Photo courtesy: © Kate Wade/San Francisco Chronicle/Corbis

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The Campaign Process

BY OCTOBER 2003, Senator John Kerry (D–MA) was second to former Governor Howard Dean (D–VT) in cash raised for the Democratic presidential primary. Kerry had amassed about $20 million; Dean, $25 million. Dean had the advantage and the momentum, but he and his campaign team, it seems, did not have a clue as to how to use them. While both Dean and Kerry spent about $1 million in Iowa, Kerry spent twice as much in New Hampshire on political advertisements. Pouring money into a campaign is not everything, however. Dean made foolish mistakes, such as spending $50,000 on a $1,500-a-plate Carly Simon fund-raising dinner. Although the event made $200,000, it cost far more than it might have—the money spent could well have gone to something far more important. In fact, Dean became known for throwing money around. One journalist reflected that the Dean campaign lacked attention to the big picture (winning), being more worried about custom-made Louisville Sluggers and fleece pullovers than poll numbers.[1] Dean's mistakes eventually led to his downward slide and Kerry's nomination.

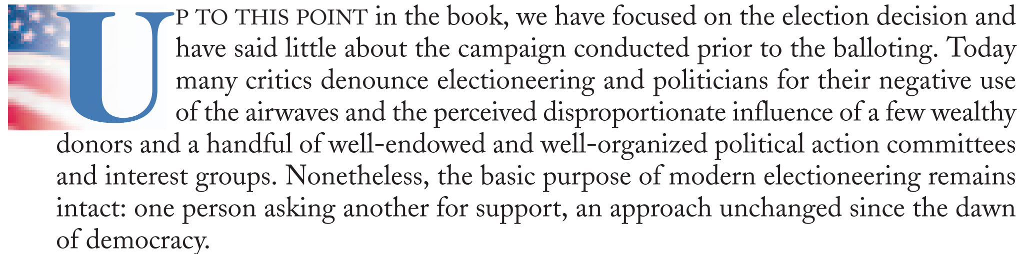
Nevertheless, Dean made Kerry spend much of his money merely to keep up, leaving Kerry so strapped that he had to take out a loan of $6 million. Kerry's fund-raising picked up as it became clear he would be the Democrats' nominee. But, President George W. Bush had $200 million to Kerry's $110 million, even though Kerry's fund-raising began to exceed Bush's in dollars per day. Kerry contemplated not accepting the Democratic Party's nomination until well after the party's national convention, so that he could spend all the money he raised himself before being limited to public matching funds while Bush spent freely. Bush had proven to be a perfect fund-raising machine, leaving Kerry to engage in creative funding techniques just to stay in the race.

By June, however, it became clear that Kerry was not as badly off as he seemed. Liberal groups such as MoveOn and Media Fund had aired anti-Bush television spots 56,627 times in contested states alone.[2] Meanwhile, Michael Moore's editorial documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11* presented an intensely critical portrayal of how Bush handled the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and speculated about Bush connections to possible supporters of Osama bin Laden. Although Kerry had nothing to do with the production of the film or with the groups producing the anti-Bush ads, he benefited. *Fahrenheit 9/11*, for example, served as the negative advertising Kerry would otherwise have had to consider running. In addition, the film—at one point holding the highest ticket sales of any movie in the nation—reached a huge audience, a large

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- The Structure of a Campaign
- The Media and Campaigns
- Campaign Finance
- Bringing It Together: The 2004 Presidential Campaign and Election

portion of which were young potential voters, who are notoriously uninformed about politics. MoveOn, Media Fund, and Moore had effectively campaigned for Kerry throughout June, and Kerry didn't pay a cent but stayed above the fray, announcing Senator John Edwards as his vice presidential candidate and preparing for what would turn out to be a heated general election campaign in the fall.



UP TO THIS POINT in the book, we have focused on the election decision and have said little about the campaign conducted prior to the balloting. Today many critics denounce electioneering and politicians for their negative use of the airwaves and the perceived disproportionate influence of a few wealthy donors and a handful of well-endowed and well-organized political action committees and interest groups. Nonetheless, the basic purpose of modern electioneering remains intact: one person asking another for support, an approach unchanged since the dawn of democracy.

