

# Political pop-ups coming

*A report shows those ads we love to hate, online pop-up ads, are an effective tool in elections.*

BY KEVIN KINNAIRD

**A** Generation X think tank that studied the effectiveness of Internet pop-up ads from leading candidates in the 2000 presidential election plans a continuation of those efforts on the state level this fall.

That's when Third Millennium President Richard Thau said the New York-based organization will begin studying the effectiveness of Internet pop-up campaign ads on voters in at least two and as many as six large states, depending on the amount of funding the organization receives to do the work.

States with large populations will be initially targeted so the group can identify a statistically significant number of Internet users who are not likely to vote, Thau said.

"I think it's inevitable that candidates for elective office will use the Internet to far more precisely target potential voters than they can through television," Thau said. "That's because the Internet gives candidates the opportunity to target their message based upon far more information about the voter than television ever could allow."

In 2000, Third Millennium executed two random, five-question surveys about Internet pop-up ads to 271,165 active subscribers of Juno Online Services. This year's survey will be administered to America Online and Juno subscribers, Thau said.

Hailed as a one-of-a-kind research project, the organization's controlled experiment revealed that among those



who saw the Internet pop-up ads for leading presidential candidates, an overwhelming majority of those participants recalled seeing the ad or ads they viewed.

Third Millennium is a Generation X organization that launched in 1993 to promote the civic involvement of young people, and conducts research and analysis to offer solutions to long-term problems like voting, Thau said. The 2000 study results were published in January of 2001.

## So do the ads work, and if so, on who?

Unlike television or radio, the Internet can offer candidates detailed information about the people they are trying to reach, Thau said. The closer you get to the target in terms of interest level the more receptive they're likely to be, he said.

"In our last study, it seemed to suggest that the ads were effective among some young adults who said they were not likely to vote, but also effective among people 50-and-over who say they're not likely to vote," Thau said. "Our last study clearly demonstrates the act of providing certain sub-segments political information through full-screen pop-up ads caused some of them to vote when they

otherwise would not have."

Thau said Internet pop-up ads are an effective tool.

"If a candidate is looking for votes, he or she should spend at least some of his or her money reaching out to potential voters through the Internet," Thau said. "That means much more than just having a Web site; proactively identifying their voters in their district, in their state, and sending them meaningful political communication through a political ad."

The principal idea, Thau said, is that with the Internet there is an opportunity through this technology to convert non-voters into voters.

"I think that's an extremely powerful technology and candidates should use it," Thau said.

Data on the upcoming study will be published in the winter of 2003. ★

*Kevin Kinnaird is the former Web site editor at The Council of State Governments.*

## Resources

On the Web: Third Millennium <http://thirdmil.org>