Reddit for President: Media with the power to topple governments?

So I want to talk about Reddit for a moment and discuss if there is something we really need to take into consideration here. After reading an article from the Wall Street Journal about Aidan King, age 23, a grape farmer and how he became a co-founder of one of the largest online organizations supporting the Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, Reddit has got my interest. Not to mention the new online digital magazine they are creating from content within the community, but we’ll talk about that a little later.

King, a lifelong fan of the senator being from Vermont and his friend David Fredrick of San Jose California back in 2013 decided they would create the “Sanders for President” category on the Reddit online chat forum, the subreddit has helped raise more than $26 million in the third quarter fundraising period from 1.3 million donations. That’s a lot of money.

The story goes that Mr. King notified the Bernie Sanders campaign what he was up to in the very beginning and the night before Sanders was going to announce his candidacy, he received a message from them that he should “prepare to get busy”. The following day through Mr. King’s Subreddit group, Sanders publicly announced his presidential bids and the group went from 7,000 followers to 40,000 in a day. This put Mr. King in front of his computer from 11Am to 4PM everyday participating and moderating the community and its posts.

The Sanders for President subreddit today has more than 113,000 members. There is no other comparison subreddit out there. Hillary Clinton’s subreddit at the time of the article only had 721 subscribers. Republican, Rand Paul has a subreddit nearing 5,000 members. Looking back to 2008, social media was monstrous for Barack Obama to organize voters. Mr. King’s operation helped the Sanders campaign set a record. Mr. Sanders’ largely small-donor base also nearly overtook Mrs. Clinton and outraised every Republican who released their totals so far.

Sanders put the feed of Reddit supporters and donations on his campaigns main webpage and that inspired the community. King and Fredrick donate all of the money to the campaign. His subreddit asked members to call friends in the area and invite them. Members of the group found rides for people who needed it. This event held a crowd of 10,000 people and really blasted Sanders into the media. King definitely plans on using this method again to drum up publicity for the primary elections. Currently King spends a bulk of his time moderating the group but says they follow one basic rule: “What would Bernie do?” No slandering of another candidate.

So what the hell are we missing, are there that many people on Reddit to produce a sea change or is it just that Sanders lovers are on Reddit or is there a much bigger media message being presented here? Every time I look at Reddit it is just this never ending stream of content. How do you make heads or tails of it all?

Now Reddit is launching a new site with content that it is calling Upvoted. The idea is a digital magazine that utilizes original content about the big things happening across the Reddit cosmos. It’s got a similar vibe to Digg. Some stories are just native ads, which is nothing new on Reddit but could make advertisers and users happier by dripping that obviousness elsewhere. The site’s Heath Black says “we have an editorial team that only works on the Upvoted content. They have editorial oversight into what we write. They will scour every nook and cranny on Reddit on a daily basis to find the coolest stuff, conduct interviews with the creators, and even in some situations orchestrate video AMAs or podcasts”. So figure 10-20 pieces of original content and going any up to 40 a day.

So when I read these kinds of things, I think is Reddit some kind of outlet for the pulse on culture. Will the articles and top content on Upvoted become “THE” thing that the public wants or has an interest in, could it induce interest?

As of right now, the wheels in my head are turning and I am now going to really look at the media outlet, perhaps there is a lot more to explore there. Maybe you should start a subreddit today? You could be the next President.