



Building Better Data

not just bigger data

*“I give them experiments and
they respond with speeches.”*

—Louis Pasteur

we create data

Evolving Strategies is leading a paradigm shift in political research and strategy. We use randomized-controlled experiments in the “lab” and in the “field” to discover what works and what doesn’t in political communications.

We don’t just *collect* data, we *create* it.

We deal with data, big *and* small. But more important than the size of your dataset is the *type* of data it contains. Data is information about the world we live in, and it comes in two types: “observational” and “experimental.”

Observational data is *static*; it’s information about the things as they *are*, or were. Voters who are pro-life are also less supportive of gun control. That’s the world as it *is*. But it doesn’t tell us whether being pro-life *causes* people to be more pro-

gun or whether a pro-life message will *decrease* support for gun control.

Experimental data is *dynamic*; it’s information about what *causes* things to change and how things *could be*.

Experiments show us how specific messages or modes of contact—telephone calls, mailers or TV ads—push or pull on voter opinion and behavior.

Experiments open our eyes to a *counterfactual universe*.

What if every citizen watched *this* ad, knew *that* fact, or was visited at their door by a volunteer? Will it shift opinion or turn more people out to the polls? Will it work with some voters, but not others, or even cause a backlash?

integrated data-building

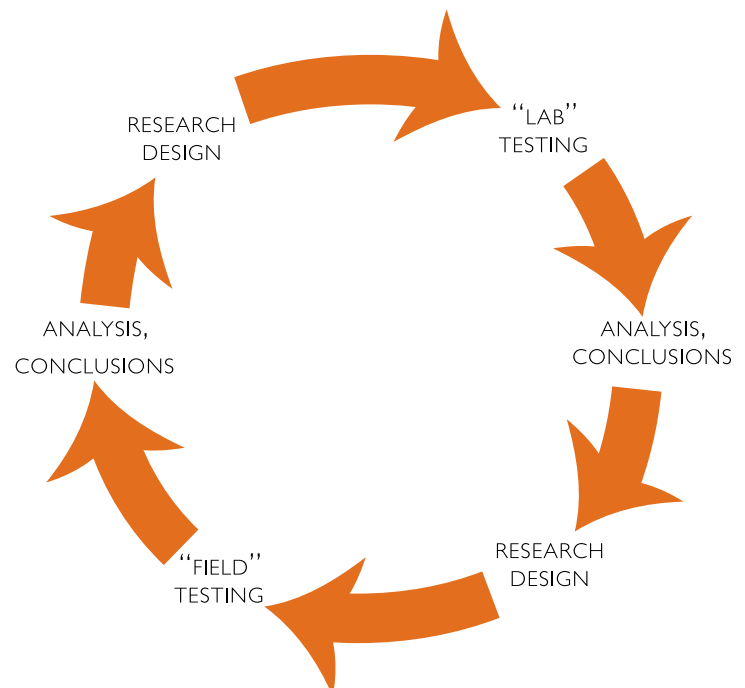
The experimental method can be applied live, in the field, on active voters and customers. But field experiments are often cumbersome, messy and expensive. On their own, field experiments can be inefficient.

A PocketTrial® quantifies the true impact of a message using a customized, double-blind, and fully controlled experimental design.

Our PocketTrial® can deliver the opinion snapshot of a standard poll, the color & insight of a focus group, and the movement & certainty that’s missing from both.

An *integrated testing protocol* that begins online with a *less expensive, more controlled* and *fine-grained PocketTrial®* makes field experiments *more focused and efficient*.

Evolving Strategies will help you create a testing protocol and deliver analysis that ensures your “lab” and “field” experiments create the most value possible.



PocketTrial®

message testing meets science

what it is...

Our PocketTrial® is like your own small-scale *clinical drug trial*, but it's *your message* we're testing.

ES quantifies the **true impact of a message** using a customized, double-blind, and fully controlled experimental design.

A PocketTrial® can deliver the opinion snapshot of a standard poll, the color & insight of a focus group, and the movement & certainty that's missing from both.

why it's better...

In traditional message-testing polls and focus groups, each respondent is asked what he thinks about a message; is it convincing, effective, agreeable, better or worse?

But what a person *thinks* about a message doesn't tell you how a message will impact his relevant opinions or behavior.

Who cares if people like a message or find it convincing? What matters is how a message **impacts** your target audience.

We provide the right answer to the right question; how does your message move your audience?

what you get...

We translate sophisticated statistical analysis into clear, actionable information.

We give you materials **far beyond** the standard deliverables of traditional firms:

- Proof of impact
- Behavioral impact measures
- Report with actionable conclusions, accessible language and simple graphs
- Transparency: *all raw data*
- Traditional deliverables: top-lines/cross-tabs.

Basic Structure of a PocketTrial®

step one

Opt-in survey respondents enter the PocketTrial™ and answer screening and control questions.

step two

Respondents are randomly assigned to a Treatment or Control group condition.

step three

Respondents are exposed to the message/s (a unique set for each condition).

step four

Respondents answer the same survey questions; "control" questions and "outcome" measures.

step five

Find the impact on "outcome" measures by comparing the Treatment conditions to the Control. (*Using cool statistics, of course.*)

Who's Winning the Presidential Ad War?

The impact of Romney and Obama campaign ads on weak partisan & pure independent voters.

