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BIPAC

2008-2009

Market Research Report for BIPAC

CHANGING THE BUSINESS POLITICAL CULTURE – EMPLOYEE AWARENESS AT WORK

Introduction

2008 BIPAC Market Research Report

Minerva Marketing, LLC, in partnership with BIPAC, conducted an online survey among employees of BIPAC's members around the United States, specifically members that have Prosperity Project® websites. BIPAC provides those participating in the Prosperity Project with the tools, strategies and infrastructure for communicating their pro-business messages. These members, in turn, distribute this information to their employees. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into employees' perceptions of the information their employers provide on issues that affect the business community. In addition, we wanted to gauge the impact this information has on their awareness of issues and participation in the political process.

To supplement the quantitative online survey, we interviewed employees of Florida Power & Light, PPG and members of the American Forest & Paper Association. These organizations were selected because of their high level of activity and innovation in reaching out to employees/members with their pro-business messages. All three qualified for BIPAC's 2008 Best Practice Program, meeting benchmark criteria (such as voter registration and metrics on website use) and leveraging BIPAC's network, tools and strategy. The anecdotal and qualitative feedback from these interviews helps paint a more complete picture of the Prosperity Project's impact on increasing awareness and involvement.

As background, BIPAC is an independent and bipartisan organization with members consisting of businesses and trade associations. Among other activities, it provides its members with factual information about key issues that are likely to have an impact on business, and in turn, its members provide this information (such as voting records) to their employees or constituents, usually through a government affairs website or department. BIPAC's Prosperity Project is designed to drive an organization's grassroots strategy, using a BIPAC-supported website to educate employees and/or members about candidates, workplace issues and elections, and to help them register to vote, find their polling place and communicate with their elected officials about issues that matter to them and to their industry.

Employees from more than 35 organizations responded to the online survey. Organizations that were polled represent a variety of industries, sizes and geographies, and employ people of virtually all demographics in a wide range of jobs.

Overview of Results

Employer Communication Works

The survey indicates that the employer-driven messages are having a significant impact in increasing employee awareness of issues affecting business. In addition, they are directly motivating employees to register to vote or otherwise get more involved in the political process.

- ***Employer is a Trusted and Additive Resource***

Most respondents found their employer to be one of the most credible sources of information, second only to general Internet sites and ahead of traditional media, political parties and labor unions. Respondents generally viewed receiving the information from their employer positively and thought it gave them a perspective on the issues that was fresh and useful, and that they would otherwise not receive elsewhere.

- ***Results: Increased Awareness and Action***

Nearly half of respondents report their levels of awareness of political issues increased as a direct result of the information they received from their employer. Further, and perhaps more meaningfully, such messages succeeded in motivating slightly more than half of the respondents to some action: voting, registering to vote, writing to a legislator, or otherwise getting more involved in the political process.

The tide of influence seems to be shifting. The information that BIPAC provides, and its delivery through employers, is well on its way toward changing the political culture of business. However, BIPAC's work is far from over. While the information is increasing awareness and motivating slightly more than half of the respondents to take action, the next challenge is how to reach the rest of the audience, who may be less open to messages or may need to receive them in a different way. Next steps for BIPAC and its members to consider include increasing the frequency of communications while shortening the content, expanding the issues covered to include those of highest interest to employees, or adjusting the communications mix (vehicle and process) to reach the balance of the audience that is not yet moved or motivated by the messages. In addition, BIPAC and its members may want to consider leveraging the surge of interest spurred by this year's general election and work to ensure that newly active employees remain engaged and participatory in years to come.

