

CAMPAIGNS&ELECTIONS®

# Politics™

ISSUE 282 • 08.09  
US/CANADA \$4.95



Alex  
Castellanos  
on Media



## Decision Time

Questions You Need To  
Answer Before Jumping In

INSIDE:

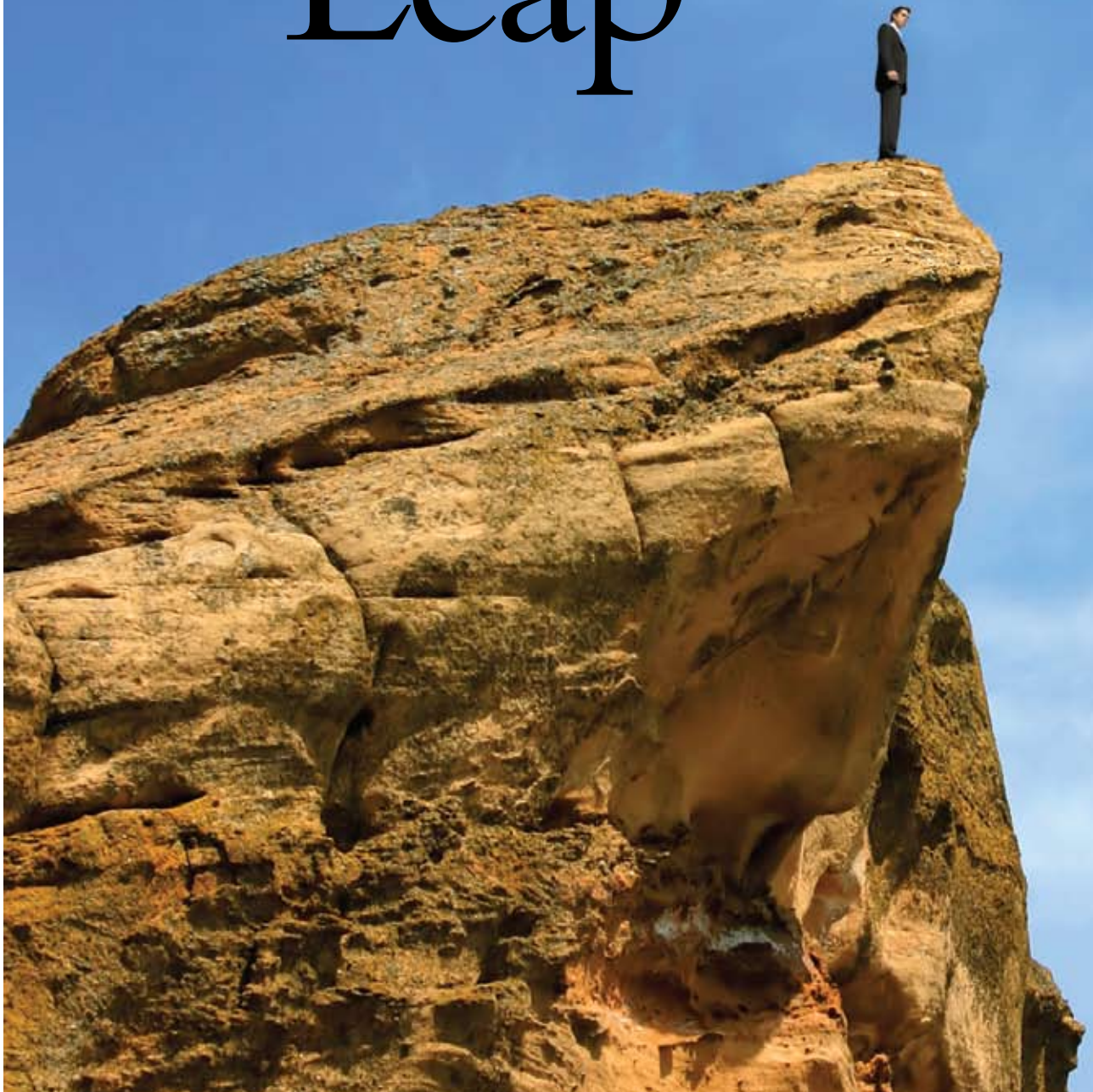
**Putting Targeting  
On The Map**

**Listening To  
Political Lyricists**



WWW.POLITICSMAGAZINE.COM

# Look Before You Leap



Oleg Prikhodko (iStock)

