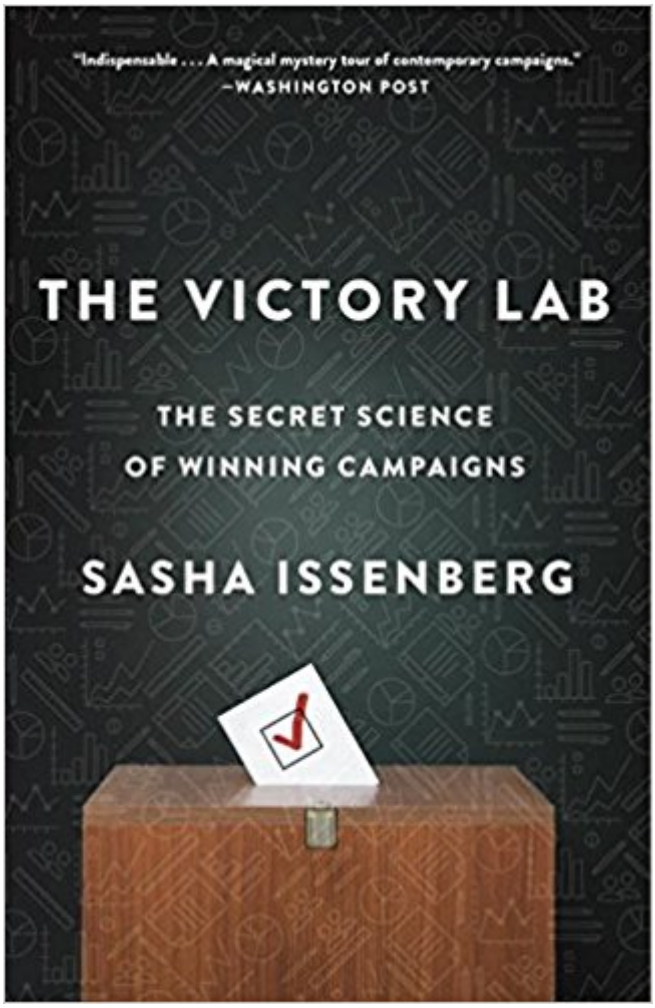
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The Victory Lab: The Secret Science Of Winning Campaigns



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Synopsis

UPDATED FOR THE 2016 ELECTIONThe bookÃ Â PoliticoÃ Â calls Ã¢â ¬Å“MoneyballÃ Â for politicsÃ¢â ¬Â• shows how cutting-edge social science and analytics are reshaping the modern political campaign.Renegade thinkers are crashing the gates of a venerable American institution, shoving aside its so-called wise men and replacing them with a radical new data-driven order. WeÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve seen it in sports, and now inÃ Â The Victory Lab,Ã Â journalist Sasha Issenberg tells the hidden story of the analytical revolution upending the way political campaigns are run in the 21st century.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â The Victory LabÃ Â follows the academics and maverick operatives rocking the war room and re-engineering a high-stakes industry previously run on little more than gut instinct and outdated assumptions. Armed with research from behavioural psychology and randomized experiments that treat voters as unwitting guinea pigs, the smartest campaigns now believe they know who you will vote for even before you do.Ã Â Issenberg tracks these fascinating techniquesÃ¢â ¬â •which include cutting edge persuasion experiments, innovative ways to mobilize voters, heavily researched electioneering methodsÃ¢â ¬â •and shows how our most important figures, such as Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, are putting them to use with surprising skill and alacrity.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Provocative, clear-eyed and energetically reported,Ã Â The Victory LabÃ Â offers iconoclastic insights into political marketing, human decision-making, and the increasing power of analytics.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