Case Study

Florida Power & Light: Employee Engagement & Enthusiasm

BIPAC provides Florida Power & Light (FPL) with its Prosperity Project® website for use by its government affairs department and PAC, and also provides guidance on further advancing their grassroots and PAC objectives. Talk to almost any FPL employee and you will get a sense of the power of these tools. The enthusiasm and connection with the government affairs activities shines through. The company has worked hard to create a culture of employee engagement in political issues through both its grassroots activities and its PAC. What sets FPL apart is the drive to go beyond traditional communication methods and look for creative ways to get employees involved. Examples include hosting breakfast events such as "Politics and Pastries" breakfasts with candidates and voter registration drives. The reaction from employees is positive, and the following suggest even more ways to increase action and communication:

- *This is exactly what I'm looking for on the issues. Really great, unbiased info.*
- *Fabulous job! If we wanted to expand, it would be out of energy and into other issues. Promote and market the websites more, or include the website and its tools in new hire orientation.*
- *We could do an even better job of increasing awareness with employees, sending out information more often than once per quarter and making the topics, articles, etc. a bit more meaningful to catch employees' attention. More frequent hits with much smaller bites.*

Key Findings

Employer Messages Increase Voting

The respondents indicated a very high level of voting in recent presidential elections, with 94.8 percent indicating they voted in the 2004 general election and a full 99.1 percent indicating they plan to vote in the 2008 general election. These numbers might indicate a strong and stable voting audience; however, only 52.6 percent indicated they have voted in every election since they became eligible, leaving a large gap of eligible voters who do not always vote. This could indicate a reduced interest among respondents in "off season" elections for Senate, House or local elections. Another 38.5 percent of respondents vote in "most elections" since they became eligible, and 6.2 percent of respondents only recently began voting. (Note: the survey findings did not address what motivated the latter audience of recent voters to begin voting. Based on the results of the following question, it is possible that new voters were motivated to vote by employer information, or other reasons.)

See chart titled "Voting patterns" above, p5.

When asked specifically about how or whether the Prosperity Project information their employer provides directly affects their voting patterns, the numbers indicate that employer messages are having a clear impact — 20.8 percent of respondents indicated that the information they received from their employers directly led them to vote "more often" or "somewhat more often." This response highlights that BIPAC's method of cascading messages through the employer is effective in helping to achieve increased voting among message recipients.

See chart titled "Voting changes as a result of employer information" below, p5.

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Voting patterns

Voting changes as a result of employer information

This chart depicts the change: those respondents whose voting changed as a result of employer information.

Frequency Differs from Credibility

When asked to cite the sources they use for information to make voting decisions, traditional media, including TV, radio and newspaper (88.1 percent), was the most frequently cited source, with the Internet (68.1 percent), political parties (42.6 percent), employers (28.8 percent) and labor unions (5 percent) following. This finding could indicate a true reliance on traditional media or it could point toward the frequency of respondents' exposure to the collective array of traditional media available. It is interesting to note the emergence of the Internet as a strong secondary source of information, leading even the political parties. Also, although not measured through this specific survey, there may be an overlap in responses between the Internet and the employer or other information sources, because most survey participants receive information from their employer and, in fact, were responding to this survey through the Internet.

Employers received the largest number of "highest credibility" responses.

See chart titled "Sources of voting information" below left, p7.

Although respondents ranked traditional media first as the source they turn to for information to help make voting decisions, responses were quite different when asked to rank the credibility of their sources. The charts on page 7 show the Internet and employers as the most credible sources of information. Employers received the largest number of "highest credibility" responses and ranked number two when incorporating the overall-weighted average of responses, with a rate of 3.04 out of a possible 5. The Internet was ranked as the most credible source, with a weighted average of 3.18 out of 5. As we discussed earlier, there may be an overlap in responses between the Internet and employer as information sources, because most survey participants receive their employer information through the Internet. Although traditional media was the most frequently cited source of information, it was viewed as the third most credible source, with political parties and labor unions following.

See chart titled "Credibility of information sources" above, p7.

See chart titled "Highest credibility of information sources" below right, p7.

