

Ethridge & Associates, LLC
CASE STUDIES

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Advertising Agencies, Public Relations Agencies, Publicity Agencies

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. has over 30 years of experience helping advertising, public relations and publicity agencies create powerfully persuasive campaigns that motivate their client's markets to do more business with their clients. We have served agencies from some of the largest in the nation to the one-person agencies. We have worked with agencies in most every state and can provide dozens of case studies about how our agency clients used our services to help them dramatically improve their client's marketing effectiveness. We have chosen three case studies that are representative of our work with agencies.

Case Study 1: The U.S. Army National Guard Recruiting Department

Before Hiring Ethridge

In December of 2005, the U.S. Army National Guard was falling short of its recruiting goals. As The USA Today newspaper covered the problem:

As of the end of February, five months into the October-September recruiting year, the Army Reserve was more than 10% behind its 2005 recruiting target, and the National Guard was 24% behind its target, Pentagon figures show.

Recruiting has been depressed by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and by yearlong combat call-ups for part-time Guard members and reservists, who usually drill one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer in peacetime. (Source: USA Today)

Washington, D.C. based full-service advertising agency, the National Guard's agency for direct mail recruiting marketing, LM&O, and their direct mail subcontracted agency, ClearWord Communications Group, Inc., contacted Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to conduct focus groups to do Copy Testing research among the Army National Guard's recruiting target audience. The purpose of this research was to evaluate seven (7) direct mail recruiting package concepts (comps). The specific objectives of this study were to determine (a) which package was best in terms of generating a positive response, (b) what creative elements made it best, and (c) what, if anything, could be done to enhance the package(s) to maximize effectiveness at motivating prospects to contact a National Guard Recruiter.

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. conducted focus groups in representative recruiting markets throughout the U.S. and analyzed the focus group responses using our

innovative and proprietary Motivational Linguistics Analysis®. As a result, the study:

Discovered which direct mail package was best and how to combine elements of various packages to make them better

Identified the argument that was needed to persuade people to join the Guard

Identified the key emotional benefits (e.g., parental pride; financial security; patriotism) that would motivate a prospective recruit to join

Identified the rational benefits for joining (e.g., educational and financial benefits)

Identified the exact key words, phrases and visual symbols to use and where those key elements needed to appear on the various pieces in the mail package (i.e., the outside envelope, inside elements, pictures, color, headlines, bullet-points, paragraphs, letters and inserts).

Based on our study, the agencies executed a direct mail recruiting campaign and recommended that the same message elements be used consistently in all recruiting efforts (e.g., on-line, in school presentations, by recruiters). The campaign's purpose was to motivate prospective recruits to call the recruiter.

As a result, after several months of hammering the key campaign themes that we recommended based on the focus groups, the National Guard "exceeded their recruiting goals for the first time in more than three years." Today, four years later, as one recruiter put it, "There are more people calling me right now who are searching for jobs" (helped also more recently by the recession). The Guard's percent of 2009 recruiting target is above 100% for all but nine of the 50 states plus D.C., and averages 114.8% overall. (Source: Adapted from USA Today)

"Steve conducted a series of national focus groups designed to give my client, the advertising agency representing the National Guard recruiting efforts, a better insight into their target audience. Steve organized the groups, wrote the questions based on our needs, recruited participants, picked the most representative sites, personally moderated each session and wrote an extensive analysis of the group findings. This analysis had a profound influence on National Guard direct

marketing materials aimed at recruiting young adults across the country. Excellent work across the board”. David Bufkin, Founding Partner, ClearWorld Communications Group, Washington, D.C.

Case Study 2: Tennessee Department of Tourism Development Results

Based on our Marketing Opportunity Analysis, we led the advertising and public relations agency for the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development to design a new advertising campaign that resulted in more tourism visitors coming to the state than ever before in the state’s history. To read this case study, go to our tourism cases studies page by clicking [here](#).

“Actionable research can be a very powerful tool for creative marketers willing to use it. Steve brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to each project. His expertise gives us, the agency, greater ability to strategically develop creative concepts that will resonate with the target audience and drive results for our client. Steve has been a valuable partner to Walker + Associates for many years...and will continue to be.” February 23, 2009, Top qualities: Personable , Expert , High Integrity, Andy Windham, Chief Operating Officer at Walker + Associates, Inc. advertising agency

Case Study 3: Tunica, Mississippi Convention and Visitors Bureau Results

Similar to our case for the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development, using our Marketing Opportunity Analysis, we led the advertising agency and public

relations agency to develop a campaign for the Tunica, Mississippi Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

The Tunica CVB wanted to test the hypothesis that they could target spot market advertising to selected key markets and motivate people to visit their destination that would historically have visited Las Vegas. For this purpose, Ethridge conducted Marketing Opportunity Analysis benchmark studies in both the Nashville and St. Louis media markets. Based on how Tunica's brand image was positioned in the minds of gamers in both of these markets, Ethridge recommended the brand positioning message to use in each market, as well as which media to use to reach the destination's Best Prospect Segment for increasing business in each market.

Based on Ethridge's recommendations, the Tunica CVB and its ad agency developed a new campaign that positioned the destination as the Las Vegas of the South. This changed perceptions of that destination from one whose greatest image strength was having "RV parks for camping" to a world-class resort destination.

As a result, Ethridge helped reposition the Tunica brand, resulting in delivering \$21.0 million in revenue increase to \$60.7 million in one of the spot markets and with a 29:1 ROI and an 88% increase in top-line revenue in the other spot market leading to a 46:1 ROI within six months.

These results won the Travel and Tourism Research Association's (TTRA) Innovative Research Award which Ethridge presented at the TTRA's International Conference in New Orleans in 2005.

Individuals / Executives / Job Changers / Graduates

Below are brief success stories about how the Life Quest retreat has changed people's lives for the better.

Case 1: A More Satisfying Career

Before Hiring Ethridge

David was in a sales job that paid him a draw against sales commissions. He loved the type of work (the financial industry) but didn't feel comfortable in a sales role.

After Hiring Ethridge

David attended our Life Quest seminar, which is designed to help clients discover their individual personality, principles, passions and purpose, and then develop a personal Life Plan with a vision for the future as well as objectives, goals, strategies and timelines to achieve the plan.

In the seminar he learned that he was much more passionate about financial consulting to help people improve their financial situation than about selling financial services. As a result, he landed the ideal job with another company doing just what he loved — financial consulting with no sales quotas to meet.

Case 2: Starting a New Business

Before Hiring Ethridge

Lisa was a stay-at-home mom working at a part-time, stressful, unpredictable job. Her employer was inconsistent in the hours that he needed her and when he did need her it was always for too much work in too short of a period of time. She couldn't achieve balance in her life because of her unpredictable job and she was not making as much money as she needed to make.

After Hiring Ethridge

The Life Quest seminar helped her better understand her in-born personality strengths, talents, passions, principles and purpose. As a result, she discovered that she was best suited to be self-employed and she envisioned a business that would allow her to have control over her unique situation.

She started her own home based business that allows her to be more proactive about her time. The work is better aligned with her personality and passions. She now has better control over her time and her life. She's enjoying her new career and better meeting the needs of her children.

Financial Services (Banks, Credit Unions, Investment Banks)

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. (Ethridge) has over 30 years of experience in marketing, communication, research and strategic business planning for financial institutions of all types: banks, trust companies, credit unions, investment banking firms, overnight check clearing services, insurance agencies, and check cashing firms. Ethridge has served financial institutions in every state in the U.S., ranging in size from the largest national banks to the smallest start-ups. With our veteran experience in financial services, we could pick from hundreds of financial institutions to illustrate examples of our results. However, we have chosen just three that are representative of our typical work in this area.

Case 1: Improving a Bank's Profitability Through Strategic Brand Positioning

Before Hiring Ethridge

The large regional bank was unprofitable due to a high cost of funds and slow loan volume.

The bank was considering offering a new line of credit cards to increase loan volume (assets), a product normally sold through direct mail.

However, resources for increasing product sales through direct marketing were extremely limited.

Therefore, the client needed to know not only which products would improve profitability, but which the bank was best positioned to sell.

The client suspected the slow loan sales volume was partly due to a confused image in the marketplace, resulting from recent acquisitions and name changes.

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge conducted our proprietary Marketing Opportunity Analysis, which included our Brand Positioning Analysis using perceptual mapping.

This analysis revealed:

What the market segments for each type of financial product (Installment Loans, Home Equities, Credit Cards, CDs Money Markets, Regular Checking Regular Savings) expected from a financial institution

That the client bank's image was indeed confused and the market did not perceive the bank to be meeting the expectations of any of the seven product segments.

That the client could not realistically compete effectively in credit cards due to strong larger, national banks that had significant competitive advantages in credit cards and due to the client's severe relative competitive disadvantage in credit cards.

That the client needed to reposition its brand image in the direction nearer to a particular bank ("Bank A"), where it could effectively compete to generate a low cost of funds by increasing regular checking and regular savings deposits, while

generating high interest income from marketing various types of installment loans (e.g., auto loans, school loans, etc.) — rather than credit cards — to improve profitability.

That this repositioning strategy would require the client to compete more effectively with this particular bank (“Bank A”) in convenience.

Based on these findings, Ethridge recommended:

That the bank improve profitability by concentrating the limited direct marketing sales/promotional budget on selling three specific products: Regular Savings, Regular Checking and Installment Loans;

That the bank better meet the convenience expectation of the target market segments for these three particular types of financial products by relocating non-performing branches closer to the branches of the smaller competitor (Bank A);

That the bank develop a mass media image campaign designed to reposition the client’s image in the direction of Bank A, by emphasizing convenience attributes as an extension of existing strengths as a hometown bank.

Results of Implementing Ethridge’s Recommendations

The bank implemented Ethridge’s recommendations exactly as prescribed. As a result:

The bank significantly lowered their cost of funds by . . .

Generating more Regular Savings and Regular Checking Accounts that paid low interest rates, and by . . .

Generating significantly more installment loans (e.g., auto loans, school loans, etc).

The bank significantly improved its Brand Image/Position as a bank that met the market’s expectations.

As a result, the Director of Marketing who hired Ethridge & Associates for this project was promoted to Vice President of Marketing.

Case 2: Growing By Getting Competitor's Customers to Switch Accounts to the Bank

Before Hiring Ethridge

A community bank with several branches through a metropolitan area had made an assumption that, because there had been several acquisitions and mergers by larger banks of smaller community banks in the area that a significant number of customers of those smaller banks would switch banks to continue using a community bank. Therefore they began running a television campaign with customers looking into the camera talking about how they were independent thinkers who had switched banks and urging the audience to be independent thinkers and switch banks too.

The client bank and its advertising agency contacted Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. and asked us to design and conduct a strategic marketing research study that would answer the following questions:

What will it take for people to switch banks? What do people really care about?

Which of several messages to be tested will be most persuasive in motivating people to switch accounts to the client bank?

What is the profile of those people who are most likely to switch accounts?

What is the relative order of influence that various bank attributes (selection factors) have on people's decision to choose one bank over another?

How is the client bank perceived by the market? What is the bank's image compared to competing banks? How is it positioned relative to competing financial institutions in terms of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. conducted its proprietary Marketing Opportunity Analysis and included some custom-designed questions to address the bank's specific assumptions and goals about getting people to switch to their bank, as well as to test some message concepts. This study revealed the following discoveries.

Key Findings

The assumption that there will be a significant shift in bank accounts due to recent bank mergers and acquisitions locally was clearly wrong.

The people who were most likely to switch banks in the next 12 months were not customers of the large, surviving banks that acquired smaller banks recently, as had been assumed, or of the other major regional banks.

The people who were most likely to switch banks were more likely to be customers of smaller community banks, like the client's bank and its closest community bank competitors.

The client bank was not positioned to take business from the larger banks due to its major competitive disadvantage on branch ubiquity. The client had competitive disadvantages on four convenience attributes that ranked in the top 10 most influential attributes out of 30 attributes measured.

The fundamental issues that were most likely to cause people to switch banks were that people get angry at banks over the lack of customer/personal service and fees/service charges/interest charged that they perceive to be too high. Positively, the client bank already had image strengths on these attributes among those who knew the bank best.

