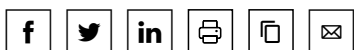


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BOLTON BACKS SENATE CANDIDATES WITH PSYCHOLOGICALLY TARGETED VIDEO ADS

John Bolton's Super PAC Is Working with Ted Cruz's Former Data Firm



By Kate Kaye. Published on June 09, 2016.



Whether New Hampshire voters hear that GOP Senator Kelly Ayotte is a "proven" leader or a "bold" one will depend on what the psychological data profiles say. Today former U.N. ambassador John Bolton's Super PAC launches video ads featuring a variety of messages aimed at select groups of voters in New Hampshire and Nevada, where national security -- a pet issue for the former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations -- could be front and center in Senate races.

The ads backing Ms. Ayotte and Joe Heck, a physician and congressman from Nevada, employ data models developed by Cambridge Analytica, a U.K. firm that just recently dove into the U.S. political market and worked with Ted Cruz's primary campaign.

New Hampshire's Democratic Governor Maggie Hassan is battling Ms. Ayotte in one of the most-closely watched Senate races this election season. The Bolton Super PAC will spend \$50,000 on psychologically targeted video and display ads supporting her that will run over the next two weeks. Another \$50,000 worth of ads will back Dr. Heck.

Ms. Ayotte, a junior Senator who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee in addition to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, asked Ms. Hassan earlier this year to pledge to limit spending by outside groups in their election race.

Three video ads, developed in conjunction with the PAC's digital agency Campaign Solutions, feature slightly nuanced messages that focus on Ms. Ayotte's foreign policy prowess. Depending on which of three target groups voters fall into, they might see ads stating that she will "restore order to Obama's reckless foreign policy," or "protect us from Obama's reckless foreign policy." They might see ads that mention the Senator's "innovative solutions to ensure a free and safe New Hampshire for all," or her mission to "create a free and safe America where you can succeed."

"The reality is the psychological data profiling that the Ambassador utilizes -- we like to think, and the Ambassador likes to think -- is the future of advertising," said Garrett Marquis, spokesman for the PAC and managing partner at public affairs firm Prism Group. The ads will run on Facebook and other sites that allow political advertisers to aim ads at specific voters.

Cambridge Analytica categorizes voters according to a classic five factor model for gauging personality traits known by acronyms OCEAN and CANOE. The five factors are openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. The company has a dozen or more online questionnaires and quizzes in rotation at any given time. It uses responses to those surveys to build its models and score voters based on partisanship, likelihood to vote, ideology, ethnicity, religiosity and stances on issues. The result is 5,000 or more data points on registered voters in the U.S.

When the PAC and Campaign Solutions first worked with Cambridge Analytica during the 2014 midterms, the PAC ran 15 different spots each in North Carolina and Arkansas and 17 in New Hampshire. Two of the Republican candidates backed by the Bolton Super PAC, Thom Tillis in North Carolina and Tom Cotton in Arkansas, won their Senate bids, while Scott Brown lost in New Hampshire.

This time around, the PAC and its partners isolated three voter categories to reach: people who are protection-focused, or concerned about damage to America’s status on the world stage; people with patriotic and traditional values who want to be assured of America’s strength; and more highly educated voters concerned with what candidates can do to improve safety and success for themselves and their families.

Ads supporting Dr. Heck aimed at Nevada voters all center on his experience as a Brigadier General and battlefield doctor who fought in Iraq, in addition to the fact that some U.S. jobs have moved to China and Mexico. But variations of those ads contain nuances, too.

One concludes, “He stands for what’s best in America and that’s exactly the kind of leadership we can trust to create jobs and restore American greatness for future generations.” Another uses more aggressive language: “Joe will rip through Washington red tape to deliver results that you can see. Joe Heck -- he won’t back down because America’s prosperity is something we’re all fighting for.”

As the election moves ahead, the Bolton Super PAC expects to support additional candidates with ads targeted similarly, said Mr. Marquis, noting, “This is simply the start of it.”

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Kate Kaye covers the data industry for Advertising Age and is the main contributor to the Ad Age DataWorks section. Before joining Ad Age in November 2012, Kate worked as a writer and reporter covering the digital marketing industry since 2000, focusing on beats including data-driven targeting, privacy, and government regulation. Kate helped cultivate the online political campaign beat, and in 2009 wrote “Campaign ’08 A Turning Point for Digital Media,” a book about the digital media efforts of the 2008 presidential campaigns. Before joining Ad Age, Kate was managing editor of ClickZ News, where she worked for nearly 7 years.

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