

Top 6 Best Political Consulting Firms (Ranking & Review)

2016 RANKING & REVIEWS TOP POLITICAL CONSULTING FIRMS

Working with a Political Consulting Firm

Have you ever wondered who's behind those successful political campaigns that seem to do everything right and end in a sweeping victory?

What about how corporations so successfully and seamlessly manage a crisis? Perhaps you've considered how an issue goes from obscurity to being on the public's radar in a big way.

More than likely, when you see situations like these, they're being managed by one of the top political consulting firms.

Political consulting firms represent the pivotal intersection between media and journalism and politics and public relations.

These firms are headed by people who understand the media and how to make it work in their favor, and they're often considered masters of spin who can take even a negative situation and turn it into a positive, whether it's for a client, corporation, nonprofit, or cause.



Award Emblem: Top 6 Best Political Consulting Firms

Political consultants play an essential and significant role in not just the political landscape but also in public opinion, governmental affairs, and journalism.

With this importance in mind, we created a list of the top political consulting firms. Each has a strong reputation, a diverse array of services and clients, and a high level of expertise in the industry.

AdvisoryHQ's List of the Top Political Consulting Firms

- **Global Strategy Group**
- **GMMB**
- **Precision Strategies**
- **SKDKnickerbocker**

- [Storefront](#)
- [The Parkside Group](#)

This list is sorted alphabetically (click any of the above names to go directly to the detailed review of that political consulting firm).

What Is a Political Consultant?

Before considering the specific political consultancy firms that rank as among the best for 2016, it's worth exploring, in a general sense, what a political consultant or firm is.

Political consultants are people or firms that partner with candidates or groups to help them promote their interests.

Their role may include the creation and implementation of campaign strategies, coordination of campaign staff, and the development of meetings and events that allow the public to interact with a certain campaign or group.

Political consultants often have broad talents and skillsets, so they may be able to unite advertising, public relations, fundraising, and marketing to help propel campaigns forward, and, along with selling an individual candidate or group to the public, political consultants are also frequently charged with fundraising duties.

As well as general consultants, many lobbyists that work on behalf of organizations and companies are also considered political consultants.

Instead of working to sell the public on a particular candidate, lobbyists will work to "sell" government officials on that company so that they'll then vote for legislation that will be beneficial to the organization.

How Do You Select a Consultant or Political Consulting Firm?

For whatever reason you might opt to work with a political consulting firm, you'll have many to choose from.

Consider the following criteria during the selection process:

- What type of campaign will you need to launch? Will it be a local, state or national campaign? This will be a predominant determining factor in the selection process because many firms may specialize in one area over another.
- What is your budget? Working with an independent political consultant may be significantly less expensive than hiring a full-scale consulting firm with extensive experience and resources.
- Are you looking for specialization in certain political areas or issues? You may be running a campaign centered on one particular issue, and there are firms that specialize in particular areas. You may also want to work with either specifically Republican or Democratic political consulting firms.
- What type of campaigns is the consultant or firm most experienced in? If you're launching a large national campaign, you might want a firm that specializes in television ads and media.

On the other hand, for a local campaign, your focus could be on direct mail. Whatever type of campaign you're most focused on delivering will help guide you through the consultant selection process.

What Is the Process for Hiring Political Consulting Firms?

Once you've narrowed down your shortlist of political consulting firms, many candidates or organizations will then send out a request for proposal or an RFP. Send the RFP only to those firms or consultants that you know could do a good job for your specific needs.

Once you receive the proposals from firms vying for the position, you'll have a better idea of pricing and the approach these firms take. You'll also learn more about their particular areas of expertise.

Once you've received proposals and have further narrowed your list of possibilities, begin the interview process. During the interview process, work to gain a more in-depth understanding of the firm or consultant's pricing structure so you're not surprised by any charges.

This is also a good time to comprehensively discuss the approach each contender takes. Many political candidates want to make sure they hire a

consulting firm that is experienced and proactive but that lets the candidate or the issue remain at the forefront.

While you will discuss campaigns that have been won or lost by the firm, this shouldn't be the only factor weighing into your decision.