# 25 Questions That Need Answers Before You Can Begin A Campaign

By Kimberly Scott

**S**o you want to run for office. Good. Now: Why? How are you going to win? How will you raise the money? Despite the volumes of articles, campaign seminars and a growing list of political consultants to call on for advice, the right answers still seem to elude potential candidates. While those of us who dedicate ourselves professionally to the cause are grateful for those of you who feel the calling, it is time for a little reminder on the basics before you jump into a campaign.

Whether you are seriously contemplating running for office or just toying with the idea, ask yourself the following questions:

## **1. Why are you running?**

Clearly define to the public and to yourself your reasons for running. We are grateful that you want to change the world, but you need to articulate how and why in five sentences or less.

## **2. What are your qualifications?**

Be honest. Understand that every word you put in print will be scrutinized and will test your credibility. Your resume should include your professional history, education, appointments, and achievements. Highlight your roots within the community and volunteer activities that demonstrate your connection to the voters. Provide both a bullet-point version and a written narrative that tells your story and frames the language for supporters.

## **3. How supportive is your family and what role will they play?**

When you say, "They are 100 percent behind me," make sure it is a true statement. Campaigning is a grueling experience for your family, and they need to be prepared for the public scrutiny, press, inevitable attacks and, ultimately, the long-term consequences of victory or defeat.

## **4. What are your political strengths and weaknesses?**

Understand and be able to articulate what you bring to the table for your future constituents. Equally as important, know your weaknesses and liabilities—cover your flanks. If you can afford it, do opposition research on yourself. It's worth the immediate expense for the long-term security.

# Make Sure You're Socially Acceptable on Social Networks

By Liz Mair



Social networking sites are outlets on which virtually any candidate for public office—whether large or small—would be well-advised to maintain a presence. With so many Americans now using these sites to connect daily, hourly and even more frequently with friends, family and coworkers with mutual (and frequently political or policy-related) interests, maintaining a profile or a fan page can be a valuable way of connecting with potential supporters. In many cases, of course, given the popularity of these sites, candidates will already have such a presence before they ever formally decide to run for office—and that's where things can potentially get tricky, or even sticky.

Many people using, say, Facebook have had friends write embarrassing comments on their wall, or upload and tag an unflattering or unwanted picture, which is then easily accessible by other users. In a society where we are increasingly used to lots of personal information becoming public, these kinds of things represent mere annoyances for most of us. But for candidates, the equation can be different. It's easy to imagine that a candidate for Congress running in a socially conservative district might find photos depicting him or her drinking vodka via a funnel at a party frequented

by scantily clad women unhelpful. A Democratic candidate running in a primary and facing a (more) progressive challenger might well find that listing Wal-Mart within a "Stuff You Like" box on their Facebook profile page—and leaving that uncorrected—was a bad move.

While we are increasingly unconcerned with the accessibility of personal details that might have been kept very private 10 or 20 years ago, information appearing on social networking profiles now can be a literal treasure trove of opposition research material. Rival campaigns are constantly looking for negative tidbits, or outright negative stories about opponents to pass on to coalition targets, mainstream media outlets and bloggers, who can be most damaging given their high level of readership among party grassroots and their ability to influence mainstream media reporting.

