



The 6 Types of Political Campaign Ads

*All campaign communications have one big purpose: **to win the election**. There are 6 main types of political campaign advertisements and communications that can help a candidate win his or election. Each category could apply to any type of campaign communication, including speeches, letters, direct mail, TV and radio ads, billboards, etc.*

➤ **The Bio Ad**

A bio ad is just that – it’s a campaign communication that talks about your candidate’s biography, where he or she came from, and what makes them a good candidate. It is closely related to the name ID ad discussed below, in that it works to raise the name ID of a candidate and talk a bit about the message. Bio advertisements and mailings are often the first communications pieces sent out by a campaign.

➤ **The Name ID Ad**

The purpose of a name ID ad or mailing is to raise the name ID of the candidate – to make sure his or her name is well known and is related, in the mind of the voter, to the campaign message. That’s it – the name ID ad generally doesn’t talk about issues in depth, instead, its goal is simply to make sure that the voters know the name of the candidate and the office that he or she is running for.

➤ **The Issues Ad**

An issues ad or mailing highlights the campaign’s key issue, or one of the campaign’s key issues. It is sometimes called a “positive ad” because it only talks about positive issues – those issues the campaign wants to address. Unlike comparison or negative ads, the positive ad doesn’t delve into what your opponents think, instead focusing on what your candidate believes and promises.

➤ **The Comparison Ad**

A comparison ad presents the voters with a choice by highlighting the issues that your campaign is focusing on, and then showing what your candidate believes, comparing those stands on the issues with what you opponent believes. Obviously, it presents the candidate with a strong and optimistic message, and puts a less glowing spin on the opponent's beliefs.

➤ **The Negative Ad**

I don't like the name "negative ad" but that's the standard terminology. Despite what you may have heard, negative campaigning isn't evil or wrong, so long as it is factual and issues based.

A negative ad or mailing is the one type of campaign communication that focuses almost exclusively on *your opponent*, telling voters what your opponent's stands are on issues and where the public disagrees with your opponent. Remember, negative ad are fine, and in many circumstances may be the best type of communication for your campaign, but keep them issues based – don't get too personal.

➤ **The "Get Out and Vote" Ad**

The Get Out the Vote (GOTV) ad's task is to motivate voters who support you to go to the polls and vote on Election Day. At the end of an election cycle, campaigns often send out direct mail, run phone banks, go door to door, and even run TV ads, targeting only their supporters with one message: remember that Tuesday is Election Day, so go vote for our guy or gal!

No Matter the Ad Type, a Candidate Needs to Stay on Message!

It's imperative that a candidate remember that no matter what type of campaign communication is being sent, it must stay on message. The campaign message is the driving force. If you're talking about your bio, how does it show that you are capable of implementing your message? If you're talking about issues, how do they support your message? If you're doing a negative advertisement, how does it show that your opponent will *not* be able to fix the problems and deal with the issues you lay out in support of your message? **Remember, message is king.**