The client bank was vulnerable to losing over half of its customers. Less than half of the client bank's current customers most preferred this bank as their first choice and the majority of the bank's own customers were secondary customers of the bank (i.e., who had more accounts with other banks).

Particular customers segments of the client bank that had particular types of accounts with the bank were most likely to switch specific accounts from other banks to the client bank.

Ethridge's Recommendations

Based on these key findings, Ethridge recommended that the bank take the following strategic actions.

The bank's highest priority should be to reduce the bank's own vulnerability to losing customers. To do this, the bank should develop a direct mail campaign to target its own customers who had the particular types of accounts that were most

likely to switch certain types of accounts from other banks to the client bank, to cross sell those other accounts to current customers.

Additionally, the bank should aim to take business away from the other, smaller community banks, the banks from which people are most likely to switch, and the banks from which the client bank was best positioned to take business.

The direct mail sales campaign should be reinforced by creating a new television campaign that used a problem-solution persuasion strategy and a “slice of life” vignettes, as follows.

As the problem to be resolved, these ads should use “slice of life” vignettes of people inside of other banks or on the phone with those banks experiencing poor customer service and/or high fees/charges.

The solution to the problem should then depict people inside of or on the phone with the client bank receiving a very positive, customer service experience and/or being elated about low or no fees for particular worthwhile services. The use of these examples was made possible (believable) because our image study showed that the client bank already had image strengths in these attributes among those who knew the bank best.

Summarize the solution with the copy point that the client bank “makes banking simple and easy” (an attribute that ranked very high in influencing people to choose one bank over another).

Finally, the bank should use as the overall strategic campaign theme, the slogan that (because this bank makes banking simple and easy) it offers “A Better Way of Banking” (the ultimate claim/branding/umbrella theme).

Results of Implementing Ethridge’s Recommendations

The bank implemented the recommendations exactly as prescribed and profitably increased its size by 25% over the course of the new campaign.

Government, Quasi Government, Utilities

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. (Ethridge) has over 30 years of experience in marketing, communication, research and strategic planning for a wide variety of state, county and city governments, quasi-government center city commissions, convention and visitors bureaus and government owned and publicly held utility company clients. We have helped clients successfully manage public policy issues, improve their state economic development, state tourism development, state prison systems, city downtown development, city image, community centers, transportation services, sanitation services, customer satisfaction, and environmental sustainability.

Case 1: Sustainable Shelby — A Sustainable “Smart Growth” Program for Creating a Community That Is More Livable, More Competitive and More Successful

Before Hiring Ethridge

One of the most important government agendas worldwide is “sustainability,” which has environmental, economic and quality of life implications. In general, government and business leaders have recognized that past choices have led to consequences like environmental harm, lower life expectancy rates, higher obesity rates and unacceptable infrastructure costs being transferred to our children and grandchildren.

In 2002, the forward-thinking Mayor of Shelby County, Tennessee, the largest county in the Memphis region and the 44th largest county in the nation, discerned that such problems were especially true in Shelby County. Mayor Wharton, called the current course of the region unsustainable on the basis of environmental and land use, disposable neighborhoods, deteriorating health, declining quality of life and public finances.

To address these major problems, A C Wharton, launched an ambitious smart growth program, called “Sustainable Shelby.” Having championed the Memphis region’s first smart growth program since taking office in 2002 by an executive order, Mayor Wharton launched a smart growth summit in 2003, followed by regular meetings that led to the beginnings of developing a new Unified Development Code.

To make sure the voice of the public was heard as part of the Sustainable Shelby process, Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. a public opinion research and consulting firm, was asked to assess Shelby County citizens’ level of interest and support for

guiding principles, specific strategies, and overall values of the Sustainable Shelby initiative.

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge & Associates, was hired by Shelby County Government to conduct custom-designed public opinion research, the objective of which was to create the foundation on which policies and programs were to be built; specifically, to:

Determine public opinion on guiding principles adopted in 2003 for smart growth

Determine public values affecting development — neighborhoods, “green” buildings, cost of sprawl, density, walkability, etc. — that should be incorporated into the proposed new development code

Identify key elements of sustainable development — land use, neighborhood reinvestment, green assets, and environmentally sensitive building

Gather information that becomes a frame for the development of the agenda for the future

Steven C. Ethridge met with the heads of the seven committees that Mayor Wharton had organized as part of the Sustainable Shelby agenda to combat the disturbing trend. These committees were: transportation and traffic, public buildings and public purchasing, neighborhood rebirth, public incentives, building codes, and land use and development. The purpose of these meetings was for Ethridge to consult with and advise the committee heads on how to gather information from their committee members on what each committee’s priorities were for the specific issue questions that needed to be included in the survey questionnaire.

As a result, the committees each turned in a list of question priorities. Because many of these questions were in scientific or technical language, Ethridge conducted secondary literature reviews and consulted further with each committee head to design survey questions that the average citizen would easily understand. Ethridge then drafted a questionnaire, pilot tested it to make sure that it

communicated clearly to the public and submitted it to the committee heads for approval before interviewing began.

After questionnaire approval, Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. conducted a scientific telephone survey of Shelby County residents based on a random sample of 610 completed interviews. This sample was reliable within +/- 3.9 percentage points with 95% confidence.

The next steps used a “break-through” process and technology that was in a news press release written by the County Mayor’s Office, as follows.

Since the March 6 kick-off, 130 people on the committees — transportation and traffic, public buildings and public policies, neighborhood rebirth, public incentives, environment and natural resources, building codes, and land use and development — have met to set goals, values, and specific recommendations in each of their areas.

All committees will meet together Thursday to rank the priorities for immediate action. They will use wireless keypad technology to vote on priorities at a meeting from 9 a.m. until noon, Thursday, June 19, at The Zone at FedEx Institute of Technology at the University of Memphis.

In addition, Memphis pollster Steven Ethridge will present the findings from a survey gauging public support for the general principles of smart growth, for sustainability principles, and for specific strategies. As part of the process Thursday, he will cast votes on behalf of the public based on the polling results.

“We wanted to be sure that the public had a voice in the setting of this agenda,” said Mayor Wharton. “This was the most scientific way of doing that, because the public input did not depend on who could get to a meeting or respond to an online survey. This is a breakthrough in setting public priorities in conjunction with a

committee, and to me, the addition of the technology and the scientific polling is a new way of public decision-making.”

Following presentations by Mayor Wharton and Ethridge, each committee will present its top recommendations, and all committee members will give each of them a value from 1 to 10 on a wireless keypad until all recommendations are ranked and final priorities are set.

With the priorities, Mayor Wharton said his staff, principally members of the Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Development, will develop an implementation plan in the next 90 days.

“I have never been more certain of anything than I am on the importance of this agenda,” he said. “Our citizens want a sustainable community. They may not call it that, but they want a future of walkable, healthy neighborhoods, vibrant public spaces, energy efficient buildings, and streets that serve alternative transportation like bikers, pedestrians, and public transit. Most of all, they want a community that can meet its present needs but makes sure that future generations can meet theirs.”

The 90-day priorities will be part of a complete agenda to be presented at the Sustainable Shelby Call to Action public meeting on July 8 at 2:30 p.m. at Memphis Botanic Garden. At that session, Mayor Wharton will be joined by Doug Farr, author of Sustainable Urbanism, which has been used as a framework for Sustainable Shelby’s work.

(click here for link to Press Release)

Ethridge presented the results at this Memphis Botanic Garden meeting, as described below.

Results of Ethridge's Work

The results as summarized in Shelby County's publication, *Sustainable Shelby: A Future of Choice, Not Chance — A Call To Action* (July 8, 2008), were as follows.

These results were not only used as the foundation on which committees built their recommendations, but they were used to develop the final ratings themselves. At the Sustainable Shelby Digital Congress, committee members rated each of the top recommendations, and their votes were equaled by those cast on behalf of the public based on the polling results. All in all, the public was strongly supportive of programs to make Shelby County more sustainable.

Although these issues clearly are not top-of-mind, they are nevertheless serious concerns for the public. In particular, the polling showed that the people of Shelby County are particularly prepared to support programs that create walkable neighborhoods, better coordination within government, incentives for better neighborhoods, and more attention to bike lanes.

Because the Guiding Principles from Mayor Wharton's 2003 Smart Growth Summit formed the framework for the work of Sustainable Shelby, the public was asked if they supported them. The polling showed overwhelmingly strong agreement with no fewer than 90 percent of the public agreeing with them:

We should maintain the vitality of existing neighborhoods. Maintaining appropriate infrastructure and intervening early when signs of decay become evident are two techniques that would help affect this (94% agreement).

Social capital—ties among neighborhoods, active citizen involvement in neighborhood planning and improvement—strengthens neighborhoods (93%).

We want to build a community that attracts and sustains people, and a competitive city built to accommodate the new economy, meaning a knowledge and technology-based, global economy (92%).

We now have a bias that favors scattered development at the perimeter. We should make redevelopment or urban infill development, that is, redevelopment of

existing neighborhoods and adaptively reusing existing buildings equally feasible (91%).

In evaluating development, we should calculate the total cost of development and maintenance, including the capital and operating cost borne by government, development, and the ultimate user (91%).

Identifying, marketing, and leveraging civic assets strengthens neighborhoods (90%).

Public discussion of public and private development and spending patterns should be promoted to tie spending to public policy (90%).

Case Study 2: Tunica, Mississippi Convention and Visitors Bureau Results

Similar to our case for the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development, using our Marketing Opportunity Analysis, we led the advertising agency and public relations agency to develop a campaign for the Tunica, Mississippi Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

The Tunica CVB wanted to test the hypothesis that they could target spot market advertising to selected key markets and motivate people to visit their destination that would historically have visited Las Vegas. For this purpose, Ethridge conducted Marketing Opportunity Analysis benchmark studies in both the Nashville and St. Louis media markets. Based on how Tunica's brand image was positioned in the minds of gamers in both of these markets, Ethridge recommended the brand positioning message to use in each market, as well as which media to use to reach the destination's Best Prospect Segment for increasing business in each market.

Based on Ethridge's recommendations, the Tunica CVB and its ad agency developed a new campaign that positioned the destination as the Las Vegas of the South. This changed perceptions of that destination from one whose greatest image strength was having "RV parks for camping" to a world-class resort destination.

As a result, Ethridge helped reposition the Tunica brand, resulting in delivering \$21.0 million in revenue increase to \$60.7 million in one of the spot markets and with a 29:1 ROI and an 88% increase in top-line revenue in the other spot market leading to a 46:1 ROI within six months.

These results won the Travel and Tourism Research Association's (TTRA) Innovative Research Award which Ethridge presented at the TTRA's International Conference in New Orleans in 2005.

Health Care Services

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. has more than 30 years of experience in marketing, communication and public opinion research for health care organizations of all types. We have served clients in the health care industry in the states of Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri, and North Carolina. While we could present dozens of case studies to represent our work in this industry, we have chosen three, as described below.

Case 1: LeBonheur Children's Hospital Fundraising Strategy

Before Hiring Ethridge

As a charitable hospital, in early 2004, LeBonheur Children's Hospital, was in the process of developing a capital campaign. The hospital was concerned that local residents in its home town of Memphis, Tennessee might not know the importance of the hospital to the local community, how it is funded, or the need for capital funding. The marketing objectives of the capital campaign were as follows:

Develop a strategy to achieve mass-market/grass roots opinion support for the campaign in the region served by Le Bonheur Children's Hospital

Develop a messaging strategy to solicit contributions from affluent individuals

To help in developing this strategy, the hospital and its ad agency wanted to conduct a custom-designed Community Survey to develop a strategy to raise money for a local capital campaign

After Hiring Ethridge

The hospital and its advertising agency asked Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C., a communication consulting and research firm, with considerable research in developing successful, national fund-raising campaigns for non-profit organizations, to conduct custom-designed marketing research. The objectives of this study, broadly speaking, were to:

Quantify perceptions, the giving behavior, and attitudes toward giving among the public, including perceptions of the adequacy of funding for children's medical services

Quantify predisposition toward giving to children's medical services

Quantify perceptions of LeBonheur and, in particular, perceptions of whether the hospital's buildings and facilities were adequate for both current and future community needs for children's medical services.

Test messages for their ability to motivate people to give donations to the capital campaign

Key Findings

The market perceived a need for private donations to health related organizations in general and were most likely to contribute financially to research aimed at life threatening illnesses among children.