Information appearing on social networks has proven embarrassing even for non-candidates in the political spotlight. Last year, *The Washington Post* reported on several photos from Facebook featuring President Obama's speechwriter Jon Favreau posing with a Hillary Clinton cardboard cut-out. Such stories help to explain the hesitance of some campaign staffers to maintain profiles on

social networks or use communication tools like Twitter. The answer, though, for candidates and staffers alike, is not to abandon these technologies, but rather to use them smartly. An old saying employed by communications hacks is, "Don't ever say or do anything that would present a problem if it appeared on the front page of *The Washington Post*." Or, as Jon Favreau might adapt it, anywhere on [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com).

The extension of that is: If you're thinking about running for public office, do a comprehensive review of what exists about you (and even your friends and family) on sites like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. Check things you have posted or something someone else posted that involve you. Then do what you can to get rid of anything that could be problematic before you get anywhere near announcing or attracting significant attention from opponents, the grassroots or the media.

Tools like these are for communicating with people, engaging them and bringing them into your circle of supporters—not for accidentally empowering your opponent.

---

*Liz Mair is a Republican strategist with Hynes Communications and a former RNC Online Communications Director.*

## 5. Where are you running?

Know your district. Tour the terrain and connect the faces of your constituency to the numbers on paper. Provide a written description of the district that reflects your talking points on why this is a winnable race. Include political and electoral history, key industries, socio-economic breakdown and voter demographics. A map for visual reference is an effective tool in demonstrating knowledge of your constituency.

## 6. How have previous candidates performed in the district?

What is the party registration? Voter performance numbers? Who carried the district at the statewide and presidential level? Research the voting patterns for the last ten years to see if a case can be made for a shifting electorate in your favor.

## 7. What is your "win" number?

Determine the number of votes you need to win, based on a precinct-by-precinct analysis of the district. If you don't know what it is, or what it means, you shouldn't be running.

## 8. Who is (are) your potential opponent(s)?

Know your primary and general election opponents and how each affects your candidacy. Do opposition research. Develop a 30-second sound bite for each opponent that reflects your campaign strategy and message. Concentrate on your advantages, not their weaknesses. Save the fight for the final contenders.

## 9. What are the legal rules of the game?

Understand all applicable election laws, including financial disclosures, petition and filing deadlines, and individual, corporate and PAC contribution limits. You need a campaign attorney and accountant. Your treasurer is a prominent name and public endorsement—not the one who does the counting.

## 10. What will the race cost?

In 2008, the average candidate spent massive amounts of money: \$1,042,000 running for the U.S. House, \$4,725,000 for the U.S. Senate and \$4,313,000 for governor. Your budget is the foundation of your campaign

plan and is determined by the type of candidacy (incumbent, open seat or challenger), the cost of previous races, the media market, your communications and grassroots plan, your opponents' fundraising capability, consultants, staff, travel and office expenses. Establish a public figure for the cost of the race and stick to it.

### 11. How are you going to raise it?

Do the math. Top 100 friends and family + your personal funds + lists + target constituencies = your fundraising. People contribute for five main reasons: The candidate, party, issues, access or social affiliation. To effectively implement any plan you will need a full-time finance director, and, for races at the federal and statewide level, a professional fundraising consultant. Regardless, the responsibility for raising funds lies with the candidate. You should be spending a minimum of four hours a day on the phone.

### 12. What is your fundraising plan?

A written plan is essential. Document events, mail, Internet, candidate solicitation, finance committee and PAC goals. This is as much your road map for success as the broader campaign plan, as one is interdependent with the other.

### 13. Who is on your finance committee?

The finance chair should have the personality, resources and rolodex to engage major donors. Your committee should be reflection of your district, with a cross-section of individuals with geographic, political, fundraising and professional strengths who are committed to writing or raising a specific dollar amount.

### 14. How much are you willing to spend personally?

There's a delicate balance. A candidate needs to demonstrate a willingness to invest in his or her own campaign, even if a token amount. There's no question being a "self-funder" is a major asset (and a consultant's favorite) and can deter others from running, but it can backfire on you politically depending on the campaign environment.

### 15. Who will support you politically?

Endorsements are a critical validator, particularly in a primary contest, and should be utilized to expand your voter base and fundraising lists. Endorsements from elected officials provide press, public recognition, votes and if utilized correctly, donors. Membership organizations and labor unions can provide money, organized field support, phone banks, volunteers and coalition resources.

