

## Privacy, Security & Trust on the Political Web

### Factors that Influence the Willingness of Internet Users to Provide Sensitive Personal Information to Political Web Sites

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#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

9,705 users of the Microsoft Network (MSN) were surveyed for this study examining the willingness of Internet users to provide e-mail addresses and credit card numbers to political Web sites. The survey was conducted in late October 2002 utilizing banner ads on the Microsoft Network (MSN), a leading Internet portal. Banners linked to a 17 question survey designed by The Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet at The George Washington University Graduate School of political Management, and The Center for Survey Research at the School for Media & Public Affairs at The George Washington University.

The results were a mixed bag for on-line campaigners. 31% of respondents indicated they have not hesitated to provide their e-mail address to a political Web site, and 11% indicated they have not hesitated to provide their credit card number to make an online contribution.

Conversely, the vast majority of respondents indicated that they have hesitated to provide their e-mail address (69%) and credit card number (89%) to political Web sites. Significant numbers of respondents cited concerns about SPAM, privacy, and security as the reasons.

These results demonstrate that while the use of the Internet for political communications is beginning to succeed at engaging individuals in our democracy, on-line campaigners need to focus on ways to foster and sustain the trust of potential supporters on-line. This report describes the survey in detail and offers ideas on how on-line campaigners can hone their operations to increase the number of individuals who are willing to engage in these essential transactions of the Political Web.

#### OVERVIEW: THE CHALLENGE FOR THE “POLITICAL WEB”

The Web sites of most political campaigns today collect sensitive personal information from visitors. Indeed, as the Web has become an integral part of political and public affairs communications, campaigners and their consultants

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typically measure the value of their on-line program by its success as a personal information-gathering machine.

Several high-profile successes have driven this trend. John McCain's 2000 presidential campaign raised \$6.4 million on-line and recruited 142,000 volunteers during the primaries, the vast majority in the days and hours after his victory in New Hampshire. During October 2002, the Moveon.org campaign collected \$1 million on-line in just 48 hours, a stunning example of the power of the Internet to quickly mobilize large numbers of people to join a campaign and open their wallets with the click of a mouse.

Major campaigns are now increasingly designed with the specific goal of driving people to a campaign Web site. Traditional forms of outreach (television, radio, direct mail, phone banks, and even yard signs and billboards), along with on-line advertising and e-mail promotions, are designed in part to encourage people to "click-on" the campaign site, with the goal of encouraging them to give up their e-mail address or make on-line contributions.

As we head into the 2004 election cycle, the major trend in on-line politics is toward highly sophisticated "CRM" database systems. CRM Stands for "Customer Relationship Management", or "Constituent Relationship Management" in the jargon of politics and public affairs. Simply put, CRM is the technology and strategy for finding, getting, and retaining customer contacts. Contact Management is the process of compiling demographic information about the people that matter to an organization and the interactions with them. Typically, this information includes personal information such as contact name and address; phone, fax, and cell numbers; e-mail address; and a log of interactions such as Web site visits, phone calls, correspondence, attendance at an event, or an on-line contribution.<sup>2</sup>

CRM, when properly implemented, will provide extraordinary opportunities for campaigns. CRM can integrate multiple databases (such as direct mail lists, phone call records, volunteer files, voting records and on-line interactions) in one place, to make communications faster and more efficient. And because CRM systems are Web-based, they can be designed to be easy to use by a geographically dispersed campaign staff with little training.

CRM also allows campaigns to customize and personalize the information in ways that enhance the experience of individual visitors who interact with the campaign through the Web. By knowing information about the visitor, a campaign can present timely, relevant and actionable information that is unique to each individual, such as information about campaign events in their hometown, or the voting record of their member of Congress.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from definition of CRM found at <http://www.sweeneygroup.com/crm.htm>

For the promise and potential of CRM to be realized, however, individuals must be willing to input their sensitive personal information into the system. But the public, who are already inundated with a barrage of television and radio ads<sup>3</sup>, unsolicited direct-mail, telemarketing calls at home, and SPAM in their in-boxes, are understandably wary of handing over sensitive information to politicians. For this reason campaigners across the board are finding it increasingly difficult to persuade individuals to give up their sensitive personal information to Web sites.

The reluctance on the part of citizens to willingly provide sensitive personal information to political campaigns poses two challenges for the Political Web: one practical, and one civic. As a practical matter, campaigns measure the value of the Internet based upon the number of e-mail addresses collected and on-line contributions generated. To the extent that Internet users withhold their personal information out of concern for the privacy and security of their data, the perceived value of the Internet to campaigners, and their willingness to invest resources in developing Internet programs, is diminished. Further, as campaigns increasingly rely on the Internet as a quick and cost-effective way to communicate with voters, individuals who decline to provide personal information will not be able to participate as fully in our democratic process.

It is therefore vital that campaigners understand the factors that influence people's willingness to engage in this essential transaction of the political Web, and take these factors into account when designing their on-line efforts.

## **PREVIOUS RESEARCH HAS IDENTIFIED GROWING CONCERN OVER ON-LINE PRIVACY**

The Political Web, of course, is intertwined with the Commercial Web, where approximately 40% of all e-mail traffic in the U.S. is SPAM, according to research by Brightmail Inc, a vendor of SPAM blocking software<sup>4</sup>. The volume has jumped from 8% of all traffic in 2001 and is expected to continue to rise.

