



Maria Adams (A): A New Waterfront Baseball Stadium for the Central Coast Seabirds¹

The Central Coast's football team, the Sharks, had just failed to make a two point conversion and stay mathematically alive for the NFL playoffs. With mixed emotions, Maria Adams watched the game clock expire from her Robinson Stadium luxury sky suite, right next door to the Sharks' owners. A young 62 years old, Maria herself was the owner of a big time sports franchise, the National League's Central Coast Seabirds who, since 1972, had played baseball here and shared this indoor stadium facility with the NFL's Sharks.

The good news was that the Seabirds could now get a head start on the annual football-to-baseball transformation of Robinson Stadium's seating and playing surface.

The bad news was that the Sharks' failure to make the post-season could create cash flow headaches for NFL owner JJ Iarman, Maria's prickly co-tenant at Robinson Stadium. The Seabirds lease had expired last year, and Maria wanted to build a new outdoor, baseball-only facility in Central Coast's urban waterfront warehouse district. But she had signed a temporary 3 year lease extension largely as a favor to Iarman, who found himself overextended in a number of poorly performing high-end residential projects. The extension had also given Maria and her partners additional time to arrange their now nearly-completed funding for the new Seabirds Waterfront Stadium.

Maria believed that she needed her own showcase stadium in order to maintain a competitive edge in the majors and also to help produce the cash necessary for the Seabirds farm team system. She was ready to introduce her plans to the public, and create the necessary popular and political support to assure there would be no snags with the city council or the state legislature. It was no coincidence that among the most frequent guests in Maria's suite were elected officials, their staffers, and other members of the Central Coast political class from both sides of the aisle. At every game or concert, Maria and her host staffers never failed to mention the Waterfront Stadium Development Project to the guests in the owner's suite.

Now she wanted to build public support, and reach outside the political elites. She placed a cellphone call to her newly hired sports marketing whiz Amanda Bell. "We need a crash course in running an issue-type campaign, you know, like a political campaign – not a season ticket campaign" Maria told her. "Let's make it happen."

Baseball in Her Blood

Born in Cuba, Maria Adams (né Delis) had a knack for making things happen. Her father, Oscar Delis, had been an accomplished businessman on the island, building successful pre-Castro sugarcane processing and rum distilling companies inside and outside Cuba. Maria's uncle, Juan Delis, left the island in the early 1950's to pursue a baseball career in the United States. (He experienced moderate success, reaching the majors during the 1955-1958 seasons.) Meanwhile Oscar, fearing for his family's safety and fortune, moved his corporate headquarters,

¹ The situation and organizations described in this case study are entirely fictional. Consumer and media research data for Central Coast are modeled using Scarborough Research and Nielsen data from a top-ten U.S. media market, and are altered for the purposes of the case. Population estimates, media audiences and costs, and other data do not represent any actual market conditions, and should be used only by competitors in the final round of the 2019 Washington Media Scholars Foundation scholarship competition. Copyright 2013 and 2019 by WMSF. Do not reproduce without permission. More information at <https://www.mediascholars.org/media-scholars>.

his wife, and 8 year old Maria to Central Coast in 1959. Together the Delis brothers began investing in minor league teams; it was a hobby for Oscar and provided a job for Juan.

The Delis brothers' big break came in 1969 when Maria was a freshman in college. It was no secret that Oscar and Juan had their eyes on acquiring the Seabirds. When a major tornado damaged the old Seabirds Park, Oscar loaned the Seabirds owners the cash necessary to make temporary repairs. Oscar also took a 50% stake in the new Robinson stadium, then under construction. By 1972, the Delis brothers owned a controlling stake in the Seabirds who were now playing their games indoors in the brand new Robinson Stadium.

Now, Maria wanted to get out of Robinson Stadium as soon as her 3 year extension ended. Unlike the NFL's Sharks, the Seabirds had a major league competitor in the Central Coast market -- the American League's White Caps. An underfunded perennial loser, the White Caps' attendance was historically 15%-25% lower than the Seabirds. That changed in 2006 when the new White Caps Park opened in a fast-growing suburban area of the Central Coast metropolitan market and Caps attendance surged past the Seabirds (see Exhibit A: Ticket Purchasers: Trends in the Central Coast Media Market). Recently, however, with its winning teams, the Seabirds had regained their dominant position in the market. Maria believed that now was the time to capitalize on the team's success, and she thought a new stadium would help boost attendance and broadcast audiences more, and push her Seabirds into the perennial top tier of MLB franchises.