Credibility of information sources

	1 = Lowest credibility	2	3	4	5 = Highest credibility	Rating Average
Employer	13.3%	16.7%	32.8%	26.8%	10.3%	3.04
Internet	6.8%	15.3%	39.5%	30.0%	8.4%	3.18
Labor union	51.6%	20.9%	17.8%	6.9%	2.8%	1.88
Political parties	19.9%	24.8%	34.2%	15.8%	5.2%	2.62
Traditional media – radio, TV, paper	11.3%	18.7%	38.5%	23.9%	7.6%	2.98

Sources of voting information

Highest credibility of information sources

Employees Rely on Employer Information

When the questions turned more pointedly toward employer-provided information, the responses paint a clear picture of increased reliance on and appreciation for the BIPAC tools and resources that employers offer. A full 70.4 percent of respondents indicated they use the web-based information their employer provides at least once per quarter (21.6 percent once per month, 9.3 percent one per week, 39.5 percent once per quarter). An additional 29.6 percent receive information from their employer through print or other vehicles. This almost universal use of employer resources at least once per quarter seems remarkable, especially in context of earlier questions citing employers as the third most frequently used source for voting information. This seems to indicate respondents are receiving an extremely high influx of information and data on elections and related issues. It also supports the finding that employers are considered one of the most credible sources, because respondents typically need to actively open an email or letter, or respond to a link sent by their employer to receive the information, compared with a potentially more passive exposure to traditional media, which could be perceived as being omnipresent at both work and home.

See chart titled "Frequency of employer website use" above right.

When measuring the perceived quality of the information received from employers as evidenced by its impact on their actions, the effectiveness of the BIPAC messages comes into even sharper focus. We discussed earlier that 20.8 percent of respondents indicated the information they received from their employers directly led them to vote "more often" or "somewhat more often." Further, nearly half of the respondents indicated the information their employer provides "sometimes" or "frequently" helped them make voting decisions (47.0 percent).

Frequency of employer website use

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Employer Information Provides a New Perspective

Since receiving information on issues from their employer, 44.4 percent of respondents indicated their overall ***awareness*** of business issues has "somewhat" or "strongly increased." Respondents indicated the employer-provided information provided a unique and valued point of view that respondents felt they would not otherwise receive. In general, respondents indicated the employer information was more convenient, provided greater exposure to topics, and increased their awareness of the issues' potential impact. Comments included:

- *I get additional information not covered in the mainstream press.*
- *Through company-provided information, I have realized that I need to take a more active role in the decisions our government makes.*
- *I have a better understanding of how the political process directly affects my company, job and personal life.*
- *It brought up issues I was not aware of yet had an interest in.*
- *I have become increasingly aware of the issues that directly affect our industry.*
- *I feel more informed and I trust the information I receive at work.*
- *I vote more consciously.*
- *It provides me with good unbiased information, like voting records of candidates.*

See chart titled "Change in awareness of issues" above right.

Change in awareness of issues

This chart depicts the change: those respondents who indicated the employer-provided information altered their awareness.

Respondents indicated the employer-provided information provided a unique and valued point of view that respondents felt they would not otherwise receive.

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Awareness Leads to Action

In addition to increasing awareness of issues, the findings support the veracity of the basic BIPAC inference that employer messages lead directly to increased action. When asked to state the degree to which their overall ***involvement*** in the political process has changed since receiving information on issues from their employer, 27.4 percent indicated it has "somewhat" or "strongly increased." Reasons for this include increased awareness, increased knowledge of issues and the fact that employers make it easy and convenient to get involved. Comments included:

- *This information gives me another data point to use in making my decision.*
- *If my employer emails me about a subject, I view it as serious and something that could change the stability of the economy, my company, or my job status.*
- *The information provides a clearer view of the implications and impacts of particular legislation for both my family and my employer.*

See chart titled "Change in political involvement" above, p11.

Further, more than half (52.5 percent) of the respondents indicated they have taken some specific political action because of employer information. As we discussed earlier, 27.4 percent indicated they have been motivated to act directly as a result of receiving information from their employer. The most conservative interpretation of the results for both questions in tandem is that at least 27.4 percent of respondents, more than a quarter of the survey population, were directly motivated to take action specifically because of their employer-provided information. Under this conservative assumption, the balance of 25.1 percent of respondents were already inclined to be involved in the political process and the employer-provided information gave them a specific reason to take action.

Of the total respondents, the most frequently cited action is writing a letter to a legislator (77.2 percent), followed by donating money (24.5 percent). It is also meaningful to note that a full 16.1 percent were motivated to register to vote, representing 8.5 percent of the total survey population. Increasing voter registration is one of BIPAC's primary goals, and this response rate shows definitive success in progressing toward this goal. Other actions cited by respondents:

- *Volunteer for a candidate*
- *Update voter registration*
- *Apply for absentee voting due to travel*
- *Participate in more elections*
- *Sign up for a PAC*

See chart titled "Action directly motivated by employer information" below, p11.

