

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** INTERESTED PARTIES  
**FROM:** RAGNAR RESEARCH PARTNERS  
**SUBJECT:** MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND MESSAGE PLACEMENT  
**DATE:** May 10, 2024

How are voters consuming information? You've got a big fancy poll that cost you a lot of money and you want to make sure your messaging is going to be used effectively. If you're reading this, you're probably a professional who knows a lot of this, but we wanted to pull together a summary on the GOP media environment and the concept of "layered messaging" ahead of the major effort of the 2024 election cycle. If you don't want the details, here's what you should know:

- **TV is like steak: you want as much of it as you can get, but if it's all you have you're going to die.**
- Volume on a small number of resonant themes is key, as long as you vary the presentation of those themes.
- **You need to layer your messaging to build a theme across multiple media outlets in order to maximize effectiveness.**

### TV Still Draws the Eyes

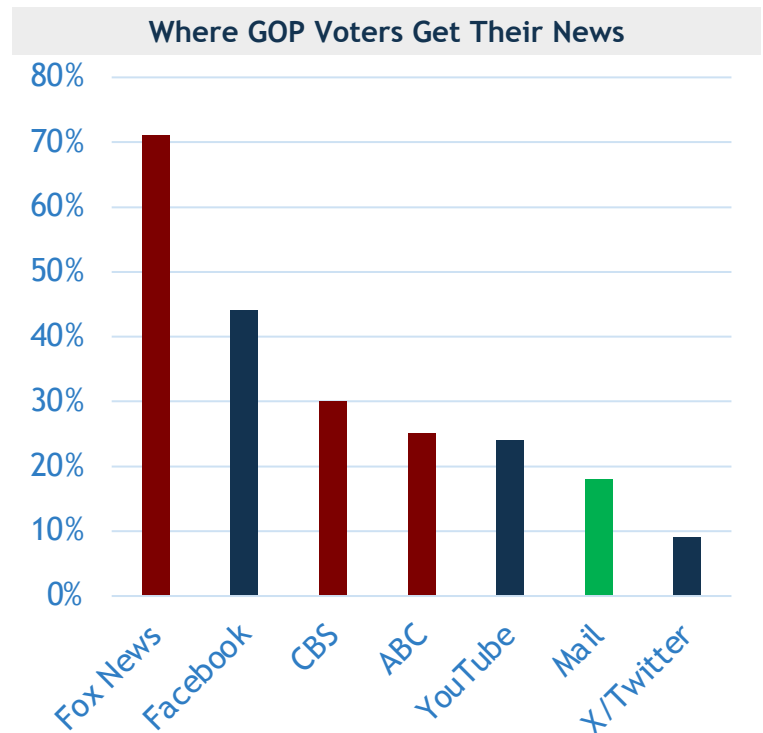
With 71% of Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents getting their news from Fox, the longtime king of cable news is still reigning.

Facebook is the next highest source. YouTube is comparable to CBS and ABC for total GOP exposure. There is no longer a "one size fits all" approach to voter contact, and probably hasn't been for 10 years.

While the journalists and political staffer crowd loves their X/Twitter, only 9% are getting their information from there.

Therefore:

- If you can be on TV, be on TV.
- Don't assume that being on TV is enough.
- If you react to online stories from niche platforms and allow them to knock your primary narrative off the rails you're going to lose and you deserve to.



