

# VOTER CONTACT NEWS

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## Hart targets California victory

By Rick Ridder

In late April of 1984 the Presidential campaign of Gary Hart realized that the unique voting procedures of the California Primary, the size of the voting universe of the State, and the importance of the election to Hart warranted an extensive targeting and field program.

The general operating assumption in Washington, DC for California political campaigns is that "No one does statewide field, it's a media and direct mail state." The reasoning is based on the notion that in such a large state, a field operation generally has only minimal impact on the outcome. Indeed, there is some validity to the statement; but a number of successful statewide campaigns in California have made a major commitment to the field operations in the last few years with good results.

Under the California delegate selection rules in 1984, the Hart Campaign was in a position where a precisely targeted field operation could make a significant impact on the outcome of the California delegate selection.

Under the California rules, there was to be no statewide or Congressional District "beauty contest." Voters would vote directly for the delegates of their choice within their Congressional District. Therefore in a sense there would be 45 different elections from which delegates would be selected. To compound the problem in some CD's as many as the top eight vote-getters would become delegates; in some as few as four. In districts where there would be a large number of delegates elected, it was clear a handful of votes would determine the outcome for a number of delegates.

This was the first time such a system had been used in California. It became apparent that one of the key aspects of the field operation would be to identify Hart supporters and then instruct them on how and for whom to vote.

Obviously, there would be no way to contact every potential Hart supporter in the state, so a targeted plan was developed in conjunction with Voter Contact Services. This plan was to maximize the

persuasion and educational focus of the field plan.

The development of the targeting plan was a two-tiered process. First, the campaign chose 12 variables from the VCS targeting file which would be categorized for the 30,000 precincts in California:

1. Democrats registered since 1980.
2. Number of Hispanic surname registrants.
3. Percent homeowner voters in the precinct.
4. Percent Democratic registrants.
5. Democratic disloyalty—a variable which delineated areas where Democratic performance was lower than Democratic registration.
6. Cranston minus Carter in 1980—a basic switch/split indicator.
7. 1980 Cranston results—a high Democratic performance.
8. An Environmental Indicator—This was a composite of the results of a variety of past environmental ballot measures in the precinct.
9. \$20-50K income—A variable based on 1980 Census Data proportionally allocated in the \$20-50K income range.
10. Age 35-44—A similar census variable which indicated the percent of residents in the 35-44 age bracket.
11. College graduates—A census variable which indicated the percent of residents in the precinct who were college graduates.
12. Average turnout in 1980 and '82 primary elections.

The variables were chosen on the basis of polling results and the traditional Hart support group. Obviously, the Hart Campaign in California was in a position to benefit greatly by the previous primaries and voting analysis in targeting Hart supporters. Complete preparation of this targeting analysis was completed by VCS in ten days.

The second phase of the targeting was initiated after an examination of the cross-tabs and correlations between the 12 variables. It was clear from the examination that a "High Hart Profile" precinct would be one with a high percentage of the following: "disloyal Democrats," age 35-44, college grad-

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# Hart targets

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uates, Democrats, and voters highly supportive of environmental issues.

A combination of these variables formed the "Hart Support Variable" for the second targeting. Precincts were then ranking separately on the basis of the value of their Hart Support Variable and on their Past Primary Turnout. All those precincts in the top 20% of the ranking on either variable were discarded for the purpose of the field operations; from the Hart Variable it was known that voters in these precincts were going to be Hart Supporters, and that they turned out for primaries. Similarly, the bottom 25% of the precincts on either variable were discarded because they weren't going to vote for Hart or they didn't turn out.

The focus of the field operation then became the remaining "double middle" precincts. There was some difficulty explaining this targeting to our field staff and activist volunteers. Frequently we heard the complaint, "But Arcata is our best area and they always turn out. We should be calling there." The explanation was that precisely because Arcata was the best area and precisely because they always turned out were the reasons why we needed to concentrate our limited efforts elsewhere. Sometimes this was met with skepticism.

Meanwhile a field program had been designed to maximize contact with voters in the targeted precincts. With some kind of Hart organization in every district there was a need to do some phone canvassing in each district. The strength of the local organization and the priority of the district varied from area to area.

When the second round of targeting was ordered the campaign also provided Voter Contact Services with a number of Democrats with phones to select from the file of registered voters in each district. This number ranged from 15,000 to 35,000, depending on the district. By checking its statistics and varying the top and bottom limits on each variable VCS then picked the most appropriate precincts in each district to phone. Within five days of the receipt of this information VCS had delivered the 45 different lists, totalling over 1,000,000 lines, to different specified locations for each district.

Phone canvassing by volunteers was initiated immediately with these lists, utilizing a classic "voter-leader" program. Voters were asked if they would be willing to act as a Hart Leader. A Hart Leader was asked to make 20 phone calls—15 to a list of registered voters provided and 5 to friends—before election day.

VCS had also provided another computer run of "leader kit" lists to send to those who indicated they would help. This list of 15 registered voters was sent in a packet from the Hart headquarters. The 15 names were all registered in targeted precincts in the Leader's community. In many instances, a voter in a targeted precinct received one call from the phone bank and two from the Leaders before election day.

In addition to these phone calls all identified Hart Supporters received a follow-up direct mail piece from the phone bank. This supplied information on how and for whom to vote. On election day, GOTV calls were made from the phone bank and by the Leaders.

Under the program, 500,000 telephone calls were made in three weeks to 15,000 precincts without one paid phoner. The total cost, including the follow-up mail, was \$100,000.

The final results were spectacular. Although Hart won the overall popular vote by only 3%, he garnered 142 out of 209 delegates elected on election day. Of these many were elected by less than 2000 votes. In the close races it is safe to acknowledge that the targeting and field operations were the deciding factors. Without the program Hart might still have won the state, but the margin in delegates would have been much lower.

*Rick Ridder was national field coordinator for Gary Hart and now is a partner in Ridder Braden in Denver.*

VOTER CONTACT SERVICES PRECINCT TARGETING ANALYSIS

CROSS TABS OF AVERAGE TURNOUT VERSUS

		DEMOCRAT DISLOYAL				CDRR: .704696				
		.6273	.5908	.5512	.5055					
HI 5TH	50	8.7-	26	4.5-	18	3.1-	14	2.4-	7	1.2
2ND 5TH	44	7.7-	32	5.6-	18	3.1-	14	2.4-	7	1.2
MID 5TH	15	2.6-	32	5.6-	33	5.7-	23	4.0-	11	1.9
4TH 5TH	3	.9-	20	3.5-	35	6.1-	26	4.5-	31	5.4
LOW 5TH	3	.5-	5	.9-	10	1.7-	38	6.6-	59	10.3

  

		\$20-50K INCOME				CDRR: .356099				
		.2068	.1946	.1844	.1675					
HI 5TH	25	4.4-	18	3.1-	21	3.7-	26	4.5-	25	4.4
2ND 5TH	24	4.2-	20	3.5-	36	5.3-	20	3.5-	15	2.6
MID 5TH	27	4.7-	32	5.6-	26	4.5-	14	2.4-	15	2.6
4TH 5TH	20	3.5-	34	5.9-	15	2.6-	27	4.7-	19	3.3
LOW 5TH	21	3.5-	10	1.7-	16	2.8-	27	4.7-	42	7.3

*An example of correlation crosstabs in the Hart targeting system in one congressional district.*