The art of campaigning involves the science of polls, the planning of sophisticated mass mailings, and the coordination of electronic telephone banks—and, recently, the creation of a campaign Web site coordinated with e-mail updates to reach potential voters and donors. More importantly, it also involves the diplomatic skill of unifying disparate individuals and groups to achieve a fragile but election-winning majority. How candidates perform this exquisitely difficult task is the subject of this chapter, in which we discuss the following topics:

- First, we will explore the *structure of a campaign,* the process of seeking and winning votes in the run-up to an election, which consists of five separate components: the nomination campaign, the general election campaign, the personal campaign, the organizational campaign, and the media campaign.
- Second, we will look at the *media and campaigns* and how candidates make use of both paid and free media.
- Third, we will analyze *campaign finance,* the features and potential implications of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, and possible finance reform in the future.
- Finally, we will discuss the *2004 presidential campaign and election* and assess its importance.

THE STRUCTURE OF A CAMPAIGN

A CAMPAIGN FOR HIGH OFFICE (such as the presidency, a governorship, or a U.S. Senate seat) is a highly complex effort akin to running a multimillion-dollar business. Campaigns for local offices are usually less complicated, but all campaigns, no matter what their size, have common characteristics. Each election campaign consists of several smaller campaigns that balance one another. They are:

nomination campaign
That part of a political campaign aimed at winning a primary election.

- The **nomination campaign.** During the nomination campaign, the candidate targets the leaders and activists who choose nominees in primaries or conventions. Party leaders are concerned with electability, while party activists are often ideologically and issue oriented, so a candidate must appeal to both bases. The nomination campaign begins as soon as the candidate has decided to run—sometimes

as much as two years prior to an official announcement—and ends the night of the party primary or convention.

- The **general election campaign.** A farsighted candidate never forgets the ultimate goal: winning the general election. Therefore the candidate tries to avoid taking stands that, however pleasing to party activists in the primary, will alienate a majority of the larger general election constituency. Sometimes, if the candidate is a clear front-runner, he or she may transition the nomination campaign into a general election campaign before the nomination is official.
- The **personal campaign.** Candidates must be seen by the voters, and they must cultivate a positive image. Therefore, the candidate and his or her family and supporters make appearances, meet voters, hold press conferences, and give speeches. The personal campaign begins as soon as the candidate wants to run for office, since it lays the groundwork for the organizational and media campaigns discussed below.
- The **organizational campaign.** In contrast to the public nature of the personal campaign, the organizational campaign consists of behind-the-scenes efforts to ensure the campaign is running effectively. For fund-raising, voter contact, and the media campaign, a candidate needs a strong campaign organization. The organizational campaign begins once the candidate has been able to drum up the capital and personnel to invest in what will hopefully turn into more money, volunteers, and—most importantly—votes.
- The **media campaign.** The goal of this aspect of campaigning is for the candidate to reach out to the voters—whether in person, or via the media—in order to create a positive impression and ultimately gain votes. On television and radio, the candidate's paid advertisements air frequently in an effort to convince the public that the candidate is the best person for the job. Meanwhile, campaigners attempt to influence press coverage of the campaign by the print and electronic news reporters.

Photo courtesy: Playboy *magazine, reproduced by special permission. Copyright 1992 by Playboy*

■ "Next time, why don't you run? You're a well-known figure, people seem to like you, and you haven't had an original idea in years." Name recognition is often more important than political ideology for winning campaigns.

general election campaign
That part of a political campaign aimed at winning a general election.

personal campaign
That part of a political campaign concerned with presenting the candidate's public image.

organizational campaign
That part of a political campaign involved in fund-raising, literature distribution, and all other activities not directly involving the candidate.

media campaign
That part of a political campaign in which the candidate reaches out to the voters, in person or via the media, to create a positive impression and gain votes.

