

The image features two large, bold, red letters, 'I' and 'Q', positioned on the left and right sides of the page respectively. The 'I' is a simple, blocky serif font, while the 'Q' is a more stylized, rounded serif font. The letters are set against a plain white background.

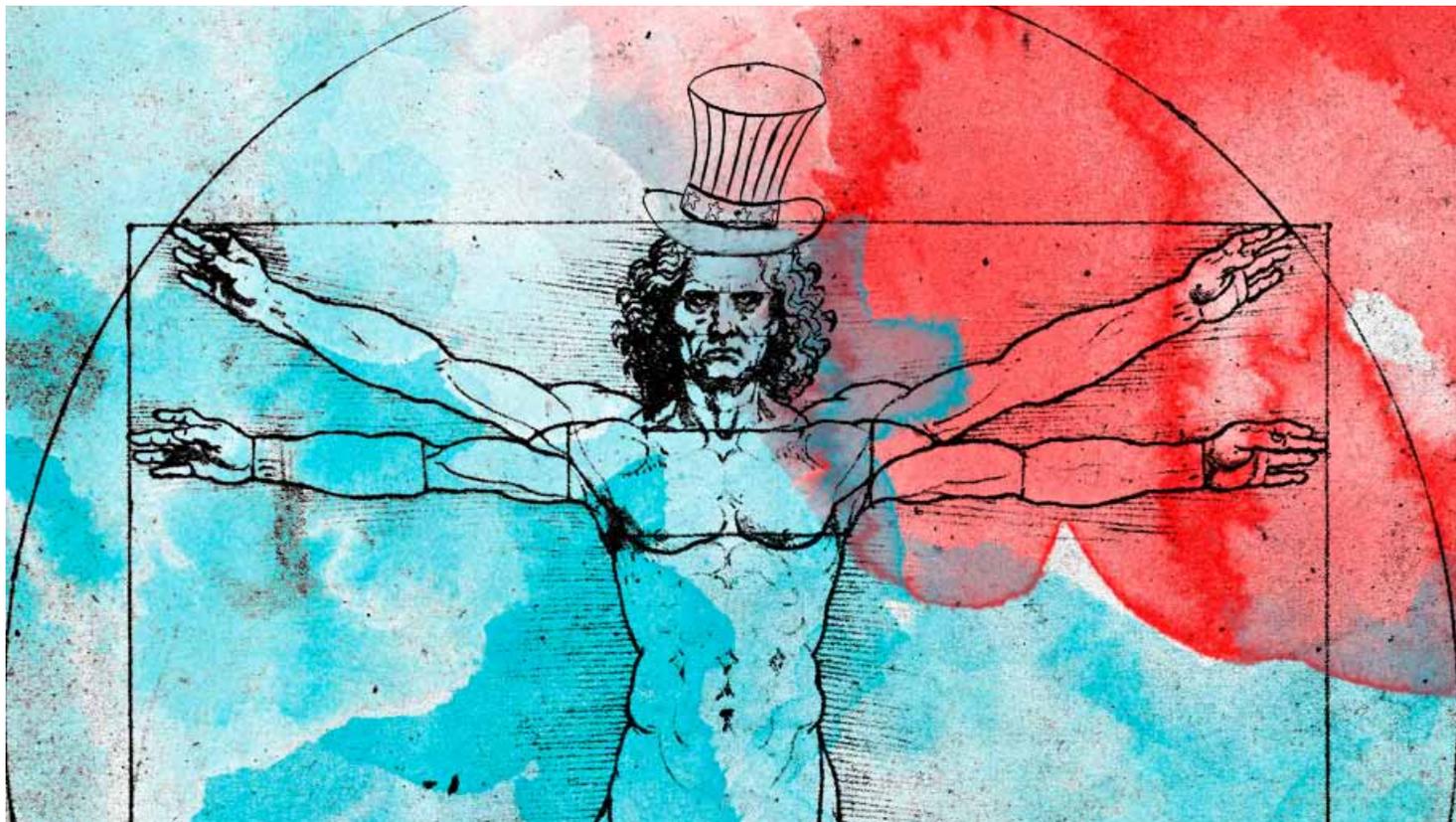
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**Building the Perfect Candidate**

Interbrand IQ: The Political Issue

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***In the 1st century BC, Lucretius, an Epicurean philosopher, observed: “What is food to one man may be fierce poison to others.” While much has changed since the 1st century BC, this observation is more applicable than ever to the current political environment in the United States.***

Today, there is a ubiquitous sentiment (from both ends of the political spectrum) that the current political equilibrium does not adequately address the needs of the populace structurally, culturally or economically. To address these perceived gaps in the political landscape, the United States has a history of serial attempts by 3rd parties and their candidates to secure more prominent political positions within the existing U.S. governing structure: Ralph Nader, Ross Perot, and Roseanne... to name a few of the more prominent examples.

