

The Power of Persuasion

Understanding How Neuroscience
And Politics Intersect In Campaign '08
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Dr. A. K. Pradeep

It's been said that compromise is the heart of our political system. If so, then persuasion is surely the brain.

Persuasion is the driving force behind every single element of every single political campaign, from the basic lapel button to the most elaborate and expensive television advertising schedule. Without its power, all the finely-tuned strategy, the most well-crafted platform, the best imagery that money can buy will fail to make a mark, much less leave a lasting one.

The Brain Makes Behavior

But many in the field of marketing—political and commercial—make a basic mistake. They believe that persuasion is an ethereal and impossible-to-pin-down art. They're convinced that measuring its presence, and its effect, are similarly elusive goals. They rely on traditional surveys and focus groups as the sole means to attempt to quantify if a product or a commercial, a candidate or a campaign message has achieved some degree of persuasion within the consumer's—or the voter's—consciousness.

They are mistaken. The latest advances in neuroscience negate all of the above.

Modern neuroscience has not only pinpointed the interlocking functions within the human brain that enable and result in persuasion occurring—the science has gone beyond that. We are now able to identify exactly when persuasion is happening, and to measure it very precisely.

In fact, on a daily basis NeuroFocus captures, analyzes and quantifies persuasion occurring during the neurological testing that we do for clients.

Voters Are Talking To You 2,000 Times A Second. Are You Listening?

The key to understanding how persuasion actually works requires a basic grasp of how the brain functions.

The brain operates as the world's most amazing network. It makes connections across miles of interwoven components, at the cellular level. Data travels at the rate of 50 meters per second. It processes 100,000,000 individual stimuli at any given moment.

At NeuroFocus, we capture actual brainwave activity across as many as 128 different sectors of the brain, at 2,000 times a second. This reflects one of the advances in neuroscientific research—our knowledge today of exactly which areas of the brain are responsible for the wide range of sensory processing and response mechanisms that occur within milliseconds in the mind.

221 Million Americans Of Voting Age—And Each One Has 5 Billion Brain Cells In Their Cerebral Cortex

That knowledge enables us to acquire the tiny but discrete electrical signals generated when neurons within the cerebral cortex fire. They fire when they are stimulated—and they can be stimulated by anything that someone can see, hear, taste, touch, or smell.

After we acquire those signals—and the collection process represents a massive amount of raw data; the equivalent of 2 gigabytes for each individual we test—we analyze it and report the results.

The Cognitive Timeline: Why Neurological Testing Is Superior To Surveys And Focus Groups

One of the chief reasons that neurological testing is so powerful, so accurate, so reliable and lends itself so well to producing exceptionally detailed findings and actionable recommendations is something called the Cognitive Timeline.

The CT is simply a schedule that outlines the time frame when the brain receives a stimulus; reacts to it; and then expresses its reaction by triggering motor responses such as speech or gestures.

The entire process takes just over one second. But it is what happens during that tiny time period that makes all the difference.

The Timeline is divided into three parts, defined in milliseconds:

- **0-250 Milliseconds:** the brain records the stimulus
- **250-500 Milliseconds:** the brain cognitively processes the input
- **500 Milliseconds and beyond:** the brain expresses its reaction in the form of speech or other muscle movements

The key is the divide between the first 500 milliseconds, and the second.

During the first period, the brain's response is still neurologically pure and unaffected by any external factors such as language, education, ethnic and cultural influences, and others. This is the phase that NeuroFocus measures in.

But during the second phase, which is when surveys and focus groups measure, a critical event occurs: in the course of formulating its response to a survey or focus group question, the brain actually alters the data it originally recorded during the first phase.

The outcome is inherently inaccurate data.

This fact is why NeuroFocus' testing methodology and results are scientifically more reliable and therefore actionable and valuable than any other form of consumer research.

Notice, Like, Remember—The Three Keys To Generating Persuasion

We distill these results into three categories: *attention, emotional engagement, and memory retention*. They are the primary metrics that we measure in neurological testing.

Why are these three so critical to success for any marketing effort, including political campaigns?

Because they are the essential building blocks for creating effective messages. They represent the way the brain works when it receives, processes, and reacts to stimuli.

Attention is a must, of course. Unless I pay attention to your message, nothing else matters. But then, your message must engage my emotions. I must feel something in order to facilitate the retention of your message in my memory.

Neuroscience has revealed that it is only when your message has gained my attention, engaged my emotions, and then been retained in my memory that I will be predisposed to act upon that message. Fail at any one of them, and your message will fail to persuade.

Measuring The Mind Through A Deep Dive Into The Subconscious

From the three primary metrics we derive additional measures of *persuasion*, *awareness*, and *novelty*.

Persuasion can be defined as purchase intent. In political campaign terms, that translates into intent to vote for a specific candidate or ballot proposition.

Awareness is self-explanatory.

Novelty, though, is unique and compelling--particularly for political campaigns.

We define novelty as the stimulus' ability to create defenses within the voter's subconscious against competitive messages. In a field as fundamentally competitive as modern American politics, gaining a strategic advantage through that ability is obviously an extremely desirable goal and a powerful achievement.

From Platforms To Photo Ops, Commercials To Campaign Speeches, Websites To Voter Videos

Plumbing the depths of the subconscious using our patented technologies and proprietary techniques, we track voters' brainwave activity in such explicit detail that we can develop a very clear picture of what they are responding to at any given millisecond.

Because we monitor at the deep subconscious level, we can evaluate virtually anything that a voter can see or hear. But we supplement that measurement with two other, complementary disciplines:

- sophisticated, pixel-level eye movement tracking technology
- galvanic skin response sensors

The combination provides a comprehensive portrait of precisely how a voter is responding:

- the degree to which they're paying attention, and the specific element they are paying attention to
- when their emotions are engaged, and exactly what is engaging them
- when they transfer the stimulus into their memory

The growth of new digital communication avenues ranging from online advertising to YouTube, websites to Twitter, offers campaigns both a wealth of opportunities and a daunting challenge: to know what's working and where to spend valuable resources of time, talent and money.

Neurological testing presents the most powerful and accurate 'road map' to follow to make the most out of those precious campaign resources.

CAR: The Science Of Rating The Candidate/Campaign Attributes That Matter

How can a campaign know—with absolute precision and certainty—which attributes of a candidate or an issue resonate the most with voters?

Focus groups and surveys can only offer approximate results. As the Cognitive Timeline demonstrates, these methods are, by definition, inherently less accurate and therefore less reliable and actionable than neurological testing.

Because attributes are so basic and so vital to a candidate's and a campaign's success, learning how they rank with voters is beyond important: it's mission critical.

NeuroFocus has a unique and proven methodology to discover the attributes that matter most to voters. We call it CAR—for Candidate/Campaign Attribute Rating.

CAR uncovers the words and phrases that strike the most resonant chords within voters' subconscious minds. The process—and the results—are neurologically 'pure,' because we measure at the first phases of the Cognitive Timeline, when external biases haven't corrupted the brain's later reaction.

CAR findings provide campaigns with the blueprint for formulating the most effective materials, from speeches to print and electronic media advertising, fundraising drives to all forms of digital media, and more.

Knowing—in advance, with total assurance that the data is dead right—results in the most efficient allocation of campaign resources.

And it provides the knowledge that, going in, a campaign's messages will resonate richly with voters, where it counts the most: deep within their subconscious, where the true selections and decisions are made.



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1200 Fifth Street
Berkeley, CA 94710
T 510.526.1616
F 510.526.9900
www.neurofocus.com*