

The Brief: Protect the Midterms

Situation:

Like it or not, Russia created the most impactful advertising campaign of the century. They used disruptive social ads, experiential events, AR gaming, and real-time newsrooms to influence voters and undermine America's democratic process. Most experts agree that Russia will use similar tactics and tools to meddle in the 2018 midterm elections.

Assignment:

Help prevent Russian meddling in the 2018 U.S. midterm elections.

Desired Outcome:

Less fake news seen and shared. More (accurately) informed voters. Better access to well-rounded rather than one-sided points of view/conversation. Elections that are influenced by candidates' agendas, not by manipulative trolls.

Audience:

Internet and social media users in the USA.

- **88%** of Americans believe that fake news has caused confusion about current events.¹
- But **84%** also say that they're confident they can recognize fake news when they see it, and yet -
- **23%** of Americans also admitted to sharing fake news (including those from Russian influences) on social media.

And to make matters worse – Americans living in swing states shared misinformation from Russian links on social media more than in non-contested states in 2016.²

Insight:

We (agencies, media, platforms) invented the techniques, technologies and tools that Russia used to interfere with our democratic process, so we are best equipped to combat malicious use of them.

Opportunity:

No one knows these technologies better than we do, so let's use our various resources and specialties to intercept, expose, and put a stop to election meddling in the 2018 midterm elections (and future democratic elections around the world.)

Proactive Thought-Starters:

- *Use the Blockchain to verify media sources*
- *Partner with Snopes to create a real-time verification hotline during the election*
- *Propose UI modifications to major tech platforms*
- *Launch a bi-partisan media literacy campaign in swing states*
- *Track deceptive ads in real time via twitter bots*

Possible non-profit partners (unaffiliated with Project Meddle):

- ProPublica
- Snopes
- Poynter
- International Consortium of Investigative Journalists
- Fake news challenge
- Public Library Association
- News Literacy Project
- Media Matters
- The News Integrity Initiative
- Facebook Journalism Project

¹ Pew Research Center for Journalism & Media: "Many Americans Believe Fake News is Sowing Confusion"
<http://www.journalism.org/2016/12/15/many-americans-believe-fake-news-is-sowing-confusion/>

² Project on Computational Propaganda