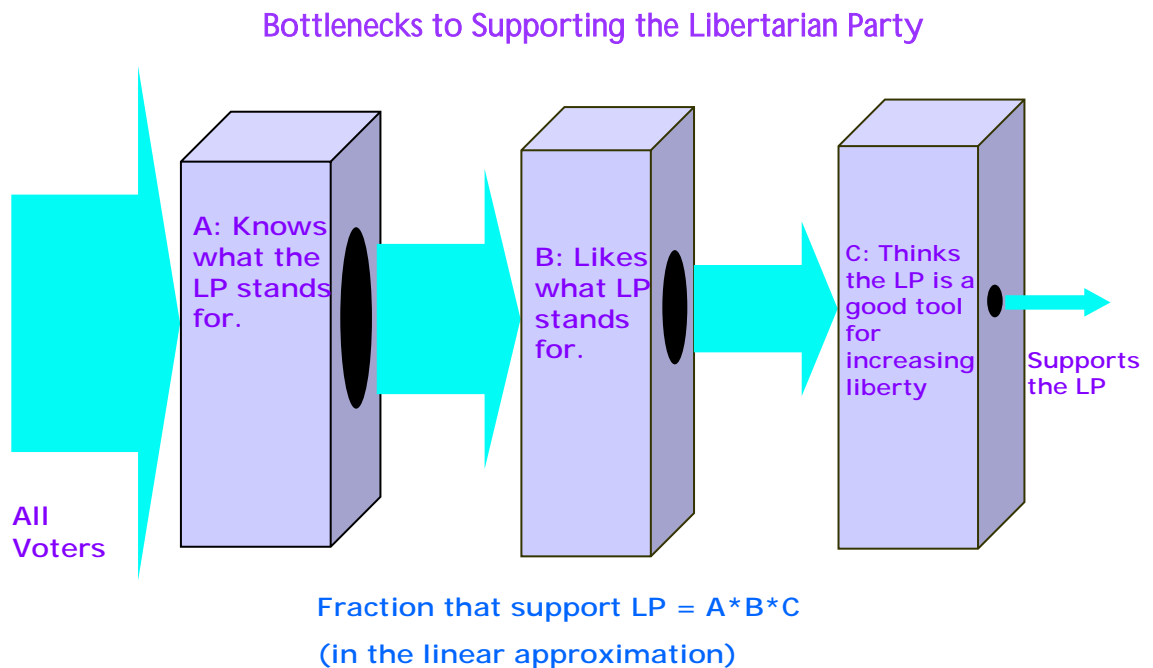


## Mass-Producing Votes

In an earlier essay, “Mass-Producing Libertarians,” I showed the process of recruiting new supporters as a series of bottlenecks. Failure to get through *any* of the bottlenecks results in a person in not supporting us. Figure 1 diagrams this process.