The decision-making process of running as a 3rd party candidate is an intensely personal one; however, it is still predicated on an

assessment by the candidate that their opponents are missing or mischaracterizing a particular fact. Ralph Nader serves as a good example, with his life-long activism on issues such as consumer protection, humanitarianism and environmentalism. He believed that neither Gore nor Bush was focused on Public Interest issues in the 2000 presidential election, and, therefore, he felt compelled to run.

While it's a historical fact that Mr. Nader had a tangible effect on the outcome of the election, there is a question that could be asked about the efficacy of his campaign. He got his message out, but the number of people who showed support with their votes may have not met his expectations. This leads to the question: what could have been done differently?

There are additional tools that can be leveraged by a candidate to most effectively take advantage of the opportunity provided by the existing paradigm. The Interbrand Brand Definition Model (BDM) is one such branding tool that can provide a firm foundation upon which a 3rd party candidate could build a campaign.

Interbrand's brand definition model contains all the elements we believe are necessary to articulate a robust brand strategy. Considering what the brand owner believes in and wants to be in light of who the target audience is and what they want, a brand definition model articulates how the brand will serve that audience. Specifically, it defines what the brand will do differently or better than others in the category; how the brand will look, speak and behave; and the unique point of view that is the fundamental reason the brand exists.

The best brand definition models serve the audience's needs in a way that is authentic to who they are, but different from how others are serving that audience. It's often based on an insight about an unmet need or a desire that the brand believes they can transform.

Are prospective voters always interested in understanding the core of a candidate's motivations? Many might argue yes. The BDM provides a structured way for the candidate to arrive at a compelling message that resonates with the prospective electorate.

The BDM allows a candidate to identify the drivers that affect decision making in their target audience. It provides an avenue to define a brand position that is infused with the personality of the candidate. In order to make sure there is authenticity, the BDM also encourages the candidate to have clearly articulated values that, where possible, are aligned with their voters' decision drivers.

Going through a structured process is great if it provides candidate brands with a good foundation, but it may also expose areas of weakness or improvement. This poses a fundamental issue for a candidate: how do I close the gap?

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In business when the opportunity to close identified gaps in capability is not available organically, the next solution is to do so by acquisition. However, strictly speaking, politics isn't a business (at least we hope so); therefore, the rules of engagement are different. How does a candidate "acquire" an adjacent group of voters while still maintaining their authenticity?

In this case, the solution is choosing the "right" Vice Presidential

running mate. In recent history, this concept of a Vice Presidential candidate as a human stopgap, addressing the perceived or actual shortcomings of a candidate, has become almost as important as the historical precedent of selecting a VP as an insurance policy.

That still leaves the problem of defining the right Vice Presidential candidate, and that is where the BDM comes back into the picture. The initial process leaves a principal candidate aware of what gaps exist in their brand proposition, and this allows the extension of relevance by selecting a VP with a brand proposition that resonates with the adjacent electoral populace. The result, when executed correctly, should be a more robust ticket that has the ability to satisfy the needs of voters in a more dynamic fashion.

Looking back at the decision-making process for a candidate, we see concerns falling into two distinct buckets. On the one hand, the personal and ideological differences that animate candidates to run; on the other, campaign strategists who are laser focused on tactical considerations that affect the viability and authenticity of the campaign. The thread that ties these two factors together is, of course, the voting public.

The end of this story starts where it begins, with the voters and their disparate needs. Applying a defined and objective process, such as the BDM, would allow candidates of all parties to clearly define the brand propositions of their campaigns to the public.

By putting the voter in the center of the conversation, the campaign may be able to more effectively deliver on some of Interbrand's key Brand Strength attributes: clarity, relevance, and authenticity. I'll hazard a guess, and say that voters today would agree that we need a bit (okay A LOT) more of all three.

