

Introduction to VoterMedia

April 2011

Does your organization have low voter turnout or have difficulty engaging members? VoterMedia.org is a platform that hosts blog competitions to engage members with more and better coverage of your organization and its upcoming elections. Voters allocate community funds to the competing blogs they find most informative.

The University of British Columbia's student union (the Alma Mater Society or AMS) has been using VoterMedia for four years, and finds it a valuable enhancement for their democracy. The AMS pays their bloggers \$8,000 per year, allocated by student vote. Anyone can enter the blogging competition.

Bijan Ahmadian, AMS President 2010-2011:

"VoterMedia has definitely made the election process more accessible. ...voter media really play an important role and have really been, you know, centre of gravity for voters to come together and discuss issues, discuss candidates, discuss their values, and give candidates an opportunity to respond, to engage with the voters, and it just feels like, more like a democracy, than it used to..."

Matthew Naylor, AMS VP External 2007-2008:

"...there were much more detailed questions, and you know, I thought that it not only helped me reach out to people, but through those questions I felt it made me a better candidate, because I had to think about what I was saying, and I had to think about what my policies were and how I was going to answer them, and it, you know, made me come up with positions, and do my research, so that I could better step into the position once I finally was elected..."

"...third party analysis of candidates, you know, having people ask questions, rather than having the candidates just print up a 150-word blurb, and putting it on a website or in a handout, is way more effective..."

Alex Lougheed, AMS VP Academic 2008-2009:

"...having those eyes going towards a student voice that's well informed, has been instrumental, not only as a tool for student governments to get their message across, but also as a tool for the student body to get their message across to the student governments."

Those are quotes from two Youtube videos available at votermedia.org. The UBC AMS ballot showing competing blogs and their funding shares is at votermedia.org/ubc.

VoterMedia.org is a nonprofit project, providing this voting platform to communities for free. We recommend starting your blogging competition months before your election, with perhaps a minimal funding level like \$10 per day. That gives your bloggers time to build their reputations with your membership. Then you can increase the funding level during the election campaign period. Your organization pays the bloggers directly, based on the voted awards on your community's accounting page similar to votermedia.org/ubc/horserace.

Your organization and the bloggers promote the competition to your membership. In addition to hosting your continuous votermedia contest at votermedia.org, you can run an election-focused votermedia contest by adding to your usual officer election ballot a new section for voting on blogs.

Please contact me for more information.

-- Mark Latham, Founder, VoterMedia.org. Email: mark@votermedia.org