Exhibit A

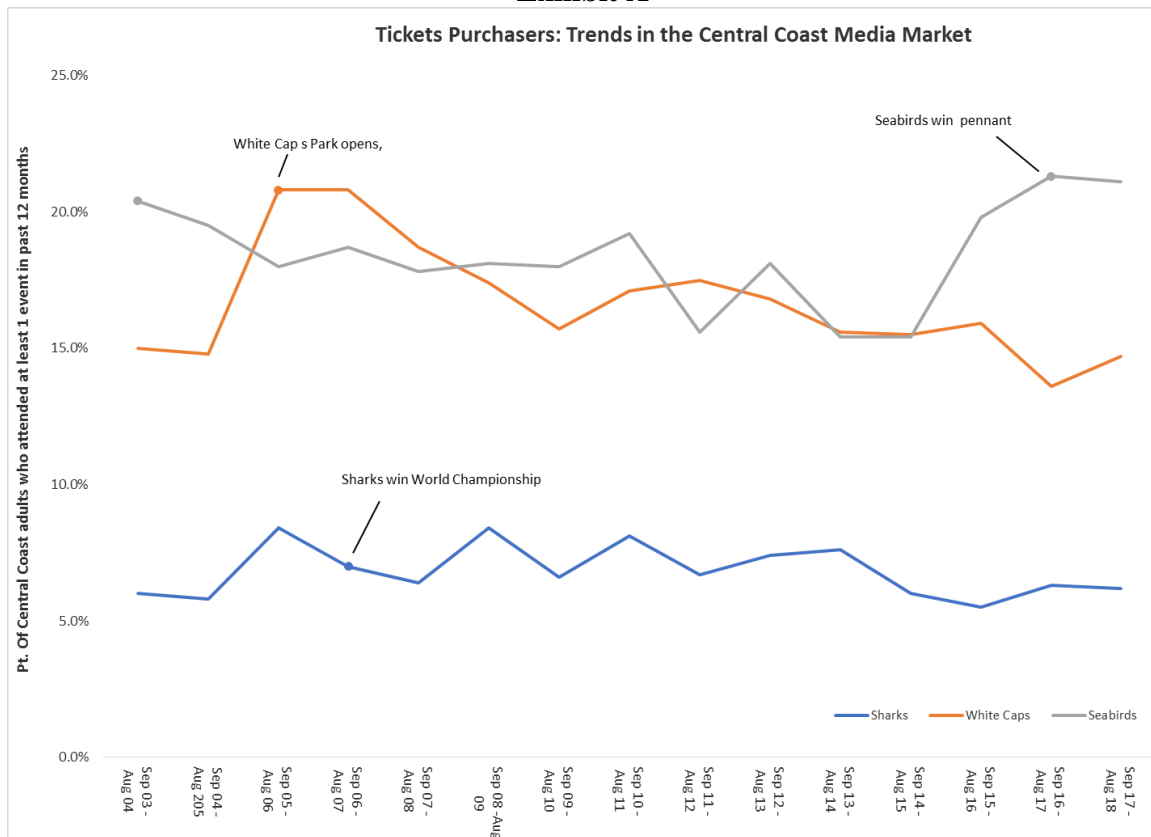


Exhibit A: Reported professional baseball and football ticket purchasers in past 12 months as reported by Scarborough Research surveys of Central Coast adults.

The Seabirds Waterfront Stadium

The Seabirds Waterfront Stadium Development styled itself as “new urbanism.” Plans included revitalization of the old fishing wharfs and warehouses into mixed residential and commercial properties, all with pedestrian friendly roads and sidewalks, green spaces, local retail shopping, and easy access to public transportation. All stadium parking lots would be located outside the Waterfront district, with special traffic features and surrounding amenities that catered to and encouraged ride-sharing and public transportation travel options. The stadium was sited and designed so it would not dominate the skyline, and surrounding building heights would be kept low.

Maria had in hand the approval of all other Major League owners except one (White Caps owner Evan Kadick had voted “present”.) The missing pieces were the necessary zoning permits and authorizations from the Central Coast City Council. But before those votes and hearings were scheduled, Maria wanted to make sure there was public support in place. Two years ago, Maria had started her own community organizing effort called the Waterfront Renewal Coalition (WRC) with a couple of staffers in a modest storefront office. They had been contacting individuals and building computerized files of residents and businesses in and around the Waterfront area.

There had been rumors that oilman Evan Kadick was talking with environmental groups and lawyers about starting a Kadick-funded “grassroots” organization to demand that the waterfront district be designated as protected wetlands, but thus far nothing had materialized. Another unknown was Shark’s owner JJ Iarman who had taken no public position on the new Seabirds stadium.²

Amanda Bell, MBA

Twenty-six year old Amanda Bell was the Seabirds’ new vice-president for marketing. She had joined the Seabirds organization five years ago after graduating from college. Amanda’s fielding was good enough to earn her a 4 year softball scholarship, but as a below average hitter she failed to earn a spot on a professional roster or the U.S. Olympic team. Instead, she was hired to do promotions for the Seabirds’ Triple-A farm club. It was there that she caught the attention of the organization’s front office and owner Maria.

When Amanda was accepted to the master’s program at a well-known eastern business school, the Seabirds offered to pay her tuition if she would come back to the Seabirds for at least three years. Amanda had returned six months ago to Central Coast with her new MBA (“A masters in baseball administration,” as Maria called it.)

Amanda had spent the last two months putting together a media campaign aimed at increasing Seabirds ticket sales and growing the television and radio audiences for game broadcasts. In the process, Amanda got an on-the-job education about a wide-variety of media platforms, and she learned how media was bought and sold. She was no media expert, but she now knew about gross rating points, cookies, cost per thousand impressions (CPM), reach and frequency, and other media concepts³. However, one thing Amanda knew almost nothing about was political-issue advertising.