On-line privacy is also an issue for Internet users, as demonstrated by previous research.<sup>5</sup> A survey conducted in June of 2001 by the Association for Competitive Technology (ACT), an Internet Industry trade association, found that 76% of consumers feel that privacy protection is important, and 65% of Internet

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<sup>3</sup> A record \$1 billion was spent on TV alone in 2002. SOURCE: University of Wisconsin Advertising Project 12/5/02 [http://polisci.wisc.edu/tvadvertising/Press\\_Releases/Press\\_Release\\_PDFs/Release%202002%20December%205th.pdf](http://polisci.wisc.edu/tvadvertising/Press_Releases/Press_Release_PDFs/Release%202002%20December%205th.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The BrightMail study can be found at <http://www.brightmail.com>. This study was also cited by The Washington Post in a March 13, 2003 article (SEE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A17754-2003Mar12.html>)

<sup>5</sup> SEE <http://www.cdt.org/privacy/survey/findings/> for an overview of recent research in this area.

users reported that a Web site's privacy policy helps them determine which vendors they will use<sup>6</sup>.

Another revealing survey, conducted in April 1999 by AT&T Research<sup>7</sup>, found that Internet users are more likely to provide certain information to Web sites when they are not required to reveal their identity. As the study reported "When presented with scenarios involving the provision of personal data to Web sites, respondents were much less willing to provide information when personally identifiable information was requested." The AT&T Research study also revealed that 61% of respondents who said they would be willing to provide their name and postal mail address to a Web site in order to receive coupons said they would be less likely to provide the information if it would be shared with other companies for marketing purposes.

Twenty six states have already enacted anti-SPAM laws in response to growing public concern about on-line privacy. Congress has also begun to debate legislation relating to on-line privacy and unsolicited e-mail (SPAM), although as yet no new laws have been enacted at the federal level.

## **UNDERSTANDING PRIVACY, SECURITY & TRUST ON THE POLITICAL WEB**

However, little definitive information is available to document the factors that influence people's willingness to part with sensitive personal information on politically oriented Web sites. Most knowledge is anecdotal, and organizers of successful efforts have tended to closely guard their secrets.

In the fall of 2002, the Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet (IPDI) at The George Washington University undertook a study to examine these factors with the help of the Microsoft Network (MSN)<sup>8</sup>. MSN provided 10 million banner ad impressions that were utilized to recruit nearly 10,000 individuals to participate in an on-line survey examining the factors which influence the willingness of individuals to provide sensitive personal information to political Web sites. Results were analyzed with the assistance of the Center for Survey Research at the School of Media & Public Affairs at The George Washington University.

This study offers some positive news for on-line campaigners. Substantial numbers of respondents indicated that they are willing to provide their e-mail address and credit card numbers to political Web sites, illustrating that the potential of the Internet to recruit supporters and generate on-line contributions is real.

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<sup>6</sup> SOURCE: "Consumer Privacy Poll", Association for Competitive Technology, June 26, 2001. [http://www.actonline.org/press\\_room/releases/062601poll\\_facts.asp](http://www.actonline.org/press_room/releases/062601poll_facts.asp)

<sup>7</sup> SOURCE: "Beyond Concern: Understanding Net Users' Attitudes About Online Privacy", AT&T Research, April 14, 1999. <http://www.research.att.com/projects/privacystudy/>

<sup>8</sup> Banner Ads were designed with the help of Mindshare Internet Campaigns LLC ([www.mindshare.net](http://www.mindshare.net)).

At the same time however, the study demonstrated that the vast majority of respondents hesitate to engage in these essential on-line political transactions. Most respondents indicated, in some form or another, that they lack a basic trust that political Web site operators will respect their privacy and ensure the security of their on-line transactions. Understanding these results should help campaigners hone their Web site designs and strategies to increase participation among these audiences and enhance the campaigns' chances for success.

## METHOD

The survey was conducted between October 17 and 31, 2002, during the height of the 2002 campaign.

A total of 9,705 individuals participated in the survey. Participants were recruited through banner advertisements placed on the Microsoft Network (MSN). MSN is a leading Web portal reaching 64.9% of the on-line audience (December 2002)<sup>9</sup>.

MSN provided a total of **10 million** impressions during this two-week period. Ads appeared on various MSN properties, including *Slate.com*, *MSNBC.com*. Various formats of on-line ads were used, including standard 468x60 pixel banners, box ads, and skyscrapers.

The ads invited interested MSN users to “help improve our Nation’s democratic process” by filling out a short survey. No financial or material incentives were offered to survey participants.

The ads were linked to a 17 question survey about factors that influence people’s willingness to provide personal information on political Web sites. Participants were also asked to provide demographic information (SEE APPENDIX A for a complete list of questions).