The Nomination Campaign

The nomination campaign gives new candidates an opportunity to get their sea legs early on. As they seek their party's nomination, candidates learn to adjust to the pressure of being in the spotlight day in and day out. This is the time for the candidates to learn that a single careless phrase could end the campaign or guarantee a defeat. This is also the time to seek the support of party leaders and interest groups and to test out themes, slogans, and strategies. The press and public take much less notice of shifts in strategy at this time than they will later in the general election campaign.

The nomination campaign is a critical time for gaining and maintaining the aura of support both within the party and with the larger electorate. A study of the weeks leading up to the 1988 Republican convention found that Vice President George Bush, the eventual Republican nominee for president, converted support from other Republican candidates through a variety of means. Much of this new support, therefore, grew out of Bush's previous success and a sense of inevitability, not necessarily out of support for his issue positions or campaign themes.[3] These principles also clearly apply to the

Photo courtesy: Jim West/The Image Works

Former Vermont Governor Howard Dean addresses a rally during his presidential primary campaign in November, 2003. Dean was the early front-runner for the Democratic nomination.

2004 campaign. For example, John Kerry campaigned with his former competitors for the Democratic ticket, such as Dick Gephardt and Howard Dean, and even named John Edwards, Kerry's toughest opponent during the primaries, as his vice presidential nominee.

A danger that is not widely recognized by candidates during the nomination campaign is that in the quest to win the party's nomination, a candidate can move too far to the right or the left and become too extreme for the November electorate. Diehard activists voters, who are often more extreme than other members of their own party, tend to participate in primaries and caucuses. If a candidate tries too hard to appeal to their interests, he or she jeopardizes the ultimate goal of winning the election. Conservative Barry Goldwater, the 1964 Republican nominee for president, and liberal George McGovern, the 1972 Democratic nominee for president, both fell victim to this phenomenon in seeking their party's nomination—Goldwater going too far right, and McGovern going too far left—and they were handily defeated in the general elections by Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon, respectively.

The General Election Campaign

After earning the party's nomination, candidates embark on the general election campaign (see The Living Constitution). They must seek the support of groups and voters and decide on the issues they will emphasize. When courting interest groups, a candidate seeks both money and endorsements, although the results are mainly predictable: liberal, labor, and minority groups usually back Democrats, while conservative and business organizations support Republicans. The most active groups often coalesce around emotional issues such as abortion and gun control, and these organizations can produce a bumper crop of money and activists for favored candidates.

Virtually all candidates adopt a brief theme, or slogan, to serve as a rallying cry in their quest for office. In 2004, the Kerry-Edwards campaign adopted the slogan "A Stronger America" in order to emphasize the security issue. Most slogans can fit many candidates ("She thinks like us," "He's on our side," "She hears you," "You know where he stands"). Candidates try to avoid controversy in their selection of slogans, and some openly eschew ideology. (An ever-popular one of this genre is "Not left, not right—forward!") The clever candidate also attempts to find a slogan that cannot be lampooned easily. In 1964, Barry Goldwater's handlers may have regretted their choice of "In your heart, you know he's right" when Lyndon B. Johnson's supporters quickly converted it into "In your guts, you know he's nuts." (Democrats were trying to portray Goldwater as a warmonger after the Republican indicated a willingness to use nuclear weapons.)

In addition to deciding on the issues to focus on during the campaign, the candidate must also define his or her stance on other topics of interest to voters. A variety of factors influence candidates' positions and core issues, including personal conviction, party platform, and experience in a certain area. Candidates also utilize public opinion polling to gauge whether or not the issues that they care about are issues that the voters care about.

Roots of Government

Stump Speeches Past and Present

Senator John Edwards (D–NC) gave one of the most memorable stump speeches of the 2004 presidential election. In the speech, called "The Two Americas," Edwards discussed how the wealthy minority of Americans live in stark contrast to the majority of working and middle-class Americans. The contrast was not to provide an "eat the rich" politics of envy but to demonstrate how the disparity between the two groups was too great and could be closed only by improving state services, repealing tax breaks for the rich, and giving greater tax relief to the middle class. On the stump, President George W. Bush often imbues his speeches with a religious tone as an expression of his faith and how it affects his conceptions of liberty.