From political reporter Issenberg comes this very interesting look at the way political consultants and professional vote-getters manipulate people into casting their votes for certain candidates. Although the field has seen some serious innovations over the yearsÃ¢â ¬â •computer models, highly detailed research tools, the use of cutting-edge behavioral psychology to predict how voters will mark their ballots, and moreÃ¢â ¬â •itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s not a new endeavor. As far back as the 1920s, people like political scientist Harold Foote Gosnell, frustrated by his professionÃ¢â ¬â„¢s inability to explain why people voted the way they did, began looking for new tools to understand and predict voter behavior. By the midÃ¢â ¬â œ1940s, social psychologist Angus Campbell was developing Ã¢â ¬Å“the first systematic effort to explain how presidential elections were decided,Ã¢â ¬Â• including a massive survey that was the forerunner of the American National Election Studies, a key tool in a field that, today, is a $6 billion-a-year industry. Given its lively subject matter, its equally lively prose, and its timely releaseÃ¢â ¬â •it will hit the shelves two months before Americans go to the pollsÃ¢â ¬â •this is pretty much guaranteed to generate high interest among readers. --David Pitt --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ã¢â ¬Å“Indispensable. . . . Issenberg has a firm grounding in the political universe. . . . [He] paints his insurgents in heroic terms, putting the spotlight on campaign warriors few of us have ever heard of. . . . [The Victory Lab is] a magical mystery tour of contemporary campaigns. By the end, a lot of the mystery will become clear, and youÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll know a whole lot more about whatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s behind those calls and letters jamming your phone lines and mailboxes.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Jeff Greenfield, The Washington PostÃ¢â ¬Å“[The Victory Lab] traces an under-reported element of the evolution of campaign tactics over nearly a half-century in an unusually accessible and engaging manner. . . . A timely, rare, and valuable attempt to unveil the innovations revolutionizing campaign politics.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The New RepublicÃ¢â ¬Å“Enlightening.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The New Yorker Ã¢â ¬Å“A magnificently reported and wonderfully written book, full of eye-opening revelationsÃ Â and aÃ Â colorful cast of characters whose groundbreaking strategies andÃ Â tactics have injected 21st-century science into politics and changed it forever in the process. The Victory Lab isÃ Â essential for anyone who wants to understand what really goes on along theÃ Â campaign trailÃ¢â ¬â •and a delight for those who simply enjoy a terrific read.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, authors of Game ChangeÃ¢â ¬Å“Sasha Issenberg cracks open the secretive realm of modern campaigns, revealing a revolution that is influencing not only who wins elections but also the fate of the nation.Ã Â This is a terrific and important book.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •David Grann, author of The Lost City of

ZÃ¢â ¬Å“Sasha Issenberg is our most acute observer of the modern political campaign. With vivid portraiture and crystal-clear prose, he takes us beyond the charge-and-counter-charge, the rallies and stump speeches, to show us the hidden persuaders. This is the politics you'll never see on the nightly news.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Richard Ben Cramer, author of What it Takes

This is a book about how to win an election in the age of high tech and big data. Campaigning is no longer about broadcasting a candidate's message to the widest possible audience. It is not even about distinguishing between a candidate's supporters, opponents, and the undecided to send a different message to each group. It is about tapping vast quantities of data available about most American adults and targeting each person with the most effective personalized strategy. And it is about finding the best messages, issues, even rumors, using experimental comparisons. It is about doing this below the radar, out of the awareness of the public. This is the nature of the modern political battlefield as seen by both parties. The strategy, tactics, and personalities who make this possible are the subject of this book.The book's narrative is a collection of smaller stories. There are brief biographies of those who developed and refined new approaches to collecting and using voter data. There are success and failure stories of various campaigns and of major battles within those campaigns. And there are the specific tactics these people deploy. It is impossible to list them all, so here are a few:- Using public records, pollsters mailed each person in a precinct a list of who had voted and who had not voted in the last election--along with an announcement of their plan to mail out updated lists after the next election. This increased voter turnout by 20%. When this strategy as put into practice, the mailers went only to voters likely to support the pollster's candidate, resulting in a selective increase in voter turnout.- It is very difficult to sell new tactics. "If you do something different, everyone will point at the thing you did different and say that's why you lost. So if you're the campaign manager you don't do anything different. If you follow the rule book strictly they can't blame anything on you."- Researchers do not find sufficient similarity among Republicans, Democrats, and Independents to use these broad categories. Instead they develop more specific typologies, such as the one from Times Mirror: "Two of the clusters were distinctly Republican (Enterprisers and Moralists), four Democratic (New Dealers, Sixties Democrats, the Partisan Poor, and the Passive Poor), and two leaning in each direction (Upbeats and Disaffecteds towards the Republicans, Seculars and Followers towards the Democrats). Eleven percent of American adults were found to be fully, and seemingly permanently, detached from politics; Times Mirror called them Bystanders." (See Pew Research's web site for a more current example of such a political typology.)- It's no surprise that telling people they "should" do something produces defensiveness