Finally, during the process of selecting a political consulting firm, ask for references.

Talking to people who have previously worked with a firm will give you an even better idea of how they handle challenges, how they tackle campaigns, their tactics, and how they interact with clients.

How Do You Become a Political Consultant?

The idea of becoming a political consultant is often one that holds a lot of allure for people, but it's much more challenging and less glamorous than it might seem. A common question people have is regarding how to become a political consultant.

Many political consultants will work on their own, but they may also decide to be employed with a firm.

Regardless, most political consultants have an educational background in journalism, communications or political science. These are the areas of study that best prepare individuals for a consulting career.

Some of the skills required for success in this demanding field include excellent written and verbal communication skills, an understanding of the political system, and the ability to effectively convey ideas.

Uniquely, most political consultants also have strong sales skills because they're essentially "selling" a candidate or an idea.

As well as a college education, the majority of successful political consultants also spend a significant amount of time volunteering for political campaigns and interning before they begin their paid career.

Methodology for Selecting the Top Political Consulting Firms

What methodology does AdvisoryHQ use in selecting and finalizing the political consulting firms that are ranked on its various top rated lists? Please click here “[AdvisoryHQ's Ranking Methodologies](#)” to find a detailed review of AdvisoryHQ’s selection methodologies for ranking top firms.

Detailed Review – Top Ranking of the Best Political Consulting Firms

After carefully considering political consulting firms, we compiled the following list of the top six. As you continue reading, you’ll find detailed reviews of each of our picks as well as an outline of the factors used in the decision-making process.

Global Strategy Group Review

[Global Strategy Group](#) is a consulting firm that works to manage political campaigns as well as corporate reputation. Clients of the Global Strategy Group include national political leaders, Fortune 100 companies, a range of associations, and nonprofits.

The goal of work done by the Global Strategy Group is to help clients influence public opinion, sway the minds of the public, build and maintain reputations, help clients through difficult crises, and manage legislation and regulations as well as helping clients win campaigns.

Key Factors That Enabled Us to Rank This as One of the Top Political Consulting Firms for 2016

Below are details of why Global Strategy Group was included in this ranking of the top 6 2016 best political consulting firms.

[Research and Insights](#)

So much of what Global Strategy Group does is based on in-depth, robust research and insights. It's this focus on research that allows it to be among the best, and it's led to its inclusion on this list of political consulting firms.

Various types of research used by Global Strategy Group includes surveys, qualitative research, advanced predictive analytics, social media analytics, competitive intelligence, and mapping of influencers and stakeholders.

Full-Scale Services

Global Strategy Group doesn't just specialize in one area of political or campaign consulting. Instead, it has expertise across all areas of strategic communications and public affairs.

It can work with clients on reputation management and crisis communications as well as helping them to create complete digital and social media strategies.

Additionally, this political consultancy firm works with clients to create successful legislative and regulatory strategies and to develop and implement grassroots and grassstops campaigns.

Vision and Values

Culture and values are an essential element of how this political consulting firm operates and the services and relationships it offers to clients.

For 20 years, GSG has been working with diverse clients, always led by the following guiding principles:

- The firm and its consultants are “fiercely” devoted to clients
- The culture is defined by independence, integrity, and responsiveness
- Great people are the most valuable asset of GSG
- GSG is committed to making sure the workplace is one that is diverse and culturally rich
- GSG is passionate about working on issues and politics that shape the world

Clients

As one of the country's top political consulting firms, the Global Strategy Group has worked with many diverse and high-profile clients to serve a range of unique needs.

Some of [these clients include](#):

- Comcast
- Con Edison
- Facebook
- Merrill Lynch
- Pfizer
- Airbnb
- American Express
- U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (NY)
- Andrew Cuomo, Governor (NY)
- Democratic Governors Association
- The Rockefeller Foundation
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

GMMB Review

Partnering with political campaigns, nonprofits, the media and creative agencies, [GMMB](#) works with clients both large and small to solve problems and bring attention to issues.

GMMB works on everything from the implementation of political strategies to planning for paid media campaigns.

