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A complete index to the internal communications referenced in ["The Front-Runner's Fall"](#)

BY JOSHUA GREEN

The Hillary Clinton Memos

["The Plan," October 2006](#)

Clinton had forbidden her advisers from openly discussing her presidential ambitions until after she'd won reelection to the Senate. But behind the scenes, planning was already underway. In this October 2006 strategy memo, Mark Penn sketched out the campaign's strategic principles ("HRC is the power candidate") and assessed potential opponents. He worried that Al Gore was "waiting to swoop in later."

[Penn's "Launch Strategy" Ideas, December 21, 2006](#)

Shortly after Clinton's reelection, Penn tried out some themes in this flattering memo to his boss. He suggested former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as a role model: "We are more Thatcher than anyone else." Penn believed that voters view their president as the "father" of the country. "They do not want someone who would be the first mama," he counseled. "But there is a yearning for a kind of tough single parent." (He did not propose divorce.) Penn thought voters were "open to the first father being a woman." But he warned again about the perils of being seen as too soft. "A word about being human," he wrote. "Bill Gates once asked me, 'Could you make me more human?' I said, 'Being human is overrated.'"

[Penn Strategy Memo, March 19, 2007](#)

More than anything else, this memo captures the full essence of Mark Penn's campaign strategy—its brilliance and its breathtaking attacks. Penn identified with impressive specificity the very coalition of women and blue-collar workers that Clinton ended up winning a year later. But he also called Obama "unelectable except perhaps against Attila the Hun," and wrote, "I cannot imagine America electing a president during a time of war who is not at his center fundamentally American in his thinking and in his values." Penn proposed targeting Obama's "lack of American roots."

[Karl Rove Strategy Memo to Bill Clements, Jr., September 4, 1985](#)

As a contrast to Mark Penn's memos, here's a fun piece of political arcana: a Karl Rove strategy memo written to former Texas governor Bill Clements, Jr., on the eve of the 1986 gubernatorial race. Clements was elected governor in 1978 but lost his bid for reelection. He was attempting a comeback. Note the tone of bracing honesty: Rove lays out his client's "potentially explosive" weaknesses, including arrogance and bad press relations. Then he explains how they can be overcome. (Let's forgive Rove the hackneyed Napoleon quote—Clements won the race.)

[Harold Ickes Lists the Campaign's "Key Assumptions," March 29, 2007](#)

Soon after Clinton's presidential campaign got underway, senior adviser Harold Ickes circulated this list of "Key Assumptions." They include his belief that February 5 would decide the nominee; that Clinton could not survive losses in Iowa and New Hampshire (but that John Edwards and Barack Obama could); and that the prevailing view of her as the incumbent was potentially dangerous. Fatefully, Ickes cited the need to maintain a \$25 million reserve fund for use after Iowa—but following Clinton's loss, he confessed to colleagues, "The cupboard is empty."

Penn Strategy Memo, April 8, 2007

With Obama's popularity and fund-raising strength becoming clearer by the day, Penn seemed to absorb the public criticism of Clinton as behaving imperiously. "Show more of the happy warrior," he counseled. He was also becoming attuned to the importance of the "change" theme Obama was touting: "Let's talk more about a movement for change coming from the people." He proposed the slogan "America is Ready for a Change, and HRC is Ready to Lead Us."

The "Kindergarten" Attack, December 2, 2007

On December 2, Clinton exploded at her staff on a morning conference call, frustrated that her campaign wasn't on the attack. Hours later, in this series of emails, her panicked staff reacted by putting together an ill-advised attack on Obama for having written a kindergarten essay titled "I Want to Become President."

Harold Ickes Memo on the Delegate System, December 22, 2007

Harold Ickes was the adviser with primary responsibility for the campaign's delegate and targeting strategy. While the Obama campaign shrewdly exploited the Democratic Party's complicated system of allotting delegates, Ickes and the Clinton campaign did not. On December 22, just twelve days before the Iowa caucus, Ickes finally laid out the system for the campaign's senior staff in this somewhat impenetrable memo.

Penn Strategy Memo for New Hampshire, December 30, 2007

On the eve of the Iowa caucus, the race was too close to call. In this memo, Penn ranked the "six potential scenarios coming out of Iowa" in order of preference. The best had Clinton winning and Obama finishing third. The worst-case scenario had Obama on top and Clinton in third—which ended up being the result. Penn laid out options for how the campaign might respond, including attacks on Obama and Edwards.

