Election Information Websites
Lessons from the Election Alarm Clock and My Election pilots

Summary Findings

The Election Alarm Clock

Who: The London Borough of Lambeth worked with supplier Delib and the Electoral Commission, who supported the pilot through their New Initiatives Fund.

What: The Election Alarm Clock is a website which lets users sign up for an email or SMS reminder about to register to vote as well as when to vote. The site also includes basic elections information about who is eligible to register, how to register and key dates for upcoming elections.

How: A Lambeth-specific Election Alarm Clock site was launched in February 2006 ahead of the May local elections. The site was promoted by distributing leaflets and posters and a viral marketing game attached to the site. Visitors to the site could win an iPod Shuffle if they registered to use the service.

Findings: An independent evaluation was conducted by Jason Kitcat. Between January and May 2006 Lambeth added 6,396 voters to their electoral register and turnout rose 4.43% in May 2006; of course this is not solely due to the site. The promotional game was accessed 716 times. Pages on the site were viewed 2,007 times between March and May.

Lessons: The short time the site was online before the election didn’t give it sufficient time to be indexed by search engines reducing the number of people looking for election information finding the site. Marketing yet another web address with a limited budget is difficult, but often the only way when web teams are so restrictive in what they allow on council sites. Members of Lambeth’s Youth Council felt the design ‘was a bit young’ and would have preferred something more clearly from government. Users and non-users surveyed expected more information from the site, particularly about candidates and manifestos.

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My Election

Who: Swindon Borough Council worked with supplier Delib.

What: The My Election website is an online resource which includes a postcode finder for candidates, wards and polling stations; an interactive forum including a why I did/didn’t vote section, live election results and a Swindon-specific Election Alarm Clock.

How: In the run-up to the May 2006 elections the site was built for Swindon. An information leaflet including the site’s address was sent to all households in Swindon. The site was the top link on Swindon Council’s homepage during the election period. The site has been contracted for two years so it will be updated for elections in 2007.

Findings: Self-evaluation was conducted by Swindon and Delib. Turnout increased by 1.7%, returning to levels they were 10 years ago, though the site was only one contributor to this. 94% of My Election site users providing feedback found the site easy to use, 74% found it useful. The site received 3,000 visits during the election period.

Lessons: A key complaint from users was the lack of direct access to more information about the candidates such as candidate statements, particularly when some users had not received literature from any of the candidates standing. Swindon feel that providing this central online resource significantly reduced the number of phoned queries they received before and after the election.

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For detailed reports on both projects visit: http://j-dom.org/edem06