



Inside an Election War Room: Hands on lessons in rapid response

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9:00am – 4:30pm

Summary

In American and Canadian politics, the “war room” has taken on near mythical status. This “room” is the central location where the heart of a political campaign is being run. It is made up of a complex set of departments that operate just once every four years.

Equipped with the technical means to gather information, plan strategy, and direct activities for the entire political campaign, the war room campaign teams use simulations and role-playing in advance of the writ period to get ready for a national election.

The war room is central, the single location which serves as the point of coordination during an election. But yet most of the general public know very little about what goes on inside this “room”.

Join Ian Capstick, Social Impact Strategist and Founder of MediaStyle, to explore the function and effect that these command centers have had on elections. Spend the day taking a look at what goes on on the inside, exploring the organization and operations of a “war room” and practicing the skills of “rapid response”.

If you are interested in what goes on on the inside during a campaign, you won't want to miss this workshop.

Outline

The “War Room”

- What is it?
- Who is in it?
- How does it work?

Preparing for a national election

- Building a team and gathering important information
- Walking through a real-life scenario
- Important considerations

The “War Room” Simulation Exercise





Required Readings*

Maher, Stephen. 2019. "The right (and wrong) way to leak to a journalist." *Maclean's*, February 7.

<https://www.macleans.ca/politics/the-right-and-wrong-way-to-leak-to-a-journalist/>

McLean, James S. 2012. *Inside the NDP War Room: Competing for Credibility in a Federal Election*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press:

- "Introduction" pp. 3-15 <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF39E7>
- "Chapter 3: War Room", pp. 52-70 <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF39E8>

Kinsella, Warren. 2007. *The War Room: Political Strategies for Business, NGOs, and Anyone Who Wants to Win*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

- "Introduction" pp. 17-40 <http://reserves.concordia.ca/ares/ares.dll/plink?14EF39C0>

Additional Resources

Ansolabehere, Stephen and Shanto Iyengar. 1994. "Riding the Wave and Claiming Ownership Over Issues: The Joint Effects of Advertising and News Coverage in Campaigns". *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 58:3, pp. 335-357.

Klüver Heike and Iñaki Sagarzazu. 2016. "Setting the Agenda or Responding to Voters? Political Parties, Voters and Issue Attention". *West European Politics*, 39:2, pp. 380-398

Petrocik, John R., William L. Benoit and Glenn J. Hansen. 2003. "Issue Ownership and Presidential Campaigning, 1952-2000", *Political Science Quarterly*, 118:4, pp. 599-626.

Canadian Political Party Manifestos from the collection of political texts made available at www.poltext.org by Lisa Birch, Jean Crête, Louis M. Imbeau, Steve Jacob and François Pétry, with the financial support of the Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et culture (FRQSC):

- Provincial manifestos: <https://www.poltext.org/en/part-1-electronic-political-texts/electronic-manifestos-canadian-provinces>
- Federal manifestos : <https://www.poltext.org/en/part-1-electronic-political-texts/electronic-manifestos-canada>

*If you are registered for non-credit and are unable to locate the readings, please contact us at wssr@concordia.ca

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