

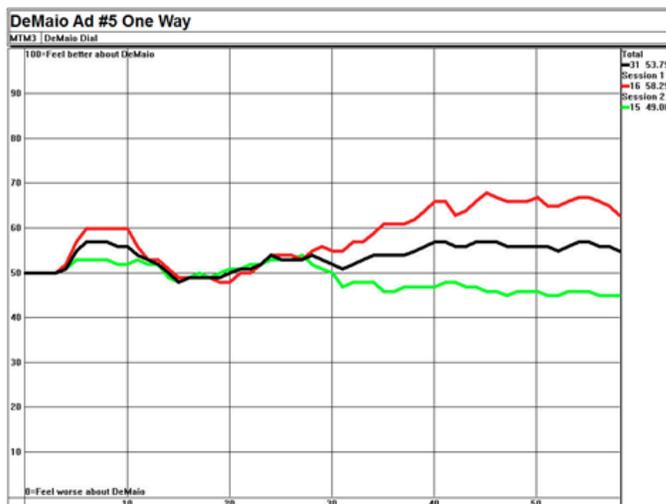
CASE STUDY: DEMAIO DIAL-TESTING HELPS GUIDE PRIMARY VICTORY

SITUATION: In 2012, San Diego needed to choose a new mayor when Mayor Jerry Sanders termed out. Of the nearly 632,000 registered city voters, 40 percent were Democrats, 28 percent were Republicans and another 27 were registered decline-to-state (independents). Carl DeMaio, a San Diego City Councilman and former successful business owner, jumped into a primary field with two other Republicans, San Diego County District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis and California state Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher, all running against one Democrat, US Congressman Bob Filner. *With two other Republicans siphoning donors, DeMaio worked hard to outraise his competitors and managed to secure the endorsement of the Republican Party of San Diego County.* Following the endorsement and 70 days before the election, Fletcher announced his departure from the Republican Party to run as an independent, forcing a fight over moderate voters.



STRATEGY: Competitive Edge Research & Communication (CERC) has built a proprietary database of 15,000 randomly-selected San Diegans which minimizes the problem of “professional respondents.” In April 2012, CERC recruited 32 undecided voters from its database and randomly divided participants into two groups.

Using Dialsmith's Perception Analyzer system, John Nienstedt conducted dial-tests to examine debate performances, media appearances and TV ads. In real-time, second-by-second, the methodology provides instant and precise measurements of participant reactions to visual stimuli. This quantitative research gives consultants a feel for the strengths and weaknesses of candidates and potential communication tactics. For example, during a dial test of a news interview, DeMaio's appeal increased when he discussed his difficult upbringing which ultimately led him to a career in public service. When dial-testing TV ads, respondents favored polished ads over more stylistically simple ads. Reaction was very positive to DeMaio's message that he was the "one man" to take a pay cut on his first day in office, reform city employee pensions and fix City Hall. Messaging in DeMaio's "Absenteeism" ad resonated solidly and resulted in a negative view of his main opponent. Participants did not like that Fletcher missed many days of work in the state capitol during his run for mayor. This was new information about Fletcher. Participants understood the argument and the ads made the issue tangible for them. Nienstedt also tested ads in support of the opponents and those that attacked DeMaio. **At the conclusion of the groups he found that the DeMaio message of independent reform of City Hall combined with anti-Fletcher ads significantly moved these moderate voters toward DeMaio.**



RESULTS: The dial-tests were a success. The campaign used TV ads that effectively pushed the "one man" theme. It also leveraged the dial tests to refine "Absenteeism" and then developed a second ad to extend the theme. DeMaio edged out the other candidates, grabbing the largest share of the votes, 31 percent. The second-highest vote getter, Filner, took 30 percent to get into the run-off. DeMaio solidly bested his non-Democratic opponents. Fletcher took 24 percent of the vote.