Some of the specific service areas offered by GMMB include issue communications, brand positioning, political campaigns, corporate social impact, and government services.

Key Factors That Allowed This Firm to Rank as one of the 2016 Best Political Consulting Firms

Below are highlighted some of the details that went into the selection of GMMB as one of the top 2016 political consulting firms.

Movement Building

One area of specialization offered by GMMB is what it calls “Movement Building.” This refers to services that take a cause straight to the people or to areas of power where decisions can be made.

The experts of GMMB work to build movements through grassroots campaigns which include coalitions, policymakers, and donors. As part of this service area, the GMMB team connects clients with the people who will have the most impact on bringing a cause to the forefront.

Capabilities include grassroots activation, coalition building, policymaker outreach, and donor engagement.

Political Campaigns

From local to state and national campaigns, GMMB has extensive experience working with high-profile candidates to manage media buying and production operations. GMMB worked as one of the [lead agencies for Barack Obama](#) in both 2008 and 2012.

The firm is known for its use of advanced and innovative techniques, including digital analytics, micro-targeting, and media organization.

It also worked on the election of Bill Clinton as well as global leaders, senators, governors, mayors, and more, from all levels of government.

Brand Strategy

GMMB bills itself as a “mission-driven agency,” and it brings that same concept to the brands it works with. Along with political consulting, GMMB will partner with clients either to revamp existing brands or help clients who are just starting out.

The branding process is intensive when working with GMMB and includes discovering truths about the brand to gain a better understanding of who it really is.

It then moves to an evaluation of factors such as culture, consumers, and causes. It’s only then the GMMB team will create a distinctive positioning statement that determines the brand story and messaging.

Awards

GMMB is a reputable, award-winning political consulting firm that also works in other areas of branding and image management.

Throughout its long history, it has been the recipient of many awards, and some recent ones include “Best in Show” at the D.C. 2015 American Advertising Awards.

[Other recent awards](#) include 10 American Association of Political Consultants Pollie Awards in areas including advertisements and causes as well as being highlighted for Millennial work by Adweek.

Precision Strategies Review

[Precision Strategies](#) is led by Stephanie Cutter, Jen O’Malley Dillon, and Teddy Goff, who helped in the reelection of Barack Obama.

This innovative leader among Democratic political consulting firms was able to [reach \\$1.2 billion](#) in its first 19 months as a startup and, since then, has worked with political campaigns, companies, and causes.

Some of the clients of Precision Strategies have included ABC, Univision, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, Americans for Responsible Solutions, and 1776, which is a seed fund.

The experienced team at Precision Strategies works in a broad range of areas, including strategic planning, message creation, digital programs, and data-based measurement.

Key Factors That Enabled Us to Rank This as One of the Best Political Consulting Firms

Listed below are unique factors of Precision Strategies leading to its inclusion on this ranking of the top 6 2016 best political consulting firms.

Strategy

Precision Strategies helps clients create strategies that are like a detailed roadmap to their ultimate objectives. Their strategies allow clients to go beyond marketing, just having a great product or digital campaigns.

Instead, campaigns are developed based on an understanding of both strengths and weaknesses, set within the framework of the competitive landscape.

Some specific areas of strategy-based service offered by Precision include strategic planning, branding and positioning, strategic assessments, and organizational audits.

Actionable Data

Precision operates from the standpoint that clients need information that's actionable rather than receiving spreadsheets full of complex data.

With that in mind, part of the service offerings provided by this leading political consultant firm include the provision of not raw data but data insights that can lead to fast action.

Data drives all strategies and services provided by Precision, including decision-making, resource allotment, and the creation of strategies.

Female Leadership

Two of the founding partners of Precision Strategy are female, and one of them includes Stephanie Cutter, who was called one of the [“most prominent voices in the Democratic party”](#) by Politico.

She has created communications and crisis management strategies for some of the top companies in the country, and she served as the deputy campaign manager for President Obama's 2012 reelection campaign.

Before becoming part of the campaign, Cutter was deputy senior adviser to President Obama, and she also worked on other notable campaigns including First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign.