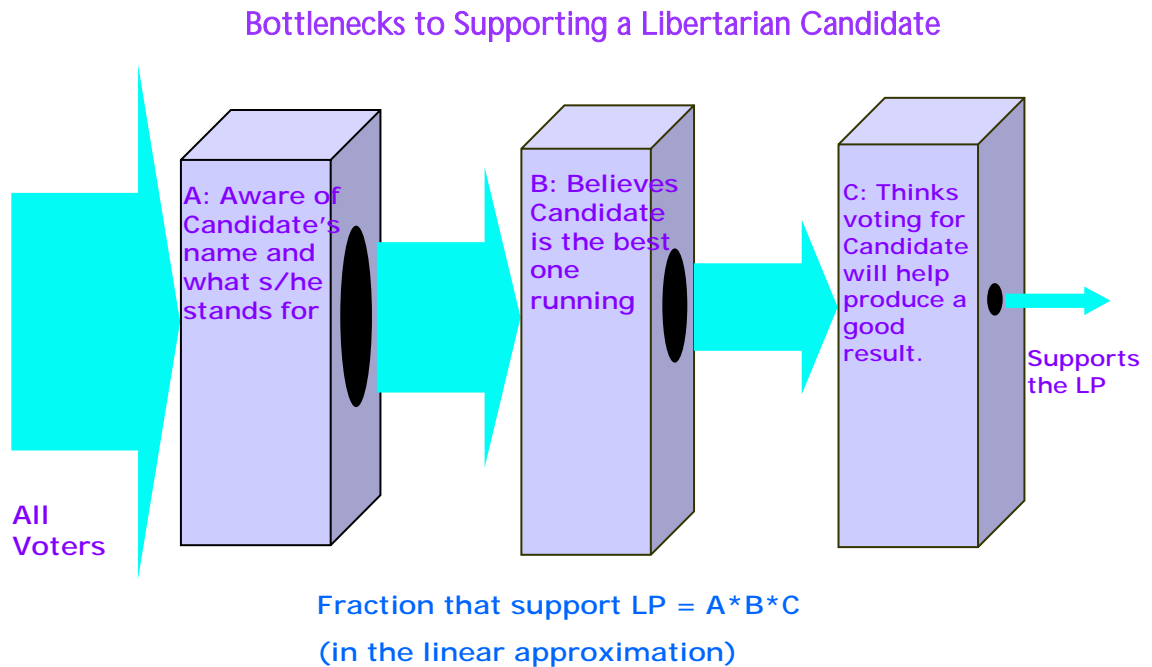
The three bottlenecks shown are:

- A. **Awareness.** Is the person even aware of the existence of the Libertarian Party? Does the person know what the Libertarian Party stands for?
- B. **Belief in.** Does the person believe Libertarianism is a good thing? She doesn't have to like everything in the platform to get through this bottleneck; she must merely like what the LP stands for more than what the competitors stand for.

C. **Credibility.** Is the LP a joke? Or is it a real political party? Does supporting it actually advance the beliefs of the previous bottleneck?

If we recruit randomly then we can treat each bottleneck as a fraction. The resulting support base is the product of the three fractions. Thus, even if we had 1/3 at each level, the result is 1/27 of the population.

Now, let us apply the same reasoning to a candidate vs. the party.



We have **Awareness**, **Best Person for the Job**, and **Credibility** as our three bottlenecks. However, the exact meanings are slightly different. Awareness involves remembering a specific name – a datum that does not help the cause after that particular candidate stops running for office. Belief in involves personal qualities as well as the platform the candidate is running on. Credibility is credibility for the upcoming election as opposed to a possible longer term dream. A candidate has a lot less blue sky to work with than the party as a whole. The lesser of two evils dilemma is *our* problem and it is up to us to fix it by using one of the ideas found in the previous essays.

In my discussions with Libertarian activists across the country I have found people who look at just one of these bottlenecks and say *this* is the reason we are losing and/or *this* is what we have to do to win. “The key is name recognition. The voters don’t think. We just need to advertise more than the other guys.” “It’s our platform. People are turned off by our pro-pot stance.” “People are turned off by our stance on immigration.” “People think we are anarchists.” “It’s the lesser of two evils

dilemma; we need proportional representation.” “We need instant run-off voting.” And so on.

My point is that none of the three bottlenecks is as tight as these activists think. It is the combination that results in very low vote totals. To win, requires opening *all three*. More importantly, the vote total needed sets a minimum bottleneck size for one bottleneck on the assumption that the other two are completely open! If half the people like your platform, but only half are aware of you and only half of those believe you have a chance to win, you get 12%.

This model is somewhat imperfect in that for some voters one or more of the bottlenecks are irrelevant. Some just vote for who they remember when voting down the ticket, so pure awareness wins for them. And not all voters worry about credibility. That said, I still think winning an election is a Total Quality Management problem. Failure at any stage is failure. On the up side, doubling our performance at each stage results in a factor of 8 in earned (i.e. above the noise) vote total.

