CASE STUDY:

HOW PACRONYM + ACRONYM “SOFTENED THE GROUND” FOR A BIDEN-HARRIS VICTORY
THE PROBLEM
Inside the Trump Bunker, With Days to Go

Win or lose, the Republican candidate and his inner circle have built a direct marketing operation that could power a TV network—or finish off the GOP.

Joshua Green and Sasha Issenberg
October 27, 2016, 6:00 AM EDT

How Trump Conquered Facebook—Without Russian Ads

Why Russia’s Facebook ads were less important to Trump’s victory than his own Facebook ads.

Trump campaign is an online juggernaut. To win 2020, Democrats must close this gap now.
The average nonpresidential Democratic campaign spends only 10 percent to 15 percent of its budget on digital channels while pouring 60 percent to 70 percent of its budget into television ads and direct mail.

“Meanwhile, the Trump campaign continues to flood the internet with micro-targeted ads aimed at shaping American’s perceptions.”
AS THE 2020 DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY DRAGGED ON, PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS FOCUSED ON TARGETING BASE DEMOCRATIC VOTERS.

LEAVING JOE BIDEN TO PLAY CATCH-UP WITH PERSUADABLE VOTERS. AS LATE AS FEBRUARY 2020, THE BIDEN CAMPAIGN WAS NOT HEAVILY INVESTING ONLINE.
OUR SOLUTION
With Trump’s unlimited funding and more than a dozen Democrats running in long, competitive primary, ACRONYM stepped up early to take the fight to Trump running the most aggressive digital ad campaign to pull Trump support down among key persuadable voters in five battleground states: AZ, PA, WI, MI, NC.

As the general election ramped up, we were among the first to expand out past the “blue wall”, targeting newly competitive sunbelt states like Georgia in the summer of 2020.
While other Democratic groups focused on traditional high-turnout, base voters, we turned to non-traditional persuasion targets: voters with low political knowledge and low turnout scores.

Our early testing showed that voters who did not know which party controlled the House of Representatives were most impacted by our facts-first persuasion ads.

Predicting a high-turnout election, we vastly expanded the traditional turnout range used in persuasion political targeting.
STRATEGY + TACTICS
Early testing showed that the majority of our voters spent more time online than watching cable television—so that’s where we met them.

We brought our best-testing creative to our low political information audience through social media, streaming, and digital publishers.
PLATFORMS WHERE WE REACHED VOTERS: ONLINE
USING ADS + BOOSTED NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS + DIGITAL STREAMING SERVICES

Facebook
Pandora
Viacom
Pluto TV
Roku

CNN
msn
SPIEGEL ONLINE
Wired
Condé Nast
TIME
El Mundo
Hearst
The Washington Post
Le Parisien
Sky News
BBC
We found that paying to promote news articles on Facebook to low-information audiences was most effective at increasing Trump disapproval, as well as increasing issue salience. These boosts moved audiences at low costs, with little turnaround time needed and little to no creative lift required.

To optimize this strategy, we built an ad-buying technology that allowed us to serve hundreds of news headlines to highly targeted subgroups of our audience and optimize the top performers.
Our program was at its most effective with messengers that were familiar and trusted to our audience. In some cases, this meant boosting Fox News hosts like Tucker Carlson, or trusted local Republicans like Cindy McCain in Arizona.

For others, the best messengers came through emotional and cultural storytelling, like an ad featuring Michael, a Wisconsin farmer.
We leaned on our rigorous measurement framework, Barometer, to identify the best performing messages and ads for our target audiences – running over 200 in-field experiments.

Informed by these experiments, we created a machine-learning powered system, DOROTHY, that estimates the persuasive potential of an ad on Facebook without the need to run expensive experiments for every creative.

This allowed us to predict the effectiveness of hundreds of ads, letting us rapidly test ads on Trump’s impeachment, COVID-19, the racial justice protests, and other breaking news to drive strategy.
We served our best-testing political news, running ads across all platforms and investing heavily in publishers like Outbrain to serve native-looking headlines on sites highly relevant to our audience, like on Parenting.com.

Ultimately, we doubled down on the boosted news tactic, as it was more cost effective and showed a 2% greater persuasive effect than video.

We even retargeted those in our audience who had also received Trump ads to directly rebut his disinformation.
EARLY IN THE PANDEMIC, WE SPENT HEAVILY ON ADS ON LOCAL NEWS SITES WHEN WE SAW HIGH LEVELS OF NEWS RESEARCH, AND PIVOTED TO ENTERTAINMENT SOURCES WHEN RESEARCH SHOWED COVID NEWS FATIGUE
OUR IMPACT
ELECTORAL IMPACT

WE REBUILT THE BLUE WALL WITH MI, PA, AND WI + EXPANDED THE MAP IN AZ AND GA – FIVE OF OUR SIX TARGET STATES

SAFE + LIKELY DEM STATES:
- 212 EC votes

CLOSE LEAN DEM STATES:
- Minnesota – 10 EC votes
- Nevada – 6 EC votes
- New Hampshire – 4 EC votes
- 20 EC votes

REBUILDING THE BLUE WALL:
- Michigan* – 16 EC votes
- Pennsylvania* – 20 EC votes
- Wisconsin* – 10 EC votes
- 46 EC votes

EXPANDING THE MAP:
- Arizona* – 11 EC votes
- Georgia** – 16 EC votes
- 27 EC votes

* States where PACRONYM ran program
** PACRONYM ran turnout program in GA.
### ELECTORAL IMPACT
### TURNOUT AMONG OUR TARGET VOTERS VS. BIDEN WIN MARGIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>BIDEN WIN MARGIN</th>
<th>OUR TARGETS EARLY VOTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>+12,813</td>
<td>188,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>+146,123</td>
<td>441,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>-73,268</td>
<td>251,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>+47,578</td>
<td>144,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>+20,540</td>
<td>215,477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
70% of our 188K Arizona targets that voted early were infrequent voters or had never voted before.

In Maricopa County, which swung +5.2pp to Biden, 50% of our target voters voted early (121k)

That's over 10x Joe Biden's margin of victory in Arizona.

145k of our targets in Pennsylvania voted early, nearly 70% of whom were infrequent voters or had never voted before.

That's triple Joe Biden's victory in the state.

442k of our targets in Michigan voted early.

55% of them were infrequent voters or had never voted before.

That's nearly triple Joe Biden's margin of victory in Michigan.

215k of our targets in Wisconsin voted early.

In Dane County, which swung toward Biden by 5.7pp, 14k of our targets voted early.

Biden won the state by just over 20k.

252k of our targets in North Carolina voted early. 70% of them were infrequent voters or had never voted before.

In Wake and Mecklenberg counties, both of which swung more than 5pp towards Biden, over 46k of our targets voted early, 80% of whom were infrequent voters or had never voted before.
Throughout the program, we successfully moved our audience against Trump. A global holdout comparison showed we decreased Trump approval among our audience by 3.4% in a critical persuasion window we filled in the spring.

Even as Trump disapproval hit a difficult-to-move “floor” this summer, we continued to optimize our program each week and saw positive trends in our measurement tool’s predicted Trump disapproval with our content.