Themes of economic inequality and religion are not unique to our present political situation but operate in a long tradition of stump speeches. President Andrew Jackson, the first president not from either Massachusetts or Virginia, was the first to engage large crowds with speeches. The times had changed since the westward expansion of the United States and the loosening of voting rights standards took power away from the ruling elite that had governed since the nation's founding. Jackson gave his speeches in common-man style, making use of his war hero status and opposition to the Second Bank of the United States, believed to be an institution favoring the rich.

In 1896, William Jennings Bryan continued the Jacksonian tradition in his legendary Cross of Gold speech, in which he harangued the Democratic Party for considering using gold as the standard by which to set American currency, a move that would benefit, in Bryan's opinion, wealthy city dwellers while hurting the agricultural base of the Democratic Party. "There are two ideas of government," Bryan said. "There are those who believe that, if you only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them." Clearly, when Edwards says, "We shouldn't have two tax systems, one for the special interests, the big corporations, many of whom pay no taxes at all, and one for all those families who just work hard every year and pay their taxes and carry the tax burden in America," he honors Bryan's concept of the "two ideas of government" and a long-standing tradition of Democratic stump speeches.

Bush, in defense of his invasion of Iraq, stated: "liberty is not America's gift to the world—liberty and freedom are God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world."[a] His religious conception of liberty is also part of a tradition of stump speeches, one easily traceable to Abraham Lincoln, who asked a September 11, 1858, Edwardsville audience, "What constitutes the bulwark of our own liberty and independence?" He then answered, "Our reliance is in the *love of* liberty which God has planted in our bosoms." For some, Bush's frequent use of "God talk" is disquieting, while others find it reassuring.

Obviously, the 2004 presidential election candidates stood on the shoulders of giants, but they themselves have contributed to the ever growing tradition of stump speeches, both by operating within the tradition and by slightly changing its course—Edwards by making inequality a need to uplift and Bush by making piety into a foreign policy.

[a]George W. Bush, "Remarks via Satellite by the President to the National Association of Evangelicals Convention," Washington, DC, March 3, 2004.

The Personal Campaign

In the effort to show voters that they are hardworking, thoughtful, and worthy of the office they seek, candidates try to meet personally as many citizens as possible in the course of a campaign. To some degree, these personal campaign events are symbolic, especially for presidential candidates, since it is possible to have direct contact with only a limited number of people. But, one cannot underestimate the value of visiting numerous localities to increase media coverage and to motivate local activists who are working for the candidate's campaign.

In a typical campaign, a candidate for high office maintains an exhausting schedule. The day may begin at 5 a.m. at the entrance gate to an auto plant with an hour or two of handshaking, followed by similar glad-handing at subway stops until 9 a.m. Strategy sessions with key advisers and preparation for upcoming presentations and forums may fill the rest of the morning. A luncheon talk, afternoon fundraisers, and a

■ Right-wing 1964 Republican candidate Barry Goldwater's famous slogan, "In your heart, you know he's right," was quickly lampooned by incumbent Democratic opponent President Lyndon B. Johnson's campaign as "In your guts, you know he's nuts."

Photo courtesy: Bettmann/Corbis

series of television and print interviews crowd the afternoon agenda. Cocktail parties are followed by a dinner speech, perhaps telephone or neighborhood canvassing of voters, and a civic-forum talk or two. More meetings with advisers and planning for the next day's events can easily take a candidate past midnight. Following only a few hours of sleep, the candidate starts all over again. After months of this grueling pace, the candidate may be functioning on automatic pilot and sometimes momentarily may be unable to think clearly.

Beyond the strains this fast-lane existence adds to a candidate's family life, the hectic schedule leaves little time for reflection and long-range planning. Is it any wonder that under these conditions many candidates commit gaffes?

