



# How to Speak Campaign 101: A Campaign Glossary



**“Political technology determines political success.”**

Morton Blackwell  
President, Leadership Institute

The Leadership Institute is a non-partisan educational organization approved by the Internal Revenue Service as a public foundation operating under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue code.

The Leadership Institute does not endorse, support, or oppose candidates or proposed legislation. The Institute has an open admissions policy; all programs are open to the public.

Contributions to the Leadership Institute by individuals, corporations, and foundations are tax deductible.

© Copyright 2020.

---

**AB/EV (Absentee Ballot/Early Voting)** – Voting that happens prior to Election Day. The time frame and process vary depending on what state or county a voter is in.

**Auto Dialer** – A software tool used to call voters. If someone picks up and a volunteer is unable to speak with them, the software will play a prerecorded message on behalf of the campaign. Auto Dialers are limited by the Federal Communications Commission and may not call cell phones.

**Ad Buy, Media Market, Points** – Terms used when purchasing television advertisements.

**Advance** – The logistics for an upcoming campaign event: room set up, speaker order, etc.

**Advantage, i360, Campaign Sidekick** – Data companies that have smart phone apps to assist campaign staff and volunteers in Voter Contact activities.

**Affinity** – Usually a scale from 0-1 or 1-10 of how liberal or conservative a voter likely is (frequently paired with the term Propensity).

**Base** – Core group of supporters -- usually ideologically similar -- who consistently vote in elections.

**Bracketing** – A secondary public relations event used to generate a more friendly narrative within media coverage.

**Bundling** – Collecting high dollar checks from individuals or couples for one specific candidate or group.

**CoH (Cash on Hand)** – The amount of money or unused funds a campaign currently has.

**Copy** – The words or text on a piece of mail, campaign website, Facebook post, etc.

**Caging** – Collecting and recording donation checks that are sent to the campaign.

**Canvassing** – Door-to-door efforts, like voter contact.

**Call Time** – A block of time in the candidate's schedule when the candidate calls to ask for campaign donations.

**Campaign General Consultant** – An experienced political operative who provides general strategy and outlines the roadmap to success for a political campaign. Consultants often work for more than one campaign at a time. The consultant sees a campaign or candidate as a client and less like a direct supervisor.

---

**Campaign Manager** – The top staffer within a campaign. This staffer oversees all aspects of the campaign including candidate management, the budget, and department heads.

**Campaign/Election Cycle** – A two-year period that ends with an even numbered year election. For example, the 2020 election cycle would include all activities from the day after the 2018 election to election day 2020.

**Campus Campaign Coordinator** – The lead student on a campus. This student oversees all of the campaign operations on a campus.

**Cord Cutter** – A person (likely younger) who does not have a landline phone or a traditional television subscription.

**Closed Primary** – A primary election that is only open to registered members of that specific party. Any citizens who are not a member of the party may not participate.

**Daily** – A newspaper that releases a new edition every day (frequently paired with the term Weekly).

**Direct Mail** – A piece of campaign literature that is sent to the voter. An entire Universe of thousands of voters could likely receive the same piece of mail.

**Down Ballot Races** – Elections for lower level office (city council, county commissioner, state legislature, etc.) that are towards the bottom of the physical ballot.

**Earned (Earned Media)** – News coverage that is free to the campaign, like a story in the local news or Weekly (frequently paired with the term Paid Media).

**GOTV (Get Out the Vote)** – The last several weeks before election day where campaigns contact all their supporters to ensure they vote. Usually, campaigns talk to people they know support their candidate, not new voters.

**Hard Money** – Donations that are made directly to a candidate or a specific campaign. Most of the time, laws limit how much money an individual or group may donate directly.

**Hit** – A noticeable media appearance that can be used in a negative or positive light.

**Line-by-Line (minute-by-minute)** – The official program, agenda, or schedule of a formal event.

**Like Race** - A similar political race to the one you are running, both in scope, election cycle, and expected voter turnout.

---

**LTE (Letter to the Editor) /OpEd (Opposition to the Editor)** – A short opinion message that is written from a reader and pushed in a Daily or Weekly.

**Mass-Based Youth Campaign** – Pioneered by Morton Blackwell, the most effective type of youth campaign. It requires a full-time, trained, paid, out of state youth director who focuses entirely on executing a systematic process of recruitment, organization, and mobilization on behalf of a candidate or cause. The Mass-Based Youth Effort provides a campaign with volunteers, votes, a youthful image, a win psychology, leadership training, and civic activity.

**Metrics** – A set of goals established for an individual staffer, department, or campaign.

**Midterm Election** – An even numbered year election that takes place between presidential elections i.e. 2014, 2018, 2022.

**Margin of Error (MoE)** – The number of percentage points by which a poll may be wrong. Usually, a poll that surveys a higher number of people will have a smaller MoE.