Mobilization

Precision isn't just a political consulting firm focused on strategy. It also works on mobilization, which is ideal for political organizations as well as nonprofits who want to raise awareness for their cause.

As part of its mobilization services, the Precision team helps clients identify goals, understand the environment they'll be part of, and assess their assets.

Other areas that fall within the realm of mobilization include strategic assessments, organization building, coalition support, and coalition building.

SKDKnickerbocker Review

With offices in Washington, New York, Los Angeles, and Albany, [SKDKnickerbocker](#) (SKDK) is a public affairs and political consulting firm focusing on working with corporations, issues visibility, and political campaigns.

SKDK has worked with Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits and philanthropic organizations, labor unions, political committees, and campaigns.

It prides itself on having a firm understanding of where press, politics, and policy all unite, and it can help clients who need to navigate a crisis, protect their brand, bring awareness or attention to an issue or win an election at any level.

Key Factors That Enabled This Firm to Be Named as One of the Best Political Consulting Firms

Specific reasons SKDK was selected as one of the top 2016 political consulting firms are listed below.

Strategic Communications

One particular area of expertise offered by SKDK is strategic communications. It places emphasis on not just communicating the right message but also in doing so in a way that breaks through the 24-hour news cycle and has measurable results.

Managing directors at SKDK, one of the leading Democratic political consulting firms, have significant experience in not just politics and government but also media and business.

Some specific areas of service offered as part of strategic communications include:

- Public and media relations
- Crisis communications
- Message development
- Branding
- Media training
- Social media

Extensive Political Experience

For clients seeking one of the top political consulting firms, experience is often a key decision-making factor. SKDK has very broad and extensive experience, and the firm has been involved in the [last six presidential campaigns](#).

Its team of professional consultants and strategists has also worked to have hundreds of congressmen, senators, mayors, and governors elected as well as many local officials.

SKDK has experience within every layer of politics throughout the country, and it approaches political campaigns in a way that's deeply involved and committed, regardless of the scale of the campaign.

Its team of strategists, writers, and other team members that are involved in national campaigns are the same people that work with local candidates and campaigns.

Women's Leadership and Advocacy Practice

Recently, SKDK announced the launch of the Women's Leadership and Advocacy Practice, providing clients with strategic communications, research insights, partnerships, and community-building support.

The initiative was launched based on many decades of helping female clients get elected as well as leading on campaigns focused on women's rights.

This team includes award-winning female leaders with extensive experience in both politics and media.

Holmes Report Winner

SKDKnickerbocker was named as the 2015 Public Affairs Agency of the Year by the Holmes Report. The Holmes Report is a prestigious group that works to improve and support the value of the public relations industry.

Along with delivering sophisticated reporting and analysis on trends and issues in the industry, it also grants awards to those companies it sees as leaders, which is why it's such an important recognition for SKDK.

Storefront Political Media Review

[Storefront Political Media](#) is a full-service political consulting firm that relies on the usage of big data to help campaigns target voters, build coalitions, and ultimately win their campaigns.

This leader among Democratic political consulting firms is unique because it brings together elements of both traditional and digital media.

[Clients of Storefront Political Media](#) have included Reset San Francisco, speakeasypolitical.com, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, the American Beverage Association, Pacific Gas & Electric Company, and Ted Wheeler for Portland Mayor.

Key Factors That Led Us to Rank This Firm as One of the Best Political Consulting Firms of 2016

The details below represent reasons why Storefront Political Media was selected as one of the top ranking 2016 political consulting firms.

Innovative Perspective

Storefront is a distinctive, standout firm of political consultants because there's an understanding that the media, fundraising, and general political landscapes are constantly changing.

There is a continual evolution in how audiences are targeted and persuaded, so there can't ever be a reliance on the same stale methods in the arena of political consulting.

It's with this understanding that Storefront specializes in providing the most innovative tools, resources, and strategies to clients.

The Approach

Storefront Political Media works on a premise of delivering multi-layered communication tools that have the following goals: persuading swing voters, driving turnout and voter registration, and ultimately winning elections.

With that in mind, part of its approach includes the motto “The Ultimate Product is Victory.” This means that, rather than trying to sell certain products, the consultants from Storefront work with the idea that victory is the product that comes before all others.