The Organizational Campaign

The organizational campaign is the behind-the-scenes business effort that funds and supports the candidate. It raises money from supporters, which is then spent on the campaign infrastructure: a staff, offices, television advertising production and airing, direct mail, fund-raising dinners, and public opinion polling that helps reveal to campaign managers which issues the public cares about.

voter canvass
The process by which a campaign reaches individual voters, either by door-to-door solicitation or by telephone.

Also, volunteers walk the streets of their neighborhoods, going door to door to solicit votes, while other volunteers use computerized telephone banks to call targeted voters with scripted messages. Both contact methods are termed **voter canvass.** Most canvassing, or direct solicitation of support, takes place in the month before the election,

The Living Constitution

Congress shall make no law . . .
abridging the freedom of speech. . .

—First Amendment

When the Founding Fathers set about writing the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, they were not specific in their definition of free speech in the First Amendment. Therefore it has been up to subsequent Congresses, presidents, Supreme Courts, and others to interpret and expand on their very simple, elegant definition. Today, we have an elaborate campaign finance system that balances free speech with the need to prevent political corruption. The Supreme Court has repeatedly addressed that difficult balance in cases such as *Buckley* v. *Valleo* (1976) and *McConnell* v. *Federal Election Committee* (2003).

Essentially, the Founders looked at campaigning as crass and beneath the dignity of office holders. At least theoretically, they believed that the office should seek the person, although in practice many of them were very ambitious and intensely sought high elected office. They did not do so in the context of a mass electorate, but rather by means of the aristocratic gentry that acted through the Electoral College to select our presidents and vice presidents.

In this era of ultra-democracy, when everyone expects to have a voice, even if not bothering to cast a ballot, the system must operate very differently. As a result, candidates campaign by raising hundreds of millions of dollars, visiting television studio after television studio for news coverage, holding media events, taping paid television and radio advertisements, and using the Internet for communication with their supporters.

The candidates' free speech is augmented by the free speech of those who have interests in seeing one candidate elected and the other defeated in a particular race. Thus, there are the political parties, raising money and doing everything described in chapter 12. There are political action committees (PACs)—the contributing arms of special interest groups on the left, on the right, and in the middle. There also are the so-called "527 committees," a recent creation that stems from the effects of the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Act of 2002, generally created to attack the opposing candidates through television and radio ads, as well as individual voter contact. And, finally, there are completely independent political committees that can raise and spend whatever they want, for whatever interests they support and prefer—so long as they have no direct or indirect contact with any campaign organizations.

It is amazing that all of these aspects have developed from the powerful words of the First Amendment. The Founders could hardly have imagined what massive enterprises campaigns would become, and what the few words they penned on parchment would create with the passing of two centuries.

Photo courtesy: Brooks Kraft/Corbis

■ Democratic Presidential nominee John Kerry responds to supporters at a rally in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in July, 2004. During his speech, Kerry announced that Senator John Edwards would be his vice presidential running mate.

when voters are paying attention. Close to Election Day, the telephone banks begin vital **get-out-the-vote (GOTV)** efforts, reminding supporters to vote and arranging for their transportation to the polls if necessary. As the media become less effective in encouraging political education and participation, candidates increasingly realize the value of identifying base voters and getting them to the polls.

Depending on the level of the office sought, the organizational staff can consist of a handful of volunteers or hundreds of paid specialists supplementing and directing the work of thousands of volunteers. Presidential campaign organizations have the most elaborate structure. At the top of the chart is the **campaign manager,** who coordinates and directs the campaign. The campaign manager is the person closest to the candidate, the person who delivers the good and bad news about the condition of the campaign and makes the essential day-to-day decisions, such as whom to hire and when to air which television ad.

Campaign consultants are the private-sector professionals and firms who sell to a candidate the technologies, services, and strategies required to get that candidate elected to his or her office of choice. Their numbers have grown exponentially since they first appeared in the 1930s, and their specialties and responsibilities have increased accordingly, to the point that they are now an obligatory part of campaigns at almost any level of government. Candidates hire generalist consultants to oversee their entire campaign from beginning to end. Alongside the generalist consultant are more specialized consultants who focus on the new and complex technologies for only one or two areas, such as fund-raising, polling, mass mailings, media relations, advertising, and speech writing.