The survey itself was conducted with sensitivity to the personal privacy of respondents. No sensitive personally identifiable information was collected during the survey (such as name, e-mail address, or credit card information). The personal information that was collected was limited to general, non-identifiable demographic information that the participants themselves provided at their option. In addition, notices were posted at the beginning and end of the survey stating that “No personal information will be collected during this survey” and that “all demographic information will remain confidential.” Data was analyzed in aggregate form and no effort was made to link any response to any individual respondent. Finally, access to the data was limited to authorized George Washington University and IPDI personnel only.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Although this survey was based on self-reported data from a self-selected audience, the large number of respondents represented a broad cross section of the MSN user population. It is important to note that the sample is further limited to the extent that it comprises individuals who were willing to click on a banner ad. It is also conceivable that the message of the banners (which conveyed a message of “help improve our nation’s democratic process”), was an additional

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<sup>9</sup> See <http://mediacenter.msn.com/home/audienceprofile.asp> for demographic breakdown of MSN audience.

self-selection factor. As a result, while the data allows us to draw general conclusions about the patterns of certain MSN users, it does not provide definitive information about the Internet population as a whole.

Of the 9,705 individuals responded to the survey, 61.7% were men, 38.3% were women. The respondents were roughly equally divided among major party affiliation (DEMOCRATS = 33.7%, REPUBLICAN = 35%, INDEPENDENT = 17%, NO PREFERENCE = 10.6%), and representative of all 50 states. The median age of the sample was 46 and the median reported income was \$40,000 to \$50,000 annually<sup>10</sup>.

In addition, 54% indicated they “regularly” or “sometimes” visit political Web sites (Regularly = 15.5%, Sometimes = 38.4%, Rarely = 33.6%, Never = 12.5%) and 83.5% indicated they voted in the 2000 general election.

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<sup>10</sup> Age and Income data is not entirely reliable. 63% of the sample provided their income, and 58% provided their age. That such substantial numbers of respondents failed to provide this basic demographic information on this survey, despite prominent notice of the survey’s privacy policy, further illustrates the challenges campaigners face in collecting any personal information over the Internet.

## RESULTS

Overall, the results indicate that, at the present time, the Internet is a modestly effective tool for obtaining sensitive personal information from individuals. At a certain level, the Web is working as campaigns expect: Roughly one-third (31%) of respondents indicated that they do not hesitate to provide their e-mail address, and one in ten (11%) do not hesitate to provide their credit card number to make an on-line contribution to political Web sites. These results demonstrate that the investment in the Internet by political campaigns and issue groups is worthwhile.

However, the vast majority of respondents did indicate concerns about providing an e-mail address and credit card number to political Web sites. Nearly seven in ten respondents (69%) indicated that they have hesitated to provide their e-mail address. A significantly larger number, 88%, indicated that they have hesitated to provide their credit card number to make an on-line contribution on a political Web site. Of these, more than half indicated that they have hesitated to provide their credit card number to a political Web site for reasons other than a lack of financial resources (see TABLE 1 and TABLE 2 below). In order for the Internet to realize its true potential for campaigns and for our nation's democratic process to work more effectively and efficiently, campaigners need to focus on ways to encourage these "hesitators" to overcome their concerns.

**TABLE 1**

**Have you ever hesitated to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site?**

|     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| YES | = | 69% |
| NO  | = | 31% |

(n = 9,705)

**TABLE 2**

**Have you ever hesitated to provide your credit card number to make an on-line contribution on a political Web site?**

|                                  |   |       |
|----------------------------------|---|-------|
| YES                              | = | 47.5% |
| NO                               | = | 11.1% |
| I DON'T HAVE EXTRA MONEY TO GIVE | = | 41.3% |

(n = 8,631)

NOTE: Respondents were offered the choice of indicating that they "do not have any extra money to give" on this question in order to allow us to gauge the extent to which

people hesitate to provide their credit card number for reasons other than a lack of financial resources.

When asked to elaborate on the reasons why they have hesitated to provide e-mail addresses or credit card information to political Web sites, respondents overwhelmingly cited concerns about SPAM, privacy, and security.

TABLE 3 below details the reluctance of the “hesitators” to provide their e-mail address. Nearly half (48%) indicated they have not provided their e-mail address to a political Web site out of concern about receiving unsolicited e-mail communications. An additional 34% indicated a concern about privacy (“my e-mail address might identify me as a political supporter”), and 14% indicated they did not provide their e-mail address because the Web site did not have a privacy statement describing how their e-mail address would be used.

Similarly, TABLE 4 illustrates the reluctance of the “hesitators” to provide credit card information. 41% indicated that they have not given money on-line because of the absence of a privacy statement, 19% are concerned about the security of providing a credit card on-line, and 13% are concerned about receiving unsolicited e-mail communications as a result of their on-line contribution.

### TABLE 3

**NOTE: The following questions were only provided to respondents who indicated that they have hesitated to provide their e-mail address or credit card number on the previous question.**

#### Q: Why did you hesitate to provide your e-mail address?

|     |  |       |
|-----|--|-------|
| (a) | My e-mail address might identify me as a political supporter           | 33.9% |
| (b) | My e-mail address might be shared with other groups without my consent | 31.8% |
| (c) | The Web site did not have a privacy statement                          | 14.2% |
| (d) | I might receive junk e-mail from other Web sites                       | 16.5% |
| (f) | Other  | 3.6%  |

(n = 6,068)

### TABLE 4

#### Q: Why did you hesitate to provide your credit card number?

|     |   |       |
|-----|---|-------|
| (a) | The Web site did not have a privacy statement                     | 41.3% |
| (b) | My credit card number might identify me as a political supporter  | 21.4% |
| (c) | I might receive junk e-mail from other sites                      | 12.7% |
| (d) | I am concerned about providing my credit card information on-line | 18.8% |
| (f) | Other   | 5.8%  |

(n = 7,793)

**NOTE:** The questions illustrated in TABLE 3 and TABLE 4 allowed respondents to select multiple responses. The data presented in these tables shows the number one response to each question.

