

Hello and welcome to my June 2008 Newsletter

Jeff Ansell News & Views

Everything you're exposed to in media is just someone else's interpretation of issues and events, so view it with an open mind. Skilful communication with media, and in presentations can make all the difference in how your messages are reported and received. It's a complicated mix of delivery and interpretation, and an ability few truly master, yet it is something anyone can learn or improve upon.

Topics for this newsletter:

- 1.) REIN IN YOUR BRAIN & SPEAK SLOWLY
- 2.) INVOKE EMOTION TO CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE
- 3.) HARPER USES COMMON LANGUAGE TO BUILD TRUST
- 4.) The EVOLUTION & REDEFINITION of NEWS
- 5.) TAKE THE HIGH ROAD, BUT DON'T GET TRAPPED
- 6.) REPUTATION MANAGEMENT
- 7.) SAVING BABY FACE
- 8.) PRESSURE COOKER UNDER THE MICROSCOPE
- 9.) THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU ...

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to friends and colleagues.

.....

1.) SPEAK SLOWLY & REIN IN YOUR BRAIN

To use and say the right amount of words, speak slowly, with the brain not getting ahead of the tongue and the tongue not getting ahead of the brain. It is easier "said than done" considering the penchant people have to speak quickly in nervous moments.

Hearing a spokesperson unleash a torrent of words is not by itself a giveaway that the individual is nervous. Often, people speak quickly to imply a sense of urgency, or to reflect passion for the subject matter. However, when spokespeople talk quickly to reporters, they risk experiencing brain-tongue separation, where brain and tongue disengage resulting in words that leave our lips faster than we intended. Oops – we said something we wish we hadn't said. Talking slowly helps control what we say, as we say it. The average person speaks at 175 words per minute in everyday conversation.

In pursuing the Democratic nomination, speeches by Senator Barack Obama averaged 110 words per minute. Speaking in a thoughtful, deliberate manner adds "gravitas to the message almost regardless of what the message is," said speechwriter Dan McGroarty, who wrote for former president George H.W. Bush.

For contrast, Hillary Clinton clocked in at an average 188 words a minute in her campaign

speeches.

You must control every word when answering questions from media.

In 2004 neurobiologists at the University of California discovered that “visual, tactile and auditory information needs to be synchronized. If it were not, then one might, for example, perceive someone’s lips move before hearing the words being spoken—like a badly dubbed foreign film.”

You can read more about the neurology of sight and sound here;
<http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/newsrel/science/sdivlabor.asp>

Here’s a guy doing 300 words per minute – and making sense.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeK5ZjtpO-M>

.....JeffAnsell.com

2.) INVOKE EMOTION TO CONNECT WITH YOUR AUDIENCE

News is about emotion, either the use of . . . or the lack of it.

Now that the presidential candidates have been selected, there is much to learn from the way they communicated in the campaign thus far, for example, regarding Hillary Clinton’s non-connection with people, New York Times reporter Patrick Healy wrote, “Mr. [Bill] Clinton became visibly emotional in Davenport on Tuesday, for instance, as he recalled a New York City fireman who professed devotion to Mrs. Clinton for her work after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. ‘I have a hard time telling this,’ Mr. Clinton said with feeling.”

Healy continued, “Mrs. Clinton has her own powerful stories about her mother’s struggles and the love for America in some countries, but she rarely sounds as if she has a lump in her throat.”

Demonstrating once more . . .

It’s not only what you say – it’s how you say it.

Perhaps that perceived lack of emotion led Hillary to open up in the days after her loss in Iowa. Recognizing her need to project greater warmth to voters, Hillary wanted to demonstrate she indeed has emotions, so when she was asked how it feels to be considered unlikable, she answered;

“Well, it just hurts my feelings. But I’ll just have to press on.”

Her answer garnered considerable coverage, but a day or so later in the Café Espresso coffee shop in Portsmouth, New Hampshire it paled in the wake of her emotional display.

A freelance photographer, Marianne Pernold-Young, asked the candidate how she keeps going in the grueling campaign. Hillary, tears welling in her eyes and a lump in her throat, answered, “I just don’t want us (United States) to fall backwards, you know? So, you know this is very personal for me. It’s not just political. It’s not just public. I see what’s happening and we have to reverse it.”

Some, (including me) thought her emotional display could quite possibly have represented the beginning of the end of Hillary’s campaign. That precise image derailed the 1972 presidential campaign of Senator Edmund Muskie, who was forced to pull out of the race because he appeared to cry while defending his wife’s integrity.

Hillary's emotional moment, shown on TV over and over again, had the opposite effect. Voters, not to mention reporters, lauded her new signs of warmth. Political scientist Pippa Norris of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard said, "When Hillary, who has played against gender types, suddenly tears up, women flock to her because she seems like them." Pollster John Zogby said, when Hillary showed emotion older women believed "her struggle is mine."

