

Client Feedback

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

Client: Rick Taylor; Dakota Communications

Service: Grassroots Recruitment and Activation

Rick says: *"Your phone calling kicked their ass. It blew them away. We won and the client was really dazzled."*

Client: Paul Fallon; Fallon Research

Service: Multiple legislative polls

Paul says: *"I was thoroughly pleased and quite impressed with the response I got from Chad. Thanks again for all your help."*

Client: Mitch Mulanix; Gorton/Moore/Mulanix

Service: Focus group recruitment and hosting

Mitch says: *"Thanks for everything you did. I thought the focus groups went very well."*

Winter 2008

CERC Acquires New Talent

With pitchers and catchers reporting to spring training in just a few days, the baseball metaphors are flowing. CERC has recently picked up some heavy hitting bench help to carry us through the 2008 season and well beyond. In this issue you'll read about Elizabeth Sheld who has worked her way into the line-up as a Research Analyst. Though steeped in politics and talk radio, Liz earned her Ph.D. in Philosophy – from Boston University, no less. Stacy Hilmen is another rookie who we plucked out of the little-known Australian leagues. Though not a true Aussie herself, Stacy has worked for a market research firm down under and brings a different perspective to CERC.

Most readers of The Edge are aware of the low regard in which CERC holds robo-calls. A recent spate of posts on AAPORnet (the listserv of the American Association for Public Opinion Research) revealed still more solid research showing that robo-calls not only whiff when it comes to scoring, but they actually annoy the fans . . . err . . . voters. Imagine that.

2008 is shaping up to be a World Series of electoral politics like no other. We think our line-up is -- top to bottom -- the strongest we've fielded during the two decades we've been in the big leagues.

Live Calls Work; Robo-Calls . . . Not So Much

Regular readers of *The Edge* know that we are not fond of robo-calls, the dirt cheap automated phone-based voter contact alternative to live phones. Try as we might to like them (and then make big bucks selling them), our scientific bent requires evidence of the technique's effectiveness. And we have not seen that proof.

We presented our own research back in 2005. Our controlled test showed that automated calls produced no increase in actual voter turnout, while live calls produced a 6% increase in turnout. Now the respected Pew Research Center for People and the Press has weighed in. Although not an experiment like the one CERC conducted, Pew's survey report clearly shows that voters generally do not listen to robo-calls. Among New Hampshire voters in December 2007, 68% of those receiving a robo-call hung up on them. In Iowa the hang-up rate was 54%. In stark contrast, voters listen to live calls: 75% of New Hampshire voters who got live calls say they listened to them and in Iowa, where even more voters were getting calls at the time, the percentage was an astounding 86%.

Many Receiving Robo-Calls, but Fewer Listening

	<u>Robo-calls</u>	<u>Live calls</u>
	%	%
Received IA	81	58
Received NH	68	52
Usually listen IA	43	86
Usually listen NH	28	75
Usually hang up IA	54	10
Usually hang up NH	68	19

Among likely caucus/primary goers, MoSE +/-4%

No doubt, more people now get robo-calls rather than live calls. But that is because the former are so cheap, not because robo-calls produce better results. In fact, yet another study suggests they are not effective at all. As Donald Green and Alan Gerber, write in their "*Get Out The Vote!: How To Increase Voter Turnout*" (Brookings Institution Press), their series of experiments show robo-calls have no discernible effect on turnout.

There may be isolated instances where automated calls make sense. Perhaps they work with the perfect message, from the perfect messenger, at the perfect time in a situation where the call is not competing with other campaign communications. But that's obviously a rare circumstance and, as voters become inured to the robo-call's "charms," effectiveness even in those limited situations will decline further.

Live calls are the way to go. After all, even if automated calls are 20 times cheaper than live calls, 20 times zero effectiveness is still zero. *Note: this analysis should not be construed as supporting a robo-call ban.* 📞

Catch Our Ad?

We decided to tell the world about CERC's 20th anniversary so you'll be seeing a series of "birthday cake" ads in publications like Campaigns & Elections and on the web. The ads feature a 20-candle cake with the twist being that each ad in the series contains alternate "frosting" wording.



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Meet Liz Sheld

Elizabeth Sheld has joined Competitive Edge as a Junior Research Analyst. Liz holds a Doctorate in Philosophy earned at the Boston school without the athletic reputation (aside from the great sport of hockey). She has worked as a Program Director and a radio Producer and has been a longtime student of politics. She will be assisting CERC President John Niensted with statistical analysis, questionnaire design, report writing and the presentation of the findings.



Stacy (left) and Liz review probability sampling theory.

Meet Stacy Hilmen

Stacy Hilmen has come on board as a Junior Research Assistant. Stacy earned two Bachelor Degrees – one in Psychology and the other in Business Administration -- from the University of San Diego. She has worked for market research firms in the US and Australia. Stacy will work with Research Assistant, Brian Lewis and Research Manager Tracy Duben compiling reports and conducting quality control assessments.

We're delighted to have both Liz and Stacy on the Competitive Edge team. Both have what it takes to give our clients the edge. 📞

Now On CERC's Nightstand . . .

"Gifted Hands: *The Ben Carson Story*" – Ben Carson, M.D. with Cecil Murphy. This autobiographical book is not a literary achievement, but the story it tells is truly one that children, their parents and everyone struggling with adversity ought to read. Carson's rise from hot-headed slum kid to the chief pediatric neurosurgeon at Johns Hopkins (at 33!) is exhilarating. You become what you work hard at becoming. Key quote: "*Mother had already decided how we boys would spend our free time when we weren't watching television. 'You boys are going to the library and check out books. You're going to read at least two books every week. At the end of the week you'll give me a report on what you read'*" 📞