

Applied Math Club Problem – March 20, 2007

Recently, a video was posted anonymously on YouTube that cast Hillary Clinton in a less than favorable light, and ended with a BarakObama.Com signature. This was eventually reported on CNN and Fox News, which brought immediate attention of their viewers to this ad. The latter viewers may not otherwise have heard of the video's existence.

Suppose you are a political campaign adviser who has decided it would be beneficial to surreptitiously undermine an opposing candidate. At your urging, the candidate you work for agrees to "go negative" using some method like the one described above.

This raises the following question:

What strategy will best achieve your objectives in a timely fashion, with minimal risk of being caught?

Your analysis should involve a discussion of how many people to involve in the scheme, what their involvement would consist of, and an assessment of the likelihood of being caught in each scenario. Your model should also include a consideration of how information propagates throughout the population, depending on the involvement of trusted individuals.

Disclaimer: The sponsors of this contest do not in any way condone the activities represented by the parties described above. Furthermore, we bear no responsibility for misuse of any knowledge gained as a result of this exercise.