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Change in political involvement

This chart depicts the change: those respondents who indicated the employer-provided information altered their involvement.

Action directly motivated by employer information

Energy and Health Care Top Issues List

When asked which issue their employer information has helped with the most, respondents indicated the issues shown in the chart below. Respondents indicated that because of employer provided information, they are "somewhat" or "much more" aware of several business issues as follows:

- *91.9 percent Competing in a global economy*
- *87.4 percent Health care for employees*
- *86.1 percent Sources and uses of energy*
- *81.5 percent Innovation and research*

See chart titled "Change in awareness of specific issues" above, p13.

A different set of topics emerges when respondents were asked to cite the one issue that is of most importance to them. BIPAC and its members may have an opportunity to provide more information on topics that employees are concerned with, not just those of particular interest to the business.

A different set of topics emerges when respondents were asked to cite the one issue of most importance to them. Health care for employees is the top choice, with 29.9 percent of respondents selecting it as the single most important issue, followed by sources and uses of energy (25.6 percent) and competing in a global economy (19.1 percent). Also, although not given as a pre-set option in the multiple-choice question, the economy was frequently written in the "Other" category as the issue of most importance. The disparity between employee priorities and the topic ranking that emerges in this question might point to the divergence between issues meaningful for businesses versus those most meaningful to employees. BIPAC and its members may have an opportunity to provide more information on topics that employees are concerned about, not just those of particular interest to the business. In addition, it may reveal an opportunity for employers to clarify the connection between issues important to the business and their impact on employees, especially for issues that are not immediately or clearly relevant to employees.

See chart titled "Issues of highest importance" below, p13.

Change in awareness of specific issues

	Much More Aware	Somewhat More Aware	Somewhat Less Aware	Much Less Aware	Rating Average
Sources and uses of energy	32.3%	53.8%	12.5%	1.5%	1.83
Workforce education	14.1%	63.0%	18.8%	4.1%	2.13
Health care for employees	25.7%	61.7%	10.3%	2.3%	1.89
Workplace elections	11.0%	56.1%	24.6%	8.2%	2.30
Tax policy	15.2%	60.9%	19.8%	4.1%	2.13
Innovation and research	17.8%	63.7%	16.9%	1.7%	2.02
Competing in a global economy	23.6%	68.3%	6.6%	1.5%	1.86

Issues of highest importance

Case Study

American Forest & Paper Association: Member Outreach that Works

BIPAC membership provides the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) with an array of resources designed specifically to help large associations to engage their members (and the employees of those members) in the political process. AF&PA is unique in its willingness and ability to get the most out of all these resources. It leverages its Prosperity Project® "Grow the Vote" website and offers free co-branded websites to its state partners and member companies. AF&PA finds this method of cascading information and tools to be effective in informing and motivating its members and their employees. The results are evident when talking with AF&PA members. They count on AF&PA for reliable, accurate information and guidance on issues that matter to the industry, especially federal issues that are of vital importance. Here's what a few of them say about AF&PA's support:

- *AF&PA analyses have been really helpful to wade through controversial issues that affect our diverse membership. We rely on them to help us to determine our own policy and any positions we might take on federal and state legislation.*
- *I like the basic updates, and when I need details I can get them. I lean on them to help me stay current and in the thick of it for federal issues.*
- *I am forwarding some piece of AF&PA information to my key membership every single week. We use the information in our publications, or forward the emails directly to our board of directors or key members.*

More Employer Activity Welcome

When asked to describe their employer's ideal level of activity in promoting public policies favorable to industry and their economic future, 41.9 percent of respondents indicated they would like their employers to become more active. This seems to be a clear and strong statement of support for employer-driven activities and information, and to point toward an opportunity for expansion. Most but not all respondents appreciated getting a different perspective on issues from their employers:

- *41.9 percent want more involvement*
- *41.2 percent want the same amount*
- *6.3 percent wanted less*

See chart titled "Preferred level of political information and activity from employer" above right.