When asked if the presence of a privacy statement would make a difference, results were mixed. On one hand, 49% of all respondents indicated that they would be more likely to give their e-mail address to a political Web site if the site has a privacy statement describing how their e-mail address would be used. At the same time, only 25% of all respondents indicated that they would be more likely to give their credit card number to a political Web site if it has a privacy statement (See TABLES 5 and 6 below).

These results suggest that the presence or absence of a privacy policy is a significant, although not overriding factor, in determining whether respondents are willing to provide an e-mail address to a political Web site. Clearly, and for obvious reasons, respondents are more concerned about providing their credit card numbers on-line than they are about providing an e-mail address. The results suggest that campaigners must establish a higher threshold of trust in order for visitors to feel secure about providing their financial information to political Web sites.

#### **TABLE 5**

**Q: In general, would you be more likely to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?**

|   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| YES   | = | 48.5% |
| NO  | = | 12.8% |
| A PRIVACY STATEMENT WOULD NOT MAKE A DIFFERENCE | = | 38.7% |

(n = 8,883)

#### **TABLE 6**

**Q: In general, would you be more likely to provide your credit card number for an on-line contribution to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?**

|   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| YES   | = | 24.6% |
| NO  | = | 28.7% |
| A PRIVACY STATEMENT WOULD NOT MAKE A DIFFERENCE | = | 46.7% |

(n = 8,313)

The question of trust is further illustrated by the data in TABLES 7 and 8 below. A majority of respondents (57%) indicated that they pay “a lot of attention” or “some attention” to privacy statements on political Web sites. Another encouraging factor: the data indicate that in addition to paying attention to privacy policies on political Web sites, 40% of respondents find these privacy policies “very easy” or “fairly easy” to understand.

Yet 47% of respondents indicated that a privacy policy would not make a difference in their decision to provide their credit card number (see TABLE 6 above). This result suggests that this concern is not easily mollified simply by the presence of a privacy policy.

**TABLE 7**

**Q: In general, how much attention do you pay to privacy statements on political Web sites?**

|                     |   |       |
|---------------------|---|-------|
| A lot of attention  | = | 23.8% |
| Some attention      | = | 32.7% |
| Not much attention  | = | 21.8% |
| No attention at all | = | 21.7% |

(n = 7,977)

**TABLE 8**

**Q: In general, how easy to understand are privacy statements you’ve encountered on political Web sites?**

|   |   |       |
|---|---|-------|
| Very easy to understand                                       | = | 6.9%  |
| Fairly easy to understand                                     | = | 33.3% |
| Fairly difficult to understand                                | = | 19.8% |
| Very difficult to understand                                  | = | 7.7%  |
| I have never read a privacy statement on a political Web site | = | 32.3% |

(n = 7,939)

## CROSS-TABLATIONS OF RESULTS BASED ON PATY AFFILIATION, GENDER, AND VOTING HISTORY

The results were further analyzed to explore differences among three key breakdowns of the respondent population: party affiliation, gender, and voting history. Six questions were analyzed for each group:

1. Have you ever hesitated to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site?
2. If yes, why did you hesitate to provide your e-mail address?
3. Have you ever hesitated to provide your credit card number to make an on-line contribution on a political Web site?
4. If yes, why did you hesitate to provide your credit card number?
5. In general, would you be more likely to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?
6. In general, would you be more likely to provide your credit card number for an on-line contribution to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?

Overall, the results do not indicate significant differences in the responses among these key audiences. We had expected to see significant differences between men and women as well as among party affiliation. While some nuanced differences were observed, we are unable to assess their significance from the data. Future research should seek to discover whether the differences observed here are significant.

None the less, these results are detailed in TABLES 9 through 11.5 below.

### **Results by Party Affiliation**

Overall, the respondent population broke down fairly evenly among party affiliation:

| DEMOCRAT | REPUBLICAN | INDEPENDENT | NO PREFERECE |
|----------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| 33.7 %   | 35%        | 17%         | 10.6%        |

As the results in TABLE 9.2 below demonstrate, Democrats are somewhat more likely than Republicans to indicate that they have hesitated to provide their credit card number to a political Web site due to lack of financial resources (45% to 36%). As shown in TABLE 9.4, Democrats indicated they would be somewhat more likely than Republicans to provide an e-mail address to a political Web site

if that site has a privacy statement (53% to 50%). Similarly, as shown in TABLE 9.5, Democrats indicated they would be somewhat more likely than Republicans to provide credit card information to a political Web site if that site had a privacy statement (31% to 24%).

Interestingly, however, as also illustrated in TABLE 9.2, among respondents who indicated that they have the resource to give money on political Web sites, Republican respondents were more likely than Democrats to indicate a hesitation to provide their credit card number (52 % to 42%).

