January 30, 2020

Dear trusted media colleague,

As you know, this is the most important election of our lifetime. I realize that I wrote the same thing last election...and the election before that, but this time it’s different.

This document will outline the secret strategies being employed by my client that I hope you agree are horrifying and cynical. I can only say that I will spend the rest of my life deeply ashamed for my part in this.

Very truly yours,

- TPM
What lies are we telling this year versus previous years?
The Political Machine 2020 is technically the 5th edition of this game. This year is a 100% rewrite of the game, which should produce an even more accurate simulation and better visuals. It also allowed us to update the game mechanics to be more in line with modern campaigns.

What’s new
1. The entire game UX. The game and its interface have huge improvements.
2. Town Halls. Players gain ideology by attending the town halls that appear on the map.
3. Ideology points. This is a new resource that allows your candidate to “buy” issues that will help make your candidate unique.
4. Ideology Trees. Each candidate has their own ideology tree. This represents that candidate’s focus on particular issues. That means that playing as Bernie Sanders is quite different than playing as Joe Biden because they have different issues to acquire in their ideology tree.
5. Voter Enthusiasm. Voter turn-out is a major focus now. It’s not just getting them to agree with you - you need to get them to get off their butts to come out and vote for you.
6. The entire simulation. Not easily visible but very important, the underlying connection between political issues, voter polling data, turn-out, and candidate positions have been redone in order to deliver a player experience that is both accurate and depressingly intuitive.

What lies are we omitting here?
There are certain…facts… that are not in this particular build yet. They are:
1. Interviews. Your candidate will be able to go on popular television shows and podcasts to give interviews to plead their case to the American people.
2. Lots of polish. We are still prettifying up the screen and graphics and text.
Introduction
The Political Machine is an American election simulation cynically disguised as a video game. Its bright and friendly graphics are designed to lull players into a false sense of security about the electoral process.

You are the campaign manager for a major Presidential candidate. By ‘major’, we mean Republican or Democrat, as opposed to some fake or irrelevant party like the Libertarians or, god forbid, the “Green” party.

Setting the game up
Once you have decided to enter the campaign management gig, you choose which party you want to help. Your options are the commie loving Democrats or the gun toting, money grubbing Republicans.

![Figure 1: Choose](image)
Which candidate do you want to manage?

We are gradually rolling out the candidates leading up to the game’s release so that each of them get a little bit of focus time.

**Preview Release 1: February 2020 – Week 1**
- Tulsi Gabbard
- Andrew Yang
- Pete Buttigieg
- Donald Trump
- Mike Pence

**Preview Release 2: February 2020 – Week 2**
- Additional candidates

**Preview Release 3: February 2020 – Week 3**
- Additional candidates
- TV Interviews: Good Day America
- TV Interviews: Really Loud Crowder

**Preview Release 4: February 2020 – Week 4**
- Additional candidates
- TV interviews: Youthful Turks
- TV interviews: Kind of Late with Colbert

**Final Release: Super Tuesday, March 3**
- Additional candidates
- TV interviews: [surprise]
- TV interviews: [surprise]
The Stats

We have to be honest with our clients, so we rate them to the best of our ability based on how they perform.

Here's how these ratings affect their performance while campaigning:

- **Stamina**: How much campaigning they can do in a given week. Every activity requires some stamina.
- **Charisma**: When your candidate gives a speech, their charisma will increase how much effect it has.
- **Intelligence**: When your candidate does an interview, intelligence increases the odds that they will be able to say something particularly witty and helpful.
- **Media bias**: Candidates cement their positions by attending town halls. Good media coverage will increase the amount of “ideology points” that the candidate gains from attending town halls.
- **Experience**: Your candidate will eventually want to bring in other operatives besides you to help them. The amount of political experience they have will affect how much those operatives cost.
- **Minority Appeal**: Turn-out is king and the more minority appeal your candidate has, the more support you will get from Hispanics and African Americans.
- **Starting Money**: You will need money to hire operatives, buy ads, and build campaign offices.
Playing the game

You have 21 weeks to convince voters in 50 states to vote for your candidate.

Each action consumes stamina. When your candidate is out of stamina or is ready to move to the next week, press the turn button (bottom right) to move to the next turn.