Figure 14.1 shows the organizational chart for the George W. Bush reelection campaign. The reelection committee is headed by Ken Mehlman, who worked at the White House for three years before resigning in mid-2003 to head the reelection committee. An important player in the campaign is not on the chart. Perhaps the key political person in the White House staff is Karl Rove, a long-time friend and colleague of Bush. Rove masterminded Bush's nomination and general election in 2000 and performed the same function in 2004 while remaining in the White House. Mehlman clearly answered to Rove.

Other key positions include the **finance chair,** who is responsible for bringing in the large contributions that fund the campaign, the **pollster,** who takes public opinion surveys to learn what issues voters want candidates to address in speeches, and the **direct mailer,** who supervises direct-mail fund-raising.

Many critics claim that consultants strip campaigns of substance and reduce them to a clever bag of tricks for sale. Others insist that despite the prevalence of consultants, running for office is still the bread and butter of campaigns: shaking hands, speaking persuasively, and listening to the voters. Voters, they say, are smart enough to tell the difference between a good candidate and a bad one, regardless of the smoke and mirrors erected by their consultants. Nevertheless, consultants do make a difference. In campaigns for the U.S. House of Representatives, for example, the use of professional campaign consultants has been shown to have a positive impact on candidates' fund-raising ability[4] and on candidates' final vote shares.[5]

get-out-the-vote (GOTV)
A push at the end of a political campaign to encourage supporters to go to the polls.

campaign manager
The individual who travels with the candidate and coordinates the many different aspects of the campaign.

campaign consultant
The private-sector professionals and firms who sell to a candidate the technologies, services, and strategies required to get that candidate elected.

finance chair
A professional who coordinates the fund-raising efforts for the campaign.

pollster
A professional who takes public opinion surveys that guide political campaigns.

direct mailer
A professional who supervises a political campaign's direct-mail fund-raising strategies.

The Media Campaign

The media campaign is as complex as it is essential for a candidate to win election. The various elements that make up the media (television, radio, the Internet, newspapers,

