
~~~~~ THE PORRO PASSAROUND - TIPS FOR COMMUNICATORS ~~~~~

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THOSE LAZY, HAZY DAYS...

The leaves are starting to turn, and campaign ads are filling the airwaves. It must be October. In the spirit of the season, the Passaround offers some thoughts on the candidates and their speeches. But we spice things up with some insights from the speechwriter for America's most famous CEO.

- [1] Speeches: McCain does better, but...
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**1. Speeches: McCain does better, but...**

In the last issue, I noted that - despite having great speechwriters - John McCain's speeches tended to be, well, dull. Now that he's been nominated and is working with speech coaches, how's he doing?

Overall, much better. His acceptance speech was pretty darn good: it was well written AND he slowed his pace, interacted with his audience, and did a much better job of varying his voice to add feeling and emotion.

One Washington speech coach, Susan Peterson of the Communication Center ([www.thecommunicationcenter.com](http://www.thecommunicationcenter.com)), gave him seven out of ten stars. Unfortunately, his presentation paled in comparison to Barack Obama and VP nominee Sarah Palin. I knew the eloquent Obama would be good, but I was very surprised at how well Sarah Palin did. Whether you agree with her policies or not, she came over as relaxed, smart, funny, genuine and committed. Her challenge now is the opposite of McCain's. He's great at events where he has to think on his feet, but he still has to work on his speeches. She's proved she can give a great speech, but how will she do when she has to get out from behind the teleprompter?

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**2. Speeches: Stories and politics**

The one aspect of speechmaking where McCain did stand out from the other major candidates for President and Vice President was his use of storytelling. "Use stories not statistics" is one of my 6 rules for effective speechwriting. All of the candidates' speechwriters know this rule very well, and the candidates are putting stories to good use. Joe Biden talks about his nightly commute to Delaware, Sarah Palin talks about meeting her husband, Obama tells us about his grandmother.

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But McCain has outdone them all. After steadfastly refusing to say much publicly about his captivity in North Vietnam, in his acceptance speech he dramatically presented personal story of how his capture, imprisonment and torture in Vietnam. Even better he used described how that time in a prison camp transformed him into the person he is now (subtext: a person well suited to be President.)It has become a major theme of his campaign.

Next time, we'll take a look at how the candidates use stories and other speechwriting devices in the debates.

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### 3. **Speeches:** From Jack Welch's speechwriter -- know your audience, or else!

Bill Lane, who worked 20 years at speechwriter for Jack Welch former CEO of GE, has a terrific new book out, JACKED UP. I got the chance to interview Lane for an article about how CEOs should communicate to key audiences during tough times. One of the many great insights Lane shared was that Welch was always willing to put in the time to get to know his audiences.

"Welch knew that the worst thing you could do was start a speech and realize you were on a completely different wavelength from the audience," says Lane. "So Jack made sure we took the time to learn as much about as many different individuals in the room as we could." That was one of the most important keys to Welch's success as a CEO, Lane says. And he warns, "Most CEOs pay lip service to knowing the audience, but they won't take the time to do it. Jack always did."