**Awareness.** First rule: repetition works. That is to say, people remember what they hear more than once. Do it again and again. You need to be sick of your own ads. Most people do not listen to or look for political ads. So what you might think is saturation is below their consciousness. People can drive by yard signs without seeing them. They mute their television sets during commercials. They go straight to the comics in the newspapers. They are even capable of tuning out a visit by the candidate; I have seen this happen.

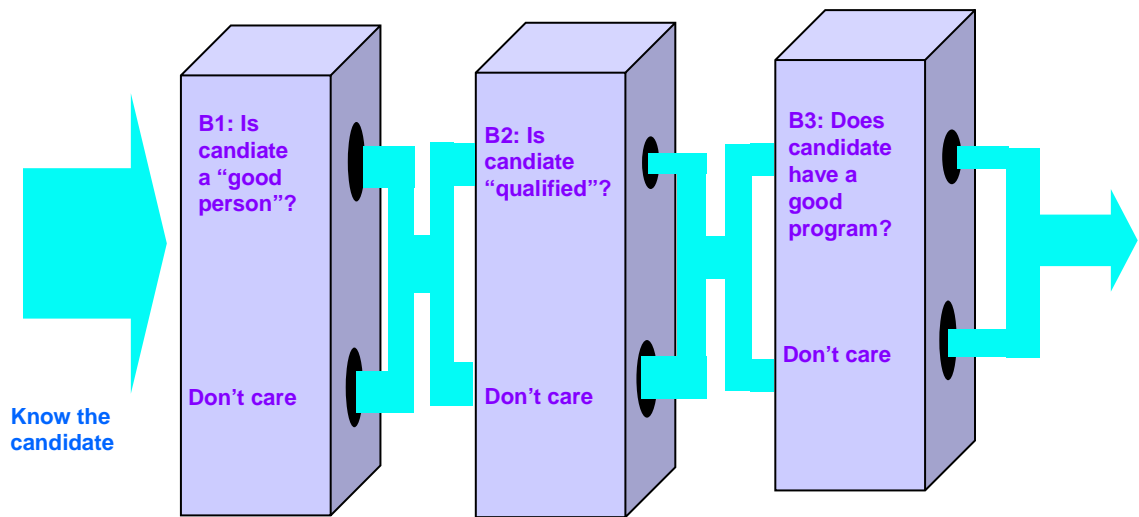
Given my limited data set, I think there is much to be said for billboards in this regard – at least in areas that are not entirely saturated by billboards. A billboard is hard to ignore on a country road. It gets *everyone* who drives on said road. It has a daily repetition rate for commuters on the road. Two months and you are looking at around 50 reps. Try that with direct mail, radio or television! You can include a picture as well as a name.

Compare this to some outreach ideas that do little to build new awareness. Working candidate forums only reaches out to the politically aware – the types of people who already know what the Libertarian Party is. The same goes for advertising on the news or on talk radio. The same goes for candidate guides. These types of outreach may be valuable for other reasons, such as credibility, but not for educating *new* people about our candidates. Consider music radio, high school football programs, the entertainment sections of newspapers, and so forth. These may run against standard political wisdom, but remember that we need to seek out those who have been turned off by the other political parties.

*Caveat!* More data is needed to verify these speculations!

**Best person for the job.** Just how much do we need to water things down? How much incrementalizing is necessary? Probably less than many moderate libertarians think. For this bottleneck has several components, only one of which is issues per se.

## Expanding Bottleneck B for Candidates



Notice that not all people care about each of these sub-bottlenecks. Different people used different methods to determine who the best person is. Many, if not most, people do not read economics books, study political science or history, or otherwise do their homework. They leave this heavy lifting to the experts. They judge these experts on whether the experts are well-intentioned and/or competent. (However, these people will notice issues when the candidate gets too far-out.) Most Libertarian candidates have plenty of room for improvement in these two stages, and many of these improvements cost no money. Unfortunately, there is an emotional cost to some of these improvements. Here are my suggestions to Libertarian candidates for widening B1.