Preferred level of political information and activity from employer

Although the percentage of respondents who want less employer communication is small, BIPAC and its members need to be mindful of their approach when expanding their communications and activities. This minority may be distrustful of employer (and perhaps all) political messages, as evidenced in the comment "[My employer] tries hard to be unbiased but the bias slips through. Even the issues highlighted shows bias." This view underscores that employers must continually strive to present unbiased, factual and balanced information. This is essential in order to maintain the high level of credibility they seem to have earned with employees to date.

Other comments suggesting possible areas of improvement or expansion of activities include:

- *Keep it coming!*
- *Show both sides of the impact, positive and negative.*
- *We need more information in a format that most people can understand. Forget the political jargon and use plain English.*
- *Continue to have guest speakers about political and economic conditions.*
- *I trust information provided by my employer to be unbiased, much more so than from the candidates themselves. I would like to see more!*

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Case Study

PPG: Reaching New Audiences

As a member of BIPAC, PPG takes full advantage of the Prosperity Project® website, as well as BIPAC's expertise in effective grassroots activities that engage employees in the political process. The PPG program is exceptional in this arena, and goes beyond its employee audience, reaching out to retirees and even shareholders. Its government affairs activities are woven directly into the fabric of the company, as illustrated by its support from the PPG leadership team and presence on the main corporate Internet site. PPG's approach of going beyond awareness and involvement is evident when talking to employees, who themselves are always looking for new uses for the information and opportunities to affect the political process in fresh and innovative ways.

- *The information that PPG provides helps me in other ways in addition to helping me decide how to vote. We have political visitors here and I use the PPG website to research the people and issues in advance. It helps me to have an intelligent conversation and ask questions that would be helpful to the plant.*
- *I wear two hats: I am an employee doing my job 9-5 and a stockholder who wants what's best for the performance of the company. The information that PPG provides helps me to think through issues from both perspectives. It helps me answer the question: What is the best business decision?*
- *I'd like to learn even more about the results of our actions, from both a personal and a business perspective. Does our vote really count? Does it affect the candidates? Do they listen? Do they make the right decisions or were they going to do it anyway? What action has occurred that I think beneficial? Does it truly affect the candidates that are elected, and once elected does our process really reach the candidates about what we believe is the right direction to take for the country?*

Conclusion

Employer Messages Increase Voting

All signs point toward the conclusion that BIPAC's method of employer-driven messages is having a significant impact. They are increasing awareness of issues that affect business, and motivating employees to register to vote or otherwise get more involved in the political process. Employer messages are viewed almost universally as positive, and the delivery mechanism of the employer is trusted and credible. It seems clear that BIPAC's approach is changing the way that its members' employees view the political culture of business.

The results of the survey describe the tremendous progress that BIPAC has made. Today, their messages are increasing awareness and motivating about half of the respondents to take action. The opportunity for BIPAC and its members going forward is how to reach the rest of the audience who may be less open to messages or may need to receive different messages in a different manner. Although the research indicates that BIPAC and its members are making an important difference, they still have challenges ahead to achieve the mission of changing the political landscape through employer-based messaging and information.

About BIPAC

BIPAC enables more effective business participation in the political process. It provides the political strategy and tools to help its members reach their election and public policy goals. BIPAC takes an integrated approach to political involvement, combining grassroots advocacy and PAC resources, all directed by nationally recognized political analysis. An independent, bipartisan organization, BIPAC is supported by several hundred of the nation's leading businesses and trade associations.

www.bipac.org

About Minerva Marketing

Minerva Marketing, LLC, a marketing and communications firm, is based in Washington D.C. It specializes in marketing for service industries, translating complex or technical client services into cohesive marketing and communications plans that are effective in reaching target audiences. Minerva Marketing has helped organizations of all sizes in a wide range of industries including financial services, human resources, education, health care, technology, accounting and other professional services. Projects include business planning, creating or refining marketing plans, conducting market and trend research, launching or re-tooling products and service lines, creating and managing communications plans, and providing sales coaching and education.

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