

Client Feedback

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

Client: Dave Ross; DCR International

Service: Focus group recruitment

Dave says: *"It went great! Eight showed up at each group and it couldn't have gone better. Thanks for all your help."*

Client: Doug Coe

Service: Jury selection polling

Doug says: *"It was a pleasure to work with you and your staff. As always, great work."*

Client: Tom Shepard; Tom Shepard & Associates

Service: Survey research

Tom says: *"Your top-quality research and strategic insight was invaluable in delivering victories for our clients"*

Summer 2008

Summer of Discontent

High gas prices. War in Eastern Europe. Home prices dropping. Banks failing. California on fire. Flooding in the mid-west. The ABC News Consumer Index shows confidence in the economy is down to a 22-year low. With all the bad news this summer, you don't need a pollster to tell you voters are in a foul mood. What is useful, however, is to be reminded how candidates and consultants ought to deal with the situation. Standing pat is not an option. Voters want solutions. Witness the new-found enthusiasm -- tolerance -- actually, among Californians for off-shore oil drilling. In the absence of real solutions, voters will embrace the fake ones, which puts a premium on articulating solid proposals in language that voters can understand. To prevent this summer of discontent from turning into a fall disaster, pick a real solution, promote it, stick with it and run as an "outsider" who loves his or her country/state/county/city.

In this issue we also introduce readers to a voter contact technique that Competitive Edge has honed over the years. It's the hybrid call and it incorporates the best elements of a live call with the reduced cost of a robo-call. We think hybrid calls offer our clients an advantage over the competition.

Got plastic? Another new feature at Competitive Edge is the ability to pay campaign bills with a credit card. We heard your pleas and have now adopted this convenient method of payment as an option.

Hybrid Calls from Competitive Edge are a Great Way to Go

How do we feel about robo-calls? Like most voters, what Competitive Edge thinks about most automated campaign messages is unprintable. There are the rare few that have their place and, more importantly, actually work. But, as long time readers of *The Edge* know, far too often they do not get the job done and, worse, create a backlash.

But is there a way to get the best aspects of a live call as well as the best aspects of a robo-call? The answer is “yes” and Competitive Edge’s hybrid calls are the solution. Competitive Edge’s hybrid calls are winning elections because:

- They hit their target audience 100% of the time and respondent cooperation is tremendous. Unlike a robo-call which can be answered by the baby-sitter, the 12 year-old or someone other than the intended recipient, hybrid calls always communicate with the targeted voter within the household. More importantly, very few people hang up on a hybrid call while most people slam the phone down on robo-calls.
- Hybrid calls serve to both identify *and* persuade voters. Unlike robo-calls which advocate (poorly) for a position or a candidate but are horrible at actually identifying supporters, opponents and undecided voters, hybrid calls do both extremely well.
- Hybrid calls are much cheaper than live-only calls. At about half the price of traditional live calls, hybrid calls are still more expensive than robo-calls, but robo-calls get you no votes or cost you votes, so what good are they?
- Pure robo-calls are illegal in California; hybrid calls are not.

How do we do it? Competitive Edge begins its hybrid calls with a live, professional interviewer. The interviewer will confirm that he or she is talking to the targeted individual and then asks them a simple identification question. Supporters may get a GOTV message, a yard sign request or some other request for action. The hybrid aspect comes into play for voters who are undecided or supporting another candidate. Undecided voters are played a recorded message which usually comes from the candidate. The message can be tailored to the voter segment being called. For instance, older females receive one message; Hispanic voters receive another. Those favoring an opponent can receive a different and more hard-hitting message. Because interviewers are not involved once the respondent goes to the recorded message, the call is shorter than a typical live call.

Competitive Edge has used hybrid calls effectively for years. We have perfected a technique to the point where our clients get a significant edge when using our voter contact programs. We’d like to show you how we can do it for your campaign. **F**

CERC President Addresses Rotary

Fixing San Diego in “four easy steps” was the title of CERC President John Nienstedt’s address to the La Jolla Rotarians on July 8th at the gorgeous La Valencia Hotel.



John Nienstedt prepares to speak to the La Jolla Rotary as Club President Ted Rutter introduces him.

John believes that San Diego’s current ills are rooted in structural problems which are spurred by uncompetitive local races for elective office. His recommendations include lifting the City’s ridiculously low campaign contribution limits, requiring rapid reporting of campaign donations on the Internet, removing term limits and returning to citywide run-off elections for City Council candidates. Injecting competition would give voters more choices, and citizens would get better government.

As John told the audience of Rotarians, “we can get back on track by re-structuring the electoral system so that competition is fostered. Strong competition breeds better athletes, better companies and better government.” **F**

CERC Now Accepts Credit Card Payments

As of August 1st, Competitive Edge has begun accepting payments via Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express. We believe that the added convenience of using a credit card will be a huge benefit for our clients. During its first week in operation, more than \$2,000 in credit card payments were processed, so the alternative to checks and wire transfers appears well on its way to becoming the payment method of choice. Not only is using plastic easier, clients may also be able to rack up frequent flyer miles and other promotions when paying the bills. **F**

On CERC’s Nightstand . . .

Social Intelligence, Karl Albrecht. Not every book we read is worth recommending. Like this one, some deserve a warning. This purports to tap into the “new science of intelligence,” but is a mish-mash based primarily on Albrecht’s personal experiences and practically no experiments to back them up. Basically crap.

Falling Up, How a Redneck Helped Invent Political Consulting, Ray Strother. Diving into Strother’s account of his Texas upbringing, his self-“invented” role as a political consultant in the steamy heat of Louisiana and his heady transformation into arguably the foremost Democratic media consultant of his era is thoroughly rewarding. The stories told within the larger biography are terrific. Most important is Strother’s recognition that winning requires a well-researched approach and that there is no substitute for hard work and dedication to the client. His descriptions of colleagues Dick Morris and James Carville alone are worth the price of the book. Of Morris, Strother writes, “He surpassed . . . almost everyone else in politics, in energy and creative ability. Dick’s only failing was he knew less about polling than I did. This was odd because Dick passed himself off as a pollster.” Carville, he says, “is still the only consultant I have ever heard of who gained credit while losing. And deserved it.” *Falling Up* is a must read. **F**