

How Design Can Change the World: New Kind and North Carolina's Amendment One

Our friends at [New Kind](#) do amazing work changing the world through design and story. I spent the weekend reading the [Management 2.0 Hackathon](#) report that [Chris Grams](#) and [Jonathan Opp](#) recently published about the community process they facilitated to reinvent management. There are lots of gems in there, and I originally thought I'd riff on it here. But I found myself far more interested in sharing a more obscure project that New Kind led earlier this year, a shining example of why framing, design, and story are so important.



Last April, I went to North Carolina to facilitate a leadership workshop for [IntraHealth](#). While I was there, I noticed a number of Carolina blue signs all over the place exhorting people to vote against [Amendment One](#).

In North Carolina, "marriage" is legally defined as being exclusively between a man and a woman. Amendment One was a ballot initiative that would further limit the type of domestic unions recognized by the state. In other words, Amendment One would explicitly outlaw gay marriage, and it would potentially strip pre-existing benefits for domestic

partnerships from gay (and possibly straight) couples.

North Carolina is an incredibly conservative state, and even though I was staying in the university-dominated [Research Triangle area](#), I was still surprised to see so many of these signs. I was even more surprised when I later visited the New Kind offices to learn that they were behind the messaging and design of this campaign.

The campaign against Amendment One was essentially hopeless. It should have been a blowout victory for the supporters of the ballot initiative. Amendment One did indeed pass by a 20% margin of defeat. It was a clear, but not overwhelming victory, considering that similar initiatives in Tennessee and Alabama had passed by margins of almost 50%. The opposition achieved stunning results, considering the cultural context and the abbreviated amount of time. As New Kind's [Nation Hahn explained](#), they received:

840,000 votes against the amendment with a three-month campaign that was only on television for two weeks. When we began this campaign our win number was 535,000 and we thought to achieve that total we would need to turn out 70,000 new voters. Our numbers were far higher.

In every single county where we had a presence, we either won or tied. In Guilford and Forsyth it was rural areas with unprecedented turnout that impacted us the most and kept us from winning. Consider that in Greensboro proper, home to Republican Congressional representation, we won 73 of 79 precincts.

We achieved, with the help of the NAACP, faith leaders, and others, unprecedented "against" votes from African Americans. Consider Wake County – at Roberts Park, a predominantly African American precinct, the early vote was 671 for and 2,071 against. That's 75% against Amendment One. You find this pattern in urban counties across NC. In Durham, the

majority of African American precincts voted “no” by almost 65% and in Mecklenburg (Charlotte), it was almost 53%. Even in Guilford and Forsyth, where voters as a whole approved the Amendment narrowly, voters in African American precincts rejected it by 53% and 55% respectively.

In urban areas we even won overwhelming Republican precincts. In Wake County, for example, we won Country Club Hills – a precinct that has never been kind to Democrats.

And even in rural areas which voted overwhelmingly in favor of the amendment we had a number of success stories – including victory in the town of Duck where Jen Jones, Communications Director for Equality NC and a hero for Protect NC Families, led a remarkable town hall.

More importantly, the foundation has been laid for a movement that isn't turning back. The campaign signed up tens of thousands of volunteers, more than 11,000 individuals donated to the cause (over 7,000 of them online) compared to only 1,000 donors who supported the amendment, and more than 800,000 people voted against LGBT discrimination.

How were they able to achieve such amazing results? You can read all about how they [incorporated design and story into this amazing campaign.](#)