² Because of his financial difficulties, Iarman was expected to keep a low profile, but might be willing to publically endorse the new Seabirds stadium.

³ This case assumes a basic, introductory-level knowledge of media concepts. Students seeking more background about media terms and planning should see the tutorial video and documents on the WMSF website: <https://www.mediascholars.org/media-scholars> .

Fortunately, Amanda knew who to call. Craig Blumstein had been a section-mate at business school and now worked at a leading political polling firm in Washington, D.C. Amanda had talked with Craig and given his firm a contract to conduct a series of polls, focus groups, and advertising testing sessions to help shape messaging for a campaign in favor of the new Seabirds Stadium.

Craig's first round of research would not be complete for several weeks. While she waited, Amanda had the immediate task of outlining a media plan and budget for presentation to Maria. Craig pointed out that there were some political variables in a consumer research database that Amanda currently purchased from Scarborough Research which conducts marketing and media research interviews with over 200,000 American adults each year. Tucked away in the hundreds of Scarborough variables, Amanda found the question she had been looking for: "How often do you vote in local elections?" Based on interviews with 3,828 Central Coast adults, 38% reported always voting in local elections compared to 46% always voting in statewide elections and 73% voting in presidential elections. Local election voters represented 2.87 million of the 7.57 million adults living in the Central Coast media market. Amanda wondered how many of them were Seabirds fans? And how many would be most likely to support the new stadium?

Politically Active Baseball Fans

During the preparation of the annual Seabirds marketing plan, Amanda had used Scarborough data to define a group of *core fans*. These were the 18.4% of Central Coast adults who both bought tickets and watched or listened to Seabirds broadcasts on television and radio. Using the Scarborough data analysis application, Amanda cross-tabulated her core fan group with turnout in local elections (exhibit B).

Exhibit B

		Seabirds Core Fans (attended games and watch/listen to broadcasts)		NOT Seabirds Core Fans
All Central Coast Adults	All Adults			
Proj	7,573,546	1,395,881	6,177,665	
Vert %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
Horz %	100.0%	18.4%	81.6%	
Index	100	100	100	
Always Vote in Local Elections	Proj	2,865,792	644,915	2,220,877
	Vert %	37.8%	46.2%	36.0%
	Total %	37.8%	8.5%	29.3%
	Index	100	122	95
Sometimes Vote in Local Elections	Proj	2,383,323	457,250	1,926,073
	Vert %	31.5%	32.8%	31.2%
	Total %	31.5%	6.0%	25.4%
	Index	100	104	99
Never Vote in Local Elections	Proj	2,324,431	293,716	2,030,715
	Vert %	30.7%	21.0%	32.9%
	Total %	30.7%	3.9%	26.8%
	Index	100	69	107
Potential WRC Supporters	<p>8.5% Seabirds Core Fans heavy-voters 29.3% NOT Seabirds Core Fans heavy-voters 6.0% Seabirds Core Fans light-voters 56.1% Non-Target</p>			

Exhibit B: There 7.57 million adults in the Central Coast media market, including 1.4 million Seabirds "core fans." Of these fans, 645,000 say they always vote in local Central Coast elections

