

Polling and Message Development



**PATINKIN
RESEARCH
STRATEGIES**



Determining Ballot Language,
Message, and Targets On the Cheap

What can polling do for you:



- Determine viability of a proposal
- Shape language in the ballot question
- Determine what components can or should be included in bond or levy
- Provide a message frame
- Identify outreach targets, base of support and opposition

The challenge: COST



While polling can be extremely useful, the cost in many jurisdictions may be prohibitive.

	n=300	n=400
10 minute survey	\$8,650.00	\$10,500.00
12 minute survey	\$9,650.00	\$11,400.00
15 minute survey	\$11,250.00	\$13,400.00



- Look at the title and question from other, larger jurisdictions—they likely tested language
- Look at the summary from other jurisdictions—that language likely reflects key messages from a poll
- If possible, get an endorsement from the county Republican or Democratic parties (or both) in order to gain access to their voter files

First things first, always remember, you're trying to sell something:



Take every opportunity to tell voters in plain English (don't get wonky) what they're tax dollars are going to buy.

Make it clear that the things they are buying are things they like (teachers, reduced class size, safety).

Reassure them—**CONSTANTLY**—that their money will be spent efficiently and accountably.

Your ballot title and question:



- A good caption and question are worth their weight in gold. In some cases, these might be the only things a voter reads before making a decision.
- **What we have to work with:**
 - Caption: 10 words.
 - Question: 20 words.

Examples of good captions and questions:



- **GOOD POLL TESTED CAPTION:** “Random Oregon Schools levy for teachers and educational programs.” (9 words)
- **GOOD POLL TESTED QUESTION:** “Shall schools protect class size, teaching positions; levy \$X.XX per \$1,000 assessed value for five years beginning 2011; require oversight?” (20 words)
- **GOOD POLL TESTED CAPTION:** “Bonds to repair facilities; update student textbooks, technology; increase safety.” (10 words)
- **GOOD POLL TESTED QUESTION:** “Shall Certain School District repair facilities; update materials; increase safety, issue \$XX.X million in general obligation bonds with audits?” (19 words)

Summary messaging:



