

Hello and welcome to my September 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. Skillful communication with media, and in presentations can make all the difference in how your message is 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.) SARAH PALIN SOUND BITE SAVIOR
- 2.) TIME TRAVEL WITH OBAMA & BIDEN
- 3.) COMEBACK KID CIRCA 2008
- 4.) CANADIANS LAUNCH SWIFTBOAT SMEAR ATTACKS
- 5.) LISTERIA HYSTERIA
- 6.) HOW TO MAINTAIN COMPOSURE ON THE HOT SEAT
- 7.) HOW TO RESPOND TO REPORTERS
- 8.) WHERE DO WE GET OUR NEWS? Pew Research Report
- 9.) CULTIVATING A GOOD REPUTATION
- 10.) LIES, DAMNED LIES, & THE INTERNET

YouTube & Video – I now incorporate an increasing amount of video links into my newsletters. We realize some people cannot view video at work, but the trend is for more and more companies and politicians to use online video in their daily mix. If you can't view video at work our suggestion is to forward this newsletter to a location where you can take advantage of this very powerful media communication tool. You can also send a Subscription to your home as well as work to ensure you do not miss anything we share here.

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

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- 1.) SARAH PALIN SOUND BITE SAVIOR

In choosing Alaska Governor Sarah Palin to be his running mate, Republican presidential candidate John McCain could have made either the boldest, or the most reckless decision of his political career. Palin boosted McCain's popularity out of the gate, but his decision could backfire depending on Palin's performance, particularly in her upcoming debate with Democratic vice presidential candidate Joe Biden. She's looking good, although not as strong as at the outset, and especially after "Saturday Night Live" spoofed Palin and Hillary Clinton in a recent skit.

As a result of a well executed speech, Palin instantaneously won over a large portion of America as soon as she stepped up to the convention floor podium to accept the vice presidential nomination, but as we can see now, her credibility regarding the truth of some statements is in question. See my segment below regarding "Lies."

She used humor and conviction to win favor. More importantly, she did it in a way that made it look unrehearsed and completely off the cuff, and in some respects it was, because according to initial reports, her teleprompter malfunctioned during her speech. The mark of a true professional is when you can handle everything thrown at you in the heat of the moment. Interestingly though, it now seems the veracity of her statement regarding the teleprompter is under question. According to the Globe & Mail newspaper, even her campaign spokesperson disputes whether it malfunctioned.

Hardware failure aside, some people think her humor is little more than a parlor trick, but when was the last time you recall a running mate creating such an impact in the opening salvo? And a salvo it was, because not only did she immediately have John McCain's followers on her side, she also won over tens of thousands of fence sitters, and probably a few Obama fans too.

Just like Obama reinventing himself by changing his name from Barry to Barack, John McCain also reinvented himself by partnering with Palin in an effort to win America's hearts and minds.

This isn't a political newsletter. It's a forum about professional speaking and managing media eloquently, so the focus here is on how Palin woke America up and pulled McCain soundly into the race as the primaries round the last corner into the home stretch.

In my professional opinion I can tell you that John McCain and Sarah Palin are not winging it. It's not just what you say, but how you say it, and timing is critical. McCain and Palin are both well-trained and rehearsed politicians, and all of a sudden Barack Obama has a very serious fight on his hands.

Prepare for a tag team showdown of Obama/Biden & McCain/Palin.

Watch Palin's acceptance speech style on YouTube . . .

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKgNrb3baNM&eurl>

In case you missed my short YouTube in the last newsletter, I wanted to include it again because Palin's speech is a great example of "Saying it like you mean it . . ."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9M7oFIJ5E8>

One last quick point regarding Palin; She's pretty quick on her feet, but she's going to have to learn to admit that she doesn't have all the answers. Speculating on affairs in which she is not familiar is dangerous, as we've recently seen regarding her comment about the U.S. going to war with Russia if Russia re-enters Georgia.

