

## ***'How Data Will Determine the Next President'***

### **Introductory Remarks (Hollis Kurman)**

I'm going to start off with a little **poll** of my own:

How many of you here tonight are **eligible to vote** in the upcoming US election...?

How many of you wish you were eligible to vote?

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'US Election-Watching' seems to have joined the ranks of **leading spectator sports** on a world level, right up there with the World Cup and the Olympics. It's a wonder that corporate brand sponsorship hasn't kicked in yet. Or maybe it has...

In terms of world class **entertainment**, there's **something for everybody**:

Drama, suspense, comedy, horror, romance... and now even explicit language and violence added to the mix, making it the **1st R-rated** election campaign in history.

As entertaining as it may be, however, we all know that this election campaign is **very serious business**. Serious business because of **what's at stake** (even on the **G7's** hidden agenda today). Serious business because of how many people and groups **stand to gain** - or lose! - from the outcome. And also serious business because **whole industries** now thrive on predicting, tracking, covering, checking, analyzing, explaining and interpreting what's going on... And what IS going on??

Even for those among us who are closest to the process or follow it most avidly, the US election campaigns and process are still **very confusing**. And when reality gets confusing, **numbers help**. Tonight, we will turn to numbers to help us understand what's going on – and find out how US presidential candidates themselves have turned to numbers to **help them understand voters and win**.

A recent *Washington Post* article (11 May) reminded us, *'Of course, Analytics is as much about **looking at the right things** as it is about simply 'numbers''*. We are fortunate tonight to have two leading experts, one on polling and one on Big Data Analytics, to help us look at 'the right things' and make sense of it all:

**Andrew Tanenbaum** is an American computer scientist and professor emeritus at the VU/ Vrije Universiteit. He is best known as the author of **MINIX**, the computer operating system forerunner to Linux. In 2004, Tanenbaum created the non-partisan blog [Electoral-vote.com](http://Electoral-vote.com), which tracks state-by-state polling data to project the outcome of the presidential race. It was one of the most widely used and cited Web sites during the 2004 U.S. Presidential election, becoming one of the top 10 blogs in the world. By 2008, the website was drawing 1.5 mln visitors per day – and it is still a very popular site for politics, polls and data.

**Timothy Prescott** was part of Obama’s **Analytics Team** in 2008 and 2012. The team used free, shared and bought data to **look at voters as individuals** instead of as blocks. The result: a **breakthrough model** that recommends which voters to approach - and *how* to approach them. By knowing the voters and modeling the electorate, the campaign wasted less time (and money) pounding the pavement. Obama’s Big Data campaigns changed the playing field and raised the bar for future campaigns. Timothy is now back in NL, working as an Analytics Consultant.

As for me, expert in neither of these things, I promise to try my best to stay **neutral** through this provocative discussion...!

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There **will be time for Q&A** following the talks and brief panel discussion.

(We’d love to hear questions from a mix of Americans and non-Americans in the audience)

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ANDY TANENBAUM TALK	(25 MIN)
TIMOTHY PRESCOTT TALK	(25 MIN)
PANEL	(15 MIN)
Q & A	(15 MIN)
WRAP-UP/CLOSE	(5 MIN)