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611 Pennsylvania Ave SE #112
Washington, DC 20003
P: 202-548-0047
www.LPStrategies.com

TO: Interested Parties
FR: Lincoln Park Strategies
RE: PAAR: A New Look at Evaluating Campaigns
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When it comes to political campaigns there has really only been one metric used to judge a successful campaign versus an unsuccessful one: whether a campaign wins or loses. While winning is clearly the desired outcome, myopically focusing on just winning an election eclipses whether or not a politician actually ran a good political campaign. It tends to blind us from truly retroactively learning how a winning campaign could have run a better campaign and causes us to lose sight of any strides that an ultimately unsuccessful campaign may have made.

Clearly, context is incredibly important, but is oftentimes overlooked. For instance, a three-point win for a Democrat running in Massachusetts is far worse than a Democrat losing by three points in Utah. Other arenas that use data-driven decision-making processes have changed the way they judge effectiveness from more arcane statistics to modern versions that better measure success. For example, for decades in baseball, purists utilized wins and losses and ERA to judge the effectiveness of pitchers. More recently, studies have shown that these are overly simplistic and even potentially inaccurate methods to evaluate a player. On a TV broadcast these days you are more and more likely to see a pitcher's WHIP, WAR, and strikeouts per 9 innings. This statistics revolution in baseball has fully taken root, with every team now employing the tactics made famous in *Moneyball*.

Similarly, it is time for the political world to move away from viewing the world in terms of simplistic measurements like wins and losses, and start looking at more meaningful measures that depict a more nuanced view of what success actually means.

In a previous memo we discussed the lack of effectiveness of television advertising in the 2012 presidential campaign. We have also shown how the results of elections can be predicted with the correct modeling, without even needing to look at a single public opinion poll. This has led us to the development of a new metric to show how effective the 2012 campaigns were in each state: Percent Above Anticipated Result (PAAR).

This month, we begin with an examination of the 2012 presidential race, and in subsequent months we will delve into Senate and House races.

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PAAR EXPLAINED

Just as WAR (Wins Above Replacement) is designed to determine the value of a baseball player by comparing his performance to that of a generic "replacement level player," PAAR derives its value from comparing a candidate's result to the result a generic candidate could be expected to get in that race. The purpose of this statistic is to provide context to the typical win or loss analysis of political campaigns. Using PAAR, we will examine the performance of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in 2012, as compared to the expected performance for a generic candidate from each party.

The "generic candidate" was created from our model for predicting presidential elections which proved to be very accurate in the 2012 election. As has been explained in previous memos, our model is built almost entirely on previous elections' electoral breakouts and changes in demographics. Generally, a generic candidate should be able to perform roughly similarly to his or her predecessors while adjusting for changes in demographics and other population trends. This ensures that for each election year the results accurately reflect the changes that are reshaping America's electoral landscape.

One additional note to keep in mind with PAAR: this is not golf. A candidate does not want a "below PAAR" score. The higher a candidate is above PAAR the better. By taking a deeper look into the states where candidates scored above PAAR and by comparing them to their campaigns' actions, we are able to see which campaigns should be viewed as effective and which spent a lot of money getting the expected result, or worse than the expected result.

We believe strongly in creating models that help to increase the accuracy of post-election analysis. However, it is not possible to create a model that can perfectly capture all of the value of every action in a campaign. A valuable model is one that can serve both as an effective representation of what we want to measure (campaign performance) and still is easily understood and able to be used in future campaigns. PAAR is not designed to be a standalone measure, but we feel it provides valuable insights for the 2016 election and beyond, and moves us away from viewing the world of campaigns solely through the lens of wins and losses.

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THE 2012 ELECTION

Obama's Top 10 PAAR Scores

In 2012, the Obama campaign had 9 of their top 10 PAAR scores in base Democratic states. While this is not surprising, it is interesting to see that Obama mostly over-performed expected results in states that he would be expected to win handily and where he has personal connections. As the chart below shows, his best result was in Hawaii where he received a substantial "native son" boost. Looking down the list, the one swing state that made it into Obama's top 10 was Virginia (see Appendix I for a complete list of all 50 states). Given these results, true accolades should be given to the campaign for its efforts in the Old Dominion State, where the expected result for a Democratic candidate would have been a loss last year.