However, Le Bonheur was not yet widely perceived as a fundraising organization. By comparison, St. Jude Hospital was.

Ethridge concluded that these findings had three strategic implications.

First, LeBonheur had to educate the market about its need for private funding and build the awareness of LeBonheur as a fundraising hospital.

Second, any effort to raise money for research aimed at life threatening illnesses among children would be in competition with St. Jude.

Third, taking these two implications together, to be most successful at fundraising for healthcare services aimed at children, LeBonheur would have to differentiate itself from St. Jude in terms of why people should contribute financially to Le Bonheur either instead of St. Jude or in addition to contributing to St. Jude.

Ethridge's Recommendations

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. recommended that, to be most successful, the capital campaign message should achieve the following communication goals:

Reinforce the necessity of Le Bonheur to the residents of Memphis and their families.

Inform the public about how many families use Le Bonheur hospital, to overcome the tendency to perceive that it is less necessary for “me and my family” and to bring the necessity of the hospital “closer to home.”

Conditionally link the need to modernize and upgrade the hospital’s facilities with the hospital’s ability to provide expanded quality healthcare for children. In other words the message should communicate that, if the hospital can receive funding to modernize and upgrade its facilities, then it will be able to offer the highest quality pediatric heart surgery in the country, expand its wellness advocacy program, buy the latest medical equipment to save children’s lives, and attract the best children’s doctors to Memphis. These services are ones that Le Bonheur should use to differentiate itself from St. Jude to the greatest extent possible.

Results of Following Ethridge’s Recommendations

This study summarized above was presented in March 2004. On June 28, 2005, LeBonheur announced their \$100 million capital campaign to build a new facility. Now, six years later, with the help of our research and citizens who donated, the hospital will realize its vision of providing the best health care to all children. Less than a year after that announcement, as of June 5, 2010, they had raised \$87.1 million. At this writing, as of September 10, 2011, the campaign has raised \$104 million. Today, the \$340 million campaign is open and operational.

Case 2: Overcoming a “Not in My Back Yard” Attitude to Build a New Hospital

Before Hiring Ethridge

Baptist Memorial Health Care, a world leader in quality healthcare, headquartered in Memphis, TN, wanted to build a new hospital branch in a suburban community, Collierville, TN. When word reached the Collierville community that Baptist was considering building this branch, there was a “fire storm” of both positive and negative public reaction. Citizens who responded positively recognized the need for a hospital in their community. However, citizens who reacted negatively were more concerned about the commercialization that building the hospital would bring near to their home. Therefore, the hospital faced a major public relations battle before they could get community approval to build the new hospital. The hospital

wanted to conduct a Community Attitude Survey to understand opinions on the issue and the messages that the hospital would need to use to gain public approval of the new hospital.

After Hiring Ethridge

Having conducted numerous image and positioning studies for Baptist Memorial Health care using our proprietary Marketing Opportunity Analysis service, as well as Employee Satisfaction Surveys among doctors, nurses and administrative staff in the past, Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. was contacted to conduct a custom-designed, scientific Community Attitude Survey in Collierville on this issue, using a scientific telephone sample survey methodology. We found the barriers to approval and the benefits that outweighed the barriers in the minds of the majority of those who represented the “Not in My Backyard” and the “undecided” groups of citizens. We recommended the strategic message themes that the hospital would need to use in the public relations campaign to convert people from these negative or neutral segments into the segments of citizens who supported building the new hospital.

Results of Following Ethridge’s Recommendations

The hospital’s communication department followed Ethridge’s recommendations. As a result, the hospital branch gained public approval, was opened, and has been benefiting the Collierville community now for several years (<http://www.baptistonline.org/facilities/collierville/>).

Case 3: NOT Following Ethridge’s Advice Results in a Marketing Misfire

Before Hiring Ethridge

A not-for-profit hospital in a relatively small suburban community was concerned that they were about to lose market share because a competing hospital in their market was about to be bought out by a national for-profit hospital chain. The hospital’s Board of Directors and its advertising and public relations agency created the idea of emphasizing to the market that their hospital was a locally

owned, not-for-profit hospital, that had been serving local patients with local doctors and nurses dating back to the Civil War, and that all of the money that comes into the hospital stays local. The idea was to contrast this hospital's non-profit status with the for-profit status of the other hospital that would now be owned by a national chain, implying that the doctors might come in from out of town and that the profits from the hospital would go out of town and no longer support the local economy. The Board of Directors and the agency wanted to hire Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to confirm that this was the right strategy.

After Hiring Ethridge

Note, first, that this situation is typical to what marketing consulting and research firms face all too often from clients. The client's mind is already made up about a creative idea that they think will work and they want to do research to "prove" that they are right. This is what the famous advertising agency executive David Ogilvy referred to in his book *Confessions of An Advertising Man*, when he said that many clients and agencies want to use research "like a drunkard would use a lamp post: for support rather than illumination."

Before we even designed a research project, Ethridge advised the hospital's Board of Directors and the agency that, based on our many years of doing marketing research for hospitals, it would be a mistake to use the strategy that they had conceived. The reason, we explained, was that people care more about health care benefits — like having a high quality of health care overall and holding down the cost of healthcare — than about whether a hospital was for-profit or not-for-profit, or whether the hospital is locally owned, and whether the "profits" of a hospital remain local. True to the characteristics of how David Ogilvy said clients often use research, the client went ahead with producing ads and press releases according to their pre-conceived strategy even while we were designing and conducting the research.

To address this issue, we used our very adaptable, comprehensive marketing planning and benchmarking tool, our proprietary Marketing Opportunity Analysis. Key findings from the study were as follows:

As we had hypothesized, the most influential attributes on the market's preference of hospitals in this market were the overall quality of healthcare provided, holding down the cost of healthcare, having highly skilled doctors on staff, and having highly skilled nurses on staff.

In this particular marketing situation (Caution: these findings have not been the same in all geographic markets!), the consumer market was much more likely to prefer a for-profit hospital than a not-for-profit hospital.

The reason was that "for-profit" meant, to this market, that a hospital had more money with which to pay for up-to-date medical equipment, highly skilled doctors, and highly skilled nurses.

In contrast, "not-for-profit" meant to this market that a hospital had out-of-date equipment and less skilled doctors and nurses on staff.

The market was mostly unaware of whether the client was a not-for-profit hospital or a for-profit hospital.

The client hospital had the strongest image of all hospitals in its service area on the attributes has a high quality of health care overall and working to hold down the cost of healthcare.

Due to the client hospital's image on quality of healthcare provided, it ranked in first place as the most preferred hospital in the market.

Ethridge's Recommendations

These findings confirmed Ethridge's hypothesis that it would be a mistake for the client to emphasize its not-for-profit status. Based on the research findings, we cautioned that if the hospital were to run the campaign that they previously had in mind, that it would actually weaken the hospital's image as a hospital that provides a high quality of healthcare overall and cause the hospital to lose its enviable most preferred status in the market. We recommended instead that the hospital develop a campaign that would reinforce its position as the highest quality hospital in the market, its efforts to hold down the cost of healthcare, and its highly skilled doctors and nurses.

Results of NOT Following Ethridge's Recommendations

As sometimes happens due to management's psychological investment in their own ideas, internal office politics, and in this case, because they had gone ahead and invested dollars in producing their previously conceived campaign, the Board of Directors ignored our advice and insisted that the agency run the campaign that they had in mind before we did the research. The agency reluctantly did as the Board directed, but asked us to do a follow-up, post-campaign repeat of the Marketing Opportunity Analysis and compare it to the benchmark study to measure the effects of the campaign.

The follow-up study showed that, because of the ill-conceived campaign that the Board of Directors insisted upon, the client hospital dropped dramatically from first place to third place as the most preferred hospital in the market and the hospital's image in providing a high quality of healthcare overall had been destroyed. Its image on this attribute dropped from the category of a competitive advantage to that of a competitive disadvantage.

The damage of not following our advice was so severe that it is taking years for the hospital to rebuild its image and market share. As has been said, "It takes a long time to build a good reputation, but you can lose one overnight."

The lessons from this and many other cases like it, in which clients either did not do research or did not follow our research-based advice are:

When the stakes are high, never rely on judgment alone but use scientific research to increase certainty that you are making the right decision.

When stakes are high, always test your assumptions using valid, reliable, scientific research.

Listen to the advice of people who have done thousands of marketing and public opinion research studies on similar topics, because with thousands of studies comes knowledge and wisdom.

Once your assumptions and judgment have been tested by good, scientific research, and someone with years of experience who knows how to correctly interpret the research has given you research-based advice, recognize that because that experienced advice is research based, it represents wisdom; then follow the wisdom of the advice, for the opposite of wisdom is foolishness, and fools suffer to their own peril, often beyond hope of repair.

Law Firms / Attorneys

Case 1: Settling a Name Infringement Legal Case

Before Hiring Ethridge

A local bank that operated in a small number of contiguous counties had been using the name of their bank for nearly 100 years. A larger bank that had used the same name in a neighboring state bought out one of the client bank's competitors that operated branches in several of the client's service counties. The client bank sued the larger bank for infringing on the use of their name.

This situation is one in which public opinion research is admissible as evidence in a court of law. For this reason, the client bank's law firm hired Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to conduct a public opinion study. The objectives of this research were to understand:

How much equity the client bank had in the name in the bank's counties served

How much name confusion was occurring in the market due to the new bank's entry to the market

How much potential loss of business the new bank was causing for the client bank due to this name confusion

After Hiring Ethridge

As often happens with clients, this law firm contacted us late in the process; in this case, just a few days before this case was scheduled to go to court. Fortunately, due to our experience in very fast-paced political campaigns, we were able to design and complete a custom designed public opinion study within just a few days; so quickly, in fact, that it surprised the attorney who was not aware of how quickly firms with political polling experience can complete polling projects.

When the study was completed, we wrote a report and presented the results to the client attorney. He scheduled a "deposition" so that both he and the other bank's attorney could depose Ethridge as an expert witness on the quality, validity and meaning of the poll.

As a result of our quality research, the client bank was able to get the infringing bank to settle out of court quickly, to the client's satisfaction, at a cost that was far less than it would have been had they gone to court.

Case 2: Settling a Defamation of Character Case

Before Hiring Ethridge

A national media firm had run a series of stories on a public issue that contained negative information about an individual who was involved in the issue. The individual sued the media for slander and defamation of character. As part of the lawsuit, the individual hired a different polling firm (NOT Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C.) to conduct a public opinion poll. The purpose of that other firm's poll was to attempt to establish the effects of the media stories on negative perceptions of the individual. The law firm that was defending the media firm hired Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. as an advisor on how to evaluate the quality and validity of public opinion polls and to evaluate the quality and validity of the other polling firm's study.

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge met with the client law firm to understand the issues and the evidences in the case. We then provided to the law firm a list of questions to ask of the other polling firm as "discovery" in the legal case and how to evaluate the answers to those questions. Then, once the other polling firm responded, Ethridge wrote a critique of their answers to the question. We were able to raise questions about the quality and validity of the other firm's poll that they could not answer. We were also able to demonstrate how their poll sample design, questions and analysis were incapable of proving the claims that the other side of the case were trying to base on the poll. As a result, the case was settled out of court to the media firm's benefit.

Case 3: Winning a Mock Jury Trial

Before Hiring Ethridge

A trial attorney was advocating on behalf of a defendant in a high-stakes court trial. The attorney had several different arguments that he could use to win the case and he wanted to know the relative persuasive power of each argument. He hired Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to conduct a Mock Jury Trial to help him determine how best to win the case.

After Hiring Ethridge

We designed a Mock Jury Trial and as a result we were able to recommend to the attorney which arguments would most likely win the jury trial. As a result, the attorney won his case.

Case 4: A Poll and Expert Witness on Stereotypes as Context for a Legal Case

Before Hiring Ethridge

A legal firm had a case for which polling was admissible as evidence in courtroom testimony. The issue had to do with a question of whether someone with a certain type of background would be perceived in a particular stereotypical way among a certain population segment. The law firm hired Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to measure the extent to which certain segments of the population held particular stereotypical opinions.