This leads to a uniting of direct mail, radio, and television as a means to pave the way for victory, and campaigns are created with powerful simplicity.

Voter Discussions

One aspect of the services provided by Storefront is the cultivation of valuable and engaging discussions with voters. Rather than relying on the ineffective traditional campaign model, Storefront’s team of experts look at campaign engagements in a modern framework.

This means they’re based on continual discussions with voters instead of following outdated messaging tactics.

These voter discussions are used as the primary methodology to introduce campaigns and candidates to voters and continue ongoing conversations that let them reinforce their message.

Varied Communication Tools

Paid media is an important aspect of campaigns at Storefront, but, at the same time, there’s a belief that communication should be incredibly varied and also include ongoing free and low-cost options.

These are the means of communication that often get overlooked in campaigns, so this idea is one that certainly sets Storefront apart as one of the most pioneering Democratic political consulting firms.

The belief is that great, effective messages can be delivered just as effectively in person or by trusted messengers, so this is a firm that can help clients create engagement around a large message with a small budget.

The Parkside Group Review

With offices in Albany and New York City, [The Parkside Group](#) is one of the leading political consulting firms in New York State, with a powerful, respected presence and a breadth of experience.

The team behind The Parkside Group is very experienced, with diverse backgrounds and decades of experience in the creation and implementation of public and strategic affairs.

During its 15-year history, The Parkside Group has [helped more than 500 clients](#), which have included Fortune 500 companies, cultural and educational organizations, advocacy groups, labor unions, and public office candidates.

Key Factors That Led Us to Rank This Firm as One of the Best Political Consulting Firms of 2016

Highlighted below are reasons The Parkside Group was named one of the top ranking 2016 political consulting firms.

Campaign Management

One focus area of this political consulting firm is campaign management, and candidate success is based on a combination of factors. These include targeting the correct audience and maximizing how resources are used.

It also combines these elements with powerful research and electoral modeling to offer clients some of the most advanced, leading-edge voter targeting.

Pollie Awards

The Pollie Awards are incredibly prestigious in the media and public relations world and are issued by the American Association of Political Consultants.

Very recently, The Parkside Group announced it had been awarded three Pollie awards for public affairs campaigns managed for Indian Point Energy Center and the Metropolitan Taxicab Board of Trade.

These awards recognized a high level of excellence in political consulting, creative design, and advertising, and there were more than [2,400 entries submitted](#).

These three Pollie awards brought the total to 25 awards the firm has won during its history.

Winning Campaign Clients

Although winning is not the only thing to look at in the selection of top political consulting firms, it is important.

Below represents some of the recent [winning campaign clients](#) of The Parkside Group, at the national and state level:

- Nita Lowery – U.S. Congress
- Joseph Crowley – U.S. Congress
- Greg Meeks – U.S. Congress
- Eric Adams – NY State Senate
- Craig Johnson – NY State Senate
- Suzi Oppenheimer – NY State Senate
- David Valesky – NY State Senate

Advertising Specialization

Along with general political consulting, The Parkside Group also offers expertise and experience in the creation of a diverse array of advertising, including print, digital, and broadcast media.

All advertising is designed to complement public affairs work, and everything operates in harmony with one another.

The Parkside Group is responsible for the production of thousands of advertising campaigns, ranging from traditional direct mail to social media content, and it employs in-house creative experts who can create unique, engaging, and innovative advertising content for clients.

Conclusion – Top Political Consulting Firms

In today's modern environment, the best political consulting firms must offer multi-faceted services and comprehensive expertise.

It's imperative these firms understand the modern world of not just politics but also media and journalism, advertising, public engagement and relations, and crisis and brand management.

Each of the firms included in this best-of list of political consulting firms embodies a sense of innovation and forward-thinking but also an understanding of the traditional elements of political consulting.

These are the political consulting firms that have effectively handled everything from nonprofit issue awareness campaigns to high-profile presidential elections, and they've managed to remain enduring names in the political and media industry.

Many of the political consulting firms represented above have won awards and have been serving the diverse needs of clients for many years.

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