

Campaign Strategy and Message Development

All successful campaigns employ an overarching strategy designed to achieve their goals. These strategies include different types of messages that are created to influence specific target audiences.

Campaign Strategy Examples

NIMBY (Not in my back yard): For issues with local economic, environmental, or other impact, this strategy appeals to people to act and protect their local area. [See this example ad about solar energy in Virginia.](#)

Statistics/Card-Stacking: Using facts and/or numbers to create a positive or negative image for a candidate or policy. The use of this data becomes “card-stacking” when certain facts are left out in a dishonest way. [Here is an example from a Climate Change related group.](#)

Testimonials: Using witnesses, often well-known people, to support your arguments. Helpful if you have a major public/popular figure to support your agenda [or a compelling story as a candidate.](#)

Appeal to Emotions: Encourages audiences to be excited, fearful, or patriotic by using powerful, simple language (like ‘freedom’) or iconic symbols (like flags) to get the viewer to connect these ideas with the candidate or policy. This technique can be used to create both positive and [negative emotions.](#)

Bandwagon: This technique presents the issue in a way to show that “everybody is doing it” and that [the viewer will be left out if he or she does not join in the movement.](#) These advertisements tend to use terms such as “We”, “Us”, and “Our” or can refer to a larger group identity, such as *America enjoys_____.*”

Message Tone

Once an overall strategy is determined, finding the most effective **tone** for your message is imperative. **Tone** refers to the overall tenor of the message. Generally, messaging can be positive, negative, or moderate, but stronger messaging can also be used to rally particular demographic groups.

Positive: Historically, political campaigns have focused on positive messaging for candidates or on policy issues. These messages frame the candidate or issue as beneficial, strong, necessary, or otherwise good. Positive messages are particularly effective with younger voters, suburban voters, and women voters.

Negative: In recent years, there has been an influx of negative messaging. This messaging focuses either on criticizing or demonizing an opponent or on inducing fear in voters. Negative advertising has been known to work well with older voters or voters who may be economically insecure.

Moderate: These messages often attempt to appear more objective by providing statistics and facts. They focus on issues in order to appear reasonable and avoid aggrandizing their own side or demonizing the opposition. Moderate messaging often appeals to independents and undecided voters.

Strong Messaging: A stronger message, whether positive or negative, may be effective to mobilize your base voters but may also turn off independents or those on the other side. For this reason, persuasion campaigns often avoid them.