After Hiring Ethridge

We consulted with the law firm to develop the questionnaire and then conducted a scientific telephone sample survey of the target audience. The results showed a clear majority of the population held stereotypical opinions as hypothesized. Steven C. Ethridge served as an expert witness on the stand to present the results of the poll before the judge and the jury. The poll was well received as valid evidence in the case.

Major Brands / Corporations

While Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. (Ethridge) has helped dozens of major corporations, both national and international, improve the external marketing and internal employee communication, we have selected the following case studies as illustrative of our work in these areas.

Case 1: Hotel Brand Positioning (An External Marketing Example)

Before Hiring Ethridge

A new hotel brand had strategically positioned itself on the industry price-continuum in the low-mid-scale position, in-between a mid-scale hotel and an economy hotel. The rationale was to take away market share from the older brands in the mid-scale segment by offering a higher quality product at a slightly lower price, while taking away business from the older economy brands by offering a better product at a slightly higher price.

After Hiring Ethridge

The company asked Ethridge to conduct an image study to confirm whether the market perceived the brand to be positioned this way relative to competition. Ethridge conducted our Marketing Opportunity Analysis study and made two important discoveries.

First, the market perceived the quality (price/value) of the new hotel to be so good that it rivaled some of the upper-mid-scale hotels, well above the intended lower-mid-scale position.

Second, people who had traditionally been staying in the older, more run-down mid-scale brand hotels were willing to pay more for the value of this new brand to stay in a newer, higher quality hotel.

These discoveries led the new brand to increase its price point (average daily room rate) and re-position itself in the upper-mid-scale position, supported by a national brand image positioning advertising campaign. As a result of discovering that the perceived price/value of the brand allowed it to charge more, the hotel was able to be far more profitable than management originally intended the brand to be.

Furthermore, as a result of this increased profit margin, the hotel brand was able to see more franchisees on building hotels of this brand. This caused the brand to be one of the fastest growing hotel brands in the world.

Case 2: A National Heavy Construction Equipment Company (An Internal Employee Communication Example)

Before Hiring Ethridge

A national heavy construction equipment company had been rapidly growing through acquisitions and was experiencing “growing pains” in the areas of service quality, employee communication, and employee satisfaction. As one means of improving the situation, the company had recently established a Business Service Center. The purpose of the Business Service Center was to provide high quality “internal customer” service between the centralized corporate office and the various branch offices around the country. The Business Service Center was to be the hub of communication between managers and employees in various field locations around the country and central departments like Human Resources, Payroll, Information Technology and various equipment specialty departments.

After Hiring Ethridge

The company contacted Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. (Ethridge) to identify where customer service and communication problems were and how to correct them, plus to measure the level of service quality satisfaction with the company’s Business Service Center. Ethridge custom-designed and conducted an organizational communication study that consisted of three phases as follows.

Phase 1 was a focus group among all senior corporate officers of the company, including the President and Vice Presidents over major corporate divisions. The purpose of these groups was to clarify the expectations of the Business Service Center, expectations of employees, and management’s perceptions about what the communication issues were. The purpose of this phase was to identify the range of issues, perceptions and possible solutions in the minds of leadership.

Phase 2 was in-depth, qualitative telephone interviews with a small, random sample (cross-section) of employees across all geographic areas and departments to identify the range of issues, perceptions and possible solutions in the minds of employees.

Phase 3 was a quantitative telephone survey with a randomly selected, adequately large sample of management and employees throughout the entire national

corporation to quantify how prevalent each issue and perception was, as well as to test concepts about which solutions would work best to correct the communication problems.

Phases 1 and 2 were analyzed using our Motivational Linguistics Analysis® to uncover the motivating factors that were driving management expectations, perceptions and employee satisfaction/dissatisfaction, as well as the correct corporate language (“buzz words”/jargon) to use in designing the Phase 3 questionnaire. In the Phase 3 analysis, the advanced, multivariate statistical analyses of CHAID, factor analysis and regression analysis were used to identify the relative importance of those factors (to see our multivariate analytical capabilities [click here.](#))

Our analysis, found important discoveries (among others) about:

How the culture of the organization and employee satisfaction had been negatively impacted by inadequate communication with employee, as well as what specific messages and media to use to improve the situation

The need to update and communicate the Corporate Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Corporate Values to reflect changes in management’s paradigms as the company had grown

A lack of adequate awareness that the Business Service Center existed and what its purpose was, both among employees in the various branch offices and among employees in the Business Service Center

The need to train employees in the Business Services Center and various other corporate functional departments in Becoming Customer Focused and Communication Skills to equip them to be better prepared to serve the branches

As a result, this corporation was able to improve its training and employee communication leading to an improved customer-service oriented culture, higher employee satisfaction, and greater profitability due to lower employee turnover and higher quality service.

News Media/Publishing

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. has major credibility with the media at the federal, state and local levels. Our polls and expert opinions have been reported in The New York Times, USA Today, The L.A. Times, The Polling Report, Real Clear Politics, Bill Hobbs Report and many other publications. Moreover, our firm has served as pollster for the Memphis, TN areas largest regional paper, The Commercial Appeal, since 1995 and has served as a political analyst for the Memphis area's TV News Channel 3 as far back as 1991. Steven C. Ethridge is recognized, particularly in Memphis and the Mid-South, as being one of the fastest, most accurate, objective, reliable, ethical and effective public opinion pollsters in the business.

Our polls for political campaigns and non-profit 501c3 organizations have appeared in numerous newspapers, while our economic and sociological studies done for government clients have appeared both in the news and in numerous city planning documents.

For a sample list of our polls and other studies in the news, please click on our press page. Below is a case study of one of our recent political polls for The Commercial Appeal. This is followed by a case study of how we helped improve a magazine publication.

Case 1: Understanding Social Trends

Since 1995, Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. has had the privilege of serving the Memphis area's largest newspaper, The Commercial Appeal, in conducting numerous custom designed polls on a wide variety of social and issues. As one example, in 1998, as our nation approached the 40- year anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, we were asked to conduct a scientific poll of the Mid-South region to assess public perceptions and attitudes about whether and to what extent the area has made progress in racial relations. One of the many articles that the newspaper published on this poll is copied below from their website:

Poll shows many think race relations making headway

By Jacinthia Jones

Sunday, January 27, 2008

Residents in the region where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated nearly 40 years ago see great progress in civil rights and race relations. But huge differences persist between blacks and whites in many areas.

A poll of racial attitudes commissioned by The Commercial Appeal found a majority of people in Shelby and DeSoto counties — both black and white — were optimistic about race relations and believe the races are getting along better today.

Specifically, 88 percent of black respondents and 91 percent of white respondents believe progress has been made on the civil-rights front.

And 74 percent of all respondents feel blacks and whites are getting along better than in the past, according to a telephone poll of 400 residents in the two counties conducted this month by Ethridge and Associates LLC.

“We noticed a lot of positive things,” said former University of Memphis communications professor Dr. John Bakke, who was a consultant on the poll. “There are clear differences on issues (between blacks and whites), but things are not as racially polarized as one might think.”

An overwhelming majority of both races, for example, believe those in the other race should stop dwelling on the past and recognize the progress that has been made.

But a definite divide emerges on a number of issues. Some of the biggest gaps between black and white poll respondents are:

More blacks said they experienced discrimination in the last year than whites (40 percent to 28 percent).

Blacks are more than twice as likely as whites to say racism plays a big part in a lack of good-paying jobs.

Similarly, half of blacks polled believe the criminal-justice system is biased against blacks, compared to just one-quarter of whites. By comparison, nearly half of whites think the criminal-justice system is unbiased, compared to just one-quarter of blacks.

Twice as many blacks favor affirmative-action programs as a means of overcoming past discrimination. Conversely, nearly half of whites, compared to just one-tenth of blacks, opposed such programs.

Both races believe racism is a two-way street.

Whites believe nearly half of blacks are racist, while blacks think almost as many whites are racist. Looking inwardly, whites were more likely to perceive a higher percentage of their own race as racist than blacks.

However, whites are more likely than blacks to consider racism to be a “very big” or “big” problem (65percent to 46percent).

The single most unifying issue between blacks and whites polled was crime, with both groups pegging it as a bigger problem than racism.

Out of six social issues respondents were asked to rank, crime topped the list, with 76 percent ranking it as a “very big” or “big” problem. Under this same measure, racism came in a distant fourth — tied with quality of public education and behind concerns about children born to single mothers (second) and students dropping out of high school (third). Rounding out the list was concern about the lack of good-paying jobs.

Still, Bakke said that doesn't mean people don't think racism is a problem.

“The majority of people do see that racism is a part of all the other problems,” he said. “So the solution to the other problems have to deal with racism. You can't separate them, particularly in this population with the history here.”

Another finding of the poll highlighted wide economic disparities between blacks and whites in Shelby and DeSoto counties.

Black households had far lower income levels; 76 percent of black households polled reported incomes less than \$60,000 annually, while 58 percent of white households reported incomes of more than \$60,000 per year.

Despite the disparities in their economic conditions, both races — a full 95 percent — expressed satisfaction with their lives here. That contentment encompasses even those who believed that race relations are getting worse and that things have gotten worse for black people since King was killed.

Although not a statistically significant difference, slightly more blacks said they are “very satisfied” with their lives than whites (62 percent to 59 percent).

“Blacks see themselves as far better off than they’re often perceived,” pollster Steven Ethridge concluded.

Dr. Bill E. Lawson, who teaches African-American social and political philosophy at the University of Memphis, attributes a lot of the upbeat attitude to the affordability of the area.

“This area seems to afford people a good quality of life. When people are happy with that and their social interaction is pleasant, then they tend to feel good.”

And in a region where issues of race seem to permeate nearly every aspect of life, blacks and whites in the Memphis area seemed generally more optimistic about the state of race relations than the nation in general.

A national survey by the Pew Research Center last November found that just 20 percent of black Americans and 37 percent of white Americans felt things were better for blacks now than five years ago.

Comparatively, in the CA’s poll, 77 percent of blacks and 73 percent of whites in Shelby and DeSoto counties believed black people in Memphis and the Mid-South were better off than five years ago.

Ethridge said the local numbers are probably a truer reflection of race relations, partly because here — unlike many other areas of the country — blacks and whites are both in large numbers and interact with each other daily.

Perceptions of people in many cities are often shaped by how the national media portrays race relations, rather than through personal experience.

“I don’t want to come off as Pollyannish here,” Bakke said, “but I do believe that Memphis has an inferiority complex and beats itself up too much.”

The poll findings suggest that there’s a strong element of goodwill here that people should tap into rather than focusing on the negatives, he said.

“I really think that the racism in many ways is like smoking — it’s really become unfashionable, not popular (and is) rapidly diminishing. However, the fact that it’s diminishing makes it even more painful when we’re reminded that it isn’t gone.

“Now, when we do run into it, it hits us in the face.”

– Jacinthia Jones: 529-2780

Case 2: Tracking Political Campaigns

A second way that we have helped media is through using custom-designed research and strategic polling tracking trends in public opinion about public policy issues and political campaigns. Our most recent polling about a political campaign for our client, The Commercial Appeal, like all of our published polls, very clearly demonstrates the accuracy of our political polling.

To compare the accuracy of the last polls taken by various firms before the election, two things have to be kept in mind.

First, they are not comparable because things can change even up to the day before and the day of the election.

Second, if you're going to go ahead and make that comparison anyway, you must adjust for undecided voters, otherwise the poll numbers tend to be much lower than the election results.

Regarding the issue of adjusting for the undecided voters, two points need to be made from other authoritative sources:

“Mythically, undecided voters are the most serious students of the process, reserving their judgment until all the facts are in; they make up their minds as they enter the voting booth. In reality, undecided voters usually don't know or care who's running and are most likely not to vote at all. . . . So, don't worry about the undecideds.” (The Irrelevance of the Undecided Voters, in *The New Prince*, Dick Morris, Renaissance Books, Los Angeles, 1999, pp. 220-221).

It is common practice in the polling industry when comparing the latest poll results taken before an election to the election results to take the “undecided” and “refused” responses out of the base and then re-percent the figures to the base of people who answered the question.

This is known as the “Proportional Allocation Method” (see, “In Defense of Polling,” by Kenneth Warren, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 2003, pp. 287-288; 319-326).

