

The Irish Times Fine Gael Leadership Tracker - entry for Digital Excellence

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/fg-leadership-race>

THE IRISH TIMES

Thu, Jul 13, 2017

Dublin

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Project team:

Fiach Kelly (Political Correspondent), Paddy Logue (Digital Editor), Cliona Mooney (Head of Analytics), Cathal Stack (data analyst), Paul Scott (design), Luke Cassidy (Digital Production Editor).

Project summary:

The Fine Gael Leadership Tracker allowed readers to track the leadership contest as it developed via a running tally of the voting intentions of hundreds of TDs, Councillors, MEPs and Senators. Readers were also able to check how their local representative was voting.

Project detail:

The aim of the Leadership Tracker project was to bring the story of the Fine Gael leadership race to as many readers on digital platforms as possible and in a format that suited their reading habits. The Tracker presented all available and collected data through a prism of political expertise. In short, we told an old-school politics story in a digitally friendly way that surpassed our competitors, providing a template for future such stories.

From the outset, we wanted *The Irish Times* to “own” the story, knowing the new leader of the Fine Gael party would also become Taoiseach and also knowing that much of the story and discussion around it would be played out in digital media and on social media platforms. We aimed to be and succeeded in becoming the focus-point of that discussion.

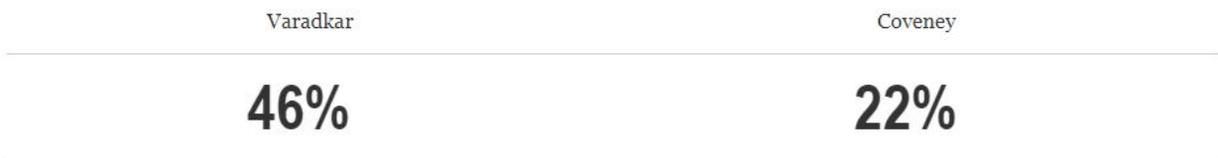
During previous such contests we used news stories and analysis pieces to tell the story, but we knew that adopting this tried and tested approach would not be sufficient. Instead, we were

determined to put the digital reader first in terms of accessibility, design, format and publish timing.

To achieve this we brought together a team of editorial, data and design experts to produce a truly digital storytelling format that, nonetheless, employed traditional ring-around journalism and expert political analysis.

Long before the contest was announced, but knowing that it would be, almost 300 TDs, MEPs, Senators and Councillors who were members of Fine Gael were contacted and re-contacted by Fiach Kelly. He brought his own knowledge and insight to bear so that we were able to say who was supporting whom right throughout the contest, be they declared or keeping their intentions secret.

Cathal Stack (data analyst) wrote an algorithm that reflected the weighted voting system employed by Fine Gael itself. This allowed us to produce an overall running percentage showing who was winning at any given time during the contest. In addition, readers (or the contenders themselves!) were able to check who was supporting which candidate. Readers could search our sortable tables to see who their local TD, Senator, Councillor or MEP was supporting.



Candidate support





The Tracker became much discussed in political and media circles and became the focal point of the FG contest story in Irish media. As we prioritised forward-planning in this project we were able to go live with the Tracker on May 17th, as soon as the contest was announced by Fine Gael. At that point we were already ahead of the pack and had assigned Fine Gael members to a particular candidate.

The Irish Times Fine Gael Leadership Tracker is a stand-out example of a very well-planned project conceived for digital readers, incorporating traditional political journalism and delivered by a team across editorial, analytics and design in digital formats that told the story on a national and local level.

Please visit the Tracker and experience it for yourself:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/fg-leadership-race>