**TABLE 9**

Have you ever hesitated to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site?

|            | <b>Democrat</b> | <b>Republican</b> | <b>Independent</b> | <b>No preference</b> |
|------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b> | 65.5 %          | 66.3 %            | 71.7 %             | 71 %                 |
| <b>No</b>  | 34.5 %          | 33.7 %            | 28.3 %             | 29 %                 |
| N = 6,712  |                 |                   |                    |                      |

**TALBE 9.1**

Why did you hesitate to provide your e-mail address? (Select all that apply)

|  | <b>DEMOCRATS</b> | <b>REPUBLICANS</b> | <b>INDEPENDENTS</b> | <b>NO PREFERENCE</b> |
|--|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| My e-mail address might be shared with other groups without my consent                       | 81.0 %           | 82.5 %             | 82.0 %              | 79.2 %               |
| I might receive junk e-mail from other Web sites   | 75.4 %           | 75.8 %             | 76.0 %              | 79.4 %               |
| My e-mail address might identify me as a political supporter                                 | 33.8 %           | 29.2 %             | 39.8 %              | 38.3 %               |
| The Web site did not have a privacy statement describing how my e-mail address would be used | 35.3 %           | 36.9 %             | 39.0 %              | 38.3 %               |
| Other  | 8.0 %            | 6.3 %              | 13.4 %              | 9.1 %                |
| N = 4,529  |                  |                    |                     |                      |

**TALBE 9.2**

Have you ever hesitated to provide your credit card number to make an on-line contribution on a political Web site?

|   | <b>Democrat</b> | <b>Republican</b> | <b>Independent</b> | <b>No preference</b> |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                  | 42.4 %          | 52.4 %            | 46.1 %             | 40.8 %               |
| <b>No</b>                                   | 12.6 %          | 11.5 %            | 9.3 %              | 8.4 %                |
| <b>I don't have any extra money to give</b> | 45.0 %          | 36.2 %            | 44.6 %             | 50.8 %               |

N = 6,723

**TABLE 9.3**

Why did you hesitate to provide your credit card number? (Select all that apply)

|   | <b>DEMOCRATS</b> | <b>REPUBLICANS</b> | <b>INDEPENDENTS</b> | <b>NO PREFERENCE</b> |
|---|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| I'm concerned about providing my credit card information on-line                                      | 79.7 %           | 83.3 %             | 81.3 %              | 87.9%                |
| I might receive junk e-mail from other Web sites  | 44.0 %           | 41.4 %             | 44.1 %              | 41.2 %               |
| My credit Card number might identify me as a political supporter                                      | 24.6 %           | 22.3 %             | 31.3 %              | 25.3 %               |
| The Web site did not have a privacy statement describing how my credit card information would be used | 33.6 %           | 37.4 %             | 36.7 %              | 35.3 %               |
| Other   | 9.7 %            | 9.7 %              | 16.1 %              | 14.2 %               |
| N = 3,093   |                  |                    |                     |                      |

**TABLE 9.4**

In general, would you be more likely to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?

|                      | <b>Democrat</b> | <b>Republican</b> | <b>Independent</b> | <b>No Preference</b> |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>           | 53.9 %          | 50 %              | 43.2 %             | 35 %                 |
| <b>No</b>            | 8.8 %           | 10.6 %            | 13.8 %             | 17.6 %               |
| <b>No difference</b> | 37.3 %          | 39.4 %            | 43 %               | 47.4 %               |

N = 6,740

**TABLE 9.5**

In general, would you be more likely to provide your credit card number for an on-line contribution to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?

|                      | <b>Democrat</b> | <b>Republican</b> | <b>Independent</b> | <b>No Preference</b> |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>           | 30.5 %          | 23.9 %            | 21.9 %             | 13.4 %               |
| <b>No</b>            | 23.3 %          | 30.6 %            | 25.5 %             | 33.3 %               |
| <b>No difference</b> | 46.2 %          | 45.5 %            | 52.7 %             | 53.3 %               |

N = 6,718

## **Results by Gender**

The total respondent population was substantially more male than female:

| <b>MALE</b> | <b>FEMALE</b> |
|-------------|---------------|
| 61.7 %      | 38.3%         |

Female respondents were more likely than males (49% to 39%) to report that they do not have extra money to give to political campaigns on-line (see TABLE 10.2). Female respondents indicated they are slightly more likely than Males (52% to 47%) to provide their e-mail address to a political Web site if the site has a privacy statement (See TABLE 10.4). Finally, Female respondents were also slightly more likely than Males (26% to 24%) to indicate they hesitate to give their credit card number to political Web sites that do not have privacy statements (see TABLE 10.5).

### **TABLE 10**

Have you ever hesitated to provide your e-mail address on a political Web site?

|            | <b>MALE</b> | <b>FEMALE</b> |
|------------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>YES</b> | 68.2 %      | 65.8 %        |
| <b>NO</b>  | 31.8 %      | 34.2 %        |
| N = 6,558  |             |               |

### **TABLE 10.1**

Why did you hesitate to provide your e-mail address? (Select all that apply)

|  | <b>MALE</b> | <b>FEMALE</b> |
|--|-------------|---------------|
| My e-mail address might be shared with other groups without my consent | 81.0 %      | 80.5 %        |
| I might receive junk e-mail from other Web sites                       | 75.2 %      | 77.4 %        |

|  |        |        |
|--|--------|--------|
| My e-mail address might identify me as a political supporter                                 | 35.0 % | 32.3 % |
| The Web site did not have a privacy statement describing how my e-mail address would be used | 36.4 % | 37.5 % |
| Other  | 9.2 %  | 8.3 %  |
| N = 4,416  |        |        |

