



Who they are

Obama for America was the official re-election campaign for President Barack Obama.

- Channel: www.youtube.com/barackobama
- Website: www.barackobama.com
- Headquarters: Chicago, IL

What they needed to do

- Engage supporters and reach increasingly hard to reach persuadable voters

What they did

- Delivered targeted messages for different audience segments using YouTube
- Used channel to hold livestreams and upload an average of 3 videos per day
- Uploaded and promoted rapid-response video with TrueView video ads
- Leveraged YouTube homepage mastheads buys on key election days to promote live stream of Democratic National Convention and promote Get Out The Vote efforts the day before Election Day

What they accomplished

- Grew YouTube community to 471,000+ subscribers and garnered over 289,000,000 video views
- Responded in real time to major events and commentary through TrueView video ads
- Election Day YouTube homepage masthead resulted in >400,000 polling place lookups at a low cost-per-engagement
- President Obama won the election, with nearly every battleground state falling into the President's column

Obama for America persuades voters on YouTube; end-to-end strategy drives election success

The Obama campaign knew that in 2012, they could not rely on the same strategies that had led to victory in 2008. The electoral environment was less hospitable, and the media landscape had been fundamentally altered.

“Our campaign was very focused from the start on the particular audience segments we wanted to talk to. We knew that voters were increasingly hard to reach on TV, and that a large chunk of voters that we needed could not be reached at all through TV or direct mail,” says Nate Lubin, Director of Digital Marketing for Obama for America. “YouTube helped provide us the scale, reach, and targeting to speak to our audience in a way few other platforms could. It was an essential part of our persuasion strategy.”

Right message, right audience

The campaign created custom video content for specific audiences, and used YouTube to deliver videos to targeted segments. In addition to professionally produced content, President Obama, First Lady, campaign staffers, and supporters were regularly featured in videos that were uploaded as often as three times a day. Each video delivered a tailored and authentic message to voters.

“We had targeted messages going to different groups like Latino audiences, young people, and women. YouTube helped us focus on the specific audiences we wanted to talk to, and ensure they were getting a message that was relevant to them,” Lubin describes.

YouTube’s geo-targeting capabilities allowed the campaign to cost-effectively reach audience segments in precise areas around the country. And YouTube’s flexibility allowed the campaign to quickly revise their targeting plans as new polling data came in.



The Obama campaign used YouTube to deliver targeted messages to specific audiences, like this ad promoting the President’s jobs plan in Northern Virginia.

"YouTube helped provide us the scale, reach, and targeting to speak to our audience in a way few other platforms could. It was an essential part of our persuasion strategy."

— Nate Lubin, Director of Digital Marketing, Obama for America

"We knew that there would be a crunch for inventory in key states, particularly with the audiences and geos we valued most. A big part of our strategy was planning early and securing reservation inventory while building in flexibility to make changes as needed," notes Lubin. "This process offered us some measure of strategic certainty while defending key inventory, locking in lower prices, and ultimately led to huge savings for the campaign."

Building an engagement hub

The Obama team built a robust YouTube channel that served as the engagement hub for all of their video content and linked to all relevant campaign activity. It launched with the release of a 17-minute documentary "The Road We've Traveled" narrated by Tom Hanks. The video, which highlighted achievements from his first term, was live-streamed to house parties across the country, and it amassed a substantial number of new subscribers.



The Obama for America channel earned 471,000+ subscribers and 289,000,000+ video views.

Over the course of the re-election campaign, Obama for America leveraged YouTube to engage voters across the country, which earned over 471,000+ subscribers and 289,000,000+ video views.

Using YouTube TrueView for Rapid Response and Building Buzz

YouTube's technology and distribution gave the campaign the power to own and deliver a specific campaign message at scale. The Obama campaign used YouTube's TrueView video ads to respond in real time to big election events. TrueView in-stream and in-search ads helped OFA expand the reach of videos, share longer-form content, and mobilize supporters in real time.



Rapid-response videos were promoted with TrueView video ads.



About YouTube

YouTube™ is the premier destination to find, upload, watch, and share video online. Google and YouTube are committed to innovating with video to create compelling services for users, content owners, and advertisers.

For more information visit:
www.youtube.com/advertise

“YouTube allowed us to focus on the specific audiences we wanted to talk to, and ensure they were getting a message that was relevant to them.”

— Nate Lubin, Director of Digital Marketing, Obama for America

Owning Key Moments on the YouTube Homepage

For major campaign events, including the Democratic National Convention and Election Day, Obama for America chose to reach a massive audience with the YouTube homepage masthead. “There were a few big moments of the campaign we knew we had to win. The YouTube homepage allowed us to expand the reach of our message during these key moments, and engage as many supporters as possible,” Lubin asserts.

During President Obama’s keynote at the Democratic National Convention, the campaign focused specifically on the non-TV audience. They changed creative multiple times in the evening, and even cut a special promo video for YouTube starring Kal Penn and John Cho, reprising their roles as Harold and Kumar, and the President. During the convention, they live-streamed the acceptance speech from inside the YouTube homepage masthead, and collected email sign-ups through a custom gadget.

On Election Day, the campaign used the YouTube masthead to amp up their Get Out The Vote efforts. Their interactive masthead allowed voters to look up their polling place from within the ad unit and receive a text message reminder with directions. The Election Day YouTube masthead resulted in over 400,000 polling place lookups. That’s more than the President’s margin of victory in CO, FL, IA, NH, and NV combined, and all at a low cost-per-engagement. “The election day YouTube masthead was tremendously successful,” says Lubin. “On the most important day of the campaign, we owned this space—enabling us to drive a

The Obama campaign's YouTube homepage masthead resulted in >400,000 polling place look-ups at a low cost-per-engagement.

phenomenal number of polling place look-ups in a highly cost-effective way.”

The Results

The results from Election Day speak for themselves: a resounding victory, with nearly every battleground state falling into the President’s column. Numerous publications, including Politico, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal, have credited the campaign’s digital ads department for providing much of the winning margin.

Lubin, smiling, summarizes aptly, “We had a strategy and we focused relentlessly on achieving it. YouTube gave us the tools we needed to reach and engage voters, and it was an indispensable part of this effort.”

