

5 Communications Lessons from Trump's Victory

✘ *By David E. Johnson, CEO, Strategic Vision PR Group*

Americans elected [Donald Trump](#) as President on Tuesday. It was the political upset heard around the world as every poll and pundit had predicted a Hillary Clinton victory. Without a doubt it was our version of the famous Harry Truman upset over Thomas Dewey in 1948. Even more so for [business communicators](#) Trump's strategy provides some lessons on how to effectively communicate.

So what were the lessons?



1. Have a message. Whether you liked Donald Trump's message regarding immigration, the Affordable Care Act, or banning Muslims, he had a message and stayed on those major points throughout the campaign. People knew where he stood on issues and by his consistency of message appeared to be a strong leader at a time when America was looking for a strong leader. Clinton on the other hand seemed bland with her statements which seemed as if they had all been focused group tested before she made them. A clear message will win every time.

2. How you say it matters. Trump had an almost uncanny sense of what voters wanted to hear and how they wanted to hear it. He realized more than what he said, how he said it to voters mattered.
3. Social media is effective. Trump was mocked for his late night tweets on Twitter. Yet he understood the power of social media far better than anyone else. It wasn't by accident that he has more followers on Twitter than President Obama has. He understood that social media provided a cost-efficient way to reach voters and engage them.
4. Be true to your brand. Trump was attacked time and again for his over the top statements and being politically incorrect. Yet that was his brand that he had developed over the years through Celebrity Apprentice, media interviews, and business deals. He was being consistent with that brand identity and that is why he was not hurt with his statements. Clinton on the other hand seemed to be rebranding herself throughout the campaign, leaving voters to wonder who was the real Hillary.
5. Know your audience. Trump knew throughout the campaign who he was trying to reach – the Silent Majority as Richard Nixon called them or the Reagan Democrats as they were rebranded – and tailored his statements and appeal to that audience. Clinton on the other hand never seemed to know who she was trying to reach. Was it the Obama coalition? Disgruntled Republicans? Undecided independents? And at the end that was fatal as her vote totals among core Democratic constituencies was far lower than that of previous Democratic candidates.

The 2016 election will be studied for years. Donald Trump will become the modern day version of Harry Truman with Hillary Clinton as the Thomas Dewey foil. Yet for communicators, the key is learning and incorporating the successful communications strategies from the election.

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