

GLENN HODAS

President, Hodas & Associates, a strategic communications consulting firm in Springfield, Ill. The firm has assisted clients on both sides of the political aisle and independents with political campaigns, issue advocacy efforts and legislative needs. He also recently joined Wilson Grand Communications, a national political media firm with offices in Alexandria, Va. and Berkeley, Calif. In 2001, Hodas joined Lt. Gov. Corinne Wood's (R) office as chief of staff. In 2002 he was deputy campaign manager for Jim Ryan (R) in the Illinois governor's race. He graduated from Northwestern University, with a Bachelor of Science in communications and political science.



Who uses your technology the most?

"Campaigns, especially nail-biters, seem to use GIS mapping the most, as they try to wring every last vote out before Election Day.

"But lately, some of the more sophisticated political organizations, issue-advocacy groups and trade associations are starting to find GIS useful as well. They're using it as a tool to develop political plans and fine tune GOTV drives so as to gain the edge they need.

"That's why we recently launched MapTheVotes.com, a Web site featuring GIS-mapped election returns on a county and precinct basis. Campaign operatives, elected officials, and political organizations can see how other candidates performed, and download maps for free. ..."

What are the most useful bits of information to obtain about people?

"Voting history is the most obvious one, but there's great value in some of the demographic information produced by the Census too. You can evaluate household income levels, ethnicity and housing patterns, among other things, and arrive at reasonably-accurate predictions on some issues. And once you've done that, you're positioned to really micro-target your message and your messenger.

"Incidentally, TV viewership and newspaper readership have also proven helpful, sometimes in unexpected ways. Not so long ago, I tracked TV viewing patterns for NASCAR races, pointing to a certain voter profile."

What are the latest technological advances in political mapping?

"Besides the explosive growth in the amount and variety of GIS data that is available on consumers and voters, the most significant development has been the 'popularization' of the technology.

"Not so long ago, to fire up your GIS system, you had to alert your local power plant. Today, very complex voter geocoding and analysis can be performed by laptops — you can just cruise over to Starbucks, order up a latte, and sip away while downloading thousands of records over the wireless network."

Claim to Fame

"Bringing creative new approaches to campaigns. Once, when we were trying to court gridlocked suburbanites, we

had volunteers distribute free jazz music CD's (which the candidate had emceed) to frustrated motorists stuck in traffic. Another time, we launched the 'ice cream truck initiative.' We took an ice cream truck to kids' soccer games: kids got free ice cream, and parents got to meet the candidate. Another popular undertaking appealed to sports enthusiasts. We arranged to host a fundraiser at the 50-yard line in Hallas Hall, the Chicago Bears indoor practice field. My personal favorite was when we bought free Italian dinners for every independent household in a strategically important community — 37,000 meatballs, anyone?"

Best Day

"It's coming soon, I just know it..."

In 10 Years

"Still debating whether to marry my girlfriend. No, just kidding. Won't be that long, she assures me."

Immediate Career Goals

"Well, after years of managing campaigns and mapping political data, I'm transitioning into media consulting. I just recently joined Wilson Grand Communications, a national political media firm. I really believe in embracing change — how else do you grow? — and am ecstatic over the opportunity to work with these top-notch veterans."

Political Heroes

"Some might say they all faded away with Kennedy. But if I had to pick someone, the young man who blocked the progress of a column of tanks in Tiananmen Square. By standing up for what he believed in — literally — he risked his life for the truth. And that's a true hero."

Secrets of Success

"How the heck would I know? I'm basically unemployed during the off-election years. But seriously, give your job 150 percent, but make sure you have fun at work every day. And if you can't, find somewhere where you can."

Predictions

"GIS mapping will become a critical tool for campaigns looking to target their messages and resources. Soon, political mappers will know more about you than the Department of Homeland Security."