**Off Year** – An odd numbered year that usually does not have an election.

**Organizational Chairman** – A student leader who oversees the campus canvass and appoints key positions of the campus campaign structure. This student may be an already elected College Republican/ College Democrat Chair.

**Oppo** – Opposition research, similar to a background search, that collects information about an opponent. This research generally includes a wide variety of information from college attendance, utility bills, legal history, etc.

**Oppo Dump** – Giving negative information about your opponent to members of the press or community in hopes that it will be used against your opponent without being tied back to your campaign as the source.

**Open Primary** – A primary election that is open to more than just the registered members of a specific party. Depending on the state, independent voters or voters of another party may participate.

**Paid Media** – Media that is paid for, such as TV and newspaper ads. Frequently paired with the term Earned Media.

**PAC (Political Action Committee)** – An organization that raises money or campaigns on behalf of a candidate or cause. Depending on the state and the race, a campaign and PAC may be legally limited on how much they can interact or coordinate.

**Push Poll** – A bias poll that uses loaded questions to change the opinion of the individuals who are taking the poll. These polls are mostly used to plant negative information instead of gauging how the electorate feels about issues.

---

**Precinct Captain** – A formal position within the local party network. Precincts will vary from state-to-state and county to county. Usually, the precinct captain is someone who has lived in the area for a while, and knows the voters and the precinct make up.

**Predictive Dialer** – A software tool similar to an auto dialer, but more complex. Instead of making one call directly after another, a predictive dialer uses a specific algorithm to guess the amount of down time between each call so the caller will spend less time waiting and more time talking to people.

**Propensity** – How often someone votes (frequently paired with the term Affinity). A high propensity voter would be someone who votes often. A low propensity voter would be someone who seldom votes.

**Soft Democrat/Soft Republican** – A person who usually votes with a specific party but may break away from their party from time to time.

**Soft Money** – Money not donated directly to a candidate or campaign, but likely given to a committee or a Super PAC.

**Split Ticket Voter** – A voter who routinely votes for both Democratic and Republican candidates (frequently interchanged with the term Swing Voter/Persuadable).

**Step and Repeat** – A large, professional banner used as a backdrop for pictures.

**Swing Voter/Persuadable** – Someone who votes for both Democratic and Republican candidates who could likely be convinced to cross party lines and vote for your candidate (frequently interchanged with the term Split Ticket Voter).

**Super Saturday, Day of Action, Week of Action** – A span of time that calls for increased volunteers, Metrics, and Voter Contact efforts. Usually used to stress test the campaign infrastructure that has been built.

**SuperPAC** – A Political Action Committee that can collect an unlimited amount of money on behalf of a candidate or a cause. However, a Super PAC cannot make donations to, coordinate with, or even talk to the candidate they are helping. A Super PAC may make purchases on behalf of the campaign, but cannot donate directly.

**Surrogate** – A well-known and well-respected member of the community who frequently speaks on behalf of the campaign to the media and the community. A surrogate is usually unpaid. Surrogates are frequently used to fight back against negative perceptions against a candidate or campaign. For example, a campaign may use female surrogates to push back against a narrative that a male candidate doesn't do enough to support women's issues.

---

**Take Rate** – The percent of people a campaign successfully connects with during Voter Contact.

**Tracker (Data Sheet)** – A spreadsheet (usually a google sheet) used to track part of your campaign. For example, a spreadsheet to track things like LTE submissions, Super Saturday sign ups, and yard sign requests.

**Tracker (Person)** – An individual who follows a candidate or elected official and records their events, speeches, and public appearances. Trackers usually work on behalf of the opposition.

**Universe** – A very flexible term used to describe a specific set of voters. For example, a Universe of Female High Propensity Swing Voters in Fairfax County would be females who live in Fairfax County, frequently vote, and have a history of voting for Democratic and Republican candidates.

**Voter Contact** – Activities like making calls or knocking doors to connect directly with voters.

**Vulnerability Assessment** – Background research done on yourself to help identify any areas of weakness that could be targeted during the campaign. Areas frequently checked are social media posts, criminal history (including parking tickets), work history, etc.

**Victory Program** – A coordinated program between state parties and the Republican National Committee. This program usually focuses on voter registration, Voter Contact, and the President’s agenda.

**Walk Book** – A list of 50-100 houses within a Voter Contact app.

**Weekly** – A newspaper that releases a new edition once a week (frequently paired with the term Daily).

**Youth for \_\_\_ Chair** – A well-known student who lends their likeness or credibility to a cause or campaign.

*Learn more about campaigns and prepare to win for your conservative cause or candidate at Leadership Institute training.*

**Sign Up Here** [LeadershipInstitute.org/Training](https://LeadershipInstitute.org/Training)

## STAY CONNECTED!



@LeadershipInstitute



/LeadershipInstitute



@LeadershipInst



703.247.2000



[www.LeadershipInstitute.org](http://www.LeadershipInstitute.org)



Steven P.J. Wood Building  
1101 North Highland St.  
Arlington, VA 22201



Leadership  
Institute