

Client Feedback

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

Client: Danny Simon, DAVIES Public Affairs

Service: Activist Recruitment

Danny says: *"We're really happy with the work that Competitive Edge has done. You've really delivered for us on some tough projects."*

Client: Tom Shepard, Tom Shepard & Associates, Inc.

Service: Benchmark and Tracking Studies

Tom says: *"The Competitive Edge Team projected the 'Obama Effect' on turnout early enough so we were able to adjust our campaign plan and compensate for changes in the composition of the electorate."*

Client: Jason Simmons, Consultants Collaborative

Service: Polling

Jason says: *"Thankfully CERC was on the job already and was providing valuable insight in the early campaign strategies. We needed more than just a pollster and that is what we got from CERC. Your professional and efficient staff was great to work with and your invaluable insight into every aspect of the campaign will not soon be forgotten."*

Spring 2009

Gaining Insight and Giving Back

Long time readers of *The Edge* know that Competitive Edge Research & Communication strongly emphasizes educational enrichment for its staff. That starts at the top with President John Nienstedt. He will be travelling to the 2009 American Association for Public Opinion Research conference to present his paper on interviewer effects during the 2008 presidential campaign. When we learn something that we believe can help the research industry, we think we ought to share it. John has been an active AAPOR member since joining in 1994. He'll also be chairing a session as well.

In a similar vein, Director of Operations Chad Harris has been working diligently to earn his certification in the Principles of Market Research course. This demanding coursework requires more than a year of effort and takes the student through every nook and cranny of the research process. In this effort, Chad was required to pass two proctored exams. We know that CERC's clients will benefit from a better-rounded staff.

A sense of community has always been a part of the fabric of CERC. This is usually manifested in employee events or simply looking out for the welfare of the staff. But we also see opportunities in our neighbors. In this issue we talk about our latest *pro bono* project on behalf of La Cuna, a charity that seeks to place babies and toddlers in safe and loving homes.

Nienstedt to Present Paper, Chair Session at AAPOR Conference

The 2009 American Association for Public Opinion Research Conference will be held in Hollywood, Florida May 14-17. If you happen to be in the neighborhood, drop by the Westin Diplomat Convention Center on Friday at 2pm to hear John Nienstedt, CERC President, deliver his paper on interviewer effects on survey results during the 2008 presidential election. With Senator Barak Obama heading the Democratic ticket, whether an interviewer was white or black affected survey results to a small degree. From the abstract:

The research makes use of thousands of interviews conducted during the 2008 presidential campaign. Importantly, the data is not limited to broad national surveys or a "one-shot" survey. Instead, the polls from which the data are taken come from a wide variety of locales and were conducted over many months. This enabled the researcher to test the hypotheses in many situations.

The results suggest that the race of an interviewer does affect the survey results in the manner hypothesized to a small degree in certain limited situations. However, the same can be said for an interviewer's opinion of the Presidential candidates. Implications for data collection and data interpretation are discussed.

John will also be chairing a Friday morning session entitled, "Collecting Recall & Event Information." As always, the Conference promises to be an enriching experience for survey professionals and anyone interested in public opinion. 📍

CERC Director of Ops Receives PMRC Certificate



CERC Director of Operations Chad Harris has completed the Principles of Market Research Course through the University of Georgia. The certificate course is designed specifically for research professionals. Principles of Marketing Research has become the research profession's highest quality, most valued, and most widely supported educational program. Chad

was awarded a *Certificate of Completion* from the Marketing Research Institute International, the Marketing Research Association, ESOMAR, and the University.

Chad joined Competitive Edge in January 2006 and has been responsible for shepherding a wide variety of projects to success. Congratulations Chad! 📍

CERC Partners with La Cuna

It probably comes as no surprise that there are not enough loving families for foster infants and toddlers. Due to their intensive emotional and developmental needs, babies are the most vulnerable age group for foster children. La Cuna (*the cradle* in Spanish) is a San

Diego non-profit organization which addresses these needs by finding the arms and hearts of families who will open their homes and care for them properly.

Competitive Edge is helping La Cuna find and understand its "target market." Much like we would with a political campaign, CERC will use its analytic capabilities to profile La Cuna's prime "customers." With very limited resources, all non-profits must become skilled at targeting their communications. Competitive Edge is proud to be helping La Cuna and its worthy cause.



If you or someone you know is interested in fostering a child under the age of 5 in the San Diego area, please get in touch with us or La Cuna at www.lacuna.org. 📍

On CERC's Nightstand (a 2-fer) . . .

***The Tipping Point* and *Blink*, both by Malcolm Gladwell**

Malcolm Gladwell's books dedicated to social science research are highly recommended reading for all political, public relations and communication professionals. The author supports his hypotheses in detail using case studies and relying on academic research. Such an approach in less capable hands is a recipe for a dry and difficult read; but science writer Gladwell is a great storyteller.

Tipping Point argues for applying a viral template to the non-biological world. The idea is that a strategist who asks, "how do we, or (more precisely) at what point do we begin to, change minds to get candidate X to 50%+1?" can learn a lot from the epidemiologist who studies how a syphilis outbreak occurs. Standout passage: "*The world -- much as we want it to -- does not accord with our intuition. . . . Those who are successful at creating social epidemics do not just do what they think is right. They deliberately test their intuitions.*"

Blink is about split-second decisions: how we make them and, just as important, how valid they are. The book obviously has tremendous implications for candidates and their handlers because it's about first impressions and gut reactions.

Gladwell's concept of "thinslicing," whereby people naturally make quick but terrifically accurate judgments based on tiny bits of information, is insightful. But his corollary to thinslicing is that -- to do it well -- rigorous analysis must be conducted before one gets into the scrimmage. Key quote: "*Deliberate thinking is a wonderful tool when we have the luxury of time, the help of a computer, and a clearly defined task, and the fruits of that type of analysis can set the stage for rapid cognition.*" Gladwell could just as well be saying: "A good benchmark survey, analyzed correctly, will help you make the right decisions during the heat of a campaign."

We'll tackle Gladwell's most recent effort, *Outliers*, in the next edition of The Edge. 📍