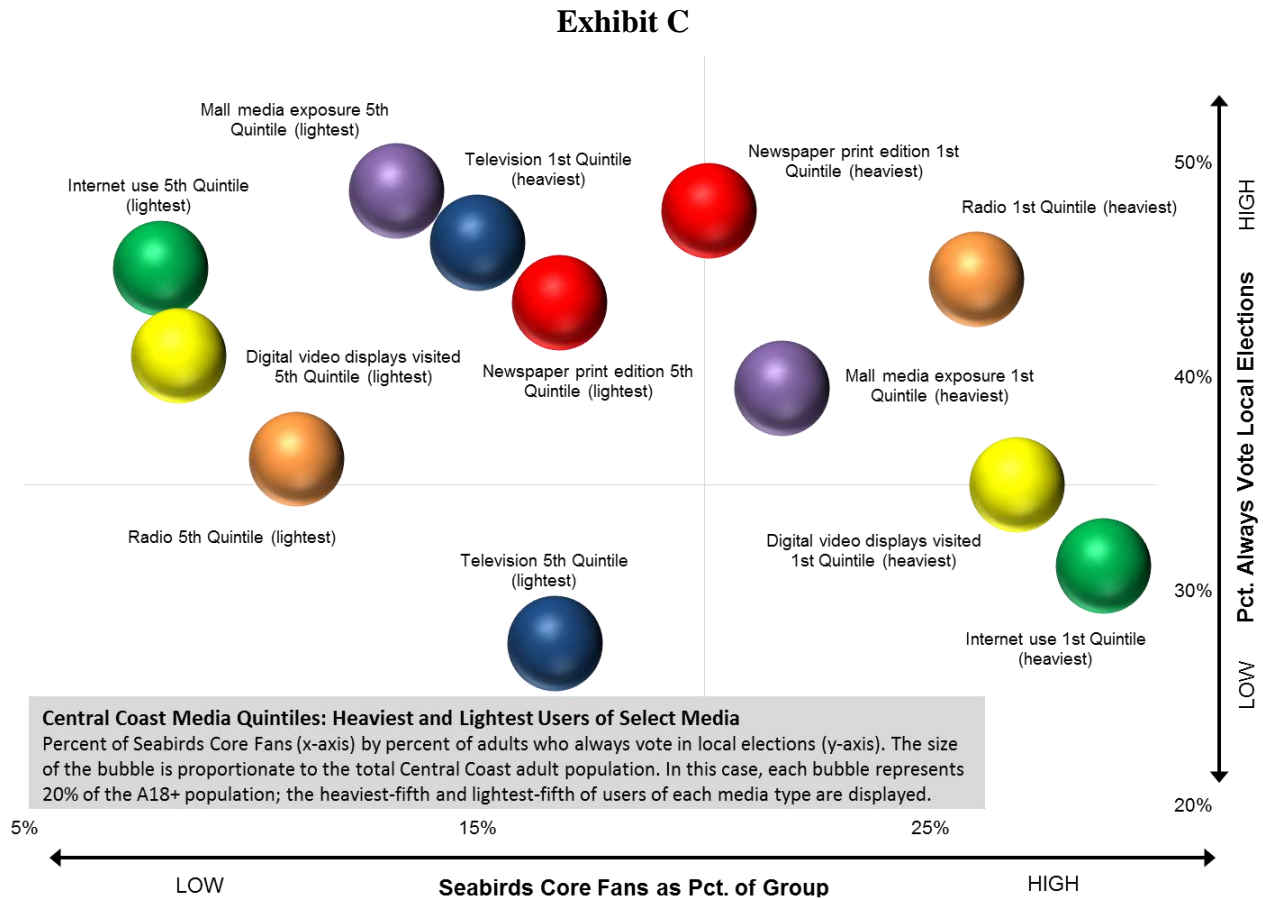
About 46% of her core fan group reported always voting in local elections. This was higher than the 38% local election turnout among all adults (indicated in exhibit B by the 122 index value— $46\% \div 38\%$ equals 1.22; expressed as 22% more likely). About 21% of core fans said they never voted in local elections (an index value of 69, or expressed as 31% less likely). Seabirds fans overall were somewhat more likely to vote than the average adult, and definitely voted at higher rates than Seabirds non-fans.

Amanda saw a potential problem – high turnout voters who were not core fans outnumbered her voting fans by a margin of 3.5 to 1, or 2.2 million to 645,000. If an active opposition campaign emerged, it would almost certainly target this larger group of non-fan, high-turnout voters.

Mapping the Media Landscape

At business school, Amanda had been exposed to bubble charts as a way to visualize data relationships (a graphic technique originally popularized by the Boston Consulting Group). To get an overall view of how potential target groups used media, Amanda first plotted a chart using

media quintile data (Exhibit C). Amanda knew that quintile data helps media researchers and planners better understand how people consume media. For instance, in the Central Coast media market the 1st (heaviest) quintile of radio users listen to more than 17 hours of radio per week, but the 5th (lightest) quintile of radio users listen to less than 4 hours of radio per week.