**TABLE 10.2**

Have you ever hesitated to provide your credit card number to make an on-line contribution on a political Web site?

|   | <b>MALE</b> | <b>FEMALE</b> |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| <b>YES</b>                                  | 48.6 %      | 41.8 %        |
| <b>NO</b>                                   | 12.6 %      | 8.8 %         |
| <b>I don't have any extra money to give</b> | 38.8 %      | 49.4 %        |

N = 6,567

**TABLE 10.3**

Why did you hesitate to provide your credit card number? (Select all that apply)

|   | <b>MALE</b> | <b>FEMALE</b> |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| I'm concerned about providing my credit card information on-line                                      | 80.2 %      | 83.2 %        |
| I might receive junk e-mail from other Web sites  | 42.6 %      | 41.1 %        |
| My credit Card number might identify me as a political supporter                                      | 26.9 %      | 21.8 %        |
| The Web site did not have a privacy statement describing how my credit card information would be used | 34.7 %      | 37.4 %        |
| Other   | 13.1 %      | 9.6%          |
| N = 3,022   |             |               |

**TABLE 10.4**

In general, would you be more likely to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?

|                      | Male   | Female |
|----------------------|--------|--------|
| <b>YES</b>           | 47 %   | 51.6 % |
| <b>NO</b>            | 12.2 % | 9.2%   |
| <b>No difference</b> | 40.8 % | 39.3%  |

N = 6,588

### TABLE 10.5

In general, would you be more likely to provide your credit card number for an on-line contribution on a political Web site?

|                      | Male   | Female |
|----------------------|--------|--------|
| <b>YES</b>           | 24.3 % | 26.3 % |
| <b>NO</b>            | 29.3 % | 23.6 % |
| <b>No difference</b> | 46.4 % | 50.1 % |

N = 6,573

### Results by Voting History

The majority of respondents indicated that they voted in the 2000 general election. No information was requested on prior voting history or the likelihood that these individuals would vote in the 2002 election, which took place within two weeks of the survey.

| VOTED IN 2000 | DID NOT VOTE IN 2000 |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 83.5 %        | 16.5 %               |

Consistent with the results of the entire sample, 32% of respondents who indicated that they voted in the 2000 general election reported that they have provided their e-mail address and 11% indicated they have provided their credit card number to political Web sites (see Table 11 and 11.2).

Of those voters who do hesitate, however, 38% indicated they have not provided their e-mail address and 35% indicated they have not provided their credit card number because the Web site did not have a privacy policy (see TABES 11.1 and 11.3). These results are also not substantially different than the overall population.

Nearly half (48%) of voters in the 2000 election also indicated that they would be more likely to give their e-mail address to a political Web site if the site has a privacy statement (see TABLE 11.4). However, only 25% reported they would be more likely to provide their credit card number if the site has a privacy statement (see Table 11.5).

**TABLE 11**

Have you ever hesitated to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site?

|            | <b>Voted in 2000</b> | <b>Did not Vote in 2000</b> |
|------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Yes</b> | 68.1 %               | 64.7 %                      |
| <b>No</b>  | 31.9 %               | 35.3 %                      |

N = 6,713

**TABLE 11.1**

Why did you hesitate to provide your e-mail address? (Select all that apply)

|  | <b>VOTED IN 2000</b> | <b>DID NOT VOTE IN 2000</b> |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| My e-mail address might be shared with other groups without my consent                       | 82.4 %               | 74.0 %                      |
| I might receive junk e-mail from other Web sites   | 75.6 %               | 78.9 %                      |
| My e-mail address might identify me as a political supporter                                 | 35.2 %               | 28.7 %                      |
| The Web site did not have a privacy statement describing how my e-mail address would be used | 38.1 %               | 30.9 %                      |
| Other  | 9.2 %                | 7.4 %                       |
| N = 4,535  |                      |                             |

**TALBE 11.2**

Have you ever hesitated to provide your credit card number to make an on-line contribution on a political Web site?

|   | <b>Voted in 2000</b> | <b>Did not Vote in 2000</b> |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                  | 43.3 %               | 35.3 %                      |
| <b>No</b>                                   | 11.6 %               | 8.5 %                       |
| <b>I don't have any extra money to give</b> | 40.1 %               | 56.3 %                      |

N = 6,724

**TABLE 11.3**

Why did you hesitate to provide your credit card number? (select all that apply)

|   | VOTED IN 2000 | DID NOT VOTE IN 2000 |
|---|---------------|----------------------|
| I'm concerned about providing my credit card information on-line                                      | 81.6 %        | 83.2 %               |
| I might receive junk e-mail from other Web sites  | 43.0 %        | 40.8 %               |
| My credit Card number might identify me as a political supporter                                      | 25.6 %        | 23.0 %               |
| The Web site did not have a privacy statement describing how my credit card information would be used | 35.3 %        | 39.8 %               |
| Other   | 11.8 %        | 12.5 %               |
| N = 3,096   |               |                      |

**TABLE 11.4**

In general, would you be more likely to provide your e-mail address to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?

|                      | Voted in 2000 | Did not Vote in 2000 |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>           | 48.8 %        | 44.8 %               |
| <b>No</b>            | 11.1 %        | 12.7 %               |
| <b>No difference</b> | 40.1 %        | 42.5 %               |

N = 6,741

**TABLE 11.5**

In general, would you be more likely to provide your credit card number for an on-line contribution to a political Web site if it had a privacy statement?

|                      | Voted in 2000 | Did not Vote in 2000 |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>           | 24.6 %        | 25.2 %               |
| <b>No</b>            | 27.5 %        | 25.9 %               |
| <b>No difference</b> | 47.9 %        | 48.9 %               |

N = 6,723

## CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DATA

The results of this survey represent a mixed bag for on-line campaigners and developers of technologies and strategies for the Political Web.