State	Expected Dem Percent	Actual Dem Percent	PAAR
Hawaii	61.6%	70.1%	8.5
District of Columbia	87.0%	90.9%	3.9
Vermont	63.2%	66.6%	3.4
Rhode Island	59.8%	62.7%	2.9
New Jersey	54.7%	57.6%	2.9
Maryland	59.2%	62.0%	2.8
Delaware	55.5%	58.1%	2.6
California	57.8%	60.2%	2.4
New York	60.5%	62.8%	2.3
Virginia	49.0%	51.2%	2.2

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Obama's Swing State PAAR Scores

While it is interesting to see where the campaign over-performed, the more telling story is how the campaign performed in contested states. In 2012, the Obama campaign over-performed expectations in 7 of the 10 swing states. While Obama won 9 of the 10 states in the final vote, clearly there should be much more credit given for the win in Virginia as opposed to the win in Pennsylvania, even though Obama won with a bigger percentage in the Keystone State. Indeed, the importance of a PAAR score of 2.2 in one of the most pivotal swing states, Virginia, should not be overlooked.

State	Expected Dem Percent	Actual Dem Percent	PAAR
Virginia	49.0%	51.2%	2.2
North Carolina	46.6%	48.4%	1.8
Florida	49.1%	50.0%	0.9
Iowa	51.3%	52.0%	0.7
Colorado	51.1%	51.5%	0.4
Wisconsin	52.7%	52.8%	0.1
Nevada	52.3%	52.4%	0.1
Ohio	51.1%	50.7%	-0.4
New Hampshire	52.8%	52.0%	-0.8
Pennsylvania	53.4%	52.0%	-1.4

Another interesting note on the two swing states with the highest PAAR scores for Obama, Virginia and North Carolina, is that the Romney campaign prioritized winning these states. North Carolina and Virginia were two of the states that the President was most decisively outspent in campaign advertising. Romney spent over $18 million more than Obama in North Carolina and nearly $13 million more in Virginia. This clearly shows that not only was the Romney campaign using an outdated understanding of the landscape in these states, but the relationship between money spent on TV and results is different than conventional wisdom suggests.

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Romney's Top 10 PAAR Scores

Flipping to the other side of the equation, Mitt Romney also had 9 of his top 10 PAAR states coming from base states. The one non-base state with a strong PAAR score was Massachusetts, where his "native son" status got him an extra 0.8 percent over the expected result. In Utah, another state considered to be favorable to him, he received a bounce of 3.9 percent. While Utah was never in question, Romney's bump in this state was significantly smaller than the bump for Obama in his home state. Nowhere to be found on this list is Michigan, his actual home state, where he saw a -0.9 PAAR score. (See Appendix II for a complete list)

State	Expected GOP Percent	Actual GOP Percent	PAAR
Louisiana	57.5%	67.8%	10.3
West Virginia	56.3%	62.3%	6.0
Utah	68.9%	72.8%	3.9
Missouri	50.7%	53.8%	3.1
Arkansas	57.7%	60.6%	2.9
Kentucky	57.7%	60.5%	2.8
Tennessee	57.3%	59.5%	2.2
Wyoming	66.8%	68.6%	1.8
Massachusetts	36.7%	37.5%	0.8
Oklahoma	66.1%	66.8%	0.7

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Romney's Swing State PAAR Scores

Looking at the states that really matter in the election, the PAAR scores for the Romney campaign exhibit the struggles it had connecting with key voters. Romney had a negative PAAR score in 9 out of 10 swing states, and broke even only in Pennsylvania. As the chart below shows, Romney performed at least a point or more below his expected result in 8 out of the 10 states, including North Carolina and Virginia, where, as discussed, they spent a very large sum of money on television.