Overview

Ad spending this election year is pushing toward the \$1 Billion mark, and there's no sign of slowing. So who is winning the presidential ad war? To discover whether Obama's or Romney's ads are more effective in shifting the vote, we partnered with Qualtrics and executed a PocketTrial™ testing the individual and combined impacts of seven Romney and Obama campaign ads.

Our PocketTrial™ quantifies the true impact of a message using a customized, double-blind, and fully controlled experimental design. It's like a small-scale *clinical drug trial*, but it's a *message* we're testing.

We exposed more than 2,300 registered, pure independents and weak partisans – no strong Republicans or Democrats – to one or more of seven political ads from the Obama and Romney camps (the Control group watched no ads). Respondents were randomly assigned to one of 11 conditions in a true experiment – 10 treatment groups and a control. Statistical analyses were performed to identify significant “treatment” impacts.

We tested the individual *and* combined impact of matched Obama and Romney ads from three “themes” and one ad from an independent group:

- Medicare ads,
- Economic Attack ads, and
- Comprehensive, economic-focused “Plan” ads
- The “Disappointed” ad from Americans for Prosperity, highly rated in focus groups and widely aired

“Is any of this advertising making a difference? That is the ultimate question and one I will revisit. For the moment, however, there is one study worth noting. The consulting firm Evolving Strategies recently completed a large randomized experiment . . .” — John Sides, Washington Post's Wonkblog

Key Findings

So which side is winning the presidential ad war? It depends on how much enthusiasm matters compared to marginal vote shifts this year . . .

The Obama ads have a *significant impact on vote preference*, increasing Obama's vote and decreasing Romney's. The Romney ads *aren't* effective in shifting preferences.

- Obama's ads increase his vote by about 6 points on average - a 15% bump in Obama's vote
- They decrease Romney's vote by about 8 points - an 18% slide in Romney's vote.
- Round 1 to Obama: Obama ads increase the percentage of marginal *undecided* and *wavering* voters who *prefer* him.

The twist . . . both the Romney *and* Obama ads are *effective at increasing enthusiasm among likely Romney voters* (McCain voters from 2008). The Obama ads *don't significantly impact the enthusiasm of '08 Obama voters*.

- Romney and Obama ads *increase* the highest level of voter enthusiasm of '08 McCain voters by 13 points - a 42% surge in the number of McCain '08 voters who are extremely enthusiastic to vote this year.
- Enthusiasm for '08 Obama voters remains flat.
- Round 2 to Romney: Romney ads impact marginal, *decided* voters, increasing the likelihood that voters who *say they prefer him will actually turn out* to vote.

About Us

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Adam B. Schaeffer

Adam Schaeffer is director of research and co-founder of Evolving Strategies. Adam has an extensive background in online survey development, message experiments, and the strategic analysis of message, policy, and audience interactions. He has developed the methodology and survey instruments for numerous online and telephone experiments as well as field experiments measuring the impact of an ongoing issue campaign and a strategic survey of policy elites.

Adam received his Ph.D. in American politics, with a focus in political behavior/psychology and media effects from the University of Virginia. He received his M.A. in Social Science from the University of Chicago, where his thesis integrated aspects of evolutionary theory and psychology with political theory and strategy.

He has extensive policy research experience, with a particular expertise in education and school choice issues, including detailed legislative development and analysis, as well as analysis of public opinion and political coalitions. He has commented on a range of political issues in print and broadcast media such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *Fox News*.

ES-11

ES-11 (a pseudonym to protect her independence as an academic researcher) is director of statistics and modeling at Evolving Strategies. She is Professor in the Departments of Political Science and Statistics at a major U.S. research University, a Senior Research Scientist at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications.

She is an expert statistician, with a particular interest in high-level "big" data analysis and modeling.

ES-5

ES-5 (a pseudonym to protect his independence as an academic researcher) is a professor of government at a major research University, where he has been on the faculty since 1992. He specializes in political behavior and statistical analysis, having authored or coauthored five books and over 40 journal articles in these and related areas of research.

He has accumulated extensive experience using voter files and related campaign data for field experiments and political microtargeting. Areas of particular interest include field experiments on messaging, political and charitable fundraising and volunteer recruitment and retention. He received a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Chicago.

ES-9

ES-9 (a pseudonym to protect his independence as an academic researcher) is a statistician and project manager at Evolving Strategies with a personal interest in contemporary politics and research interests in forecasting, monetary policy, and asset pricing.

He has worked as a statistician at the Bureau of Economic Analysis on research projects including valuing implicitly-provided financial services, forecasting revisions in GDP, and modeling consumer choice and learning in the cell phone industry. As an undergraduate student, he worked as a research assistant on a project estimating effects of distance on trade.

He is a Ph.D. candidate in the economics department at a major U.S. research university, and holds a master's in statistics from Georgetown University and a bachelor's in economics and politics from Washington and Lee University.

“So voters finally seem to be moving, part of what’s being called an Obama convention bounce. But who exactly is doing the moving? I recently wrote about one of “PocketTrial” lab experiments...”

—Sasha Issenberg, *Victory Lab*

“[At a time when Gingrich was at the peak of popularity, Evolving Strategies’ experiment] prefigured what weeks later became reality, when a barrage of negative advertising from Romney and his super-PAC effectively sank Gingrich.”

—Michael Warren, *Weekly Standard*

“I’ve mentioned Evolving Strategies before, a D.C. consultant group that does some really interesting online experiments ...”

—Sean Trende, *RealClearPolitics*



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