

HIRING A CAMPAIGN MANAGER



THE
ARENA

THE PROFILE OF AN EXCELLENT CAMPAIGN MANAGER

An excellent campaign manager is a creative strategist, a natural manager who will unlock potential in her team, and a mature leader who can work directly with the candidate, consultants, and institutional players with confidence and efficiency. She is calm and unflappable, decisive but intentional, and a critical thinker who knows when to question conventional wisdom and when not to reinvent the wheel.

Role and Responsibilities

If the candidate is the CEO of the organization (visionary, fundraiser, face/voice), then the campaign manager is the Managing Director (strategist, team lead, keeper of the budget). Ideally, a campaign manager's scope of responsibility is anchored in:

- 1 Writing the strategy
- 2 Hiring, training, and coaching the team to execute
- 3 Overseeing the campaign plan and budget
- 4 Managing consultants, vendors, and external stakeholders

The best campaign managers have excellent interpersonal skills, and view the successes and failures of their team as their own. They set clear expectations and give their team ownership over achieving their goals. They know how to balance motivating people with holding them accountable for meeting a shared definition of success. And they are skilled in identifying and synthesizing priorities for both the candidate and the broader campaign team. The strongest CMs think on both a strategic and tactical level, and are methodical with how they employ resources and make decisions. If a CM is succeeding in her job, the candidate is playing the role of approver, but never strategist (she doesn't have time for that!), and the team is thriving and meeting its collective goals on a daily and weekly basis.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Getting to Know Each Other

- What's your story? What drew you to working in politics, and why do you stay?
- Tell me a little bit about your experience. In considering the skills you've built throughout your career, what have you discovered are your superpowers? Conversely, what are your greatest areas for growth and development?
- How are you hoping to grow in your next role, specifically?
- What is most important to you about the next campaign you work on?
- Tell me about your biggest achievement in a job so far—what work are you most proud of?
- Tell me about a time you failed and what you learned from it.
- Why are you interested in working on this campaign?

2. Strategy Chops

- When you think about how campaigns are usually run, what do you think separates the good from the great?
- Given what you know about this candidate and this race, tell me how you would go about developing a strategy to win.
- We know that races this cycle are going to need robust organizing programs to win. Tell me about your vision for an excellent organizing effort on this campaign.
- Some on the left say we need to invest more in turning out low-propensity voters. Others say we need to do a better job of engaging moderates and working class voters. What's your point of view in that debate?
- What kind of message do you think voters are most responsive to in our current climate? What kind of messaging should candidates avoid?
- If you were to step into the CM role tomorrow, walk me through what your first four weeks would look like.
- What's the best and worst advice you've ever received about how to run a campaign?
- What conventional wisdom about how to run campaigns should we question? What do you think campaigns can do better in the future?

3. Leadership and Management Style

- Tell me about your management style. What are your guiding philosophies or principles as a manager of a team?
- What works for you in a manager? What doesn't work for you?
- Tell me about how you give difficult feedback. Can you give an example of a time you've had to give constructive feedback to a teammate or someone you managed? What was your approach?
- How do you make sure you and your team have the same definitions of success?
- How do you create an environment conducive to strong communication across a team?
- Tell me about a time you had to keep a team motivated in the face of big challenges. What did you do?
- Who has been a model manager or leader in your own life? What do you admire about how they manage and lead a team?
- As a manager and leader, what are you personally working on improving?
- What do you think people who have worked for you in the past would say about what it's like to work for you?
- Tell me about your approach to building a high performing team.
- Imagine you are hiring a senior staffer for the campaign. What qualities do you look for, and how do you assess for them?

4. Managing Up and Across

- Have you managed a candidate before? Tell me about what that was like, what the biggest challenges were, and how you dealt with them.
- Tell me about a time you've had to work through a disagreement with someone you worked for. How did you arrive at a solution?
- What do you see as the biggest challenges for a first-time candidate?
- Tell me about your approach to working with vendors and consultants.
- What do you think people you've worked for in the past would say about what it's like to work with you? What would they say are your greatest strengths? Your greatest areas for improvement?