State	Expected GOP Percent	Actual GOP Percent	PAAR
Pennsylvania	46.6%	46.6%	0.0
New Hampshire	47.2%	46.4%	-0.8
Ohio	48.9%	47.7%	-1.2
Wisconsin	47.3%	45.9%	-1.4
Florida	50.9%	49.1%	-1.8
Nevada	47.7%	45.7%	-2.0
Iowa	48.7%	46.2%	-2.5
Colorado	48.9%	46.1%	-2.8
North Carolina	53.4%	50.4%	-3.0
Virginia	51.0%	47.3%	-3.7

Looking at all 50 states, the GOP will need to do some serious soul searching if they want to enjoy success in 2016. Just as there is little reason for a baseball team to spend big money on a free agent that performs worse than an average player, there is no reason why the GOP should feel good about the fact that hundreds of millions of dollars were spent to perform worse than a generic GOP contender was expected to. When looking at the average scores for each campaign (see table below), it is clear that the ROI for the Romney campaign was dreadful. With an average negative score across the Swing States (-1.9), the Romney campaign's problems were bigger than underestimating turnout of minority voters.

	Base Dem	Swing State	Base Rep
Obama Average PAAR	1.3	0.4	-2.2
Romney Average PAAR	-3.5	-1.9	0.6

For the Obama campaign, there are clear success stories when looking at the results through the PAAR spectrum. However, there should be some discussion about the fact that in three of the swing states, the money that poured into the campaign couldn't halt a negative PAAR score, and in two others (Wisconsin and Nevada) the needle barely moved. For 2012 this is a moot point, but lessons can and should be learned for 2016.

IMPLICATIONS

As is the case with just about every evaluation metric, there is not one definitive number that perfectly encapsulates success or failure. While PAAR may not be the ultimate campaign evaluation statistic, it is able to provide insight into how a campaign performed in a more in-depth way than looking simply at whether the candidate got 50+1 percent of votes on Election Day. If we continue this narrow view of campaign results, it will be hard to learn from past campaigns to determine how to run a more effective campaign. PAAR opens the door towards a better understanding of campaign success and failure that can be used in future races.

We certainly encourage more discussion about PAAR as well as other possible ideas that take campaign analysis beyond the outdated metrics that are currently being employed.

In the coming months, and as we move closer to the 2014 midterm elections, we plan to apply this methodology to recent Senate and House races to gain insight into the most successful campaigns of the last election cycle.

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APPENDIX I: OBAMA 2012 PAAR SCORES

State	Expected Dem Percent	Actual Dem Percent	PAAR	State	Expected Dem Percent	Actual Dem Percent	PAAR
Hawaii	61.6%	70.1%	8.5	Michigan	54.4%	54.2%	-0.2
District of Columbia	87.0%	90.9%	3.9	Ohio	51.1%	50.7%	-0.4
Vermont	63.2%	66.6%	3.4	Oklahoma	33.9%	33.2%	-0.7
Rhode Island	59.8%	62.7%	2.9	New Hampshire	52.8%	52.0%	-0.8
New Jersey	54.7%	57.6%	2.9	Arizona	45.8%	44.6%	-1.2
Maryland	59.2%	62.0%	2.8	Nebraska	39.2%	38.0%	-1.2
Delaware	55.5%	58.1%	2.6	Indiana	45.2%	43.9%	-1.3
California	57.8%	60.2%	2.4	Pennsylvania	53.4%	52.0%	-1.4
New York	60.5%	62.8%	2.3	Illinois	58.8%	57.3%	-1.5
Virginia	49.0%	51.2%	2.2	North Dakota	40.2%	38.7%	-1.5
Alaska	38.9%	40.8%	1.9	Alabama	40.1%	38.4%	-1.7
Washington	54.4%	56.2%	1.8	South Dakota	41.7%	39.9%	-1.8
North Carolina	46.6%	48.4%	1.8	Louisiana	42.5%	40.6%	-1.9
South Carolina	42.5%	44.1%	1.6	Idaho	34.6%	32.6%	-2.0
Mississippi	42.0%	43.5%	1.5	Oregon	56.6%	54.2%	-2.4
Texas	40.1%	41.4%	1.3	Massachusetts	63.3%	60.7%	-2.6
Florida	49.1%	50.0%	0.9	Kansas	40.6%	38.0%	-2.6
Iowa	51.3%	52.0%	0.7	Montana	44.6%	41.7%	-2.9
Maine	55.6%	56.3%	0.7	Tennessee	42.7%	39.1%	-3.6
Colorado	51.1%	51.5%	0.4	New Mexico	57.1%	53.0%	-4.1
Georgia	45.3%	45.5%	0.2	Kentucky	42.3%	37.8%	-4.5
Minnesota	52.6%	52.7%	0.1	Missouri	49.3%	44.4%	-4.9
Wisconsin	52.7%	52.8%	0.1	Arkansas	42.3%	36.9%	-5.4
Nevada	52.3%	52.4%	0.1	Wyoming	33.2%	27.8%	-5.4
Connecticut	58.1%	58.1%	0.0	Utah	31.1%	24.8%	-6.3
				West Virginia	43.7%	35.5%	-8.2