Possible actions include:

1. **Travel to another state** (right click where you want your candidate to go). Visiting another state will increase voter enthusiasm for your candidate. You should always visit any state you hope to win - for example, Wisconsin.

2. **Build a campaign office.** Campaign offices passively raise money for your candidate and increase enthusiasm in the state they’re built in.

3. **Campaign.** This instructs your candidate to give a speech on a given issue. Your candidate and be for or against or can attack their opponent as being for or against a given issue.

4. **Build your ideology.** When your candidate attends town halls, they will receive ideology points based on their performance (which is based on how much stamina remaining have when they arrive). The typical amount received is 3, but if the media loves your candidate, they can receive an additional point or two.

5. **Fund Raising.** It takes a lot of stamina, but your campaign will need money.

6. **Buy ads.** Ads are like campaigning except you don’t have to be there. They will continue to send your message in that state and nearby states even when your candidate is in another state. However, they cost money.
A quick run through
By now, you are starting to realize how dreadfully “gamey” our election system is.

For the record, we cannot be held responsible for the fact that the founding fathers chose to make our elections a board game in which each state is worth certain numbers of points. We are simply adapting to it.

Early campaign
For the first couple of weeks, we have our candidates go to key states and build campaign offices. This will help us build enthusiasm in that state.

When we see a town hall opportunity (the bouncing house in your candidate’s color), we instruct our candidate to travel there.

After the town hall, check your ideology tree to see if your candidate can claim an issue.

Warn your candidate: Easy issues are double edged
Different issues have different effects on your candidate’s candidacy. These effects are:

1. How much enthusiasm they will create for your candidate.
2. How much enthusiasm they will create for your opponent.
3. How much it will increase this issue in the national dialog.
Now, some issues cost less to acquire than others, but you should warn your candidate that the easy path may not be the right path. Extreme positions are there for the taking, and while they’re relatively cheap to get, they can cause other problems.

For example, some issues will create a lot of enthusiasm for your candidate – but, they can create a lot of enthusiasm for your opponent, too. This may not be a good thing, depending on what states you are trying to win.

![Figure 2: This is the state of Wisconsin. You should visit it.](image)

The more you upgrade your office, the more money it will bring in. If you upgrade it to the highest level, you will receive a consultant operative who you can move to states that you are trying to build enthusiasm in, but don’t necessarily want to visit.

![Figure 3: Consultant sent to Oregon. I need their votes but don't want to have to send my candidate there personally.](image)
Mid Campaign

Once you have your campaign offices set up, you should make sure you are giving speeches and taking out ads.

Ads are nice because they affect adjacent states and beyond. They are nationwide, versus campaigns which only affect that state. The effect, however, decreases the further it is from the ad’s location.

Once you have a couple ads in place, target the states you must win. Figure out what that state’s issues are by double clicking on it.
This screen tells you what the top issues in the state are and how the voters there feel about them.

The right side shows what each candidate’s position is on the issue.

At the top, you can see the issue score and enthusiasm. Players can increase their issue score by giving speeches or taking out ads in that state.
Late Campaign

By now the campaign map looks something like this:

Now is the time to start playing dirty.
These are political operatives. The base cost to hire one decreases each week, but their cost goes up as they are hired.

These operatives are:

1. **Fixer.** He...ahem...takes care of other operatives. Send him to a state where there’s another operative and watch them “mysteriously” go away.
2. **Cheerleader.** They greatly increase your enthusiasm in the state they’re deployed in.
3. **Smear Merchant.** They misrepresent your opponent’s positions on issues, greatly reducing their issue score.
4. **Spin Doctor.** They...exaggerate... your positions to make it appear that you agree with whatever the voter is wanting to hear.
5. **Intimidator.** They suppress voter turnout.
Florida is purple. Let’s send a Smear Merchant there.

Much better.

So, as we reach the end of the campaign, it is neck and neck.
Your results may vary. Let us make it very clear that not all candidates are equal. Some are much harder to win with than others.

What we can say is that these are the strategies we employ to help our candidates succeed; or at least, succeed well enough so that we can hired again for the next campaign cycle.

Use this information as you see fit. Please forgive us for what we do...

More information
Website: www.politicalmachine.com
Platform: PC, Steam
Price: $14.99