

Politics and Persuasive Technology

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Defining the topic:

This report gives an overview of interactive products designed to persuade people to :




- 1.) Agree in principle with a particular political or social cause
- 2.) Actively support a particular political or social cause




Why is this topic important?

Political persuasion changes the country and the world - whoever can propagate ideas and translate those ideas into votes has the power. Government impacts everybody.

Why is politics a good application of persuasive technology?

- Technology (especial software and the WWW) has economies of scale that can be key to funding-challenged causes
- Simulation and interactivity allow personalization of abstract policy details
- Technology reduces geographical barriers and various forms of red tape that otherwise prevent a message from being communicated.

Product	Target user & persuasion goals	How it Works
<p>The Word's Smallest Political Quiz http://www.lp.org</p> 	<p>Target users hold some 'libertarian' beliefs but don't necessarily consider themselves, or vote, Libertarian. Persuasive goal is to get people to identify themselves as, and perhaps vote, Libertarian.</p>	<p>Users mark Yes, No or Maybe, in response to 10 statements. Based on answers, users are shown where on a political grid they stand, and the percentage of other people who answered that way.</p>
<p>Budget Info: Interactive Spending Reform Tools http://www.heritage.org/research/features/budgetcalculator/</p> 	<p>This tool is designed to encourage support for federal spending cuts, and inform user of where such cuts could be made.</p>	<p>User can begin with the current budget, then make cuts and increases as desired. Afterwards, user can compare her budget with heritage.org's own recommendations.</p>
<p>Consumer Freedom Games www.consumerfreedom.com</p> 	<p>Target users are against excess consumer legislation. Persuasive goal is to increase activism and awareness about consumer legislation.</p>	<p>Games include "Lawsuit Fabricator", wherein one selects an annoyance and finds out who he could sue for it. Also "Attack a Nanny", a whack-a-mole game with a nanny state figure as the mole.</p>

Product	Target user & persuasion goals	How it Works
<p>Social Security Calculator http://www.socialsecurtyplus.org</p> 	<p>Calculator goal is to persuade users to support, or more strongly support privatizing social security. Target user is under 50, with right-leaning political views.</p>	<p>Enter age and sex for a preliminary estimate of how much you'll get out of social security vs. how much you'd get from private plan. Enter further personal details for more accuracy</p>
<p>Walk in Her Shoes http://www.choice.org/access/walk.intro</p> 	<p>Interactive simulation experience is designed to demonstrate the difficulties of getting an abortion in California, and convince user that freedom of choice is currently being abridged. Target user is presumably male or a female unexperienced with the abortion process.</p>	<p>Users pick one of three counties, then try to get an abortion through various venues in that county (hospitals, clinics, etc.) Information about various options (or lack thereof) is provided along the way.</p>
<p>GetActive Software http://www.getactive.com</p>  <p>Usage examples: http://www.scorecard.org http://www.retoarethetrust.com</p>	<p>User of the sites that are <i>managed</i> by the software are people who may be slightly interested in activism, but view getting involved as too much effort or are unaware how the topic affects them personally. Goal is to persuade users to take action via automated letter-writing and letter-faxing campaigns related to a specific political or social cause.</p>	<p>The software manages websites that allow visitors to send automated, template-based "form letters" to key politicians or decision-makers. It also allows visitors to send email to their friends asking them to do the same.</p>
<p>GOP Team Leader gopteamleader.com</p> 	<p>User: Active (or not-so-active) GOP member who might be interested in volunteering time and effort to advance party goals. Goal is to persuade user to stay up to date on current GOP issues, to recruit others to stay up to date on those issues, and to persuade the member to perform specific "Action Items."</p>	<p>Current GOP issues are tailored to user's home state and topic interests on homepage. User accrues "GOPoints" for completing "Action Items", redeemable for various prizes. "Outstanding Leader" users are highlighted on the site.</p>

Future Products:

Product	Target user & persuasion goals	How it Works
<p>Smart Mob Assistant</p> <p>"Anti-fur rally 3 blocks north!"</p>	<p>Target will be politically active people in urban areas. Persuasive goal is to assist in protest creation and general activism.</p>	<p>User enters political interests, receives signal when a significant group with similar interests are gathered nearby.</p>