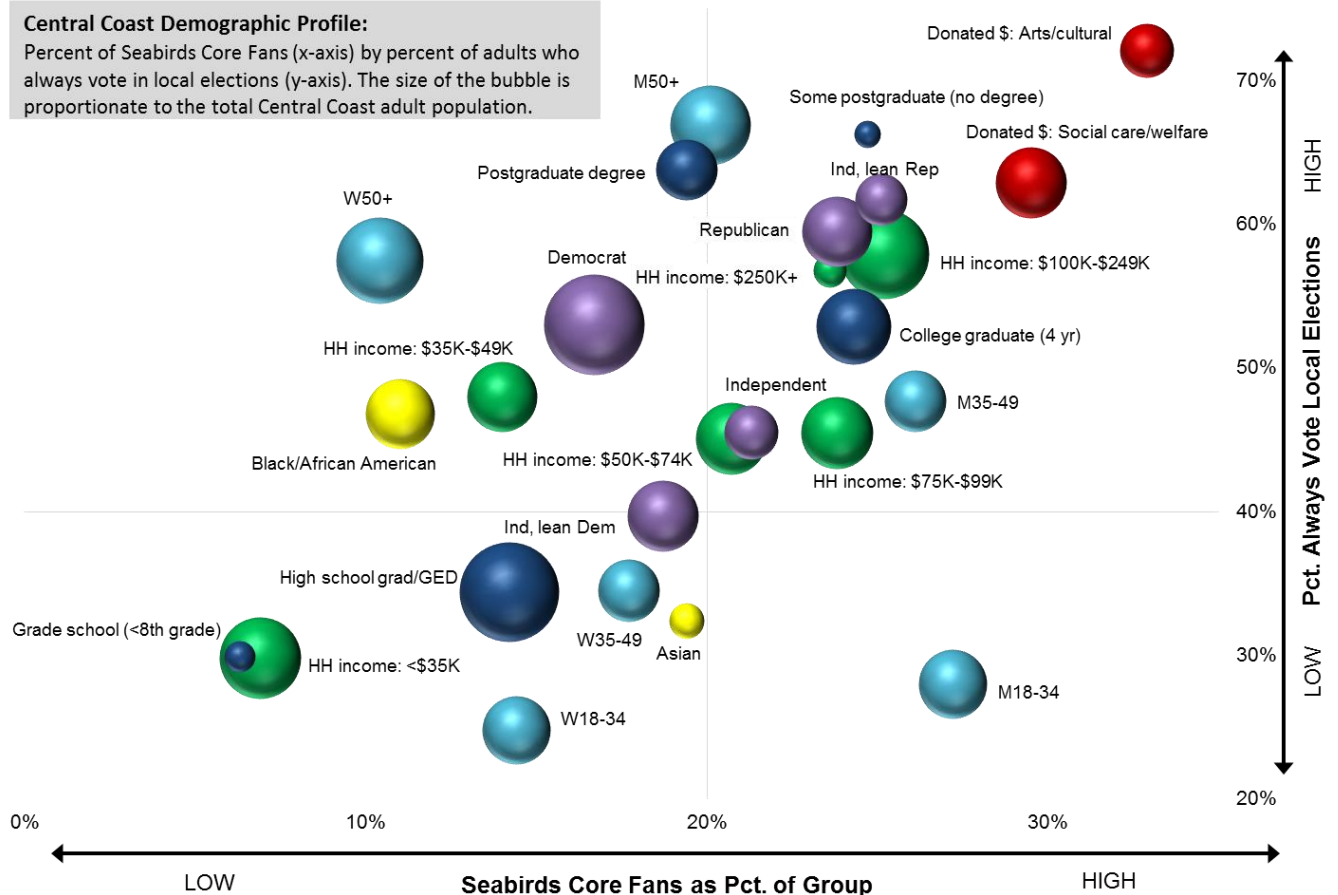
In the upper right-hand quadrant, radio and mall media reach those Seabirds fans that are more likely to vote in local elections. Meanwhile, heavy Internet users are more likely to be interested in the Seabirds, but less likely to vote than users of other media types. Television and newspapers are good for reaching high turnout voters but less effective at reaching the core fan group than radio and internet heavy users. Amanda would use this sort of analysis to help her allocate her total campaign spending across various media vehicles.

Amanda prepared another bubble chart (Exhibit D) showing select demographic and political groups. She found it interesting that donors to arts/cultural organizations and social care/welfare organization were also more likely to be Seabirds fans. Amanda's research showed that Seabirds fans tended to have higher household income and completed higher levels of education compared to all Central Coast adults. (See additional bubble charts in Appendix.)

Exhibit D

Central Coast Demographic Profile:

Percent of Seabirds Core Fans (x-axis) by percent of adults who always vote in local elections (y-axis). The size of the bubble is proportionate to the total Central Coast adult population.



Finally, Amanda prepared an Excel spreadsheet that would function as her "shopping list" while she prepared her media plan and budget (Exhibit E). The list was long, but not exhaustive, as Amanda might decide to add other communications tools not currently on this list as she developed her plan.

To simplify things, Amanda priced each media vehicle in terms of its cost per 1000 impressions (CPM). For example, early morning programming on Central Coast broadcast television stations averaged \$10 per 1000 viewers. If Amanda bought 1 million impressions on the local early morning programs, she could expect to pay about \$10,000. Similarly, if Amanda decides to spend \$50,000 on radio news/talk, she would expect to achieve about 3,125,000 adult 18+ impressions (or 3.1mm A18+ imps⁴).

⁴ The WMSF encourages rounding.