This method assumes, like the Dick Morris quote above, that most “undecided” voters are not as knowledgeable and end up not voting at all and if they do vote, in

all but the rarest of cases, they tend to split among the candidates in the same proportions as those who were decided when the poll was taken.

Using the proportional allocation method, the results of the last polls before the 2007 Memphis mayoral election are compared to the actual election results in the following table. Using the standard adjustment procedure that is described above, in the table below, the “undecided” and “refused” voters were taken out of the base and the numbers were “re-percented” to the base of people who answered the question. For example, in the Ethridge poll, 35% were either “Undecided” (22%) or “refused” to answer the election question (14%).

As this table shows, on both an unadjusted (5 points) and an adjusted basis (8 points), Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C.’s poll more accurately predicted the spread between the top two candidates (8 points) than did either the Rasmussen poll (1 point unadjusted; 1 point adjusted) or the Yacoubian poll (2 points adjusted; 3 points unadjusted). All of the other polling firms, even though their polls were taken closer to election day than ours, showed the race “too close to call” (within the margin of error). Ours was the only poll that showed Willie Herenton would win by a significant margin.

Comparison of Accuracy of Last Polls Taken Before the Election							
		Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C.		Rasmussen Poll		Yacoubian Research	
Interviewing Dates	Oct. 8	Sept. 23-25		Sept. 29-30		Sept. 20-24	
	Actual Vote	Polled Vote	Re-Percented Vote	Polled Vote	Re-Percented Vote	Polled Vote	Re-Percented Vote
Margin of Error	Na	+/- 4.4	+/- 5.4	+/- 4.4	+/- 4.52	+/- 4.8	+/- 5.4
Willie Herenton	42%] +8	24%] +5	37%] +8	36%] +1	38%] +1	30%] +2	38%] +3
Carol Chumney	34%]	19%]	29%]	35%]	37%]	28%]	35%]
Herman Morris	22%	19%	29%	22%	23%	20%	25%
Others	1%	3%	5%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Re-Percented Base*	99%	65%	100%	95%	100%	79%	100%
Number of Interviews	na	n=500	n=319	n=500	n=475	n=400	n=316

* To Take Undecided and Refusals Out of the Base.
 Note: percentages may not add exactly due to computer rounding.

The astute reader of the table above will wonder why Ethridge’s numbers for the top two candidates were deflated compared to the other polls. The reason is that The Commercial Appeal had a standard practice of telling respondents in the introduction to the survey that the poll was being done for The Commercial Appeal. In this particular race, incumbent Mayor Willie Herenton had made a

convincing case to his voting base that the newspaper was biased against him. This caused many of his voters, and some of Chumney's, who were polled to refuse to answer the election question: a phenomena that we have often seen in campaigns involving Herenton. This meant that to be interpreted properly, the responses to this question had to be adjusted to a new base, as shown in the "re-percented" column above. A reporter for The Commercial Appeal got this right, when he reported on his blog, Eye on Politics that:

Herenton's supporters often declare that polls have been very wrong when it comes to measuring his actual level of electoral support, the idea being that white voters who like him are reluctant to say so and black voters are suspicious of answering polls. In a final poll conducted for the 2007 race . . . Ethridge surmised that if many of the people who were refusing to participate in the poll were indeed Herenton supporters, he could likely get more than 40 percent of the vote — very close to his final tally of 42 percent. Zack McMillin, Eye on Politics, MemphisNewsBlog.com, on August 13, 2009 2:42 PM

Note that we conducted several polls for The Commercial Appeal in this race. Earlier polls showed that Herenton would have a difficult time winning (note from the table above that he won with less than 50% of the vote). Later polls showed trends shifting away from Chumney and toward Morris. However, after our last poll was conducted for The Commercial Appeal, our private polling for City Council races showed that the trend shifted away from Morris toward Chumney for second place. Those private polls were not published. This trend in Chumney's favor in the race for second place began after our latest poll for The Commercial Appeal and thus was not reflected in any of the reporting on our polls.

Case 3: Enhancing the Success of Publications

Another way that we help media and publications is helping them enhance the marketability and success of their publications. One example of this is the client QSource's Quality Source magazine as described below.

Before Hiring Ethridge

QSource, Tennessee's Quality Improvement Organization for Medicare beneficiaries and their healthcare providers, was coming up on a contract renewal date of August 2005, for their magazine Quality Source. Therefore, in March, 2005, QSource asked Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C., a marketing and public opinion research firm with extensive experience in both health care and communication, to conduct a public opinion research study to evaluate and enhance Quality Source. The objectives of this research, generally speaking, were to gain a better understanding of both the readership and the creative effectiveness of the publication.

After Hiring Ethridge

To achieve the objectives of this study, Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. designed and conducted a study using our Message Testing service with two phases. Phase 1 was a quantitative web survey among medical professionals to identify, segment and profile readers and non-readers of the magazine, to measure readership of past issues, what they liked and disliked about the magazine, and the usefulness of the magazine. Phase 2 was a focus group among medical professionals in the target audience to generate suggestions for how to improve the magazine in terms of its branding, color, layout, relevancy/value of information content, readability and test future creative concepts for the magazine.

Key Findings

Our study concluded that the Quality Source magazine had been a huge success. It had a very high delivery rate; readership rate; favorable opinion; usefulness/value of content; a very high readability; a high brand recognition; an easy-to-follow layout; and very little to be approved upon. The study also found that a majority of

the readers and prospective readers would prefer to receive the publication by an email newsletter rather than in print.

Ethridge's Recommendations

Although the magazine had been a huge success, there were nonetheless some opportunities for improving. Three recommendations were most significant. First, was to use the inside front cover of the magazine to express and reinforce a positive relationship with the readers to help them bring about improved quality. Second, was to make it clearer how every article, ad and resource piece clearly and quickly stated how that information could be used, practically, by the reader's organization, to improve health care quality. Third, we recommended that the publication begin saving money by giving readers the option of receiving it by email rather than by mail.

Results of Following Ethridge's Recommendations

QSource made minor improvements in the publication and met their goal of renewing their contract for the Quality Source magazine. They also gradually began saving money by sending the publication as a "e-newsletter" rather than by print. For a copy of the current e-newsletter that reflects our recommendations click [here](#).

For more information about Ethridge's work for media and publications, please click [here](#) to see our press coverage.

**Non-Profits / Ministries / Churches / Schools /
Foundations / Associations / 501c3s**

Case 1: Young America's Foundation/Reagan Ranch

Like most of our clients, the Young America's Foundation, is a repeat business client. The following are two brief case studies of how we helped this non-profit organization.

Project A: Raising Money to Buy the Reagan Ranch

Before Hiring Ethridge

Former President Ronald Reagan was aging and he and Nancy Reagan wanted to preserve their Ranch, where many historical presidential events had occurred, as a national treasure. At the time, the federal government under President Clinton had little to no interest in purchasing and preserving the ranch.

The Young America's Foundation (YAF), a conservative organization committed to ensuring that increasing numbers of young Americans understand and are inspired by the ideas of individual freedom, a strong national defense, free enterprise, and traditional values, wanted to step in to save President Reagan's Western White House, Rancho del Cielo. YAF wanted to purchase the ranch to preserve it as a living monument to Ronald Reagan to pass on Ronald Reagan's ideas to future generations.

To help them develop an effective fundraising campaign, the YAF and its fundraising consulting firm SCA, contacted Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. for strategic communication consulting and research on ways to develop the campaign. We provided the research and consulting described below that helped the YAF raise the money to buy the ranch.

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. conducted Donor Motivational Research using our proprietary Motivational Linguistics Analysis®. Using these powerful research methodologies, we discovered the right strategic message, themes, key words, key phrases, visual symbols and spokespersons to use in a video direct mail fundraising campaign. In a very short period of time, this direct mail campaign raised \$7 million and eventually raise more than twice that. At the time when the campaign had raised its first \$7 million, the President of Young America’s Foundation wrote us a testimonial letter summarizing how our work had helped them achieve this success. An extract from this letter is provided below and a copy of the full letter can be found by clicking [here](#).

“Dear Steve: I am writing to let you know what a tremendous contribution your research and consulting made to the success of the Ronald Reagan Historical Trust fundraising campaign. This campaign may be the most successful fundraising campaign this decade. So far, we have raised \$7 million dollars and the money is still pouring in. Your research helped us tap the ‘responsive chord’ among conservative donors that motivated donors to reach deep into their pocketbooks and write very sizeable contribution checks . . . Steve, on behalf of Ronald and Nancy Reagan, the Ronald Reagan Historical Trust and the owners of the ranch, the Young America’s Foundation, I want to express a heartfelt thank you for a job well done. We will heartily recommend Ethridge & Associates to any organization that wishes to use public opinion research to help it craft a winning message. Sincerely, Ron Robinson, President, Young America’s Foundation, Santa Barbara, California.

Project B: Building the Reagan Center

Before Hiring Ethridge

Several years after buying the Reagan Ranch, the Young America’s Foundation had the vision of building the Reagan Center in Downtown Santa Barbara, California. As the principal outreach organization of the Conservative Movement, the Foundation wanted to build a center that could be used to introduce thousands

of American youth to Reagan's conservative principles of individual freedom, a strong national defense, free enterprise, and traditional values. President Reagan committed himself to reaching young people with his ideas — a goal that is also central to the Foundation's mission. Building the Reagan Ranch Center would continue Reagan's legacy of ideas.

Again, to help raise the necessary money to achieve their vision and mission, The Young America's Foundation and SCA turned to Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. for strategic communication consulting and research to help them develop an effective capital campaign.

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. conducted another Donor Motivational Research using our proprietary Motivational Linguistics Analysis®. Again, using these powerful research methodologies, we discovered the right strategic message, themes, key words, key phrases, visual symbols and spokespersons to use in a video direct mail fundraising campaign to raise the necessary money. Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. helped the Foundation raise the millions of dollars that were needed to build The Reagan Ranch Center.

As a result, The Young America's Foundation is better able to accomplish their mission by providing essential conferences, seminars, educational materials, internships, and speakers to young people across the country. The Reagan Ranch Center in downtown Santa Barbara is a "schoolhouse for Reaganism" where young and old alike can visit and learn more about one of America's greatest presidents.

Case 2: George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens

Before Hiring Ethridge

George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens had hired SCA to help them develop a specialized fundraising campaign. SCA turned to Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. again for strategic communication consulting and research to help them craft a fundraising message.

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. conducted a Donor Motivational Research using our proprietary Motivational Linguistics Analysis®. Using these powerful research methodologies, we discovered the right strategic message, themes, key words, key phrases, visual symbols and spokespersons to use in a video direct mail fundraising campaign to raise money. As a direct result of our research and consulting, Mount Vernon broke 150 year records in their fundraising, as testified to below.

“Steve Ethridge’s firm understands how to get inside the hearts and minds of the donor audience to discover what to say to motivate them. Due to his innovative linguistics analysis, we were able to implement winning campaign messages that significantly strengthened our case of support for national clients. In fact, in the case of Mount Vernon he helped us to see [that] the visual imagery used for marketing President George Washington needed to change and the language had to better capture the fondness American’s felt toward our first President. As a result, we broke 150-year fundraising records and saw contributions over \$1.0 million through the mail. To locate a vendor like Ethridge & Associates has been a great find.” Stephen Clouse, President, Stephen Clouse & Associates, Washington, D.C.

Case 3: Citizens for Community Values

Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. has had the privilege of working for Citizens for Community Values in Memphis, TN, to help them achieve this mission by providing communication consulting and research of two types:

Community Attitude Surveys – to quantify the public’s attitudes toward sexually oriented businesses

A Donor Motivational Survey — among donors and prospective donors to help CCV determine what to say, how to say it, to whom to say it, where to say it and when to say it to significantly increase their funds raised.

Most recently, to help CCV raise more money and expand their outreach, CCV asked Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to conduct a Donor Motivational Survey to help them develop a fundraising campaign. We custom designed a survey and completed in-depth interviews among CCV’s board members, donors and prospective donors. The objectives of this survey were to find out:

Why donors had given in the past?

How they viewed the image and effectiveness of CCV?

Why prospective donors would donate in the future?

What CCV needed to do and say to maximize future donations?