- First, burn all your Ayn Rand books. Perform an exorcism. Curse them. Have someone spank you every time you use the phrase "rational self-interest." Ayn Rand's moral philosophy is poison to any political movement. Purging the libertarian movement of the Randroid Curse is one of the most powerful things we can do to boost our movement. I know this one hurts, and many of you disbelieve in the necessity/desirability of this step, so I will make the detailed case in a later essay.
- Sell yourself. What good deeds have you done in the past? Put them on your web site. Talk about them. If you are a regular churchgoer, let it be known. If you are a practicing pacifist Quaker, let it leak out! There is no wall of separation of church and candidate!

- Start with intent. Do not talk about what you intend to do until you have spent a large amount of time expressing your concern about the problems you intend to solve. That illiteracy is a problem may well be obvious to you, but that your heart bleeds for those hurt by inferior public schools is not obvious to the voters.
- Put out a good picture. A benevolent smile will win votes. The correct haircut and clothing will make a difference. Do the family pose thing. No snarls or smirks. We are talking reaching out to the most primitive parts of the brain here. Watch some cartoons and compare the faces of the villains vs. the good-guys. Make sure you look like a good-guy.

Good intent is all well and good, and some will vote for you just for that, but it also helps to be qualified for the job. Some pointers:

- Don't run for an executive job unless you have executive experience.
- Do your homework. Can you *really* implement that tax cut?
- Document your homework. Write a thick white paper. Put it on the web site. Go ahead and be technical and boring here. Few will read it, but those who do will be influential, and others will be more comfortable just knowing it is there.
- If possible, show up for the meetings of the level of government to which you aspire.
- Show off your team of experts.

As for the good program (B3), I have covered incrementalating elsewhere.

As an illustration of the power of these ideas consider the last few presidential runs. Has the Libertarian Party *ever* run a candidate qualified to be U.S. President? Forget issues for a moment, the president is the head of the most power bureaucracy on earth. This is not an entry level executive position! The following jobs are not generally considered to be executive positions: author, radio talk show host, professor, legislator, doctor, or engineer. (The last two can be executive under some circumstances.) The American people are not stupid! They want a president who has been a CEO, a governor or a general – someone who has experience running a large organization. Military experience is also a plus, given that the U.S. president is also the commander-in-chief. Oh yeah, rock-solid emotional stability (that button thingy, you know), and “plays well with others” are also qualifications.

We see now how such principle-free candidates as the first George Bush and Colin Powell get serious consideration for being president. They had impressive resumes. This is also why H. Ross Perot got serious consideration – for a while – despite lack of a program. Perot had impressive executive experience and a history of good deeds working for the MIAs. He lost when he showed lack of emotional stability.

So, does the Libertarian Party have anyone willing to run who is actually qualified to be president? If not, then we should not run a presidential candidate; it is insulting to the voters.

**Credibility.** A candidate who has high awareness and a large fraction of the people believe is best for the job, will generally have credibility. However, the real trick is to have credibility before awareness has been achieved. Donations and press coverage are needed to build awareness, and those require credibility. If you don't have enough money to "buy the race" consider these options.

- Run in a two-way race. There are many of these available. Two-way races eliminate the "lesser of two evils" and people who don't think you can win can comfortably vote for you to "make a statement."
- Triangulate. If the Republican sounds semi-libertarian, run to the left. If the Democrat is pro-drug, run to the right.
- Go after habitual non-voters.
- Run down the ticket. In a small enough district, door-knocking and word of mouth are significant. Since boot-strapping is possible, you can gain credibility by displaying a willingness to work – even if you have no money or organization.

### ***Conclusion***

Winning is not easy, but it is possible. Of the five areas for improvement listed, three require no money or organization. And for those areas where money/organization is necessary, the Libertarian Party does have enough if we choose our battles wisely.