



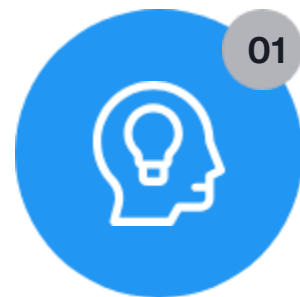
Ron Nehring

From Strategy to Votes: The Manager's Role



The Campaign Manager Is the System Architect

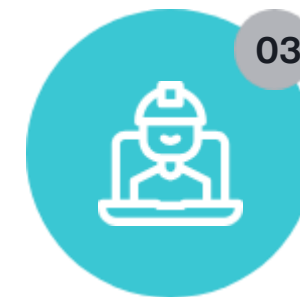
Design the campaign so it survives stress, not just peak performance



**Inspiration supports the work.
Design makes the work possible.**



Most campaigns fail when they only work with peak performance and collapse under stress.



In parliamentary systems this role is often split; if it is split, someone still must own system integrity or it won't exist.

Core Roles of the Campaign Manager

You don't get to pick your favorite two; miss any one of these and the campaign dies—sometimes slowly, sometimes spectacularly.

Campaign success requires all five roles to be covered; no exceptions.

Campaign management is about coverage.

Focus on assigning responsibilities, not just enthusiasm.

Make sure the fundraising is happening

Everything else is commentary; campaigns with money problems also have messaging, staffing, and morale problems.

Even in party-funded systems, resources still bottleneck—mail, digital, travel, staff time; someone must force prioritization.

Money issues cascade into messaging, staffing, and morale.

Resources bottleneck across channels; prioritize ruthlessly.



**If Fundraising
Stops, the
Campaign
Stops**



**Candidate Call Time Is
Non-Negotiable**

**Cash-on-Hand
Matters**

Late Money Is Expensive

Systems Beat Heroics

Build repeatable fundraising processes so results don't rely on mood or one donor



If fundraising depends on the candidate feeling good that day, it's broken.

Replace mood-driven work with schedules and written goals.



People do what you measure; if you measure effort you get effort theater, and if you measure dollars you get results.

Choose metrics that drive actual outcomes, not appearances.



Campaign staff often chase activity metrics; managers must insist on impact metrics or the system will lie to itself.

Shift focus from activity to impact to prevent self-deception.

2. Make sure the political programs are happening

Execution, precision, and consequences



Campaigns love talking about strategy but voters experience execution

If you can't explain how votes are actually being moved, you don't have a program—you have a story.



What's worth doing is worth doing well

Warm bodies don't win elections; effective contacts do, and fewer voters contacted effectively are better than thousands contacted badly.



Consider second order effects

Bad scripts create backlash and poor targeting demoralizes volunteers; always ask what happens next if this works or if it fails.

3. Run the Business

Treat operations as the backbone: prevent predictable failures



Campaigns are businesses under stress; compliance errors, payroll issues, and vendor disputes are predictable failures, not surprises.

Recognize common operational failures as expected and plan accordingly.



Example: Finance reports described as "handle later" led to a small error that snowballed into a public complaint and shifted the narrative to incompetence.



If you didn't price the risk it will hurt you at the worst possible time; unpriced risk is the enemy and being surprise-averse is essential.

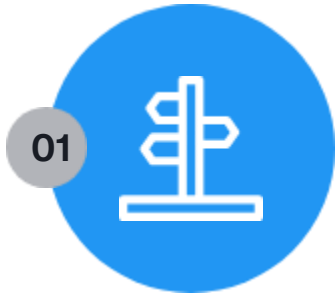
Quantify and price risks proactively to avoid crises.



When the business side is boring, it's working; if everything feels exciting something is wrong. Stable, routine operations indicate healthy processes.

4. Execute According to a Plan

Turn decisions into timely, accountable action



Plans are decision frameworks

Plans are decision frameworks created so you don't make panicked decisions under pressure; no plan means improvisation, usually by the loudest person in the room.



Execution risks

- Poor execution kills good strategy when there are no checklists, deadlines, or follow-through, and campaigns often die at this stage due to lack of accountability.
- Strong strategy decks with no accountability result in nothing happening on time.



Design for human error

If execution requires perfect people, redesign it to assume fatigue, mistakes, and turnover; short campaign periods make this even more critical.

**A plan that isn't implemented is
just optimism with better
formatting.**



5. Keep the Candidate Out of Trouble

Protect access, manage risk, and save careers early



The candidate is the highest-risk asset.

Most scandals are preventable because they happen when someone confuses access with trust.



Risk management is loyalty.

Protecting the candidate is responsibility.

Saying no early saves careers.

Managing the Candidate Is Managing the System



Candidates aren't figureheads

Guardrails reduce friction not freedom

The best candidates welcome constraints that protect them

Maximize the candidate's time

Decision Authority Prevents Paralysis

Ambiguity kills campaigns under stress — clear ownership avoids costly delays and confusion.



Someone must own:

- Budget tradeoffs
- Message escalation
- Schedule veto power

**Campaign
managers must
recognize
warning signs**



01

Fundraising Volatility

Week-to-week swings in fundraising that signal unstable donor engagement and forecasting risk.

02

Normalized Missed Deadlines

Internal deadlines routinely missed and accepted as normal, undermining momentum and accountability.

03

Staff Improvisation

Team members consistently improvising around systems instead of following processes, indicating system failures.

04

Candidate Bypassing Process

Candidate repeatedly bypasses established processes with “just this once,” eroding discipline and consistency.

**Be the Adult Who Keeps
the Campaign Real**



THE CAMPAIGN MANAGER'S JOB

01

Design a system that survives stress

02

Make the fundraising happen.

Fund it before it needs the money

03

Make the political programs happen.

Voter persuasion and turnout wins the day

04

Implement the plan

05

Run the business

06

Reduce the risks

07

Keep the candidate viable, credible and protected

Most campaign disasters are optional.

Well designed campaigns create their own margin for error.





Ron Nehring



From Strategy to Votes: The Manager's Role

