

# Campaign Success Right from Your Desktop

## *The Value of Targeted Email Outreach*

By Roger Stone

**M**ike Panetta, the “shadow” U.S. representative for the District of Columbia, had used his first two terms in this position as a platform to advocate for statehood and budget and legislative autonomy for the District of Columbia. Panetta knew he had been an effective advocate for those issues. Despite his belief that he was the right candidate for the job, he was a challenged incumbent who was facing the last few critical days in the election.

There is an old adage that the one thing that campaigns cannot buy more of is time, but they can invest in online outreach services, specifically, targeted email outreach. In certain scenarios, that can be a game changer in a race that is coming down to the wire.

### ***Reaching Voters at the Click of a Button***

Panetta, like many, searched for a solution to meet his last minute needs. Perusing multiple voter engagement platforms, Panetta discovered Advocacy Data’s newly launched platform VoterVendor. The platform not only contains the email addresses of over 30 million registered voters, but is also a do-it-yourself solution that activates at the click of a button.

In many cases, VoterVendor can be more cost-effective than direct mail since direct mail remains prohibitively expensive for many races. Given the flood of mail that was being received from candidates for mayor, council chairman, and city council, Panetta literally did not want to fall in with all the clutter. Robocalls were also not an option, since he realized many voters were receiving nearly 10 calls a day.

The self-service VoterVendor platform allows candidates to identify key voters, format their email and send out a message. Using VoterVendor gave Panetta the ability to

send an informative email message directly to over 37,321 registered voters for a few cents per send.

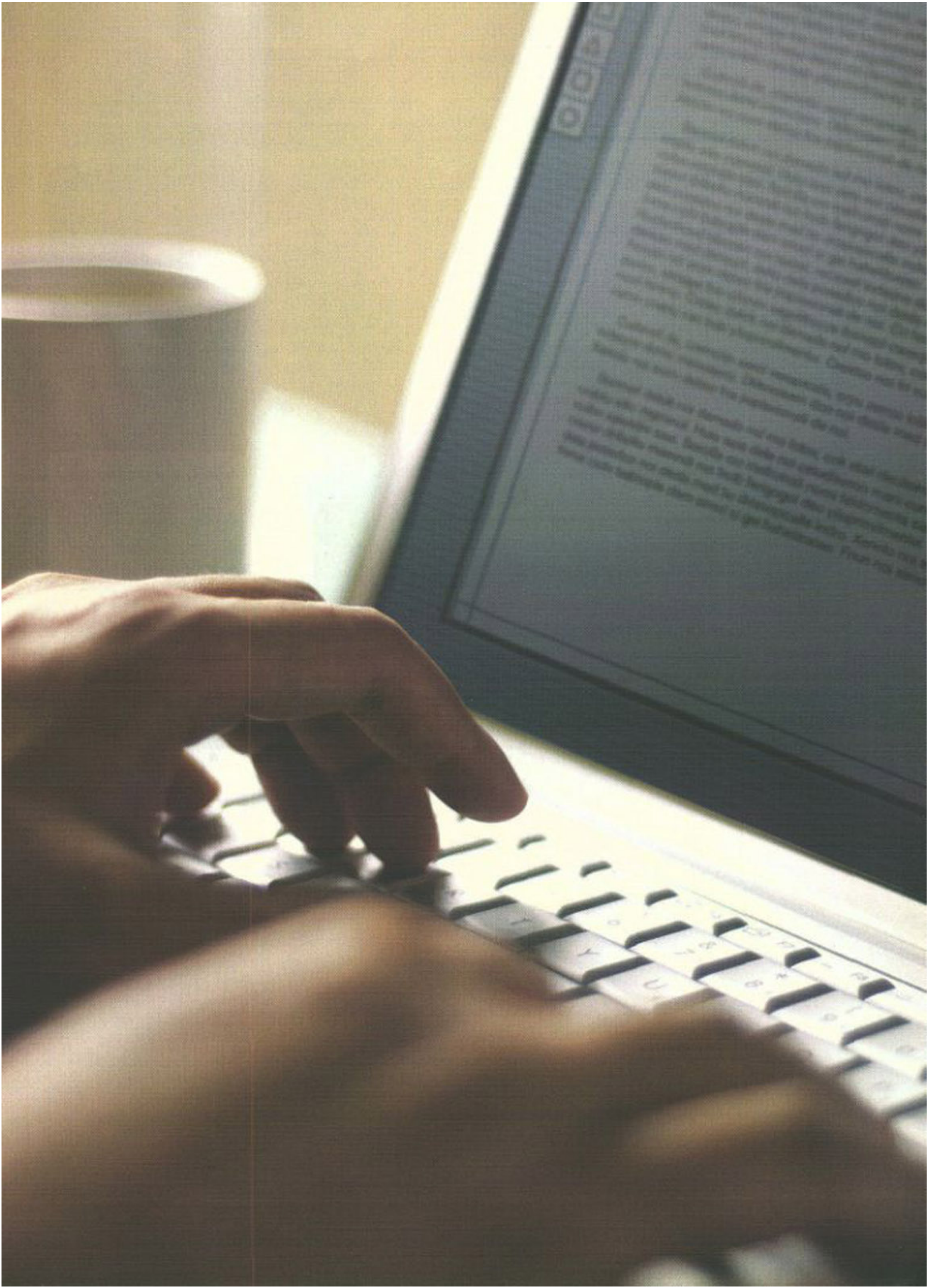
Like many candidates that Advocacy Data works with, Panetta was hesitant to try email outreach. Emailing a large list of registered voters just before an election is a risk, since it could alienate voters who would have voted for you. Due to Panetta’s track record, he knew he just needed to remind voters who he was and that he was on the ballot. His email was an effective “for your information” reminder versus a “hard sell” or an email that “goes negative.”