On the positive side, the data indicate that the Internet is achieving some modest success as a mechanism for gathering sensitive personal information from individuals. The data showed that 31% of respondents have not hesitated to provide their e-mail address, and 11% have not hesitated to provide their credit card number to political Web sites. These results, along with the demonstrated successes of numerous on-line campaigns to-date, indicate that the Internet is working at some basic level for campaigns.

At the same time, however, the data demonstrates the stark challenge those who seek to harness the Internet to empower broader participation in our nation's political process, as well as to those who seek to market sophisticated technologies and strategic services to campaigns.

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they have substantial concerns about engaging in the essential on-line transactions of the Political Web:

- 69% of respondents reported they have hesitated to provide their e-mail address to a political Web site.
- 89% of respondents reported that they have hesitated to provide their credit card number to make an on-line contribution to a political Web site. Of these, more than half indicated that they have hesitated to provide their credit card number for reasons other than a lack of available financial resources.

While some interesting, nuanced differences were observed between men and women, Republicans and Democrats, and voters, these differences were not significant enough to be deemed definitive.

For the Internet to realize its true potential, and for CRM and personalization systems to justify their value, campaigners need to focus on ways to encourage these "hesitators" to overcome their concerns.

While a majority of respondents (57%) indicated that they look for privacy policies on political Web sites, and pay attention to such policies, the data suggest that a privacy policy alone is not enough to overcome the "hesitation factor".

- 48% of respondents reported that the presence of a privacy statement would make them more likely to provide their e-mail address to a political Web site.

- At the same time, only 25% reported that the presence of a privacy statement would make them more likely to provide their credit card number to a political web site.

These results demonstrate that individuals are clearly more concerned about providing their credit-card numbers, typically the most sensitive personal information typically collected by political Web sites, than they are about their e-mail addresses. It also suggests that while privacy policies are important, the presence of a policy is not enough to ensure that most individuals will be willing to make an on-line contribution.

Most respondents indicated concerns about receiving unsolicited e-mail (a.k.a. SPAM), revealing themselves as political supporters, and security as reasons for not providing their e-mail address or credit card number to political Web Sites.

We view these results as indicative of a deeper challenge for the Political Web: *the necessity to foster and sustain the trust of individuals*. In order to decrease the number of “hesitators” and encourage greater numbers of citizens to engage in the basic on-line transactions of the Political Web, campaigners and their consultants must focus on ways to present themselves and their web sites as trustworthy enough for citizens to hand over their sensitive personal information.

Based on the results of this survey, anecdotal evidence and experience in the field, we offer below seven practical guidelines that we believe can help foster trust among visitors to campaign web sites and increase the likelihood that greater numbers will provide their e-mail address and credit card information in the future:

1. Post a Privacy Statement. Any web site that collects any sensitive personal information (name, address, phone, e-mail, credit card information, issue preferences, or any other information which would identify a specific individual and his or her activities), must have a privacy statement describing how such information is treated. State your privacy practices in clear language and post it prominently on your Web site.
2. Use standard security technologies (such as SSL) and describe your Web sites' security practices clearly. While the study was directed at privacy, rather than security concerns, significant numbers of respondents indicated they are concerned about providing their credit card numbers online. Although most, but not all, campaigns use some form of secure transaction technology today, the results of the study suggest that campaign's should make substantial efforts to clearly describe the ways in which they protect the security of on-line transactions. These security technologies are easy and inexpensive to implement.

3. Offer visitors some amount of control or “choice” over how their information is used and shared. Whether such choice is “opt-in” or “opt-out” is less important than providing visitors some control over how information is used. For example, provide a check-box to allow users to decide whether their information will be shared with other groups or campaigns. Do not automatically sign contributors up to e-mail newsletters without first obtaining their consent (either affirmatively or through an “opt-out” mechanism).
4. Demonstrate a commitment that the campaign will stick to its privacy and security policies. If you intend to share information with others, say so clearly in your privacy statement (and offer users the ability to decline). Think through all the possible uses of personal information in advance, and once your campaign is launched avoid changing the practices in mid-stream. Campaigns should say what they do and do what they say. This is vital to fostering and sustaining trust.
5. Test the “Usability” of your campaign’s web site, with a particular focus on the pages where sensitive personal information is collected, before launch. Usability testing, a relatively new science, is the process of examining the functionality of your web site’s design. Excellent resources on how to conduct usability tests are available at [www.useit.com](http://www.useit.com).
6. Be certain that your privacy and security policies are easy to find and summarized in the places where sensitive personal information is collected. Campaign Web sites often bury their privacy policy in a link at the very bottom of their Web pages. A good practice is to post the link immediately below the forms where sensitive information is collected. A better practice is to provide a reassuring summary of your campaign’s privacy practices near such forms, with a prominent link to the full privacy policy.<sup>11</sup>
7. Be consistent with your data practices across all media. CRM systems can help facilitate this. Keep track of constituent preferences and follow them (i.e., if an individual prefers to be contacted by phone rather than e-mail, adhere to that preference). Such practices will help foster trust by demonstrating that campaigns are sensitive to the preferences expressed by individuals who participate in their campaigns on-line.