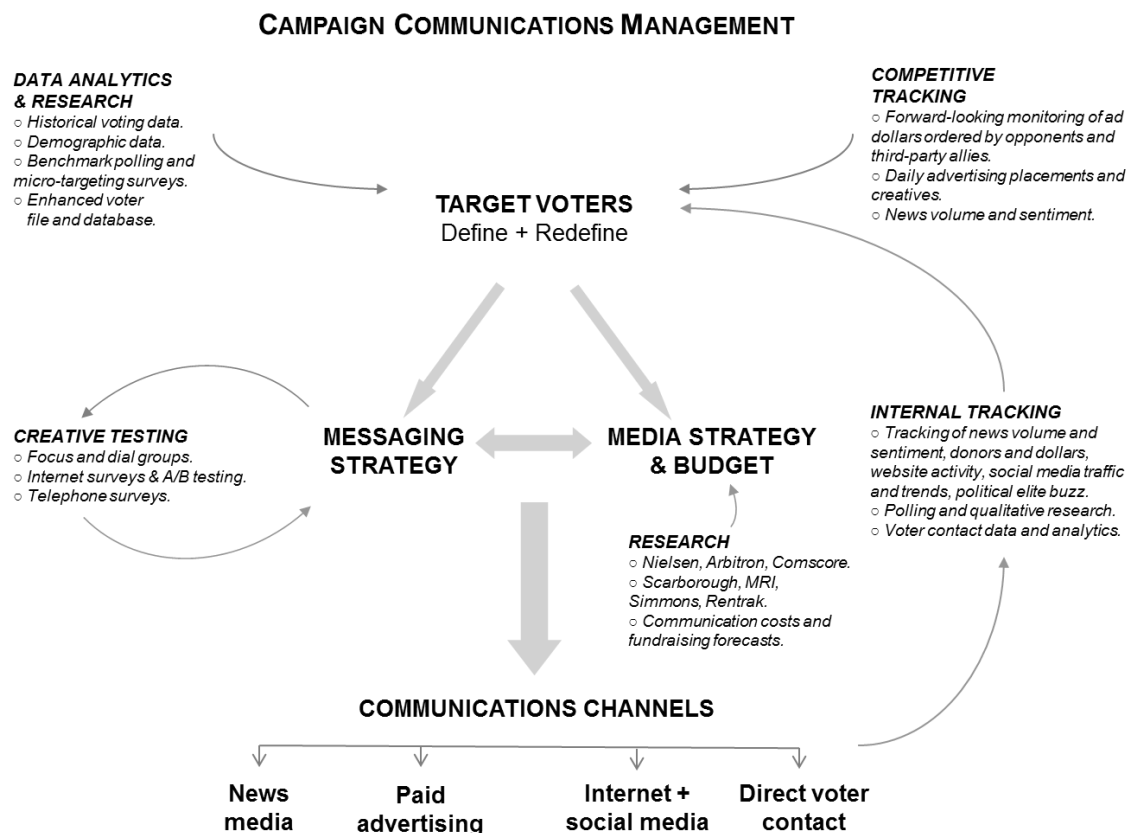
Exhibit E (Also provided in an Excel file format)

Seabird Waterfront Stadium Development Project:					
Media Planning Costs and Audiences					
	Avg Planning Costs per 1000 impressions (CPM)	Seabirds Core Fans		High Turnout Voters	
		As Horz% of Media Audience	Seabird Index	As Horz% of Media Audience	Local Voting Index
TELEVISION (:30)					
Combined Broadcast Television Networks (by daypart)					
Early Morning (5a-9a)	\$ 10	14.4%	78	49.0%	129
Daytime (9a-3p)	\$ 7	11.8%	64	48.9%	129
Early Fringe (3p-5p)	\$ 8	9.5%	52	54.3%	144
Early News (5p-7p)	\$ 16	13.0%	70	53.3%	141
Prime Access (7p-8p)	\$ 20	14.1%	77	50.0%	132
Primetime (8p-11p)	\$ 35	15.9%	86	46.8%	124
Late News (11p-1130p)	\$ 37	14.7%	80	50.7%	134
Late Fringe (1130p-1a)	\$ 15	14.6%	79	46.6%	123
Local Broadcast TV Sports - weekend	\$ 33	31.0%	168	45.9%	121
Spanish Language Broadcast Television					
Early Morning	\$ 33	14.8%	80	35.5%	94
Early News	\$ 38	10.3%	56	28.1%	74
Late News	\$ 45	7.5%	41	35.5%	94
Primetime	\$ 62	10.2%	55	28.0%	74
All Day Rotator	\$ 35	10.4%	56	32.6%	86
Combined Cable Network Groups					
News: Daytime	\$ 25	19.5%	106	53.6%	142
News: Primetime	\$ 50	19.6%	106	54.9%	145
Arts/Culture/History: Daytime	\$ 15	27.7%	150	42.7%	113
Arts/Culture/History: Primetime	\$ 30	27.4%	148	43.0%	114
General Entertainment: Daytime	\$ 14	21.6%	117	34.1%	90
General Entertainment: Primetime	\$ 28	26.9%	146	36.9%	98
Sports: Daytime	\$ 20	20.6%	112	49.8%	132
Sports: Primetime	\$ 45	26.1%	142	53.1%	140
Lifestyle/Info-tainment: Daytime	\$ 14	17.6%	95	39.1%	103
Lifestyle/Info-tainment: Primetime	\$ 26	14.0%	76	33.8%	89
Other/Niche/Education: Daytime	\$ 16	27.9%	151	47.6%	126
Other/Niche/Education: Primetime	\$ 31	21.5%	116	38.0%	100
Satellite Dish Viewing: All Day Rotator	\$ 8	16.2%	88	45.8%	121
RADIO (:60)					
Combined Radio Formats**					
Newstalk	\$ 16	19.8%	108	49.5%	131
Rock	\$ 25	23.2%	126	36.8%	97
Country	\$ 23	20.4%	111	30.5%	81
Spanish Music	\$ 35	18.6%	101	32.1%	85
Sports	\$ 28	29.6%	161	47.1%	124
Satellite Radio	\$ 12	27.0%	147	44.3%	117
**Mix of drivetime and daytime					
PUBLIC BROADCASTING UNDERWRITING					
PBS non-political underwriting announcement	\$ 65	19.2%	104	49.1%	130
NPR non-political underwriting announcement	\$ 53	14.7%	80	40.6%	107
PRINT					
Full Page B&W Ad					
Central Coast Tribune - Monday-Friday	\$ 60	25.1%	136	52.4%	138
Central Coast Tribune - Sunday	\$ 75	18.9%	102	47.2%	125

Craig's Political Campaign Model

This afternoon Amanda would be meeting with Maria to discuss the overall timing and budget of the campaign to promote public support for the Seabirds Waterfront Stadium Project. At lunch she reviewed a diagram that political pollster friend Craig Blumstein had sent her. Amanda was going to focus on the media strategy and budget part of the flowchart, and leave the messaging decisions until after Craig finished his first round of consumer research and polling.

