteer in mind, including:
- A thorough orientation of 30-45 minutes prior to each activity in which volunteers have an opportunity to role-play their conversations with potential voters
- A thorough debrief of 30 minutes after each activity in which volunteers can share the best stories from their shift and can tally the cumulative impact of their work as well as to be given the opportunity to commit to work another shift or to work on a phone bank.

5. Leadership development

- Activities of the organisation should be steered by a leadership team with the support of an organiser
- In between elections the leadership team and the organising staff should encourage volunteers in local communities to conduct campaigns of issues of concern to the local residents.

6. Early Start

- In order to build a successful effort that recruit enough volunteers to cover an entire area, a professional organiser needs to be on the ground at least 12 months before the target election. If the organiser has 18-24 months that is even better.

- Late money is significantly less helpful than early money. To increase capacity, funds must be front-loaded to hire more organisers early on.

It is common knowledge that the more contacts that are made and the more times a person in contacted the likelihood of that person voting increases dramatically. Given this, the challenge is capacity building. Obviously, 1,413 volunteers, some who work more than one shift, can contact more than 1,413 volunteers.

The question is why does a Mr Dear, a man with a heart transplant, walk 20 shifts? My experience has taught me that if people are treated as adults, given real responsibilities, know that they are part of a team that is establishing the strategy, and that they feel good about the candidate and/or his/her position on issues that they care about, people will work incredibly hard. Large numbers of people acting together on a common goal creates the feeling of a movement; and there are few things in public life that are more exhilarating than being part of a movement.

12 CONCLUSION: 106 TO WIN

Marcus Roberts

Barack Obama stunned the political world with his victory in 2008, with a campaign that extended the boundaries of the possible. In field, digital, strategy and movement politics, the Obama campaign broke new ground that the Fabian Society's landmark 2009 publication 'The Change We Need' sought to introduce to a British audience.

The bar was set even higher for 2012. How would the president win in a time of economic uncertainty, with his popularity by no means universal? The chapters in this collection demonstrate how Obama 2012 cleared this bar by some distance.

Labour's challenge in 2015 is as, if not more challenging than the one President Obama faced twelve months ago. But the answer for Labour is also profoundly simple: to win its designated 106 target seats by designing campaigns custom built for the needs of each constituency.

How can Labour do this? We need to know what we're aiming for. As Marlon Marshall and Mark Beatty note, by beginning with the win number and then tailoring target seat strategies accordingly, Labour has a model that can be reapplied 106 times over.

To do so this, the implications of Fran O'Leary's chapter are critical. Labour must cease conceiving of the electorate as a collection of focus group generalities. The days of 'Mondeo man' and 'Worcester woman' are over. Voter propensity modeling is urgently needed to understand voters as individuals - not sound-bites. This will allow Labour volunteers to knock on the right doors and have the right conversations with the right voters.

And Labour must shape the 2015 electorate to a pattern of individual voters that provides a majority. As Frank Spring explores in his contribution, each of the 106 needs a different balance between base, new and persuadable voters. The outlines may be similar from seat to seat but the precise proportions can and should vary to suit local circumstances. Labour's electoral coalition is not the 8 million votes received in 2010 or the 13 million votes of 1997 but rather the 2 million or so votes the party needs in the 106 target seats. Taken even smaller this may mean that the party's actual target pool of voters is as little as 500,000.

This has more than just numerical significance. With such a small target pool of voters the party can realistically aspire to deploy roughly the same ratio of staff and volunteers to target voters as the Obama campaign itself achieved. With this target pool, Labour can run field operations of the same scale and efficacy as Katherine Richards argues for: using innovations like random control experiments to test voter contact scripts and adopting the significant 'make a plan' volunteer tactic that helped drive up turnout.

But the ultimate lesson of the Obama campaign is that all the pieces must

come together. The individual contributions in this report, and those of 'The Change We Need' should not be treated as an a la carte menu, with Labour picking and choosing the most palatable ideas when they suit. All the parts of the campaign must service each other.

Mary Hough's exploration of storytelling shows how the national story of the party and the individual story of the volunteer can coincide to give more meaning to conversations with voters. Claire Hazelgrove demonstrates how to take advantage of this approach once digital is given a seat at the table next to the other campaign chiefs. Will Straw makes the case for a more aggressive use of policy as an instrument of explicitly electoral advantage. For the Democrats even their national convention is unabashedly a spectacle for attracting votes by enthusing key demographics, a feat Olly Parker and Polly Billington challenge Labour to aspire to, if not exactly emulate.

As Kirsty McNeill and Arnie Graf cogently remind us, the successes of the 2008 and 2012 Obama campaigns are not an off-the-shelf solution for Labour. Many aspects cannot be directly reapplied, and there are others where we should question whether Labour should even want to. The task for Labour is to take inspiration from these successes and develop their own route to victory in 2015.

The road ahead for Ed Miliband and Labour is daunting. But so too was the road ahead that greeted a freshman senator from Illinois. So too was the road ahead for an incumbent president, bruised from countless battles with Congress, trying to build a future for his country out of the wreckage of an economic crash.

For Labour now as for President Obama then, the old certainties and the old solutions simply won't do. If Labour retreats to its comfort zone, content to pay little more than lip service to lessons from the other side of the Atlantic, it will lose the next election. Four years on from 'The Change We Need', we need this change more than ever.

FORWARD |

THE CHANGE LABOUR STILL NEEDS

Edited by Marcus Roberts

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"This Fabian pamphlet is both timely and helpful, and I have no hesitation in recommending it to all Labour campaigners and supporters" - **Iain McNicol, General Secretary of the Labour party**

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