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## Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices (8<sup>th</sup> Edition)

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By Judith S. Trent, Robert V. Friedenberg and Robert E. Denton, Jr.

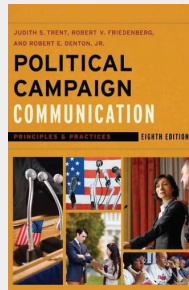
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Thoroughly researched, insightful and well into its eighth edition, *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices* is a seminal text for anyone interested in a comprehensive understanding of electoral campaigning and the communication strategies undertaken therein. This book is a part of the series titled *Communication, Media, and Politics* edited by Robert E. Denton, Jr. that aims at understanding the role played by communications in the broad domain of politics. As the title suggests, this book focuses on the communication aspect of political campaigning (set in the American electoral milieu). Deftly structured, the text is essentially divided into two broad categories. The first section is devoted to a thorough study of the principles of political campaign communication. Taking the reader through each stage of the American election process, the authors give a sound descriptive analysis of the foundational tenets of campaign communication and its styles. Divided into four chapters, this section primarily acquaints readers with the fundamentals of political campaign communications and the utility that it holds at different stages of the electoral journey of a candidate in the U.S. elections. Here, the authors walk readers through the germination and evolution of political campaigns as they take place in the American political system, and chart out the efficacy of different communication styles at each stage.



The second section of the book covers the practices of political campaign communication. As the theme suggests, this part of the writing elaborates upon the strategies and the media employed by political candidates during election campaigning. It not only traces the different spheres of communication with the electorate, but also acquaints the reader with the historicity of the practice (in the chapter on recurring campaign communication practices), and its potential efficacy. It studies aspects like public speaking (strategies and kinds of speeches), debates, interpersonal communication, advertising and new communication technologies (social media like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, etc.), and how they interact with political campaigns. It would be safe to say that the second half of the book progresses from the first. It provides readers with the tools required to put to effect the broader principles as understood in the chapters devoted to the principles of political campaign communication. What makes this part of the text even more exciting is the consideration of ground scenarios and contingencies taken into account by the authors while addressing political campaigning as a methodological tool toward desired electoral results.

In totality, this book certainly makes for an apt guide for anyone interested in the workings of political campaign communication in

a democratic system. What is offered in these pages is also a handbook on strategizing electoral campaigning and understanding how we, the subjects of campaign communication, are targeted by those vying for political office. The book is a succinct account of the public relations tangent of political campaigning. However, what keeps one wanting is the narrow scope of the literature. As the writing is based solely on the American political process, and it does deeply explore the intricacies of each stage of the American election system, it remains an inadequate text for those situated in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, this does not dismiss the utility of this book as electoral strategies across countries can be borrowed from each other. With that said, one cannot uncritically extrapolate the knowledge provided and discussed in this piece of writing to other electoral theatres as the election machinery, the rules that direct it, the pressure groups, freedom of speech, political sponsorships, etc., vary across countries. It is how these domestic variables either propel or impede the efficacy of campaign communication that cannot be understood using the lit-

erature in hand, as it is solely a reading of how political campaign communication transpires in the U.S. But, keeping that aside, the book has to be lauded for its impressive writing that is lucid and extremely intriguing for anyone who gets excited by the thought of studying elections.

To conclude, Judith S. Trent, Robert V. Friedenberg, and Robert E. Denton, Jr. provide their readers with a work that caters to a broad audience. The language and the style of writing make it an exciting read for audiences across different spheres. It is no surprise that the book is already running in its eighth edition. One hopes that the upcoming editions of the work will expand the geographic landscape of the scope of writing and take readers into domains of campaign communications as they transpire in other parts of the world as well. Probably a thematic division across regions would be desirable. Certainly this would be a herculean task for the amount of ground research required, but would without doubt be a valuable addition to the fields of psephology, media and political science.