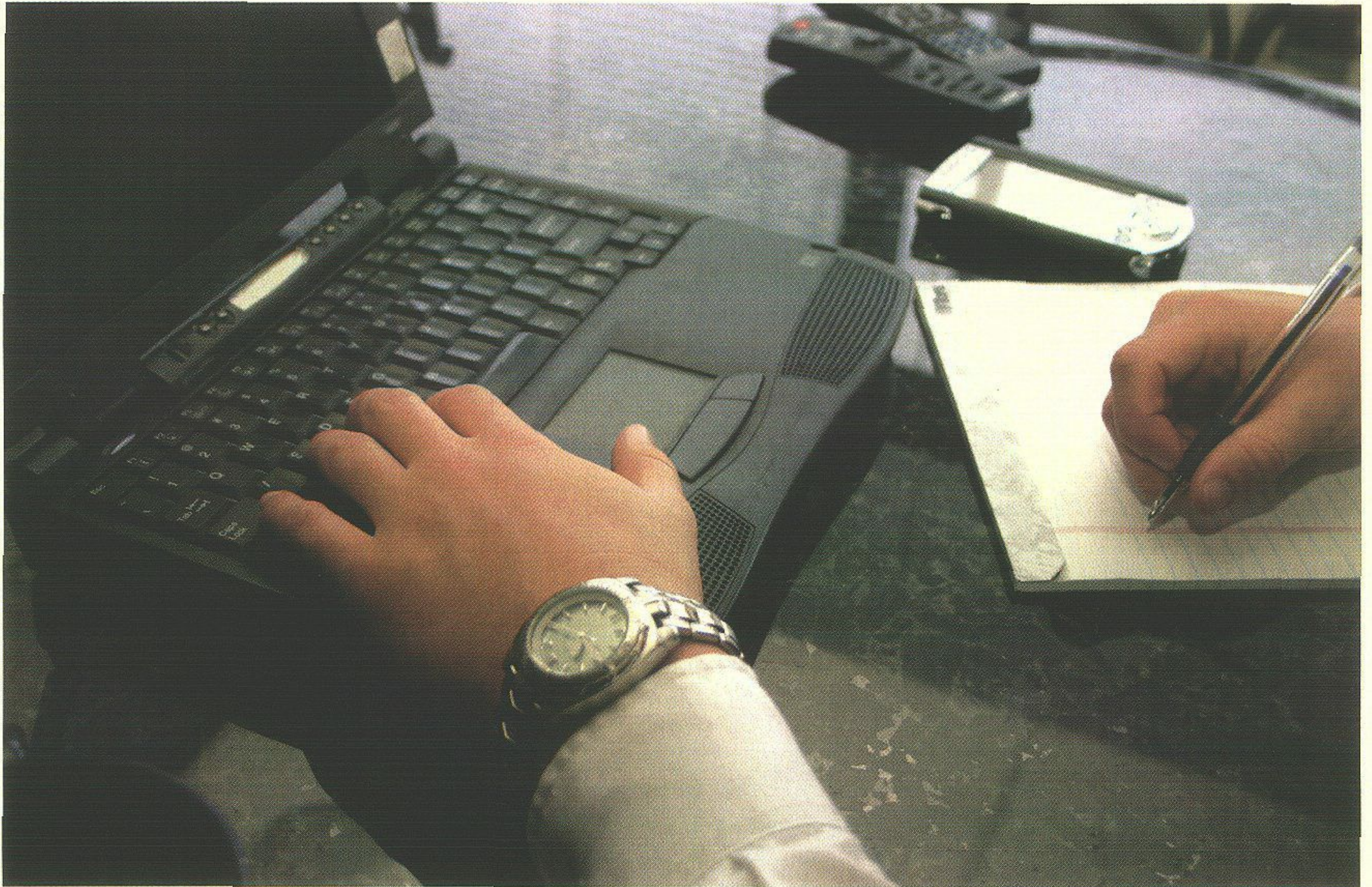


[Targeted e-mail outreach] can be a game changer in a race that is coming down to the wire.

### ***Personalized Emails Act As Useful Last Minute Reminders***

Panetta elected to draft two emails to be sent out in the week time period before the election, sending one on the Thursday the week before the election and one on the Monday before the Tuesday election. Neither email had a strong “vote for me” message, but VoterVendor’s interface allowed Panetta to customize his emails with his name and campaign logo, coming directly from his own email address. Panetta believes that this approach made the public see him as someone who was providing useful information and, having already been through two election cycles, it





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reinforced his candidacy and gave people that last minute incentive to go vote for him.


As with any campaign strategy, Panetta did receive a handful of complaints due to the emails, but he was able to address each complaint individually since VoterVendor is a do-it-yourself platform. Despite a few unhappy recipients, Panetta's response was overwhelmingly positive. Many recipients sent "thank you" notes or called Panetta's campaign team asking for additional information and their polling place so they could go vote.

### ***A Cost-Effective Solution That Led to a Third Term***

On September 14, 2010, Panetta secured, for the third time, the Democratic nomination for his position. Given

the down-ballot nature of the race, he needed to find additional cost-effective ways to break through the clutter and remind voters of the good work he had done over the years.

The reality is that elections these days are much different. Unlike the previous cycles in which Panetta had run in, he found himself up against an aggressive young challenger who was running very hard for this position and was able to devote far more resources into the race, both in time and money, than he was. Panetta saw his opponent chipping away at his "incumbent advantage." Despite using traditional offline methods like signs on street poles, winning several key endorsements, and investing in earned media and advertising, Panetta needed a way in which he knew he would get right in front of potential voters.

Using VoterVendor to contact voters on the eve of an election worked for Panetta, who plans on using it again. VoterVendor reinforced his candidacy, and his messages provided the type of information that potential voters needed, and it turns out, details that they wanted. 

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