



Case study

GETTING A MARKETING EDUCATION February 2009

When Pete Wilson was asked to help answer the question 'why parents choose particular schools for their kids', he saw the chance to educate both his client and his employer. His decision to use a web-based geographic marketing system, like the most intuitive of educational practices, was to prove infectious, exciting the clients and prospects of his employer Gavin Anderson & Company, as well as his colleagues, for the benefits it delivers to market and social research projects.

Mr. Wilson took up his role as a research director about the same time as GA Research was retained by a Sydney based education provider to answer that strategic question being asked frequently in the competitive Australian education market.

Gavin Anderson advises on corporate, financial and public affairs worldwide. Its research division GA Research conducts a range of qualitative and quantitative projects.

Mr. Wilson saw the project for the education provider as an opportunity to advance the use of technology to support market research by introducing the Tactician Online system, a web-based geographic system distributed by MapData Sciences, which equips sales and marketing organisations with powerful marketing and planning applications.

He spearheaded the introduction of Tactician Online at GA Research, drawing on his earlier experience working with geographic information systems (GIS) and digital mapping.

"But mapping is just the beginning. It is the combination of digital mapping of data with comprehensive analytical capabilities that gives Tactician Online its power and takes it to the next level –beyond simply being able to present geographic data in a visual form," he said.

Tactician Online connects people to demographic maps, data and market intelligence which is organised geographically, according to the unique markets, trade areas, territories and communities, in which organisations sell, promote, advertise and deliver products and services.

Using this data, along with custom data uploaded by the user where appropriate, Tactician Online can generate an enormous number of textual and visual reports covering current and projected demographic data. Thousands of demographic data variables are available for mapping and reporting.

Mr. Wilson said "we quickly identified that Tactician Online was more cost-effective and would be easier to use than a GIS which was a possible option for us. However, we would have had to have done a lot with the GIS to develop a workable solution. Nor did licensing a GIS give us the flexibility of being able to use Tactician Online as a hosted, web-based service for an annual fee."

The software and data required to run Tactician Online reside on secure servers at MapData Sciences, the Australian and New Zealand distributor for Tactician. This overcame the need for GA Research to license the software or acquire new or special hardware to run the application.

Mr. Wilson says the desk research phase of the schools project was most appropriate for the introduction of Tactician Online.

To begin the project GA Research determined the research criteria for families who identified with a particular religion, choosing to undertake research by postcode areas. It also incorporated overall enrolment data supplied by the client at a census collection district level.



GA Research constructed variables using recent Census data. By postcode area it was able to research the attendance uptake at private, public or religious schools, as well as determine what areas represent low, medium or high uptake for these sorts of schools and how income levels and ethnicity determine uptake.

Following desk research, GA Research conducted focus groups, the consolidated results from which enabled the client to formulate a program to market its educational offering.

While Mr. Wilson acknowledges that digital maps are increasingly finding a place in the business environment, it is the combination of location with the analytical capabilities and integrated demographic data of Tactician Online that give the system its power and take it beyond simply being able to present data in a visual form.

"I was fiddling with Tactician Online within minutes of the application being commissioned for us by MapData Sciences. Because Tactician Online is easier to use than other possible solutions, but nonetheless very powerful, a greater number of people are inclined to experiment and become familiar with using it. Having all Census data and mapping functionality in one solution makes it very powerful," he adds.

MapData Sciences supported the introduction of Tactician Online by teaching GA Research staff how to use the application as well as by geocoding, or accurately locating, 150 schools on digital maps to further streamline the research project.

"We are almost flying solo as a user of Tactician Online," Pete Wilson said. "We ask for support from MapData Sciences when we encounter the small differences that distinguish one project from another."

For example, MapData Sciences was asked to construct market areas based on electoral boundaries for use with Tactician Online.

"This has excited clients by showing them how its power might be applied to research in the political arena," Mr. Wilson said.

"Tactician Online has now become integral to our other work, especially the qualitative research we undertake for shareholder and membership groups.

"It enables us to very quickly determine by geography who voted a certain way, or who holds a certain opinion. From this feedback we can hold focus groups to further research issues."

Mr. Wilson says GA Research has produced maps speculatively to show prospects just what the system is capable of and how the application of the technology might assist their research project. The research team has also produced a generic presentation for Gavin Anderson consultants to introduce the tool to their clients and prospects.

About GA Research

[GA Research](#) is a specialist market and social research firm with particular expertise in corporate, financial and issues projects.

It focuses on projects related to:

- Corporate reputation and stakeholder perception
- Financial transactions and investor relations
- Issues management and opinion polling
- Testing communications materials

Its unique mix of experience as researchers, research buyers and communications consultants means it translates research findings into real-world strategies. Being campaign focussed, it explores what's driving opinion and the most effective ways of influencing knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.



GA Research is a division of [Gavin Anderson & Company](#), advisers on corporate, financial and public affairs worldwide. It is a member of the Australian Market and Social Research Organisation (AMSRO).