

How Do I Get People I Don't Know To Trust Me?

INTRODUCTION

A candidate ("the challenger") was running for municipal office for the second time after losing the election by 2% of votes four years earlier. In preparing for the election, the challenger wanted to have a brochure to share with residents and leave them at their homes if they were not home when he visited.

THE PROBLEM

The challenger was facing an incumbent politician who had been successfully re-elected for several terms ("the incumbent"). The incumbent had significant support in the region and had successfully warded off any candidates who had also run for the position. The challenger had to build enough trust in people, many of whom he did not personally know, to secure their vote on election day. The incumbent had the following strengths:

- He had been the elected official in the region for more than 20 years
- He was well-known in the community
- He had the support of fellow incumbents, many of whom were also long-term politicians

THE SOLUTION

When reviewing what made the challenger an attractive candidate, the following set him apart from the incumbent:

- He had a solid financial background from his career in the private sector
- He had a strong family dynamic with children and grandchildren
- He had extensive volunteer commitments in the community to leverage

The elements of the brochure included:

- Headings of information that highlighted the challenger's strengths including understanding finances, creating opportunities for families, the value of volunteerism, and encouraging the younger generation versus focusing on the problem in the region
- The language of the brochure included voters (i.e. we can do this) versus excluding voters (i.e. I will do this)
- The photos in the brochure focused on togetherness and family as a way to see the challenger as someone similar to the voter as opposed to the traditional suit-and-tie headshot
- The biography detailed how the challenger encouraged teamwork and collaboration versus listing individual accomplishments

THE RESULTS

The challenger was successfully elected. Even after the election, many residents remarked on the brochure, and for some it was the reason they chose to vote for him. He has continued to further the collaborative and teamwork method of improving his district in his elected decision-making capacity.