Based on the findings from this research, we recommended the key message themes, target audiences, and media to use in their fundraising campaign

One of the key fundraising recommendations that we made was to develop a video/DVD that makes the case for why churches, businesses, and individuals should donate to the organization. CCV created a DVD containing the testimonies of some of the women in CCV’s A Way Out Program and also the testimonies of the volunteers who serve as their mentors. This combination powerfully depicts

CCV's mission of seeing not only change in the community, but permanently changed lives of women and children.

As a result, in 2009, during the recession, CCV was able to raise more funds than they had raised in any previous year. While other similar-sized organizations were experiencing declines in the fundraising due to the recession, CCV was on a firm financial foundation due to our research and advice. Since then, most every church and foundation grant funding organization that they have shown the DVD to has made a significant donation.

Our purpose in working with non-profit organizations is to help put them on a firm financial footing so that they can focus less on needing to raise money and more on excelling at achieving their mission. This is what happened in the case of CCV when we helped them raise more money. Because of their excellence in achieving their mission, CCV's "A Way Out" program was a finalist in the Samaritan Guide's "Samaritan Award," in 2005, 2006 and 2007, which was featured in World magazine. Then, in 2008, CCV won first place in the Samaritan Award contest as the grand prize winner (of \$10,000) and was featured on the cover of the Worldmagazine for this award.

Retail Chains/Department Stores/Restaurants

Having more than 30 years experience in marketing, consulting and research with different types of retail business, we could have selected dozens of success stories as case studies. However, we have selected the following three case studies as being representative of our work in retail.

Case 1: Repositioning a Neighborhood Grocery Store Chain

Before Hiring Ethridge

Management of a new and innovative type of grocery store, a “Neighborhood Grocery Store,” wanted to learn how to get more people from the neighborhood that surrounded the store to shop there rather than at the larger supermarkets that were further away. Thus, management asked Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to conduct marketing research to help them expand their local business and begin to assess the opportunity for expansion.

After Hiring Ethridge

We conducted a series of focus groups among grocery store shoppers in the neighborhood, with the groups segmented by customers and non-customers of the store. We probed grocery store shopping preferences, why people choose one grocery store over another, this grocery store’s brand image relative to competing stores, specific product mixes, and the perceived price/value of product lines carried by the store compared to competition. We also tested specific advertising and promotional concepts as well as probing media behavior and preferences to determine the best way to communicate with prospective customers.

We analyzed the results using our innovative and proprietary Motivational Linguistics Analysis® to identify motivations and themes that needed to be addressed in both merchandising and marketing. Because the Motivational Linguistics Analysis® quantifies verbatim comments, we were able to use multivariate statistical analysis to discover how the brand was positioned relative to competing brands on the motivating attributes. As a result, we were able to recommend how to better position the brand relative to competition to take advantage of the store’s strengths and opportunities in the market. We also identified and recommended specific changes that the store needed to make in product mix, pricing and merchandising, as well as what message and media to use to generate more business and build brand loyalty. The store has implemented our recommendations and is enjoying a higher level of revenue and profitability as a result.

Case 2: Strengthening a Regional Department Store Chain's Brand Position Against National Chain Competitors

Before Hiring Ethridge

A 100+ year-old, successful, family-owned, regional department store chain was concerned about the entry of several national department store brands that were entering their market. They wanted to make sure that their brand was well positioned against these new competitive threats, as well as what their product mix should be, and how well their advertising and merchandising was working. The store's owners hired Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to help them determine how the brand was positioned relative to competition and what to do about it to increase business.

After Hiring Ethridge

We conducted our proprietary Marketing Opportunity Analysis among their demographic target market segment in their geographic market area. We discovered that the brand's unique competitive advantage had to do with better understanding the regional, cultural purchase preferences — an advantage with which no national chain could compete. We also helped them clarify those cultural preferences and better align their product mix, merchandising, media mix and sales strategies with market preferences. As well, we helped them identify their Best Prospect segment for increasing business, as well as which media to use effectively and efficiently reach that target. As a result, this department store chain was able to improve their product mix, marketing message, media mix and sales effectiveness; thus, maintain and grow their market share in the face of stiff national competitors with strong branding campaigns.

Case 3: Improving an Up-Scale Jewelry Store's Sales Effectiveness

Before Hiring Ethridge

A very upscale, local jewelry store was concerned that some of its newer sales employees might not be providing the high-quality level of attention that its customers were accustomed to receiving from the store. Senior management of the store wanted an outside, objective assessment of the level of sales experience that customers were receiving. For this purpose, management contacted Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to conduct a Mystery Shopping Study.

After Hiring Ethridge

We first met with the store's management to listen to and get a good understanding of the demographic profile of their customer base and how they wanted their customers to be served during the sales process. We developed, with the management's input, a list of criteria by which management wanted the mystery shoppers to evaluate the sales representatives. We then custom designed a mystery shopping guide with appropriate rating criteria. We also established a statistical sample design for the number of mystery shopping experiences. This sample design had quotas by the type of jewelry shopped, the number of interviews to be completed per sales associate, and the number of interviews to be completed by various types of mystery shoppers (e.g., male/female, young/old, midscale/upscale). Then we recruited appropriate mystery shopper interviewers to resemble the range of the store's typical customers. Each mystery shopper only shopped the store one time. Thus, it took a large number of mystery shoppers to complete this task.

Over a period of several weeks, we completed the planned number of mystery shopping interviews. Immediately after each "shop," our mystery shoppers recorded their experience on the rating scales. We analyzed the results using averages and ranges on each rating scale criteria. We compared each sales associate's scores to the average across all employees shopped and rank-ordered the employees on their cumulative scores. We designed this research to test management's hypotheses about which employees were meeting management's

standards and which were not. For most employees, we proved their hypothesis to be correct. For a few, we disproved management's hypothesis.

In our analysis, we recommended which employees needed additional sales and customer service training as well as the specific skills on which each employee needed the most training emphasis. As a result, this upscale jewelry store was able to improve the quality of their customers' sales experience and the sales effectiveness of their employees; thereby maintaining the store's brand image and customer loyalty, while improving revenue and profitability.

Political Candidates & Campaigns

With 28 years of strategic polling and campaign consulting experience at the federal, state and local levels, Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. is well known, particularly in Memphis and the Mid-South, as one of the fastest, most accurate, objective, reliable, ethical and effective public opinion pollsters and strategists in the business (see our Testimonials). Ethridge has unparalleled credibility in local and regional media, having served as pollster for the Mid-South Region's largest newspaper, The Commercial Appeal and TV News Channel 3 in Memphis intermittently over nearly two decades. For political campaigns, we provide telephone surveys using both live and automated (IVR) interviews, focus groups, in-depth interviews, and audience response analysis.

Ethridge has polled for dozens of political campaigns and at all levels, including candidates for U.S. President, Senate and Congress, and local level candidates for Mayor, City Council, County Commission and Sheriff.

Ethridge has national media credibility, having been quoted and published in numerous national media including the New York Times, the L.A. Times, USA Today, The Polling Report, the D.C. Spectator, Real Clear Politics, the Bill Hobbs Report and many others.

Ethridge is widely recognized as one of the most accurate political pollsters in America (see our Testimonials page)

Ethridge is widely recognized as the first pollster in America to foresee that former liberal Democratic Senator and Budget Finance Committee Chairman Jim Sasser could be defeated. He foresaw this possibility in early 1993, nearly two years before any other pollster did and two years before Sasser was ultimately defeated by Bill Frist ([click here for documentation](#)).

Many of Ethridge's political campaign clients have been outspent by their opponents 2 or 3 to 1 and still won because of Ethridge's expertise in developing and managing winning campaign messages.

Representative Republican clients include U.S. Congresswoman Sue Myrick in NC's 9th Congressional District; former U.S. Congressman Ed Bryant in

Tennessee's 7th District; former Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist; and U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander in his last bid for President.

We could pull from dozens of our political case studies to demonstrate our work in this area; however, we have chosen three of our favorites and presented these below.

Case 1: Being Outspent 2 to 1 and Still Winning a Governor's Race

We had worked with Dr. John P. Bakke, now retired Chairman of the Department of Communication at The University of Memphis, as a consultant for U.S. Congressman Don Sundquist for several campaign cycles. When Congressman Don Sundquist decided to run for Governor of Tennessee, he and his consultant Charlie Black, former strategic advisor to Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, hired Dr. Bakke as Director of Communication for the Sundquist for Governor campaign. Dr. Bakke, in turn, hired the following to be on the communication strategy team:

Steven C. Ethridge as pollster

Dick Morris, who at the time was a Republican consultant (and later worked for President Bill Clinton as his senior campaign advisor) as a strategic communication consultant

Marius Penzner (who later followed Dick Morris to work on the Clinton presidential campaign) for video production

Becky West to handle media placement and direct mail

Ethridge was privileged to work on this seasoned team with Dr. Bakke, Charlie Black, Dick Morris, Marius Penzner and Becky West for the Sundquist for Governor Campaign. Ethridge conducted all strategic polling for the campaign, with the input, of course from Dr. Bakke, Charlie Black, Dick Morris, Marius Penzner and Becky West. We started in 1993 with strategic benchmarking and planning polls to develop Sundquist's campaign strategies and then tracked at appropriate intervals throughout 1993 and 1994. This was the one of the largest, most fast-paced and competitive campaigns that Ethridge had been involved with at the time.

Two particularly noteworthy things occurred in this campaign that speaks to Ethridge's accurate polling capabilities. These are referred to as "Mini Cases" A and B below.

Mini-Case A

The first requires describing some context from an unrelated campaign. Ethridge had done polling for a Senatorial candidate in the Republican Primary, Harold Sterling, in 1993. In this poll, Ethridge was the first pollster in America to discover that then U.S. Senator Jim Sasser, the powerful Chairman of the Senate Budget Finance Committee could be defeated. Ethridge and Harold Sterling took the results of this poll to the Republican Senatorial Committee and presented them to their Chairman at the time, Haley Barbour (now Governor of Mississippi), and their Director of Communication Paul Circio (now partner in Stevens & Circio). At the time, the Republican Senatorial Committee did not have any idea that Sasser could be defeated and they did not consider Tennessee to be a “top tier” state for the 1994 Republican Senatorial campaigns. After seeing our poll, they began to follow Tennessee more closely.

At the time, Dr. Bill Frist, who later won Sasser’s Senate seat, had not yet decided to run for office. Frist picked up on the themes from our poll about how Sasser could be defeated. Frist, out-spent Harold Sterling and won the Republican Primary and then used the themes that we had discovered to defeat Sasser.

In separate tracking polls for Don Sundquist, throughout 1993 and 1994, Ethridge had been tracking the Frist vs. Sasser trial heat election question. Throughout that time, we showed Frist ahead of Sasser in every poll up until September 1994, after which time we showed Sasser leading only twice by an insignificant amount.

Shortly after Frist won the Republican Primary, Frist’s pollster White Ayers called Steven Ethridge and said that they had just found, for the first time in their tracking polls, that Frist was leading Sasser. Ayers asked Ethridge for permission to take our tracking polls and his latest poll that showed Frist ahead and write a memo to the Republican Senatorial Committee showing Frist ahead by two polling firms. Of course, Ethridge gave Ayers permission to do this and, as a result, the Republican Senatorial Committee gave the Frist campaign its maximum donation. Whereas our poll in March of 1993 showed that a well-financed Republican who used the message themes that we recommended could defeat Sasser with between 56% and 64% of the vote, Frist defeated Sasser with 56% — exactly as we foresaw was possible nearly two years before the election occurred.

Mini-Case B

During the General Election in 1994, the campaign strategists for three campaigns, Don Sundquist's campaign for Governor, Bill Frist's campaign for U.S. Senate, and Fred Thompson's campaign for U.S. Senate, were agreeing to share tracking polls with one another as a means of corroborating where each candidate stood in their races. At one critical period during the campaign, over a period of several weeks, both Frist's and Thompson's pollsters were showing Sundquist trailing his opponent Phil Bredesen, whereas, by comparison, our polls were showing Sundquist consistently and significantly ahead.

Ethridge was under a lot of pressure to explain why his was the only tracking poll that was consistently showing Sundquist ahead (in all but one poll in October where we showed them tied). Dr. Bakke asked Steven Ethridge to get on the phone and find out what the differences were in the three polling firm's methodologies that would account for the difference in the polls. Ethridge did that and found several things about our sampling and interviewing methodology that were superior (all proprietary aspects of our methodologies).

