

MORE ON ADVERTISING

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John Kimball reminds us of a sizeable upcoming opportunity: Political dollars that are available “not in spite of the COVID-19 health crisis, but because of it.”

According to Kimball, \$8 to \$11 billion will be spent to elect candidates, to advocate for ballot issues, to get out the vote, and on direct mail and yard signs..

Philip Inghelbrecht, cofounder and CEO of Tatari, said, “History tells us that political advertising spend will not be negatively impacted by the economic downturn. During the Great Recession, which took place during the 2008 election cycle, campaign contributions and expenditures set records, jumping about 40 percent from 2004.”

Some of the normal avenues of political spending will not be available. Candidates cannot run their campaigns as they had planned. Large gatherings, meet-and-greets, even door-to-door canvassing will be practically non-existent. The need to manage campaigns differently is putting candidates in a mad rush to come up with new ideas. They’ve raised the money and need to spend it if they want to win.

That’s where newspapers can increase their share – if they address the category with the same aggressiveness that they usually apply to their other advertising clients.

A 2016 study by the News Media Alliance showed that newspapers reach 75 percent of opinion leaders and early followers in local markets. Meanwhile, local newspapers and their websites reach 64 percent of all registered voters each week. With most elections turning on the margins of a few percentage points, candidates cannot afford to ignore their most loyal and regular voters. With the uncertainty and impact of COVID-19, this year more than ever, they will need to make extra efforts to ensure they get out the vote by driving home their campaign messages.

Make sure you include in your package everything you can sell – website placement, geo-targeting, guaranteed day-of-delivery inserts (to grab some of the direct mail money), specialty printing, front page sticky notes, spadea wraps, polybags, voter guides, etc. Many candidates have also already produced 10- or 15-second commercials for local and cable TV. Include that in your packages as a way to increase the reach of their digital message. Show exactly what these options look like so the candidate can easily see what you can offer.

Digital is important, and it is your digital content that is part of the trusted source assigned to the local newspaper. That has never been more true than in today’s environment where people are looking to their local newspaper to deliver trusted news. It’s likely the newspaper’s online audience has never been larger.

It is imperative that newspapers show how valuable their audience is to the candidates and how easy it can be to speak to them in the single most trusted source of political news and advertising in the market. With eight out of 10 newspaper readers voting in the last two presidential elections, telling that story to local candidates can help them get in front of the people who can propel them to a November win.

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