

Starting a Run for Office - A Political Candidate Checklist

Developing a solid plan is key to any political victory. Checklists can play a big part in organizing your efforts. Being prepared will allow your team to hit the ground running.

Here we put together campaign checklists for a candidate preparing to run for office.

Gather your contacts

One of the first steps in putting together a campaign plan is to gather a list of all your contacts or anyone you think will support your candidacy.

Your contacts can include:

- Friends
- Family
- Present and past co-workers
- Business and professional contacts
- Contacts from organizations and memberships
- Party officials / Elected officials
- Schoolmates

Once you have gathered your contacts and their information, put them on a spreadsheet, database or CRM. When you are ready to reach out to these people, you will be able to find them easily and track the support they provide.

Research your public history

Knowing what information about you is publicly available can help you avoid any pitfalls that may come your way.

Your personal information may include:

- Current and prior addresses
- Mortgages and loans
- Property ownership / taxes and liens
- Employment history
- Licenses and certifications
- Military service
- Court proceedings and judgements
- Criminal record

- Statements of public record
- Social media accounts
- Public campaign finance records (donors and donations)

Do your homework on the position you seek

No matter what elected position you are running for, it is wise to learn everything you can about the position you seek. Knowing what is required will allow you to quickly act once you have been voted in.

What you should know about the position:

- Legal duties and powers assigned to the elected position
- Position within the government structure
- Schedule of workday and meetings
- Ceremonial duties
- Salary and benefits
- What was required for the current office holder to be elected

Your campaign timeline

Know the timeline for your campaign. Some things will be in your control, such as when you hold fundraisers or public events. Other dates will be determined by your local election law.

A typical campaign calendar checklist includes:

- Nomination filing date
- Petition filing deadlines
- Financial reporting schedule
- Primary date
- Election date
- Final financial report

Compliance with deadlines is a must. Candidates can and do get kicked off a ballot for not adhering to proper deadlines.

Other campaign planning timelines include:

- Your fundraising schedules
- Volunteer efforts
- Candidate appearances
- Debates
- Advertising schedule

- Staff meetings
- Bulk mailings
- Sign distribution

You'll need campaign staff that are organized and prepared to work with a plan. They will also need to deal with unexpected events as they come up.

Your positions on the issues

This is the heart of your campaign and will show voters where you stand.

Candidate issue checklist:

- What are the major issues?
- Rank issues in matters of importance.
- What is my position on each issue?
- What is the most important issue that the candidate will take as their own?
- Prepare written statements of the candidate's positions.
- What is my opponent's position on each issue?

Put together material for print and web

- **Gather Photos:** You will need to gather pictures for use in your campaign. You need a good head shot, of course. Also get pictures of you with your family and of you being active in your community. Consider hiring a professional photographer.
- **Utilize Past Materials:** If you have run for office in the past, you may be able to recycle some of the content of your old campaign material.

Write a personal biography

When running for office, voters need to learn about you and who you are. [Developing a personal biography](#) as part of your candidate checklist is so important. You will want to include not only your professional history but also your personal history.

The basics of candidate bio include:

- An introduction
- Your experience
- Personal details
- What you hope to accomplish in office

If you don't tell your own story and define yourself, your opponent will.

Build your own brand

As an election ultimately ‘sells’ a political candidate, you will need develop a brand to represent you.

This includes your:

- Colors
- Campaign slogan
- Campaign logo
- Stock images of yourself

Everything should come together to best represent your own personal style. When it is done right, voters will see your campaign material and will immediately associate them with you.

Develop an Online Presence

The first set in developing an online presence is to conduct a self-search. Put your name in the search engine and see what comes up on the first few pages. This will give you a good idea about what people see when they Google your name. If what you find is negative, you will need improve your online image. Below are a few things that can help you influence your online presence and build a solid online brand.

- **Build a website:** As a candidate, you will need a place online to share your message, provide updates and accept online donations. Your [campaign website content](#) should include a personal bio, information about the positions you are passionate about, volunteer and voting information. Also, do not forget to secure a domain name that matches your campaign.
- **Develop a social media plan:** In today’s world, no political campaign plan would be complete without social media. Social media gives you a unique chance to connect with potential voters on a personal level. Most candidates focus on Facebook and Twitter. Create accounts that you intend to use and have the resources for maintaining. This will help you make the most out of your time and reach the maximum amount of people.
- **Prepare for digital advertising:** With a low cost to entry, even local candidates can put together an effective online political marketing strategy. Local campaigns can follow almost any marketing strategy that a state and federal race can do. How much should you budget for digital advertising? This varies on the size of your campaign and the amount of money you have to work with.

Consider these online advertising options:

- Social Media Advertising

- Pay Per Click Advertising
- Local Websites (ex., newspapers)
- Retargeting Site Visitors
- IP Target Marketing

Just like getting help with branding, you might want to get help with your [online advertising efforts](#). There is learning curve when it comes to digital marketing. Building a website, for example, can be a difficult task if you have never created one before. Instead of trying to tackle these tasks alone, why not use a [campaign website design service](#)? It will take the guesswork out of building your online presence. Additionally, you may want to hire or have a social media consultant run the online advertising side of your campaign.

View the full post at: <https://www.onlinecandidate.com/articles/planning-political-campaign-checklist>