Pew Research Center. (2020). "Americans Who Mainly Get Their News on Social Media Are Less Engaged, Less Knowledgeable"  
Pew Research Center. (2021). "News Consumption Across Social Media in 2021"  
American Press Institute. (2017). "Who Shared It?: How Americans Decide What News to Trust on Social Media"

## What Sticks?

You want to know what effective information flow looks like in 2024? We took some of our very recent primary data and simplified it to prove this point. Below is a selection of four primary races, with the top messages we recommended compared to the top messages voters recalled hearing about, organized by media. Here's what it looks like:

Survey Recs	Race 1 Top Positive Messages Recalled by Source Favorable Image rose 29%.			Survey Recs	Race 2 Top Positive Messages Recalled by Source Favorable Image rose 21%		
	TV	Digital	Mail		TV	Digital	Mail
Message 1	Message 2	Other Message	Message 2	Message 1	Message 2	Message 2	Other Message
Message 2	Other Message	Message 2	Other Message	Message 2	Other Message	Other Message	Message 2
Message 3	Message 2	Message 3	Message 3	Message 3	Message 1/3	Message 1/3	Message 3

Survey Recs	Race 3 Top Contrast Messages Recalled by Source Unfavorable Image Rose 14%			Survey Recs	Race 4 Top Contrast Messages Recalled by Source Unfavorable Image Rose 19%		
	TV	Digital	Mail		TV	Digital	Mail
Contrast 1	Contrast 2	Contrast 2	Contrast 2	Contrast 1	Contrast 1/3	Other Message	Contrast 1/3
Contrast 2	Contrast 1/3	Contrast 1/3	Contrast 1/3	Contrast 2	Other Message	Contrast 2	Other Message
Contrast 3	Contrast 1/3	Contrast 1/3	Contrast 1/3	Contrast 3	Contrast 2	Contrast 1/3	Contrast 2

Here's what it means: winning campaigns layer their messages. They hammer home a couple of critical points that matter to voters and they bombard voters across all mediums. HOWEVER, that doesn't mean using the same content on repeat and it doesn't mean using the same data points.

Voters recognize ad content as quickly as 13 milliseconds. But as any good mail shop will tell you, what you're paying for is the 8 seconds a voters looks at your piece while they carry it from the mailbox to the trashcan. You need to present new information in new formats that make the brain have to absorb the information before it discards it. Find a few messages that resonate, then vary those to force the brains they're targeted at to absorb them before they discard them.

**What sticks? Volume sticks, repetition sticks, variation within the theme sticks.**

## How Does This All Fit Together?

TV gets the most eyeballs, if you can be on TV, be on TV. It's good for:

- Jumpstarting and boosting your image or issue to be top of mind.
- Laying the bricks for an overall narrative.

Digital is growing but it hasn't taken over yet. Because of its ability to target, it is incredibly strong at supporting the narratives set up on TV:

- Get your red meat in front of the lions who will volunteer for and fund your campaign.
- Preempt issues you will get hit on because you can respond to key universes without broadcasting weakness to the world.
- Throw out secondary or variation messages that will flavor and build on the bricks your TV spend is doing.

Mail rounds out the trio because it is cheap and highly targetable. Use it like a combo of TV and digital depending on the resources of your campaign.

## If you take one thing away:

For the love of God and Country, please stop splitting up the electorate into tiny messaging universes and trying to say a million different things to small groups of people. They do not remember your message. Have you ever seen a campaign that looked promising with a good candidate who had lots of money? Have you ever circled back to that campaign after a couple of months and wonder what they spent all that money on and why it feels like they haven't done anything? It's because they were spending a lot of money saying things that got lost in the chaotic 21<sup>st</sup> century media environment. Stop doing that.

Instead, do some research to figure out what about your story will resonate best with voters, and then layer those messages across multiple media to ensure that it penetrates into their awareness and validates the money you're spending.

This cycle is going to be a knife fight all the way through, make sure your knife is sharp and your money counts.

## About Ragnar Research

With over 70 years of combined experience in public opinion research, the partners at Ragnar Research have a track record of getting the numbers right on behalf of candidates, colleges and universities, and Fortune 500 companies. The principals at Ragnar have conducted public opinion research in every state in the nation using the most accurate methodologies for the modern world. Ragnar Labs is our ongoing series with a goal of provoking conversations about polling in Republican circles because we feel that evaluating ourselves, our industry, and the world around us is the only way Republicans can find continued success.