By following these guidelines, campaigners will likely garner a greater level of trust among their potential supporters and, correspondingly, increase the number of e-mail addresses and on-line contributions generated through their Web sites.

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<sup>11</sup> Dick Gephardt’s 2004 Presidential Campaign web site is an example of what we believe is an effective presentation. See the campaign’s contribute page at [www.dicgephardt2004.com/main/donate.html](http://www.dicgephardt2004.com/main/donate.html)

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The goal of this study was to clarify and quantify the extent to which Internet users are willing to part with sensitive personal information on political Web sites. At the same time, it raises other important questions for future research.

Additional research is needed to confirm whether this data is representative of the broader Internet population, and if trends exist. Over time, it is important to know whether the number of “hesitators” is going up or down, and what factors influence that change.

The conclusions of this study are limited to the extent that the results are based on self-reported data from a self-selected audience of one of the Internet’s largest portals. Future research to confirm these findings might examine other portals, and could be enhanced through the use of other research instruments such as focus groups, telephone polls of donors and direct experiments of the sort conducted by Arthur Lupia at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor<sup>12</sup>.

Future researchers should also look at ways in which Political Web Site operators can foster trust. This can be accomplished in two ways: direct contact (through focus groups and telephone surveys), and by exploring how various Web design and message combinations enhance or detract from a visitor’s willingness to trust that their privacy and security will be protected.

Fostering the trust of visitors to political Web sites is clearly essential if the promise and potential of the Internet to enhance our nation’s democratic process is to be realized. The Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet looks forward to providing additional research and to assisting other scholars in better understanding the role of the Internet in our democracy.

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur Lupia has pioneered the application of laboratory experiment methods to examine individual’s actions with politically oriented Web sites. For an example, see his work on the analysis of the Markle Foundation’s 2000 Web White & Blue project ([www.webwhiteblue.org](http://www.webwhiteblue.org))

## APPENDIX A: Survey Questions

1. Have you ever hesitated to provide your e-mail address on a political Web site?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

NOTE: Question #2 was only presented to respondents who indicated “YES” on Question 1. Respondents who indicated “NO” were automatically advanced to Question 3.

2. Why did you hesitate to provide your e-mail address? (select all that apply)
  - a. My e-mail address might be shared with other groups without my consent
  - b. I might receive junk e-mail from other websites
  - c. My e-mail address might identify myself as a political supporter
  - d. The website did not have a privacy statement describing how my e-mail address would be used.
  - e. Other (please specify) [open-ended response]
3. In general, would you be more likely to provide your e-mail address to a political web site if it had a privacy statement?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. A privacy statement would not make a difference
4. Have you ever hesitated to provide your credit card number to make an online contribution on a political website?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I don't have any extra money to give

NOTE: Question #5 was only presented to respondents who indicated “YES” on Question 4. Respondents who indicated “NO” were automatically advanced to Question 6.

5. Why did you hesitate to provide your credit card number? (select all that apply)
  - a. I'm concerned about providing my credit card information online
  - b. I might receive junk e-mail from other websites
  - c. My credit card number might identify me as a political supporter

- d. The website did not have a privacy statement describing how my credit card information would be used
  - e. Other (please specify) [open-ended response]
6. In general, would you be more likely to provide your credit card number for an online contribution to a political website if it had a privacy statement?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. A privacy statement would not make a difference
7. In general, how much attention do you pay to privacy statements on political websites?
- a. A lot of attention
  - b. Some attention
  - c. Not much attention
  - d. No attention at all
8. In general, how easy to understand are privacy statements you have encountered on political websites?
- a. Very easy to understand
  - b. Fairly easy to understand
  - c. Fairly difficult to understand
  - d. Very difficult to understand
  - e. I have never read a privacy policy on a political website
9. How regularly do you visit political websites?
- a. Regularly
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. Rarely
  - d. Never
10. What prompted you to visit these political websites? (select all that apply)
- a. Online advertisement
  - b. Television advertisement
  - c. Material I received in the mail
  - d. E-mail messages
  - e. News coverage
  - f. Link from search engine or directory
  - g. Link from online news article

- h. Other (please specify) [open-ended response]
- 11. OPTIONAL: Please tell us how political web sites can be improved [open-ended response]

Demographic Questions

- 12. What year were you born [open text area]
- 13. What is your gender?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
- 14. What state do you live in? (pull-down menu with list of states)
- 15. Last year, what was your total annual income?
  - a. Less than \$10,000
  - b. \$10,000 to under \$20,000
  - c. \$20,000 to under \$30,000
  - d. \$30,000 to under \$40,000
  - e. \$40,000 to under \$50,000
  - f. \$50,000 to under \$75,000
  - g. \$75,000 to under \$100,000
  - h. \$100,000 or more
- 16. Generally Speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?
  - a. Democrat
  - b. Independent
  - c. Republican
  - d. No Preference
  - e. Other
- 17. Did you vote in the 2000 general election?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No