The flowchart was something that Craig's firm used for presentations to political clients and candidates running for office. Amanda was not running a candidate campaign but she wondered what other aspects of the diagram might be applicable to her Seabirds campaign. According to Craig, one of the biggest differences between political and consumer campaigns was that political campaigns placed more value on so-called "direct contact," including volunteer door-knocking, telephone calls, and other forms of personal interaction. Amanda wondered if she should make some allowance for this in the budget she would be preparing.



Maria's Marching Orders

Amanda was flabbergasted when Maria told her that she was willing to spend up to \$4 million next year in order to generate public support for her new stadium. This was twice as much as Amanda's total annual budget for Seabirds team marketing.

"If you don't have to spend it all, I would of course appreciate that," said Maria. "But make sure you spend as much as we need." Maria suggested that she plan a five-month campaign. The first phase of the campaign would be March, April and May to coincide with the start of baseball season. The second phase of the campaign would follow in October and November. "If we win the pennant again, we won't have to spend anything in the fall!" Maria joked.

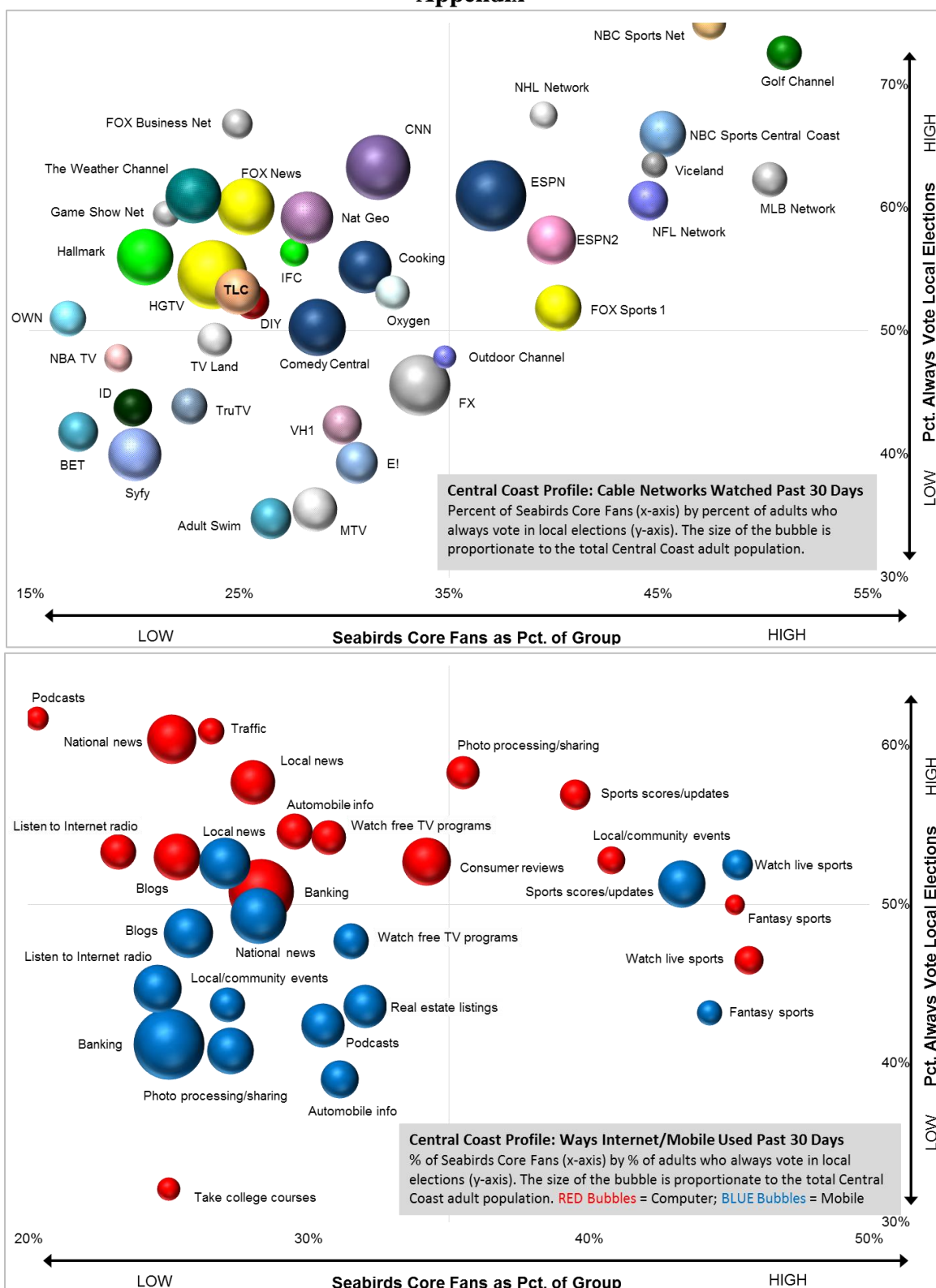
Amanda asked Maria about spending on personal contact and other political coalition-building activities. "I don't really know anything about that or how much it costs but you might want to hold some money aside to cover those sorts of things," Maria answered.