Patti Solis Doyle Welcomes Her Eventual Successor, January 13, 2008

In the wake her Iowa loss, Clinton chose not to fire anyone. Instead, she added another layer of advisers, including Maggie Williams, her former chief of staff. In this email, Patti Solis Doyle, Clinton's embattled campaign manager, welcomes the woman who soon succeeded her.

"Move Your Cars!"

A memo to the entire D.C. staff.

Guy Cecil Memo Projecting Clinton's Super Tuesday Performance, January 21, 2008

With the February 5 primaries just ahead, senior adviser Guy Cecil circulated this targeting memo to staffers. While Clinton had once expected to wrap up the nomination on Super Tuesday, Cecil recognized just how imperiled her candidacy was as that fateful date loomed. Nevertheless, he predicted that she could net 58 delegates.

Internal targeting projections for February 5th states, January 21, 2008

Harold Ickes post-Super Tuesday strategy, February 4, 2008

In this strategy memo on the eve of Super Tuesday, Harold Ickes surveyed the grim landscape ahead. Having cut the polling budget for many February 5 states, the campaign was essentially flying blind. "We are in for a real fight," Ickes wrote, "but ... given some breaks, it is a fight that she can win."

Letter of Complaint from the *Washington Post's* Managing Editor, Philip Bennett, February 11, 2008

The Clinton staff engaged in epic battles with the press. As the campaign's fortunes worsened, resentment at the press turned into personal attacks against reporters. In this letter to Clinton's campaign manager, the *Washington Post's* managing editor complained that Phil Singer, a senior Clinton spokesman, was spreading malicious—and false—rumors about a *Post* reporter to one of her own colleagues.

Penn Strategy Memo, March 5, 2008

On the heels of critical wins in Texas and Ohio, Penn continued pushing the ideas of “strength” and “leadership.” He worried that white male voters were “steadily eroding” and railed against the idea of showcasing Clinton’s softer side. “The idea,” he wrote, “that this can be won all on smiles, emotions, and empathy is simply wrong.”

Robert Barnett Email to Clinton and senior staff, March 6, 2008

A Washington wise man loses his cool.

Penn’s “Path to Victory,” March 30, 2008

After death-defying wins in Texas and Ohio, Mark Penn circulated his “Path to Victory,” which included portraying Obama as “a doomsday scenario.” He chided his adversaries for their timidity about attacking Obama’s pastor, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Jr. “Many people,” Penn wrote, “believe under the surface that 20 years sitting there with Goddamn America would make him unelectable by itself.”

Harold Ickes Email, May 4, 2007

Harold Ickes was Clinton’s point man on the issue of Florida and Michigan. Throughout the campaign, he kept tabs on the ongoing strife between the two states and the Democratic National Committee—he did not try to influence it until too late.

Harold Ickes Email, August 24, 2007

More Florida-Michigan back and forth.

The “Florigan Plan I,” February 25, 2008

With Clinton’s delegate gap looming as a serious problem, a group of her advisers drew up a proposal to seize back momentum by demanding revotes in Florida and Michigan. Dubbed the “Florigan Plan,” it called on Clinton to issue a challenge to Obama on the morning of March 5, the day after her expected wins in Texas and Ohio.

The “Florigan Plan II,” March 5, 2008

Their initial suggestion ignored, the advisers behind the “Florigan Plan” again pushed the campaign to act on the issue of revotes in Florida and Michigan.

The “Florigan Plan III,” March 10, 2008

With hope fading that Clinton could close the delegate gap, several of her advisers made a final, unsuccessful push to address Florida and Michigan right away. The campaign did not do so until nine weeks later, on May 21.

Geoff Garin Email, April 12, 2008

When Geoff Garin replaced Mark Penn as chief strategist, he was appalled at the leaking and backstabbing. “I don’t mean to be an asshole...,” he wrote in this admonitory email to the senior staff.

Geoff Garin Email, April 25, 2008

Geoff Garin thought that a positive strategy, backed by a new infusion of spending, could revive Clinton’s campaign. He believed he could deliver a big win in Indiana and narrow the margin in North Carolina to single digits, as he explains in this email to senior staff.

The Clinton Campaign’s Final Pitch to Superdelegates, June 3, 2008

As the Democratic primaries drew to a close, Mark Penn put together a final presentation for superdelegates arguing why they should support Clinton over Obama. Note the provenance of Penn’s maps: Karl Rove & Co. *faux pas*?

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