Toronto TV critic John Doyle wrote that one reason Hillary's display of feeling had the effect it did is because "women own the television world right now and have for several seasons. It's women viewers who matter to broadcasters and advertisers, and it is the stories, fantasies and foibles of women – especially married or mature women that are the fodder for the most important and popular story telling. What Clinton did was insert herself into the most significant narrative in the American popular culture."

She went on to win the state primary. Lest skeptics fault Hillary for her emotional demonstration, hubby Bill offered up some wet ones of his own the next day, when he welled up on-camera, while talking about the pride he felt for his wife.

Worth noting is that Pernold-Young, the woman who asked Hillary the question, has mixed feelings about what she witnessed. "We saw 10 seconds of Hillary, the caring woman," she said. "But then when she turned away from me, I noticed that she stiffened up and took on that political posture again. And the woman that I noticed for 10 seconds was gone." Pernold-Young ended up not voting for Hillary. "I voted for Obama," she said. "He really moved me. Hillary did too, but he was less scripted."

Practice makes perfect. You can't expect to perform on cue and in a perceived off-the-cuff manner if you don't take time to fine-tune and learn exactly how to properly use emotion to positively impact your statement. I refer to this discipline as Quantum Speak, and for a number of years have helped a variety of politicians and executives express and manage their emotions and speak with clarity.

You can learn more about Quantum Speak here;
<http://www.jeffansell.com/quantum-speak-full-text.html>

.....JeffAnsell.com

3.) HARPER USES COMMON LANGUAGE TO BUILD TRUST

In a historic apology to First Nations Indian People in Canada, Prime Minister Stephen Harper used proven crisis management strategies to get his message across in a way that was perceived by many, especially the victims, to be heartfelt and genuine.

The National Post newspaper asked me to analyze the apology for a feature article. First Nations Aboriginal children were subjected to abuse and atrocities at the hands of the government spanning the late 1800's to 1990 when the boarding schools were finally closed.

Prime Minister Harper exhibited many traits of a well-trained crisis management communicator during his speech, and used a series of strategies meant to invoke trust. He even asked for forgiveness, and if you have any type of media training you know that this simple appeal goes a long way in gaining trust.

You can read the National Post article and more of my analysis here
<http://www.nationalpost.com/news/canada/story.html?id=580666>

.....JeffAnsell.com

4.) The EVOLUTION & REDEFINITION of NEWS

“The one function TV news performs very well is that when there is no news, we give it to you with the same emphasis as if there were.” – David Brinkley

I recently wrote an article for an online publication called “PR in Canada,” and in it I address the perennial question, “What Makes News?” It’s hard to tell anymore because the news landscape is changing so rapidly, and often in such an abstract manner that even media professionals readily admit to being confused.

This article will put a new spin how you regard the news, and reinforce once again that there is no substitute for experience.

<http://www.princanada.com/what-makes-news>

.....JeffAnsell.com

5.) TAKE THE HIGH ROAD, BUT DON'T GET TRAPPED

Campaigning for the GOP nomination, Senator John McCain was asked a question about Hillary Clinton when it appeared she still had a chance of winning the nomination. “How do we beat the bitch?” asked an audience member. “Excellent question” responded McCain.

Excuse me?

What is so “excellent” about calling a presidential candidate, or a woman a bitch? By answering as he did, McCain confirmed he is like-minded with the questioner in believing that Hillary is a bitch. The fact there was no big backlash to his comment remains curious.

McCain legitimized and accepted the premise of a very offensive question. Considering that the question and answer were heard in a public forum, at the very least McCain was obligated to respond to the characterization about Clinton.

More appropriate comments or responses would have been:

“Hillary Clinton deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.”

“Your terminology is inappropriate.”

“Hillary Clinton is a respected member of the Senate.”

Now, this does not mean that anytime an offensive question is asked that you’ve got to pick up the mantle and fight back.

In some instances, it can be a trap.

For example, if a reporter is conducting an interview for print or is recording an interview for TV or radio, their questions are likely to be edited out. Take a look at the following question and answer:

Q: “How do you plan to beat that bitch, Hillary Clinton?”

A: “I never said Hillary Clinton is a bitch”

Well, you know the quote resulting from that response will read, "I never said Hillary Clinton is a bitch." Even though the respondent thinks he is doing something positive by refuting the offensive claim, he makes it worse for himself by accepting the premise of a very negative question. Better to respond with one of the three choices offered above, as Senator McCain himself discovered when a similar type situation repeated itself.

At a Cincinnati rally, conservative radio host Bill Cunningham was invited to introduce the senator as a guest speaker. In his introductory remarks, Cunningham encouraged Americans to "peel the bark off Barack Hussein Obama." In an obvious attempt to remind people of Obama's Muslim roots, Cunningham made three references to Hussein, Obama's middle name.