Back in her office, Amanda considered the key strategic questions that she would need to answer:

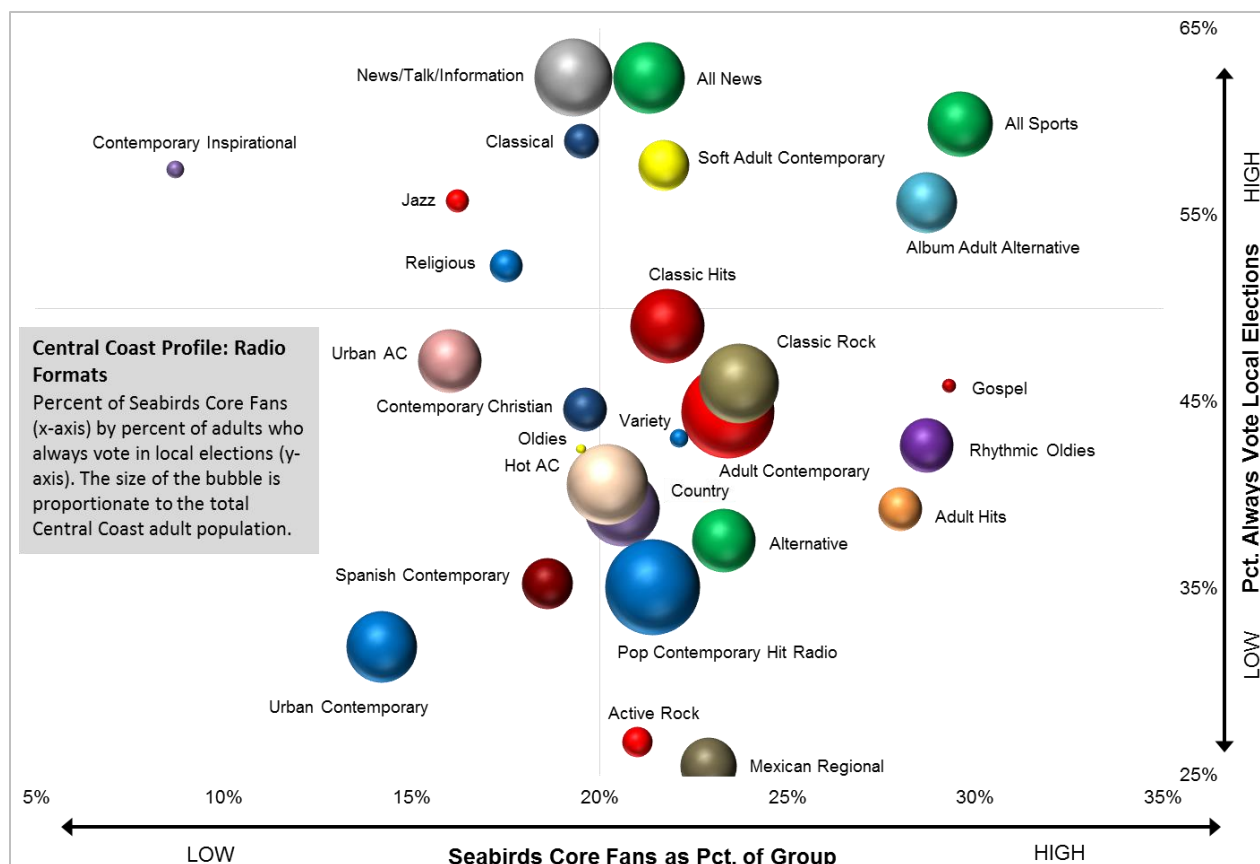
- Who was her target audience(s) for the new stadium campaign?
- How could her target(s) be reached?
- What mix of media vehicles would be a cost-effective way of reaching them?
- How would she schedule the spending of the \$4 million budget next year?

Amanda would have to prepare a written document for Maria to answer these questions. She didn't know exactly what the written document would end up looking like, but she wanted to include the following:

- a. A month-by-month media plan in an Excel spreadsheet. The columns would be months. The rows would be different media vehicles that Amanda wanted to include in her plan. The spreadsheet would at least show how much she would spend each month on each different type of media, how many impressions she would get each month and estimate her total gross rating points over the course of the campaign.
- b. Clearly labeled summary tables and graphs for presentation to Maria and other Seabirds top management and project investors. These would show the thinking and analysis behind her budget recommendations.
- c. A memorandum that included a narrative description of the proposed media plan along with any supporting tables or graphics. Amanda had to keep the memo to 8-10 pages long, including any tables or graphs that she decided to insert.

Appendix⁵

⁵ All chart and graph data used in this case study came from a top 10 Nielsen media market, Scarborough Research Release 2, Aug 2017-Aug 2018, n=3,828.



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