Her gaffe is a good lesson for everyone. If you don't know what you're talking about be honest with reporters and say something like, "This is a difficult issue, and I'd like to give it more thought."

No one will fault her, or you, for being honest.

Is the Saturday Night Live spoof of Palin & Hillary Clinton a new form of news? Note the collection of related info on the page.

<http://www.JeffAnsell.com/46/BHuff091808.html>

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2.) TIME TRAVEL WITH OBAMA & BIDEN

I've been writing about Barack Obama for quite a while, probably long before most people ever even heard his name.

While doing research for this newsletter I went back to see what I've written about him in the past, and I saw a piece we published regarding a gaffe made by then U.S. Presidential hopeful, and now Obama running mate, Senator Joe Biden in reference to Obama being "the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy."

It was a racist-intoned gaffe Biden would not soon forget.

If you recall, at the time in February 2007 I wrote; "Media have now painted Biden as "His Own Worst Enemy." And when you see your name associated with the word "gaffe" more than twice, it's a sign you need professional media communication help. Go ahead and try it yourself. Go to Google and type "biden gaffe" (use the quotation marks) and see how many returns you get. I got 830 on February 9, and 540 on February 21, 2007. Time seems to be a healer, but can you afford even one second of grief?"

Well guess what folks?

When I Googled "biden gaffe" today in 2008 I got 33,700 hits.

Nineteen months later and people still hang on to him like a pit bull.

I also wrote in 2007 that "It's a new era, and media training is more important today than it was yesterday."

Maybe I was wrong about time being a healer.

If you want people talking about you a year and a half later . . .

. . . make sure they are saying good things.

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3.) COMEBACK KID CIRCA 2008

Joe Biden took a big hit over his gaffe, actually, string of gaffes, but in some cases it is possible to redeem yourself, and Bill Clinton is a perfect case in point.

Teflon Bill lulled the audience to sleep during the 1988 Democratic convention speech that nominated Michael Dukakis as the party's presidential candidate. The speech was boring, and lacked the vitality Clinton usually imbued into his oratory. Tom Brokaw reported that when Clinton wound up his speech with, "In conclusion, . . . people began to cheer."

Clinton quickly realized he hadn't performed well, so instead of ducking for cover, he soon addressed media head on.

Unfortunately, or fortunately depending on how you look at it, we're not all Bill Clinton, but even in 1988 Clinton had enough training and confidence in his media skills to smooth over rough spots when he knew he was in trouble.

It was his first opportunity on a national political stage, and he also knew that if he didn't redeem himself quickly it could be a tough if not impossible climb out of the hole he just dug.

Could you do the same?

Good speakers may be born, but great speakers are made.

Obama, Palin, and Clinton are all great speakers.

If you want impact and to avoid gaffes, slow down and think. For more insight and a free online Tune-Up on this subject take a look at my short YouTube video, "Don't be so quick to speak."
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIQDXV3egZw>

Clinton Bores His Audience – MSNBC article & Video <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5470323/>

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4.) CANADIANS LAUNCH SWIFTBOAT SMEAR ATTACKS

In the shadow of an upcoming presidential election in the U.S., Canadian politicians are borrowing American “swiftboating” tactics to target voters of Canada’s current federal election, which will occur during the same period.

Recently, Stephen Harper’s Conservative team launched a smear campaign video depicting a cartoon puffin pooping on the shoulder of Stéphane Dion, and Stéphane Dion’s team launched a video comparing Harper to Hitler. Neither video had anything to do with the other, at least that I can see.

It turned out that both videos created the exact opposite reaction their respective parties were expecting. Canadians reacted quickly to make it clear they were not amused. Both videos were pulled and apologies made, but not before the damage was done.

When politicians act like this it unfortunately causes a person to wonder if one should vote for . . . or against a candidate.