When Ethridge reported these differences in methodology to Dr. Bakke, he told Charlie Black, Don Sundquist, and Dick Morris that he believed that our polls were correct and that he was standing by Ethridge's polls. Based on our polls — the only ones that were showing Sundquist ahead — we made all campaign decisions based on the belief that Sundquist was ahead, rather than making decisions as if we were behind (which would have been entirely different, reactionary, and could have caused us to lose).

On election day, our polls proved to be the most accurate compared not only to these three polling firms but also compared to the Mason Dixon polls that were conducted for the media

The stories above testify to the accuracy of our polling. Moreover, regarding effectiveness of our communication strategy that was developed out of the polling,

Bredesen outspent Sundquist by two to one (by approximately \$12 million to \$6 million), yet we won very decisively as the newsletter link above describes.

Case 2: An Upset Victory Against an Entrenched Opponent Who Outspent Us 2 to 1

Harold Sterling, a former Tennessee State Legislator and leading real estate agent, had just won the Republican Primary to represent his party in the General Election for Assessor of Property in Shelby County Tennessee. He was referred to Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. for strategic campaign consulting to help him win the General Election.

Harold had so far only raised \$3,000 to invest in his campaign against the formidable, well-entrenched and well financed incumbent, Michael Hooks, nephew of nationally known Dr. Benjamin Hooks, the former Executive Director of the NAACP. Harold asked Steven C. Ethridge how he should best invest his \$3,000 toward winning the race.

Ethridge advised Sterling to spend every penny of it on strategic polling to find out whether Sterling could win and, if so, how. Whereas, often, political campaigns that have little money insist on spending what little they have on media, we knew that if Sterling didn't first get the message right, he would never be able to raise much money. The polling was an investment, not a cost. Sterling understood that and followed Ethridge's advice.

Based on a small but strategic poll, we were able to determine that there was indeed a path to victory, but that Sterling could not possibly win by more than 1 percentage point (Sterling later won by ½ of a percentage point). Based on our polling, we identified Hook's greatest candidate weaknesses, Sterling's greatest candidate strengths, the most important issues, how best to position Sterling in contrast to Hooks, the most persuasive campaign agenda/theme, the target

segments of voters that Sterling's campaign needed to target to win, and which media to use to reach those voter segments.

Next, with no campaign money left, Ethridge wrote a radio ad based on the findings from the poll. Sterling and Ethridge took the radio copy to some prospective donors and asked for enough money to produce the ad and air it on the radio. We raised just enough money to do those things. Then, when the radio ad began to air, it stung Hooks to the core on his key weakness, generated news press, and became the political "buzz" of the county.

We knew we had hit a responsive chord but we didn't know how effective the ad was. So, we went to some prospective donors and raised just enough money to do a tracking poll to measure the effects of the ad and to confirm what we thought we should do next.

Before we conducted the next poll, Hooks responded to our radio ad and used Harold Sterling's name in the ad more than he used his own. This helped our campaign by raising awareness of Sterling and increasing the credibility of his campaign.

Then, the tracking poll showed that the radio ad had indeed reduced Hook's vote and increased Sterling's vote significantly. Moreover, both the radio ad and Hook's response had favorably increased Sterling's name recognition. Sterling was still behind but now within striking distance with a shot to win.

Based on this tracking poll, Ethridge wrote three television spots. We took the poll results and the copy for the three television spots to some prospective donors and raised just enough money to produce the television spots. Then, when the TV was produced, we showed them to some prospective donors and raised just enough money to air the first ad.

After the first TV spot had aired, again the “buzz” around the county was moving in Sterling’s favor. As Sterling was out campaigning in public places (e.g., grocery store parking lots, malls, etc.), television news cameras intercepted him periodically and ran their interviews on the network news every few days. The campaign got very exciting.

Knowing that Hooks was in a competitive race, then U.S. Congressman Harold Ford, Sr. announced that he, his brother John Ford who was a state legislator, and Michael Hooks were running together on what they called the “Dream Team” Democratic ticket. From all appearances to the news pundits, this shifted the momentum back in Hook’s favor.

We came under considerable pressure to change our strategy to directly react to the Dream Team. However, because we had done strategic polling that had confirmed the strategy that we needed to use to win, we stuck to our original plan.

Again, we were out of money but wanted to know exactly where we were and to confirm whether running our next two TV ads were still the right thing to do. So we raised just enough money to conduct another tracking poll. This showed that we had moved closer to Hook’s lead but still were behind with a clear shot to win. Moreover, the poll showed that our strategy was still the right one needed to win. So we took the poll results to some prospective donors and raised just enough money to air the last two television ads.

The entire campaign was “hand to mouth,” in terms of raising just enough money, when we needed it, to do what we needed to do next to win. On election day, Harold Sterling went counter to the trend — that Harold Ford Sr. and his brother John Ford won their races — and Sterling defeated Hooks by ½ of a percentage point. Reportedly, Hooks out spent Sterling more than two to one. Yet, in this race, message mattered more than money. Our strategic polling made the difference.

There are at least three lessons in the campaign for other candidates.

First, when you have limited money, never have the mentality that you need to hoard money to spend on media rather than investing it in a valid, objective strategic polling to discover how to win. Assuming that there really is a path to victory for your candidacy, a good strategic poll to determine how you can win is the best possible investment to help you raise money. It will show not only that you can win but that you have a plan to win. That is what will motivate people to donate to your campaign.

Second, once you have used the poll to raise money, then, spend the money the right way to connect with your target voting audience. We have seen too many viable candidates lose because their finance committee was concerned that they needed to have a lot of money in the bank on financial disclosure reporting dates as the means of raising money, rather than spending what money they have to connect with their target voting audience as the means of raising money. The problem with hoarding money is that, while the “political insiders” pay attention to those financial disclosures, the average voter does not. Spend what you have, the right way, when it needs to be spent to connect with voters — that’s how you build campaign momentum and raise more money.

Third, once you have a strategy that polling confirms will work, stick with that basic strategy. Tracking polls may show that you need to “fine-tune” or adapt in minor ways at critical points in the campaign, but do not allow outside pressures to get you off your basic strategy.

The only way that a campaign can have confidence to spend money as the means of raising money and to stay on strategy even under fire is to begin by investing your first campaign dollars in good strategic polling and then doing tracking polls at key points throughout the campaign.

The following is a brief testimony from Harold Sterling about how our strategic polling and communication consulting helped him win a race that most pundits thought he could not win.

“The information and advice that you gleaned out of the data collected resulted in a strategy and victory that few people thought could be done. Your ability to not

only collect the data but also to interpret the data resulted in our winning strategy. My victory for Assessor of Property surprised all the pundits and resulted in the largest turnout in any August General Election in the history of Shelby County.”
Property Assessor, Harold Sterling

Case 3: Focusing the Campaign Agenda on the Winning Message

Early in Ed Bryant’s primary campaign for Tennessee’s U.S. Congressional District 7, he and his campaign staff came to Ethridge for strategic communication consulting and polling. At the time, they were talking about a wide variety of issues in their speeches and other voter communication: tort reform, gun control, abortion, taxes, spending, the deficit, international affairs and many others. Part of the challenge was to focus their message because, considering the limited time that someone has in a 60-second radio spot, a 30-second television spot, or a 9-second sound bite on the news, no campaign could possibly be effective trying to talk about so many issues at once.

Contrary to the criticism that is often levied against pollsters in general, we never tell a candidate to change his or her convictions and to say something that they do not believe in just to win. Instead, what we do is figure out, of all the convictions that a candidate has, which ones do voters care about most and how can we best communicate to voters about those convictions. This is what we did in Ed Bryant’s case.

Prior to running for this congressional seat, Ed Bryant had been a U.S. Attorney representing West Tennessee. In this capacity, he had become known as a proven crime fighter. He had even made national news for his crime fighting reputation.

In our strategic polling, we measured the relative importance of issues, the perceptions of candidates on key attributes, and the relative importance of those candidate attributes. We found that the most important issue that people in District 7 were personally concerned about at the time was crime. We also found that the attribute proven crime fighter ranked high in importance to voters, and that Ed Bryant had a clear image advantage over his opponent on this attribute.

Based on this finding, we recommended to Ed Bryant's campaign that he set the campaign agenda on the question of which candidate would do a better job of fighting crime and reinforce Ed's position as a proven crime fighter. Thus, his campaign developed advertising that focused on these themes. Our tracking polls showed that this agenda was working. Late in the campaign, his opponent picked up on our agenda and ran ads trying to say that he would be tough on crime. However, Ed's opponent had no credibility on this issue; moreover, he was too late with this message. Thus, Ed was able to win this campaign largely because he used our strategic polling to focus his campaign message on both the issue and the image agenda that mattered most to voters and on which he had the most credibility.

We later polled for Ed to help him win the General Election and then to win reelection to three subsequent terms.

Travel, Tourism, Hospitality, Entertainment Industry

Many of our greatest successes in creating unprecedented increases in Marketing/Communication Return on Investment have been in the travel/tourism/hospitality and entertainment industries. This is due to Ethridge's extensive experience in corporate marketing in general, plus his executive marketing experience in the hotel industry before starting our. Since founding our firm in 1993, our clients have included national hotel brands, state tourism departments, city tourism departments, convention and visitors bureaus, various types of entertainment companies, amusement parks, and a charter airline company.

Case Study 1: Tennessee Department of Tourism Development Results

Before Hiring Ethridge

The Tennessee Department of Tourism did Focus Groups and found out that Tennessee was perceived as being better than any other state in offering music attractions (e.g. country music, blue grass, blues, and gospel music). So, they built a \$2 million advertising campaign positioning the state's tourism brand as a music destination. The television campaigns showed Dolly Parton and Crystal Gail atop Lookout Mountain singing the campaign theme "Come to Tennessee. We're Playing Your Song."

While this very memorable campaign initially drove tourism to the state, it mostly benefited Nashville, the nation's country music capital, because of the emphasis on country music. Other tourist destinations throughout the state wanted a new campaign. When a new Governor was elected, his administration decided to conduct research to revisit the campaign strategy.

So the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development hired Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. (Ethridge), a recognized expert firm in tourism marketing and research, to evaluate the campaign and see if a more effective message could be developed.

After Hiring Ethridge

Ethridge conducted a comprehensive Marketing Opportunity Analysis for the state. This study, which essentially covered the eastern half of the U.S., measured what motivated people to choose one state over another for a vacation destination, the state's image relative to other states, and the key marketing effectiveness measures of awareness, favorable predisposition, market share, and the inquirer conversion rate.

This study found a key problem with the previous campaign. While the Focus Groups on which the previous campaign had been developed were right in finding that Tennessee was perceived to be stronger than any other state on music, that research had failed to measure how influential music attributes were on consumer decisions to choose one state over another as a vacation destination.

By comparison, Ethridge's Marketing Opportunity Analysis measured the relative influence of 36 attributes on consumer decisions and found that all of the attributes related to the previous campaign ranked very low in market influence. For example, out of 36 attributes:

Having places to enjoy popular country music shows (ranked 13.5)

Having beautiful, scenic mountains (ranked 17.5)

Being known for big-name entertainment (ranked 17.5)

Having a variety of places to enjoy blues, jazz and rock and roll music (ranked 32nd)

Several attributes that the previous campaign had not emphasized ranked much higher in market influence; for example, the attributes:

Having one or more fun amusement and theme parks (ranked 2.5)

Being a good place to relax and unwind (ranked 4.0)

Being a good family atmosphere with a variety of things for children to enjoy (ranked 6.5)

Having meaningful historic landmarks, sites, architecture and battlefields (tied for 6.5)

Having a variety of entertainment options overall (tied for 6.5)

Being a good place to go for outdoor recreation and activities, such as camping, hunting, hiking, climbing, rafting, canoeing or snow skiing (tied for 6.5)

Being an affordable place to go on vacation or for a weekend get-away (tied for 9.5)

On the above attributes that ranked higher in influence than the music attributes, Tennessee had plenty of strong attractions to offer; however, the market had relatively little awareness that the state offered those benefits, because they had never been emphasized in the state's advertising campaign.