### 16. Does your party support you?

In any race, this will have an influence on viability and resources but if you are not the chosen one, it should not dissuade you from running. The competency of local and state

political parties varies significantly and is not a guarantee of success or, under any circumstances, committed resources.

### 17. What are the major issues in the race and where do you stand on them?

If you have never run for office, make sure you understand the issues and their full implication for your candidacy. While polling will provide you with the top issues of importance to the voters, you need to be prepared with research, position papers and a definitive answer on all local and national issues. Once you have taken a stance, do not flip-flop.

### 18. What is your media strategy?

Your media and communications plan is the largest component of the budget. Your paid media plan should be the product of a media consultant and driven, at least initially, by the issues. This should be partnered with a formal earned or free media strategy that engages the press and voters through editorials, events, public appearances and interviews.

### 19. What is your Internet strategy?

This is now an essential part of any campaign. Before you announce your candidacy you should have a website ready to go, a way to accept donations online and a plan to grow your list of supporters. This list will be a critical component of your fundraising, messaging and field efforts.

**Get the Look** Image may not be everything, but it does count. Image consultant Maurice Bonamigo has some rules to follow for anyone considering a campaign launch.

**Do NOT step in front of a camera until you have done your homework.** You need to understand what the whole spectrum of campaigning is about. Know your constituency. How many are there? What are their voting trends? Where are their precincts?

**People want a winner, so look like one.** You have to have to be out on the frontlines and perceived as a winner from day one. Speak like a leader, dress like a leader and act like a leader.

**Hire a professional to orchestrate your wardrobe.** It may be trendy to look like a pimp but no one is going to elect one. Pay attention to your accessories and how much make-up you're wearing—this goes for men and women.

*Maurice Bonamigo is founder and president of Maurice Bonamigo & Associates, a political consulting firm with offices in Chicago, Los Angeles and Palm Beach, FL.*



# Just Say No *By Jeff Hewitt*

Every campaign cycle, thousands of well-intentioned citizens decide to run for public office. Most are answering a higher calling to serve the public, and the decision has been carefully considered. But there are some potential candidates who need to stay out of a race. Here are five reasons to say 'no.'

## 1. You're Struggling With the Basics

You need to know about the budget at the level of government you are interested in plus the duties and responsibilities of the office or **DON'T RUN**.

At the end of the day most political positions are all about the budget—where and how the money is spent on the public's behalf. Depending on the office you are seeking, whether it is at the municipal, county, state or federal level, you must have an understanding of how much money is spent and on what services. To a large extent, the office you seek should match the level of government you are most interested in and know the most about.

## 2. You Lack of a Clear Message

If you can't answer the "why are you running" question, then **DON'T RUN**.

It is the most basic question in politics: "why are you running?" Any candidate considering office must have a 30 second answer to this question that can be expanded into a few minutes for a basic stump speech. You will refine and polish your message as you formulate the campaign, but initially the candidate should have a gut reaction to this kind of question.

## 3. You're Not Sure You Can Raise the Money

If you don't want to spend your own money or ask others to contribute, **DON'T RUN**.

A campaign is really just a conversation between your campaign and the electorate. Your opponent also has a conversation with the electorate and the voters pick a winner. The more conversation "impressions" you can project, the better your chances of winning. The problem is that most impressions cost money—for TV & radio

time, direct mail, print advertising, etc. The Internet is to some degree leveling the playing field, but nonetheless a candidate for most offices in America still needs to communicate through these traditional mediums in addition to a door-to door or Internet campaign. So you are going to have to spend your own money or raise it from a bunch of people by asking them personally and directly.

## 4. Your Electoral Prospects Are Too Slim

If the numbers aren't favorable, you need either a superior message or significant fundraising advantage. If you don't, then **DON'T RUN**.

