

Client Feedback

Here's what some recent CERC clients are saying . . .

Client: Chris Wysocki; Gilliard, Blanning, Wysocki

Service: Congressional survey research

Chris says: *"Boy, I really appreciate you turning this poll around on short notice. The results were extremely helpful to our client."*

Client: Dave Ross; DCR International

Service: Municipal candidate polling

Dave says: *"Thanks Chad. You've been GREAT to work with! In fact, the whole team has been fabulous. Please pass on my special thanks and appreciation for a job well done during this entire election season!"*

Client: Name and Firm Withheld

Service: Congressional survey research

"Congratulations on the accuracy of your polling work. It looks like we were within a point or two of both [Congressional Districts]. Thanks for your hard work and flexibility."

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A Revolution is Turning the Wheel

Competitive Edge has pushed through many changes during the past year. The changes have come at nearly every level of the firm. In this issue we announce one more that is sure to please our clients. We have added a call center manager with more than a decade of survey research experience. You can read about Ronald Zavala inside this month's Edge.

With the correct personnel settled into place, it is time to "turn the wheel." That's business researcher Jim Collins' insight into how all revolutions begin and eventually come to pass. CERC is revolutionizing its approach to survey research and will turn the wheel to get to that point. The quality of the data we collect is bulletproof because our innovative training methods and quality control mechanisms are the best in the industry. By coupling those factors to a) our rigorous attention to the details of the research process and b) our sophisticated way-beyond-crosstabs approach to statistical analysis, clients get the complete package. Oh, and we have some fun along the way too, as you can see by the Animal Walk we took to support our client the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA!

Meet CERC's Call Center Manager Ronald Zavala

Ronald Zavala has been hired as Competitive Edge's new Call Center Manager. Ronald is responsible for managing the work of CERC's interviewers as they conduct polling, focus group recruiting, voter contact and grassroots projects. He also handles quota control, supervises the support staff, evaluates personnel, scheduling and assists with hiring.



In hiring Mr. Zavala, CERC President, John Nienstedt said, "We interviewed candidates from across the country. Ronald has the mix of ability, experience and attitude we are looking for. It's all about CERC's relentless pursuit of excellence and we're very happy to have Ronald on the team."

Ronald joins CERC with more than a decade of experience in the research field. He began his phone center career as an interviewer at Directions in Research in 1996. Since then he has acquired a wealth of interviewing, supervisory and management skills, having worked for a qualitative research firm in Orange County, a medical database company in Irvine, and Field Research in San Diego. In his most recent position, Ronald was Flagship Research's (qualitative, quantitative and field research) Executive Director.

Ronald received his BA in Classics from San Diego State University in 1993 with an emphasis in Greek and Latin. He was honored as the Outstanding Graduate in his class, Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa. Ronald also earned his teaching credential from San Diego State University in 1994. He was raised in Central America, is fluent in Spanish, and served honorably for two enlistments in the U.S. Navy as a Quartermaster (navigator's assistant). His interests include Mexican History and music, being an avid collector of live bootleg recordings and Bob Dylan's music, in particular.

Happy for the opportunity to contribute to -- and learn from -- the CERC team, Ronald broadens the firm's scope of service with his several years of qualitative research experience. Ronald will integrate his experience and approach into the CERC environment. "My objective," Ronald says, "is to make Competitive Edge the phonecenter of choice for interviewers here in San Diego and for clients across the nation." 📞

Nienstedt to Chair AAPOR Session on Political Attitude Formation

If you are headed to this year's AAPOR Conference in Anaheim, be sure to sit in on the Friday afternoon session entitled "Shaping Political Thoughts and Behaviors." CERC President John Nienstedt will be chairing the session which will include presentations on political consumerism, the gender gap in political knowledge and

what should be a fascinating paper on "Parenting and Politics" from venerable AAPOR presenter Ward Kay. The session runs from 4:30 to 5:45 on May 18th and the discussant will be John Robinson of the University of Maryland.

In addition, Tracy Duben, CERC's Research Manager, will be attending the Conference. If you have not met Tracy yet, this will be a great opportunity to do so.

Competitive Edge personnel regularly attend the Conference as a way to stay current on industry trends and methods. Nienstedt co-presented a paper on questionnaire wording of ballot questions last year. He has attended every conference but one since 1995.

This year's Conference -- the 62nd -- focuses on the increasingly complex and visible intersection of polls, survey research and policy. No matter what the issue, the ways in which polls and surveys are designed, executed, interpreted and evaluated can have a major and lasting impact on critical policy decisions. 📞

Ambulating for Animals

Four CERC team members participated in the San Diego Humane Society and SPCA's "Walk for Animals" on Saturday, May 5th. While the short walk by Mission Bay wasn't strenuous, it was done for a great cause and a great client. Competitive Edge is conducting research for the SDHS to help it design its strategic plan.



Left to right: Research Associate Brian Lewis, John Ciancio, SDHS President Mark Goldstein, President John Nienstedt, Office Manager Shari Ciancio, Research Manager Tracy Duben, Rich Davis.

On CERC's Nightstand . . .

"Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die" -- Chip Heath and Dan Heath. There are lots of books on crafting messages and selecting mediums. But this book is more than about getting a message across. "Made to Stick" is about making a lasting impact with your message and that makes it mandatory reading for strategic consultants. Ranging from messages designed to get kids to do their algebra homework to determinants of vote choice to convincing litterbugs not to toss trash out their truck windows, the book takes a research-based approach to getting into -- and sticking to -- the cerebral cortex of an audience. Key quote: *"There is no formula for sticky ideas . . . but they do draw from a common set of traits which make them more likely to succeed."* Those traits are simplicity; unexpectedness; concreteness; credibility; emotions and stories. 📞