

④ Rick Perry uses Dallas-based Blue Calypso to rev up presidential bid



Kye R. Lee/Staff Photographer

Andrew Levi, founder and CEO of Blue Calypso, is helping Rick Perry use social media to turn around his presidential bid.



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Gov. Rick Perry hopes to add some sizzle to his fizzling presidential campaign by using a Dallas startup's grass-roots social media marketing program to drum up support — and potentially drive donations.

Nine-month-old Blue Calypso uses a patented digital advertising platform to leverage relationships between friends who can spread the word through social media.

Blue Calypso will initially email hundreds of thousands of Perry campaign supporters, asking them to endorse Perry through a link to its Calyp political platform. Endorsers can invite others and send messages to friends and family through social networking sites and blogs, including links to donation systems.

Social media experts say such peer-to-peer programs are a way for politicians to reach younger voters on their turf and gain some control over what's being said about them on social media sites.

In 2008, Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama broke ground by using social media in new ways. Now it's de rigueur in any election. JPMorgan predicts that 2011 mobile advertising spending will increase to \$1.2 billion, or about double 2010 spending.

Perry is no stranger to social media, having used it heavily in his 2010 re-election bid for governor. But his late entry in the race for the Republican presidential nomination has him playing catch-up to most other candidates.

Rival Mitt Romney's Facebook following is nine times larger than Perry's. Perry also lags Republican candidates Michele Bachmann, Newt Gingrich and Ron Paul on Facebook and Twitter. Obama tops them all, with more than 24 million Facebook likes and more than 11.5 million Twitter fans.

Perry keeps a personal Twitter account and a governor Twitter account, and his campaign keeps at least two other Twitter accounts. He also has at least three Facebook accounts.

As part of its service, Blue Calypso plans to add links to Calyp directly on Perry's social media sites. It also will provide the Perry campaign with analytics to measure the effectiveness of ads and dashboard reports on the demographics about endorsers.

Chief executive and founder Andrew Levi wouldn't disclose what the Perry camp is paying, but a typical endorser campaign costs \$5,000 to \$10,000 a month for a company with 100,000 advocates.

The Perry campaign did not return phone calls. The governor's office said a state office can't comment on actions by Perry's presidential campaign.

"The 2012 Perry for President team is committed to putting new methods to work in building support for Governor Perry's race for the U.S. presidency," Ray Sullivan, communications director for Perry's campaign, said in a public statement. "The ability to leverage social and mobile technology platforms is important to our overall strategy."

Perry is trying to recover from a series of gaffes made in speeches and debates that have gone viral on social media sites. Most recently, he said there were eight U.S. Supreme Court justices instead of nine. He compared Social Security to a Ponzi scheme. And perhaps the biggest "oops" moment was during a debate when he failed to recall the third government department he would eliminate as president.

Blue Calypso "has an incredible opportunity to make an historical turnaround for a campaign," said Alex Patton, a GOP consultant and social media expert in Florida. "It's going to take more than social media to turn that [Perry] campaign around. Rick Perry's got a lot of catching up to do."

Marcus Fagerlund of Meltwater Buzz, a social media monitoring and engagement company in San Jose, Calif., said these types of peer-to-peer social media platforms can help candidates regain control of their campaigns.

"A tool that can monitor what's being said about your campaign can help you be more proactive," Fagerlund said. "And social media humanizes the politician and creates a voice for the voter."

A serial entrepreneur who holds six patents, Levi launched Blue Calypso in March at SXSW Interactive, which also created a fever around Twitter and Foursquare.

Since then, he has organized about 500 campaigns for clients such as Motorola and Dallas' Al Biernat's steakhouse. The 15-employee company is publicly traded on the OTC Bulletin Board.

Signing Perry was a coup for Blue Calypso. He is the company's first political client, but Levi said he's talking with other politicians.

On Wednesday, Blue Calypso said the National Republican Senatorial Committee signed up to use its political platform to build a social advocacy campaign to connect Republican senators and senatorial candidates to supporters.

"We want this to become a well-known weapon for anyone on the political campaign trail," he said.

How Calyp works

The Perry campaign sends a mass email about Calyp.

Interested people click on the link from a computer, smartphone or tablet to go to Calyp.com.

People then can join to endorse Perry. The app is free.

Endorsers can share the Perry campaign and send messages to friends and family via links to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs and other options.

Note: The Perry campaign does not offer cash rewards to endorsers for sharing, but some Blue Calypso brand campaigns do. Active users earn an average of \$75 a month.

To view Gov. Perry's YouTube message about Blue Calypso's political endorsement platform, go to www.youtube.com/calypendorsers.