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APPENDIX II: ROMNEY 2012 PAAR SCORES

State	Expected GOP Percent	Actual GOP Percent	PAAR	State	Expected GOP Percent	Actual GOP Percent	PAAR
Louisiana	57.5%	67.8%	10.3	Connecticut	41.9%	40.7%	-1.2
West Virginia	56.3%	62.3%	6.0	Georgia	54.7%	53.3%	-1.4
Utah	68.9%	72.8%	3.9	Wisconsin	47.3%	45.9%	-1.4
Missouri	50.7%	53.8%	3.1	North Dakota	59.8%	58.3%	-1.5
Arkansas	57.7%	60.6%	2.9	Florida	50.9%	49.1%	-1.8
Kentucky	57.7%	60.5%	2.8	Nevada	47.7%	45.7%	-2.0
Tennessee	57.3%	59.5%	2.2	Minnesota	47.4%	45.0%	-2.4
Wyoming	66.8%	68.6%	1.8	Iowa	48.7%	46.2%	-2.5
Massachusetts	36.7%	37.5%	0.8	Mississippi	58.0%	55.3%	-2.7
Oklahoma	66.1%	66.8%	0.7	Texas	59.9%	57.2%	-2.7
Alabama	59.9%	60.6%	0.7	Colorado	48.9%	46.1%	-2.8
Kansas	59.4%	59.7%	0.3	South Carolina	57.5%	54.6%	-2.9
Montana	55.4%	55.4%	0.0	North Carolina	53.4%	50.4%	-3.0
Pennsylvania	46.6%	46.6%	0.0	Maine	44.4%	41.0%	-3.4
New Mexico	42.9%	42.8%	-0.1	Virginia	51.0%	47.3%	-3.7
South Dakota	58.3%	57.9%	-0.4	New York	39.5%	35.2%	-4.3
Arizona	54.2%	53.7%	-0.5	Washington	45.6%	41.3%	-4.3
Illinois	41.2%	40.7%	-0.5	Delaware	44.5%	40.0%	-4.5
Indiana	54.8%	54.1%	-0.7	New Jersey	45.3%	40.6%	-4.7
New Hampshire	47.2%	46.4%	-0.8	Maryland	40.8%	35.9%	-4.9
Michigan	45.6%	44.7%	-0.9	Rhode Island	40.2%	35.2%	-5.0
Idaho	65.4%	64.5%	-0.9	California	42.2%	37.1%	-5.1
Nebraska	60.8%	59.8%	-1.0	District of Columbia	13.0%	7.3%	-5.7
Ohio	48.9%	47.7%	-1.2	Vermont	36.8%	31.0%	-5.8
Oregon	43.4%	42.2%	-1.2	Alaska	61.1%	54.8%	-6.3
				Hawaii	38.4%	27.8%	-10.6