



### Challenge



Late in 2008, a group of home builders approached Fleishman-Hillard. Their goal: Build a coalition to advocate for legislation that would establish a short-term incentive for qualified home buyers. At the time of our first meeting, Congress had just passed an \$800 billion bailout bill and the likelihood of further spending on that scale was seen as unlikely.

### Solution

FH moved quickly to organize and build a group of stakeholders into a powerful advocacy organization: The Fix Housing First Coalition. We developed and executed an integrated communications campaign involving media relations, alliance building, lobbying, social media, digital communications, and research.

FH first grew the coalition by reaching out to associations and companies with a stake in the housing market. We then leveraged those companies and associations (through their employees and members, respectively) along with aggressive online tactics to eventually build the coalition to 2,500 companies and 44,000 activists who sent 180,000 emails to their members of Congress. After getting a barrage of emails, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell noted that he visited our site, [www.FixHousingFirst.com](http://www.FixHousingFirst.com) and was impressed with the list of supporters he found there. He then became a champion in the Senate and echoed our messages. On "Face The Nation" and elsewhere, McConnell said, "Let's fix housing first. That's what started all of this." Other Senators – both Republicans and Democrats -- took up the call. From that point forward, coalition messages were repeated on the Senate floor.

Online advertising was another central tactic. On the night of President Obama's February press conference to tout the stimulus bill, FH purchased the search terms "Obama news conference," "stimulus," and "housing" on Google. Every time someone typed in those search terms, they'd see our listing on top of the sponsored links. In just a few hours, 21,000 people saw our ad during and just after the press conference. Our traffic saw a surge that Monday – 1,300 unique visitors clicked on the "Contact Congress" button, compared to 265 the Monday before - a 372% increase.

In addition, FH began a Twitter account to provide real-time updates to followers and drive additional traffic to the Web site. Within just a few days, nearly 300 people subscribed to our Twitter feed – each with several dozen to several thousand followers of their own. It became viral, and exponential; many of our followers have their own Twitter accounts and were sending out our updates to their own followers. Again, we saw a massive uptake in visitors to the site. Anyone who wanted an up-to-the-minute update of the state of play in Congress came to the site to read the Twitter feed. We also used Twitter for minute-by-minute activism, targeting specific chambers – House or Senate – and messages as the dynamic and ever-changing situation unfolded. We used e-mail alerts to mobilize coalition members in discrete states.

### Result

By mid February 2009, Congress had enacted the Fix Housing First Homebuyer Tax Credit – legislation named after the Coalition created by FH – offering an \$8,000 credit to first-time homebuyers.

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