

## Election Forecasting: Polly Wants Help

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The contest hardly seems fair. On one side, a journalist from the *LA Times* develops a site to forecast the Bush/Kerry election. On the other side are an academic from the Wharton School, a specialist in forecasting, and two political scientists. The Wharton site, off to an earlier start, uses scientific knowledge about forecasting methods. By combining forecasts from four methods (polls, betting markets, econometric models, and Delphi surveys of experts), it provides the most accurate forecasts of the Bush/Kerry election. The Delphi survey is the first application of this method to election forecasting; we expect to show that our 16 experts will be more accurate than a poll of 1,000 voters. The site also provides commentary on the election and links to relevant research studies on election forecasting.

The site, which is named after our mascot, Polly the Parrot, demonstrates how to apply scientific methods, such as combining forecasts, to a highly visible problem – the election. Polly’s methods would help in other areas, like new-product forecasting.

The results judged by visits? The *LA Times* has had almost 2 million visits while Polly has had fewer than 50,000.

Can you marketing experts help Polly to get more recognition? Surely a superior site along with the combined knowledge from marketing scientists should allow us to gain more recognition than the *LA Times* site. Polly lives at <http://pollyvote.com>