What I mean is are you a Democrat running in a very Republican area? Or vice versa? Are you running against a beloved, scandal-free, undefeated incumbent? Those can be tough to beat. Now it becomes subjective when the numbers or trends show it to be 60-40 or 55-45 one way or the other. Caucuses, PACs, and the like will consider a race competitive if the numbers are 55-45 or more evenly split. Outside of that margin, not so much. That is a decent barometer, on average, but that ignores the countless upsets that occur every election year. If you have a compelling message and lots of money, the number gap can be overcome.

## 5. You're Wavering on Public Service

If you don't have the fire in the belly for the office you are contemplating, then **DON'T RUN**.

There are kids in college right now lying awake at night plotting their political future, learning the issues and building the contact network of future volunteers and donors. These "alpha" politicians will make every sacrifice and work every waking minute to win their future campaigns. I'm not saying you have to campaign every second, but the point is, are you prepared to work hard on your campaign? It can be tough to talk to the public all day and ask people for money, so you really have to want the office you are running for. When a candidate gets "talked into" running, it usually shows up in the campaign.

---

*Jeff Hewitt runs Hewitt Campaigns in Austin, Texas. He served on the Clinton-Gore campaign staff, managed a variety of campaigns and served as an adviser for a variety of congressional races throughout the U.S.*

## 20. Who is your campaign manager?

The campaign manager is the most significant player in shaping the race. Hire an experienced manager with a credible resume who can put together a professional operation and team including a finance director, scheduler, press secretary and, eventually, a field director. Make sure it is someone you have confidence will sweat the details. You will lose if you try to run the nuts and bolts of a campaign yourself.

## 21. Who are your consultants?

No matter how seasoned you are you will need the advice of, at a minimum, a professional pollster and media consultant, to provide you with the political and technical expertise necessary to run an effective campaign. PR consultants and academics are no substitute for experienced campaign veterans. Make sure they have a track record working with campaigns of

similar political dynamics, particularly if you are running for an open seat or a challenger that requires more hands-on strategy and time. Affiliation with a well-respected consultant can add instant credibility to your campaign.

## 22. Have you done a poll?

Ideally you should do a benchmark poll prior to running to accurately determine what issues are important to the electorate, as well as the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each candidate. If you can't afford polling at the beginning of the race, check with the party, press and like-minded organizations that may have done public polling that can be used to your advantage.

## 23. What is your grassroots/field strategy?

This is the heart of the campaign and if not executed well, can negate all other successful components. Although

initially developed by the campaign manager, you will need to budget for a field director in the final months of the campaign, if not sooner, depending on the level of office. Your grassroots strategy is people-driven and should incorporate the resources and manpower of endorsing organizations as well as the party if you are the endorsed candidate.

**24. What other elections are on the ballot and how will they affect your campaign?**

A high profile race at the top of the ticket or a controversial ballot initiative can make the difference between winning and losing. Understand the political and statistical impact other campaigns will have on your race and your message.

**25. When are you going to announce?**

Traditionally this comes in the form of a well-orchestrated campaign rally but many candidates are choosing to announce online to maximize coverage and generate immediate fundraising results. Your announcement signals the official start of the campaign and your readiness to formally enter the public domain, prepared with plan, message, money and answers to my first 24 questions.

Good luck and, of course, should you need a consultant ...

---

*Kimberly Scott is president of ConklinScott, a democratic political consulting firm specializing in national political relations, strategic fundraising and labor relations. Bliss Institute Intern Erick Rigby contributed to this article.*

I talked to my Congressman last night.

I gave him my take on the stimulus bill.

Broadnet connects constituents. You deliver the experience.

**broadnet**

Broadnet is your preferred wholesale technology partner. Contact us today at 1-877-579-4929 or [www.broadnetconnects.com](http://www.broadnetconnects.com).

**CHONG + KOSTER**

congratulates

**SENATOR AL FRANKEN**

on his victory

**AGGRESSIVE PROGRESSIVE MEDIA**  
BY REFERRAL ONLY