One of these attributes served very well as an "umbrella theme" under which all of the others could be used to support (as a "case" or "argument") why the theme was believable: having a variety of entertainment options overall (which ranked 6.5 in market influence). Therefore, Ethridge recommended that the state develop a

campaign using the idea of variety as the umbrella theme — the positioning of the tourism brand — with the other high-ranking attributes listed above as supporting sub-themes; while giving music attributes just enough emphasis to maintain that as a competitive advantage.

Tennessee and its tourism ad agency, Walker + Associates, Inc., followed Ethridge’s recommendations. Based on these recommendations, the state and its ad agency developed a new ad campaign with the theme “Tennessee Sounds Good to Me.” This theme served as an umbrella under which a variety of attributes could be emphasized that “sound good” for a vacation. The word “sounds” was used in TV advertising to highlight a variety of sounds like golf balls being hit, kids laughing at amusement parks, motor boats running and, of course, music.

The State of Tennessee and Walker + Associates, Inc. changed the advertising message, spent less money on mass media (\$1.6 million) than the previous campaign (\$2 million), and kept the media buy prorated the same. The result was that Tennessee increased its return on marketing investment to 276% of its pre-campaign level in just 6 months. Moreover, all measures of direct economic impact increased substantially.

The research (\$60,000) represented 4% of the media budget (\$1.6 million). Yet it was the critical input that:

Increased ad-generated consumer expenditures in Tennessee increased to 202% of the pre-test amount, from \$37 million to \$75 million in six months

Increased Marketing Return on Investment (MROI) to 276% of the pre-test amount (from \$4.71 to \$13.00). In other words, for every dollar spent on marketing production and media, the dollars returned in tax revenues to the state increased from \$4.71 to \$13.00.

Other significant increases as a result of following our recommendations from the Marketing Opportunity Analysis were as follows:

Increased inquiries by 68% (from 250,000 to 420,000).

Lowered the cost per inquiry 45% (from \$7.13 to \$3.91).

Increased the conversion rate by 31% (from 39% to 51%).

Increased taxes per inquirer returned to government by 51% (from \$33.56 to \$50.97 per inquirer).

Increased the Profit/Cost Ratio by 224% (from \$3.71 to \$12.04)

Increased the Gross Profit Margin of the ad campaign by 17% (from 78.8% to 92.3%).

The dramatic success of this campaign made statewide news all over Tennessee. Additionally, Ethridge was invited to present this research case study before the Travel and Tourism Research Association's (TTRA) Southern Central Conference on September 29, 2000.

The success of this campaign was reported by news organizations all across Tennessee. Just a few of the newspapers and quotes selected from those newspapers are listed below.

Johnson City Press

Ad campaign boosts tourism

“Research shows that the state’s new “Tennessee Sounds Good to Me” advertising and marketing campaign has more tourists taking a vacation here than ever before.

...

“The ‘Sounds Good to Me’ campaign . . . has broken all records for consumer identification and retention, said Don Sherman of Walker and Associates, the firm that handles tourism advertising for the state.

“Follow-up surveys conducted only six months after the campaign debuted found it had put a Tennessee vacation into the minds of half of the people asked.

“And the state moved from 14th place to a three-way tie for second with North Carolina and Georgia as the most preferred vacation destination for people living in the Southeast. Florida is the most preferred.”

(Johnson City Press, page 10, February 18, 1998).

Chattanooga Times Free Press

Variety of activities attracts tourist to the state

“The goal of Tennessee’s [tourism] campaign is to get people to think of it in terms of a variety store instead of a specialty shop,” says, Dr. John Bakke. . . . “We now have objective proof that the campaign is working” says Bakke, head of the communications department at Memphis State University and a tourism consultant.” . . .

“The effectiveness study showed that spontaneous awareness of Tennessee as a vacation-pleasure trip destination increased 50 percent. Asked what they recalled from the Tennessee ads, respondents gave the highest ranking (28 percent) to variety of things to do. . . .

“Tennessee’s image has improved on the attributes of having a wide variety of entertainment options, having beautiful, scenic mountains, having a variety of places to enjoy blues, jazz or rock n’ roll music and having genuinely hospitable, warm and friendly people.

“The campaign has also repositioned Tennessee as more of a family-oriented vacation-pleasure trip destination. The study was a scientific telephone sample survey conducted last October by Ethridge & Associates of Memphis.”

(The Chattanooga Times, page E9, February 20, 1998)

Tennessean.com

“The campaign has been effective in broadening the market for tourism, said Steve Ethridge, president of Ethridge & Associates of Memphis, a marketing, consulting and research firm that did the survey. It costs \$96,000”.

(The Tennessean, page 4B, February 18, 1998).

The Commercial Appeal

“Leon Downey, executive director of the Pigeon Forge Department of Tourism, said the state promotion helps the Smoky Mountain resort town. . . .

“Said Jim Kennedy, president of the Chattanooga Area Convention and Visitor’s Bureau: ‘Absolutely this helps. It particularly helps us . . .’

(The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, TN, Section B, page 1, February 17, 1998)

A sampling of other newspapers in which similar articles appears is listed below.

The Citizen Tribune, Knoxville, TN, page A-2 November 20, 1998

The Messenger, Union City, TN, page 3-B, February 18, 1998

The Bristol Herald Courier, page 3-B, February 18, 1998.

The Greenville Sun, February 18, 1998

The State Gazette, February 17, 1998.

The Paris-Post Intelligence, February 17, 1998

The Mountain Press, Serving Sevier County, TN page 11, February 18, 1998.

The Knoxville News Sentinel, page A4, February 17, 1998.

The Cleveland Daily Banner, page 3, February 17, 1998

The Oak Ridger, Oak Ridge, TN, page 6B, February 17, 1998

The Daily Times, Serving Blount County, page 5A, February 17, 1998

Case 2: Chattanooga — Re-positioning a City for Economic Growth

This case may initially seem like it is too old to include among our case studies. However, when you see the long-term impacts of Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C.'s recommendations it should be obvious why we included it.

Before Hiring Ethridge

In the late 1990's travel tourism to Chattanooga had been significantly declining. The Chattanooga Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB), the quasi-government agency that was most responsible for the area's tourism marketing, wanted to know why tourism was declining and what could be done to reverse this trend. The CVB's marketing objectives were to increase tourism visits among people who would stay longer and spend more money. The CVB's assumption about how to do this was that its visitors were skewed toward lower income households and that it needed to target more upscale visitors.

After Hiring Ethridge

In the mid summer of 2001 (before the 9/11 terrorist attacks), to test this assumption and to help the CVB determine what to do to significantly increase tourism revenues, the CVB asked Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. to design and conduct a marketing research study. The objectives of this study, generally speaking, were to analyze Chattanooga's current market and potential market to determine:

How the Chattanooga tourism brand was positioned in the minds of the market relative to competition

What to do about how the brand was positioned to significantly increase its tourism revenues.

To meet these objectives, Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. applied our proprietary Marketing Opportunity Analysis. We conducted a scientific telephone survey using an adequately large, random sample of prior visitors and prospective visitors. We

also established sample quotas by key media markets to be able to analyze results and apply the recommendations from the research by media market.

Key Findings

The assumption that the area's tourism visitors were skewed toward lower income households was wrong.

The majority of both the area's recent visitors and its Best Prospect Segment (that segment from which the area had the best chance of cost-effectively generating new visitors) were already skewed toward high-income households.

However, despite their high income, the prior visitors were visiting Chattanooga less often, staying fewer nights and spending less money on average than they were at other destinations.

The study found that the reason why people were visiting Chattanooga less often, staying less often and spending less money was that the area's tourism marketing campaign lacked momentum on Key Marketing Effectiveness Measures of Top-of-Mind Awareness, Favorable Predisposition toward visiting the destination, and Brand Image strength on attributes that were highly motivating to the market (even though Chattanooga offered those attribute benefits).

Thus, the issue was not to target a higher income traveler but rather to run an effective awareness and image building campaign that targeted people like those who were already visiting, yet with a message — a Brand Proposition or Unique Selling Proposition — that would motivate them to visit Chattanooga more often, stay more nights and spend more money.

Regarding how to generate visitors who would visit more often, stay more nights and spend more money, our perceptual mapping analysis found the following:

Chattanooga was uniquely positioned among competitors as a passive edutainment attraction that offered educational entertainment with spectator things to do, like viewing historical attractions (e.g., Civil War History, the Chattanooga Choo Choo) and natural phenomena (e.g., mountains, caverns, waterfalls, etc.) . . .

However, based on the motivating power of the brand attributes and the benefits that were sought by Chattanooga's Best Prospect Segment, the brand needed to reposition more in the direction of an active/participant/recreation

entertainmentdestination (by emphasizing attributes like being a good place for outdoor activities such as camping, white water rafting, boating, fishing, hiking and rock climbing).

At the same time, the study found that the most influential attribute overall to the key market segments was being a good place to relax and escape from it all — an attribute which Chattanooga offered (in the objective marketing reality) but was not perceived by the market to have an image strength on (the subjective marketing reality).

These three sets of findings combined meant that Chattanooga should position the brand as a unique place where you can both, (1) relax, unwind and escape from it all (passive edutainment) and (2) have fun (active/participant/recreation entertainment).

Ethridge's Recommendations

Based on our Marketing Opportunity Analysis, we made Strategic Brand Positioning Recommendations regarding realistic marketing goals, which market segments to target, which media to use, how to allocate the media budget by month (based on when people were making decisions to take certain types of trips), and the strategic brand message. Using our Model for Managing Competitive Advantage we recommended the relative priority order of emphasis that Chattanooga should give to key attributes to motivate tourists, who would visit more often, stay longer and spend more money. Regarding the Strategic Brand Proposition, we recommended that the brand reposition its image by employing an umbrella theme that positioned Chattanooga as a place where you can either relax (passive) or have fun (active entertainment) enjoying outdoor activities or learning about natural phenomena and historical sites, where the umbrella theme was supported by sub-themes of various destination attractions/benefits.

Results of Following Ethridge's Recommendations

Whereas when Chattanooga first came to Ethridge & Associates, L.L.C. for help, they had been experiencing declines in tourism, soon after we made these recommendations in 2001, the tourism revenue for the Chattanooga area (Hamilton County, Tennessee) started a dramatic increase that continues today. As late as June 2010, the Chattanooga CVB still uses the key theme that we recommended; today it is, worded as "Relax. Have Fun. Experience a Chattanooga Getaway (see

the theme still in use at <http://www.chattanoogafun.com/>). By using the basic theme we discovered and recommended based on our Marketing Opportunity Analysis, over the past decade, the Chattanooga (Hamilton County) area's tourism revenue has increased dramatically.

Moreover, due a long-term continued emphasis on this brand repositioning theme, that combines the benefits of relaxation and fun, the area's overall economic development has improved dramatically.

The area has become Tennessee's fastest growing county in tourism revenue. [Click here for more information.](#)

As a result of the contribution of tourism revenue to the area's overall economic development, Chattanooga went from a "deep hole" to leading the state in population growth. [Click here for more information.](#)

Case Study 3: Tunica, Mississippi Convention and Visitors Bureau Results

Similar to our case for the Tennessee Department of Tourism Development, using our Marketing Opportunity Analysis, we led the advertising agency and public relations agency to develop a campaign for the Tunica, Mississippi Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

The Tunica CVB wanted to test the hypothesis that they could target spot market advertising to selected key markets and motivate people to visit their destination that would historically have visited Las Vegas. For this purpose, Ethridge conducted Marketing Opportunity Analysis benchmark studies in both the Nashville and St. Louis media markets. Based on how Tunica's brand image was positioned in the minds of gamers in both of these markets, Ethridge recommended the brand positioning message to use in each market, as well as which media to use

to reach the destination's Best Prospect Segment for increasing business in each market.

Based on Ethridge's recommendations, the Tunica CVB and its ad agency developed a new campaign that positioned the destination as the Las Vegas of the South. This changed perceptions of that destination from one whose greatest image strength was having "RV parks for camping" to a world-class resort destination.

As a result, Ethridge helped reposition the Tunica brand, resulting in delivering \$21.0 million in revenue increase to \$60.7 million in one of the spot markets and with a 29:1 ROI and an 88% increase in top-line revenue in the other spot market leading to a 46:1 ROI within six months.

These results won the Travel and Tourism Research Association's (TTRA) Innovative Research Award which Ethridge presented at the TTRA's International Conference in New Orleans in 2005.