

DESCRIPTION OF THE

COMMERCIAL AD CAMPAIGN

FOR THE TRONDHEIM LABOUR PARTY 2015

Country: Norway

Client: Trondheim Labour Party

Commercial campaign: Rune Olsoe

Graphics and layout: Blink

STRATEGY AND MESSAGE

The election for City Council and Mayor of Norway's third-largest city was mainly a contest between two main opponents - the Labour Party and its partners, favoring investments in schools and care for the elderly, versus the conservative parties favoring tax cuts.

Our overall strategy was to make the election a referendum between these two choices, framed in a "value-differences"-theme. This strategy and the message communicated through the ad campaign, as well as a well-executed grassroots campaign, resonated remarkably well with the electorate.

After 12 years of consecutive rule under the Labour Party, the media had grown much more critical of the Labour Party. Because of this it had become increasingly hard to reach the electorate with our message. A central part of the strategy was therefore to bypass the editorial media and take our message straight to the voters, through an extensive commercial ad campaign.

The campaign's slogan ("The Labour Party chooses schools and the elderly over conservative tax cuts") could have been a gamble, for sure. Our polls showed that the tax cuts suggested were popular among a large quantity of the electorate. Therefore, its success depended on the choice being framed in a values-oriented theme that would trigger voter turnout for the Labour Party. We felt voters were often being underestimated, and that they understood you had to prioritize, that you couldn't have it both ways.

Framing the choice in a values-oriented theme was therefore the aim of both the commercial and the grassroots campaigns. The organizers and volunteers of the latter cannot be praised enough for their extensive effort and hard work, which were essential to the end result.

THE COMMERCIAL AD CAMPAIGN

The commercial campaign, strategy and message fell was managed by Rune Olsoe, who also ran the creative part of the ad work. The firm Blink was hired to do layout and graphics and, through a highly skilled photographer, photo work for the main ads.

The commercial campaign consisted of a series of ads and messages, most notably:

- **The Wallet;** The concept of the wallet is itself hardly new. We were directly inspired by similar ads with a wallet and the posed question, used by the Democrats in the US (fundraising) and the Green party of Sweden (web poster). We made our own version, much brighter in its expression and more modern (with credit cards) than the other two and added elements like linking the visual directly with our campaign slogan, as well

as a voter-trigger (direct solicitation to vote Labour), as advocated by research from the last two decades. We believe the combination of the wallet and our slogan of prioritizing our kids and the elderly (schools and elderly care) instead of tax cuts that go right into your wallet, made our version not only effective, but also particularly suited for our campaign.

- **The Traffic Signs:** Olsoe created and used an early version of this ad in the 2007 Trondheim Labour Party-campaign, again in 2011 and again in 2015. The signs were thus used repeatedly for several consecutive campaigns, which made them instantly recognizable as a Labour Party ad. The 2015 version was refined graphically, and linked directly to our campaign slogan, as well as a voter-trigger.
- **Dreams of Becoming a Fireman;** When Olsoe first created an early version of this ad (then as a flyer) over twenty years ago, it was inspired from campaigns with a similar theme done for the German Social Democrats. Olsoe have since used different versions of it in campaigns throughout the period 2003-2011. For the 2015 layout we maintained the idea but started over completely in regard to the picture, framing and graphics work. The photo work for this 2015 campaign ad is sublime, capturing both the fragility and aspirations of one of our youngsters, as we pushed the clear message that we are the ones who's been assigned to safeguard them and their dreams – and that this requires us making the right choices.

The commercial campaign was the costliest the Trondheim Labour Party have ever conducted. Funds had been set aside by the party for several years, fundraising was at an all-time high and there was financial support from unions. The size of this war chest was essential for the ability to bypass the editorial media and take our message straight to the voters – a central part of our core strategy.

Political advertising on television is not permitted in Norway, but in 2015 a large number of the electorate still subscribed to their local papers, and polls showed newspaper ads still worked like a charm (this effect have since declined). However, to get the necessary impact on the electorate it was essential that the message be present on an array of platforms. Therefore, the campaign ran on large billboards, on busses, in social media, leaflets, posters and – above all else – newspaper-ads. In the largest paper alone, we programmed more than 30 large ads in the last five weeks closing on election day (full color, section A placement).

It goes without saying that planning, producing and executing such an extensive local commercial campaign required fundamental expertise in polling interpretation, print media programming, creative work and strategic message discipline. But above all else it succeeded because *all parts* of the campaign understood and owned the overall strategy and message – and were successful in executing their different tasks. In other words, the campaign had highly skilled people in *all* departments. Thus, the commercial campaign, the grassroots campaign, the candidates and the campaigns press office all worked closely together and in tandem. This boosted the effect of the message exponentially.

THREE MAIN NEWSPAPER ADS OF THE COMMERCIAL CAMPAIGN

The three main ads used for print media were (this is original version in Norwegian – English version submitted):



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ELECTION RESULT

The campaign was highly successful. This was partly as an effect of being able to successfully bypass the editorial media and take our message straight to the voters, through this extensive commercial ad campaign. In a Scandinavian multi-party election - ten parties eventually won representatives in the city council - the Labour party won in a landslide, capturing 41,5% and the mayor was reelected.

MORE INFORMATION AT VALGVINNER.NO

For a more detailed look at the organization and race see (in Norwegian, use translation): <https://valgvinner.no/kampanje/folkeavstemning-om-verdier/>