

Manifesto 1.0

1. Politics is a conversation.
2. This conversation sounds stale, repetitive, hectoring, inhuman, patronising, old.
3. Human conversations are different. They consist of individuals talking and listening. They are not 'on message'.
4. "Whether delivering information, opinions, perspectives, dissenting arguments or humorous asides, the human voice is typically open, natural, uncontrived." – The Clue Train Manifesto.
5. Currently, politicians broadcast their views.
6. Broadcasting – speaking to everyone, spreading one's message wide - has forced politicians to sound ever less human.
7. New technology is making the current tone of political conversation sound increasingly removed from everyday discourse. Think about the way you email your friends, and compare it to a politician's speech.
8. The Medium is the Message. Why would you treat the new medium like the last one?
9. In politics, technology has been used vertically. You gather information at A, communicate it through technology, repackaging, rationing, spinning as you go until you get to the target audience, B. Technology has been used for little more than beating another path from A to B.
10. Problem: B is ignoring you. B is good at filtering out spam, be it politics or get-rich-quick schemes. B won't listen to what you're sending unless you talk to them.
11. If you do use new technology, we'll be cautious about what you tell us. We can check now. It takes no time at all.
12. If you lie, deceive or dissemble, we'll tell everyone. That takes even less time.
13. This is why VoxPolitics believes technology is switching sides. It is gradually betraying parties and pollsters. It is becoming the voter's friend.
14. Technology heralds a veritable funeral cortege of political war-horses: RIP The Message, RIP The Party For Life, RIP Politics as Lecture.



15. Politicians should not despair. Technology will befriend those who understand these limitations. But it will be merciless with those who don't.
16. Technology will allow understanding politicians to engage in the type of human discussions that traditional representative democracy demanded, but could not handle. MPs who fear email should think about this.
17. This is a story about technology, and how it changes people. But it's mostly about people, and how they use technology to change the world around them.
18. The Internet, information and communications technology, mobile telephones: these are all part of the story. But it is people who are getting smarter.
19. What happened to business about five years ago is about to happen to politics. Are you ready?
20. Established Political Gospel: never admit to being wrong; never look back; don't look beyond the next election, control information tightly to make you look good.
21. Isn't it great being in control? Tough. You can't be any more.
22. Increasingly people know when they are being lied to. Why? Increased information.
23. The techniques of communication used in politics – information management, the press, TV –are under pressure by new media.
24. These new media allow people to talk to other people, learn, and change things.
25. Politicians don't trust us. We can tell. We don't trust politicians. They can tell.
26. Politics is house-sitting. We lend you our house. You don't burn it down. Are we supposed to be grateful because you present us with a house which isn't in ashes?
27. Political parties ration information. In politics, people are meant to make up their mind on half the facts.
28. This is why politics remains an industrial whale, beached in an information age.
29. 80% of shoppers shop without a shopping list. And you expect us to belong to the same political party for life?



30. People can now find a way of being heard which can overcome voting structures. Call it vote swapping, tactical voting, arbitrage: we call it empowerment.
31. Losing a single seat due to tactical voting organised by a website will send a message as clear as a million emails.
32. Not long ago, people couldn't tell if you said different things to different people. People could not see if they were only getting half the picture.
33. Now we see the joins. We can *almost* see the whole picture. We'll make sure you've not been telling different people different things.
34. Define 'Message': I will tell you only what I want you to know. People will only understand me if I repeat something over and over again and again.
35. Have you any idea how silly you sound?
36. Why do we want to read your spun version when we can use the same number of clicks to access the unspun version?
37. We know you are not faultless, or blameless. But many of us might be more understanding than you think, if you let us be.
38. New technology privileges the humorous: jokes spread further and faster than dogma. Politics may be a serious business, but lighten up a little.
39. Networked politics means that ideas, news, and trends move faster: too fast for many. But that speed means that you can spoil the tabloids' party: they have to wait until the next morning to break the story, you can pre-empt it this afternoon. Wouldn't you like to do that?
40. As politics accelerates the past becomes ever more accessible. We no longer have to be experts with libraries to find out who said what, when.
41. Most people aren't apathetic. MORI polls have a better response rate than most elections. Most of these are about soap power. It is just that there are more barriers to getting involved with politics than there are to answering the phone. Those barriers are now being removed.
42. Do you think we're really not interested in communicating with the people who spend 40% of our money?
43. Networked politics means people are getting smarter, more organised, more likely to kick something.
44. Just as it lowers barriers to information, the new communications technologies lower barriers to organising people with information.



Remember the Tory who said "if the miners had had mobile phones, we would have lost".

45. All of this, it hasn't happened yet. But it is *happening*. Two pence off a litre of petrol says...

46. VoxPolitics is coming.



About VoxPolitics

VoxPolitics is a campaign to explain how new technology changes politics.

VoxPolitics is a response to social and economic transformations that are changing the basis of politics and political action. These changes include: economic globalisation; liberalisation; individualisation; greater personal mobility; social fragmentation; and demographic shift. All change the nature of what politics is concerned with and how it is conducted.

VoxPolitics believes the most significant transformation is technological. We believe that new information and communications technologies (ICTs) will change forever the relationship between people and politics.

We look at existing political relationships - party and member, politician and voter, campaigner and supporter, government and governed - and see cobwebs.

The 'new politics' will mirror the 'new economy'. Just like the 'new economy' this is not a choice: it will happen. There will be much hype, but even more substance.

We believe that the themes of the new economy are also applicable to politics and political action. These include: the importance of creativity and innovation; digitisation; the primacy of access over ownership; the power of networks; disintermediation (and reintermediation); speed; interactivity; the critical role of knowledge; and connectedness (or the convergence of traditionally disparate areas of action)

Technology lowers barriers to information, and makes it easier to use information to achieve one's ends. Previously politics suffered from massive information asymmetries: the establishment had access to information, and rationed and controlled access by others. This was not always deliberate, but it was certainly a fact. New technology, particularly networked Internet technologies, mean that anyone can find almost anything. There are fewer secrets, and fewer places to hide.

Political relationships are formed through media of expression and communication. These relationships mirror the history of communications advancement: podium (speech); pamphlets (printing); newspapers (industrialised printing); radio (broadcast voice); and television (broadcast



pictures). Technology is now introducing several new media in quick succession, and merging some of them into new 'multimedia' channels.

Like every new political relationship these will require a shift in the practice of politics to cope with change. In the past this has meant teaching politicians to appreciate the value of makeup for television, or the value of toning down their opinions on national radio shows.

Coping and prospering will mean first and foremost adopting a new voice. This voice will be natural, human, humorous, honest, uncontrived, open, unbiased and persuasive. As we state in the manifesto, current politics sounds very different to this.

So what is the manifesto? It is an experimental document, in an experimental format. A series of numbered statements are designed to pose questions, get you thinking, to engender debate and to see what happens next. Some of the statements are clear; some are ambiguous. Some are straightforward, some complex. But we hope they are all worthy of a moment's thought and a visit to our website www.voxpolitics.com to join in the debate.

Finally, VoxPolitics is built over the web, open for all to see, and free to access. If it was a piece of software, we'd like to think of it as open-source. If you have any comments, ideas or reactions to any of this, we need to hear them, so we can carry on making it better.

Right now, we see politics as a pretty tired business. If you agree, read this manifesto, sign it, and e-mail others. For this is now how movements grow.

Acknowledgements:

We do not pretend these ideas are wholly ours. In particular, we owe a debt to the authors of the [Cluetrain manifesto](#). We encourage you to check out their site. We also owe a debt to numerous cartographers of the information age, whose ideas we have adapted to political action.