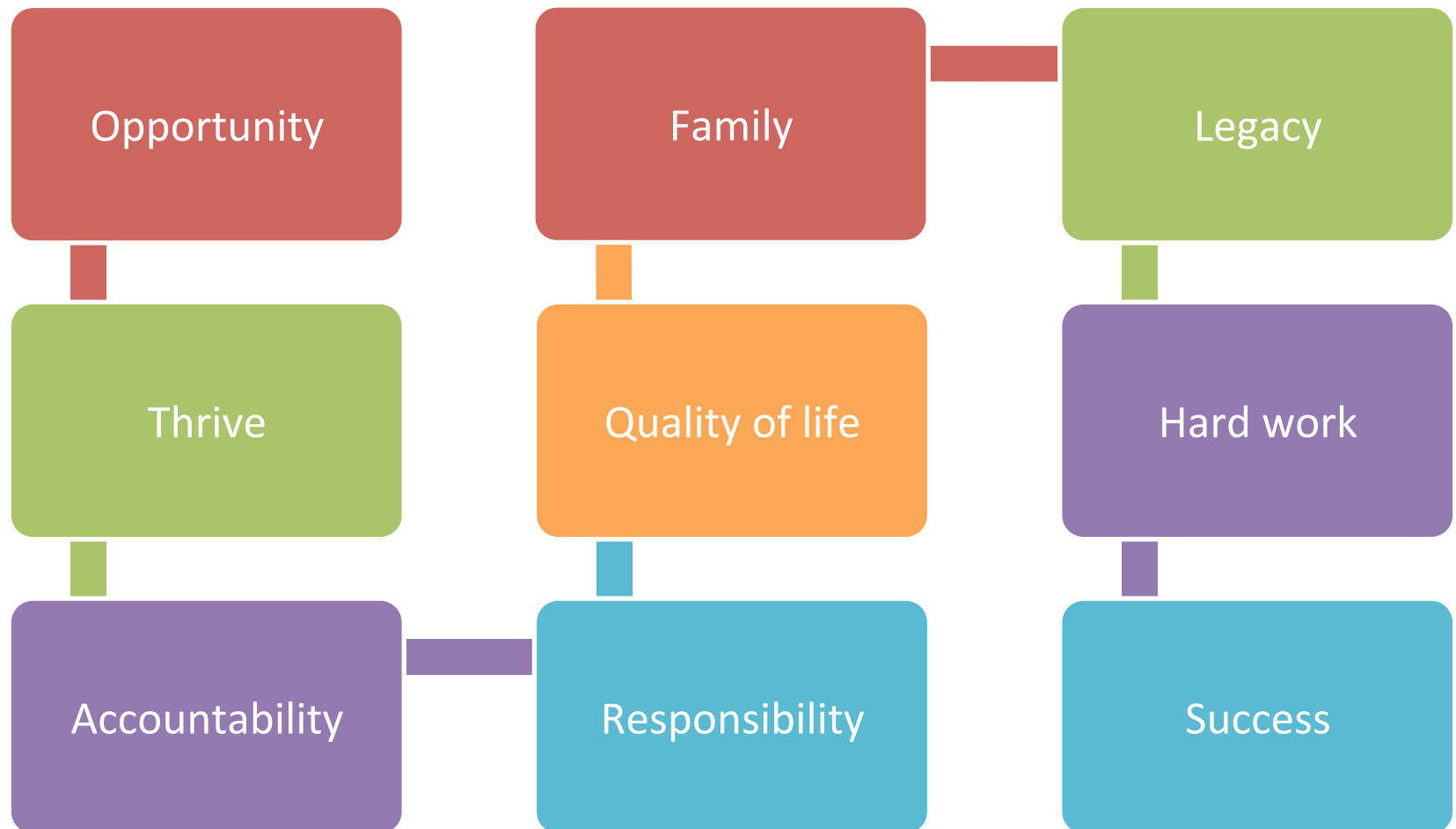
- The 175 word summary is where you get to message. USE IT!
 - **What are you going to fund with a levy:**
 - Teaching positions (how many) that would otherwise be cut?
 - Maintaining or reducing class size?
 - More individual attention for students from teachers?
 - Educational programs necessary for a well-rounded education?
 - **NOT: “School operations.”**
 - **What are you going to fund with a bond:**
 - Student and teacher safety?
 - Replacing rusty drinking water pipes, removing asbestos or mold?
 - Repairs to out-of-date facilities like aging roofs?
 - Replacing out-of-date textbooks for math and science?
 - Improving technology that helps students learn and succeed?
 - What should we say for both: **ACCOUNTABILITY!!!!**



- Unlike newspaper ads, most voters actually read them.
- You can focus on one messenger per statement:
 - ✓ Teachers
 - ✓ Parents,
 - ✓ Small business owners
 - ✓ The Chamber
- Repetition is your friend. **Repeat, repeat, repeat.**



- Incorporate values laden messaging in your voters pamphlet statement and in other outreach materials:





Levy renewal

Stops the devastating cuts

Stand up to legislators
who failed our schools

Maintains low
class sizes

Parents, teachers and students

Reinvest in schools

Quality education

Ready to compete in
the worldwide economy

A good investment
in the future

Accountable

230 teachers

Good quality of life

Excellence in
education

An example of how we do
things right in average
town Oregon

Good-paying jobs

15% across-the-board cuts



- **THEIR VOTER FILE.**

- You can use the party files to build walk lists or call sheets.
- You can target those lists to LIKELY VOTERS.
- If its during a major election, you can get “match backs” which allow you to back out from your universe any voter who has already voted.
- Long story short, using a party file saves you:



And who are your likely targets?



Your base will likely be:

- Democrats (especially women)
- Younger voters (under age 50)
- Parents with kids in public school
- Renters



Your persuasion targets will likely be:

- Non-affiliated voters (especially women)
- Home owners
- Ages 50-69

Thank you



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