Still licking his wounds from the "bitch" incident, Senator McCain later told the crowd that Cunningham "made some disparaging remarks about my two colleagues in the Senate, Senator Obama and Senator Clinton. I have repeatedly stated my respect for Senator Obama and Senator Clinton, that I will treat them with respect. I will call them Senator," he said. "Whatever suggestion that was made that was in any way disparaging to the integrity, character, honesty of either Senator Obama or Senator Clinton was wrong. I condemn it, and if I have any responsibility, I will take the responsibility, and I apologize for it." (Source New York Times, February 27, 2008)

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Our Media Strategies program;
<http://www.jeffansell.com/mediastrategies-full-text.html>

Regret The Error – a collection of media errors
<http://www.regrettheerror.com/>

.....JeffAnsell.com

JEFF'S CALENDAR UPDATE advertisement

DEALING WITH AN ANGRY PUBLIC – HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

The next Dealing With An Angry Public Harvard Law School conference is slated for November 13 & 14, 2008. The conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts provides strategies for resolving conflicts and disputes with dissatisfied customers, potential litigants and concerned interest groups.

As a faculty member of the Public Disputes Program, part of my agenda explores how to get messages out effectively when dealing with the media and interest groups in controversial situations.

Hope to see you there . . . click here for more info;
<http://www.jeffansell.com/dealing-with-an-angry-public.html>

Direct link to Harvard Law School program description
<http://pon.execseminars.com/index.php?seminar=ap&do=learn>

.....JeffAnsell.com

6.) REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

It pays to be proactive in our rapidly evolving news media world.

For starters you can subscribe to Yahoo! and Google ALERTS to monitor your company name, your president, and key players and issues in your industry. Google and Yahoo! will let you know when someone publishes an article using the tags you submit.

Address rumors before they take on a life of their own by monitoring your company name on social networking sites. Don't ignore rumors, because if you do people often assume the rumors to be valid. It's not prudent to wait for a crisis to explode.

It's also a good idea to monitor Yahoo! & Google NEWS for your name. It's not paranoia. It's responsible to know what people are saying about you and your company. They make it "1 Click" easy.

Another good strategy is to monitor major discussion forums in your industry and learn to interact. It takes time to understand the subtleties and lingo of each group. If you wait until a crisis occurs you could make things worse by responding inappropriately.

If you're not familiar with the following social media search companies, learn what they do and what they report about you;

www.Technorati.com & www.BlogPulse.com

When you find erroneous information online about your company, ask the people publishing it to correct themselves, if they don't, do it yourself in comment sections. A competitor will not usually report bad information about your company on their own website or blog. Instead they will use third party social media blog sites to anonymously start or feed rumors that impact your company.

If an erroneous statement about your company has taken on a life of its own, also consider posting your perspective on your company blog or website, and make it easy to find because this is quite often where skeptics will look. People want to believe what they read about you on your company website - as long as your perspective has merit. Sticking your head in the sand and ignoring an issue sends a message that you are hiding something.

Transparency is an important aspect of reputation management in this era. You can use it offensively as well as defensively, but offensively is the best option. Place your views online before someone else does it in an unflattering manner.

Use low budget video when it is possible, and use companies like YouTube and Yahoo! to host your videos, because if you do, you will automatically leverage their large audience.

A blog is ideal because it can combine a number of different elements like text and video, and it is easy to manage if you use popular companies with stable systems.

Manage your reputation proactively.

.....JeffAnsell.com

7.) SAVING BABY FACE

A recent study by scientific researchers suggests that the shape of a person's face affects how a message is received.

The three researchers, Gerald J. Gorn and Yuwei Jiang from Hong Kong University, and Gita V. Johar from New York's Columbia University, report that, "the shape of a person's face is not a trivial consideration." They contend that during a "minor" public relations crisis, a person with a "BABY FACE" is regarded as more honest than someone with a mature face. However, when the crisis is serious, and "in contexts where innocence conveys naiveté, a mature face is evaluated more favorably."

Based on this study, some people are suggesting that when a company is subject to a minor crisis that they send in an executive with a round "baby face," but if the crisis is serious, an executive with a mature face would elicit a more reassuring response.

My personal and professional opinion is that in times of crisis, and regardless of the shape of an executive's face, send in the person who is the best-trained and most capable overall.

You can read more here;

Science Daily

<http://sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080530132058.htm>

Reuters

<http://reuters.com/article/lifestyleMolt/idUSSP31422420080602>

I have no affiliation whatsoever with the researchers or their findings, but if you're interested you can purchase the report here.

<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/529533>

.....JeffAnsell.com

8.) PRESSURE COOKER UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

It's not easy remembering what to say when a microphone and camera are thrust in your face. Even professionals crack under the pressure. Your best defense is to train and practice in an environment that mimics the real world as close as possible.

How tough is it on the front line?

Check out these two video clips to see even the pros crumble.

Bill O'Reilly loses it in the studio.

WARNING; this video clip contains profane language.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tJjNVVwRCY>

Reporter Argues with his Anchor in the Studio – ON AIR!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOc4XgBespw>

If these pros have a hard time just imagine the pressure you invite upon yourself when you step into the breach unprepared.

.....JeffAnsell.com

(416) 413-9660, Copyright 2006 Jeff Ansell & Associates Inc.

Produced by Area46 Media Communications – www.Area46.com