Simulation
You Are a Presidential Campaign Consultant

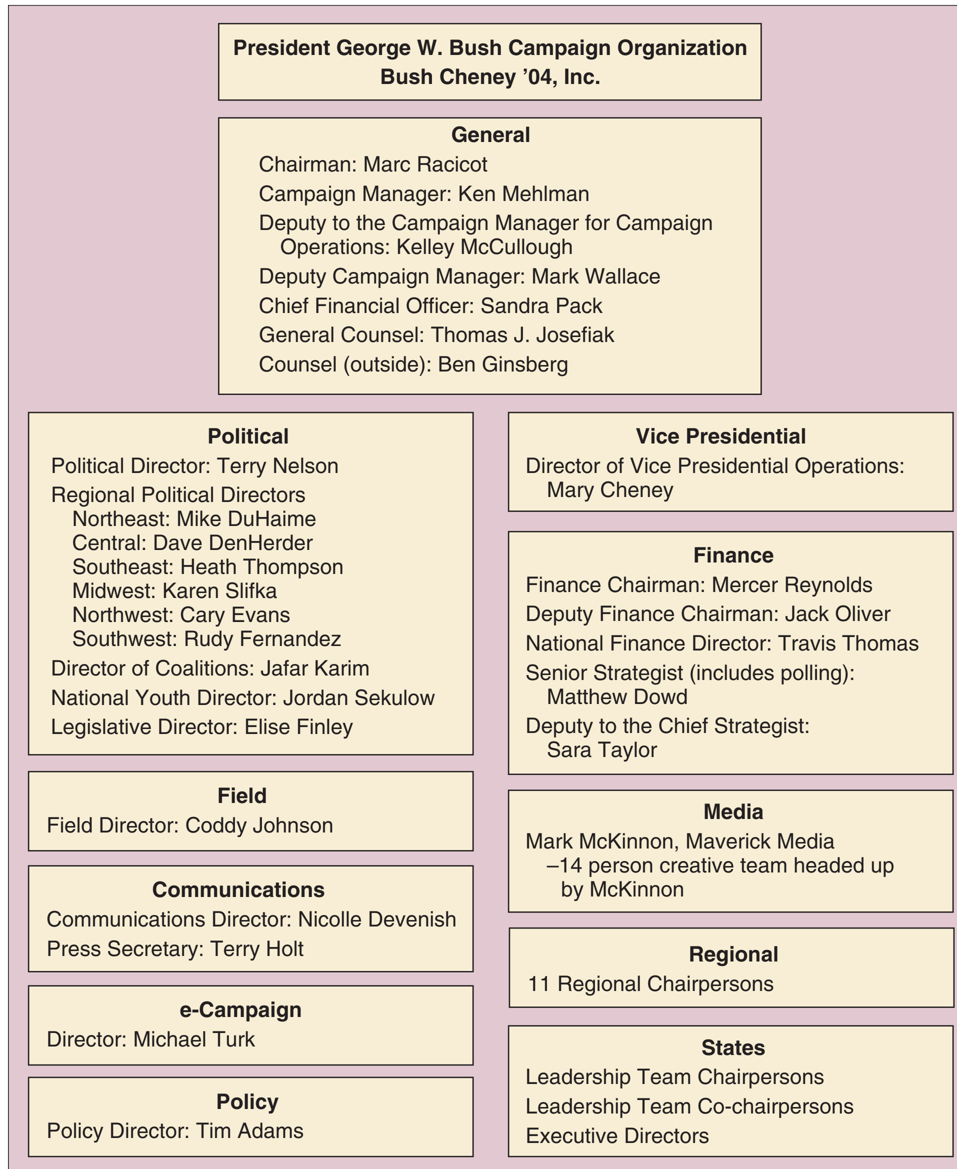


FIGURE 14.1 Bush Campaign Organizational Chart. ■

and magazines) are the best methods available to candidates to get their message to every potential voter. Candidates employ a network of staff to manage the different kinds of media.

The **communications director** develops the overall media strategy for the candidate, carefully blending press coverage with paid TV, radio, and mail media. A candidate cannot merely buy an election by blasting major media markets with political advertising. That is both an inefficient and extremely expensive method. A candidate cannot rely entirely on the attention of the press, since the press interests are capricious and never align with those of the candidate. The communications director develops a strategy of using both paid and free media to market a candidate most effectively to voters, such as airing negative ads in areas recently visited by the competing candidate.

communications director The person who develops the overall media strategy for the candidate, blending the free press coverage with the paid TV, radio, and mail media.

The **press secretary** is charged with interacting and communicating with journalists on a daily basis. We are all familiar with the campaign press secretary, since it is his or her job to be quoted in the newspapers or on TV explaining the candidate's positions or reacting to the actions of the opposing candidate. Good news is usually announced by the candidate. Bad news, including attacks from the other side, is the preserve of the press secretary (better to have someone not on the ballot doing the dirty work of the campaign). The press secretary's position is a stressful one, as he or she must be available at all hours,

press secretary The individual charged with interacting and communicating with journalists on a daily basis.

seven days a week, holidays included, for a demanding, voracious press corps that fills news shows and files print or Internet edition stories at all hours. This is not a job for the faint-hearted.

media consultant
A professional who produces candidates' television, radio, and print advertisements.

You Are a Media Consultant to a Political Candidate

The **media consultant,** as discussed above, is the outside contractor who designs TV and radio and mail advertisements. We now look at the details of how the media campaign is conducted. More than one consultant or even an advertising company or two may be assigned to this fundamental part of the modern campaign. The communications director has to work with the consultants to make certain that the key issues are addressed well in the ads, and the communications director frequently involves the campaign manager, the pollster, and sometimes the candidate in crafting the paid messages.