and resistance to change. But telling them that a large number of other people are doing it increases their chances of doing the same. This approach, developed by social psychologists to encourage general prosocial behavior, translated well to get-out-the-vote programs.- Prospective voters asked if they would vote for an African-American often answer positively when they have privately decided they are not comfortable doing so. This has led to vote overestimates for African-American candidates. Researchers found they could get more accurate estimates by asking prospective voters if they thought their neighbors would vote for an African-American. This approach worked as "...a way of correcting for the inability of voters to be as honest and self-aware as pollsters like to pretend they are."The book provides a readable and seemingly thorough account of how campaign tactics have developed in the age of big data. I would be a more valuable book if some of the biographical information were removed in favor of more detailed description of campaign tactics and statistical procedures. As written, it gives a sense of these techniques and how they are used. More detail is needed, if not in this book, then in a companion volume that is more methods-oriented. I'd like to see Sasha Isenberg write something like what the forensic linguist John Olsson has produced, both a serious text,Ã Â Forensic LinguisticsÃ Â and a popular audience collection of interesting cases,Ã Â Wordcrime.

Politics has evolved over the last 50 years from a spray and pray approach to campaigning to a much more data and demographically driven approach. Using various measurements and statistics, political campaigns are able to use rifle shot precision to target those voters that are most likely to swing an election result with a message that will resonate.The book discusses this approach in detail - in fact, too much detail. Some of the history - especially the early days through the 1992 campaigns - is interesting. The remaining parts of the book - taking the reader to the 2012 election - becomes redundant and bogs down in names and seemingly endless and forgettable small vignettes and names of data scientists and rehashed approaches.There is very little actionable here for most political scientists. It is more of a history than a how-to. Probably a useful read for someone fascinated by the subject, but for the casual reader, the book gets quite dry after the first 200 pages.

This book really brought a lot of things full circle for me. I dabbled in the 2008 election as a 20 year old (still the best time of my life) and it reminded me of how so much of my empirical prowess came from tutorials with the Iowa Voter File Manager. I dabbled in field organizing, and coalition organizing too even! It's experiences in my own life, yet Issenberg helps me reflect on how impactful they were with his authenticity and comprehensiveness. It's truly the handbook I wish I had been

given 5 years ago to understand how unique of a moment I was in.It’s also refreshing how well he traces the topic from 1920s Ivory Tower disciplinary squabbles to transit buses in Akron, merging the academic with the tactics, all the while hoisting up the dedication and curiosity of so many individuals without whom this revolution seemingly would not be the same. The ’strivers’ are all so quintessentially American that you really just have to smile about how great a political journalist he is!

For anyone interested in elected politics, this book is a must read. The author presents a very detailed discussion through the use of anecdotes of the efforts by presidential campaigns and the major political parties to build massive data bases on american public and utilize the data to manipulate the public into supporting their candidate or cause. The author explains how memberships, store loyalty card information, credit card purchase history and countless public information has been compiled into data bases by the political organization so as to micro target voters using complex computer algorithms to predict voting booth behavior.While the content is interesting, the pace of the book is painfully slow. There are so many different stories about so many different data bases and computer models that the book becomes difficult to comprehend and follow. I would not recommend this book to anyone who is short of time and looking for a quick information upload book.

Highly detailed and expansive. Spans more than a century of political approaches and tactics. Excellent educational resource, presented in a story compilation form. Dense and sometimes jumps back and forth. Overall, highly recommend for someone looking for quantity and quality on the topic.

Worked on the campaign and was impressed with how everything was so detailed and worked so well.This book gives great insights into how to organize, collect data, refine them, through aggregation and disaggregationprotocols. So this is what makes Nick Silver such a genius!

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