You can view CBC snippets of the videos on YouTube
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vycORRHCVGo>

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5.) LISTERIA HYSTERIA

Canadians are dying due to a food borne outbreak of listeria.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, as of September 23, 2008, there are;

18 deaths confirmed as contributing or underlying causes
48 confirmed cases
10 more cases suspected
5 under investigation

The cause of death is a result of eating cold deli-style meats commonly used in sandwiches. In addition, some cheeses were recalled. Plus, food products that came in contact with these food groups along the entire food chain were suspect and pulled from grocery stores and restaurants.

The controversy caused a media meltdown. Consequently, the Calgary Herald newspaper called me shortly after the outbreak to elicit my perspective regarding how the company responsible for the outbreak, Maple Leaf Foods, should handle their reputation and communication with the public in this catastrophic crisis situation.

I told reporter Gina Teel, “People are starting to ask questions at popular sub joints and sandwich shops about the source of the meat in their sandwich. They've got a lot of explaining to do. They are in the eye of the hurricane as well. A company like Lucerne [which distributed sandwiches that contained infected meat] has to "bend over backwards" to demonstrate to its customers that

it's doing everything it can. The public is always looking for some degree of assurance that these things won't happen again, but nobody can provide that assurance. In the meantime, they have to be seen to be doing what is right and what is ethical.”

The president of Maple Leaf Foods is a former client, and I have to say that he learned his lessons well because he did a great job of assuring Canadians that he was doing everything in his power to deal with the crisis in a compassionate and speedy manner.

Read my interview in the Calgary Herald
<http://www.JeffAnsell.com/46/BListeria091808.html>

You can also watch Maple Leaf Foods president Michael McCain (no relation to U.S. presidential hopeful John McCain) respond directly to the public on YouTube. WARNING, the language in the COMMENTS section is explicit and abusive.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgk3o3AJM2U>
He ran similar full-page notices in national papers across Canada.

Here's a link to another of my short YouTube clips you might have seen in the last newsletter, but it's worth looking at again in the context of this deadly crisis issue. It will help you to appreciate why it is so critical that you “Know how you want to come across.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJ_dusfZpUY

How effective was Michael McCain's announcement?

Here's a comment from a reader sent to a newspaper;

“On Monday I watched president and CEO Michael McCain on TV, looking heartsick but taking responsibility for the Maple Leaf Foods disaster and apologizing to everyone. He had to have known that lawsuits were only a matter of time, but he did it anyway.

I can't remember the last time anyone promptly took responsibility for something he or she caused . . .

. . . My heart goes out to all the affected families, particularly people who've lost loved ones. And my respect goes to McCain, a true class act.” Gail Radford-Ross – Saskatoon - Vancouver Sun on 08/28/08

Michael McCain isn't the only executive to offer a corporate apology. Steve Jobs, CEO Apple recently also offered a mea culpa and a \$100 store credit to customers who felt ripped off after purchasing the illustrious iPhone too soon.

<http://www.apple.com/hotnews/openiphoneletter/>

It works folks. Be genuinely apologetic, and do it ASAP.

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6.) HOW TO MAINTAIN COMPOSURE ON THE HOT SEAT

One of the most common questions I'm asked is;

"How do I stay calm when speaking with a journalist?"

The obvious answer is to know your subject, but it goes much deeper. Many people fail to appreciate that there are physiological reasons for stumbling when asked a question by a reporter.

To start, shorten your sentences.
It will help you maintain your train of thought.

Here are a few ways to keep your sentences short;

1. Breathe
2. Only say a word when you know what that word is
3. Slow down when you speak
4. Stretch vowel sounds, so you linger longer over each word.
5. Make your point and end it with a period.
Make your next point and put a period in there too ...
6. Limit your use of conjunctive words, i.e. "and, but, which..."

I also offer a Media Strategies PHONE Tune-Up service
for busy executives who have attended one of my programs.

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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>

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7.) HOW TO RESPOND TO REPORTERS

For a variety of reasons politicians cannot always say what the public expects. And whether it is a politician or CEO, knowing how to be noncommittal, yet informative is a learned art form.

This video on YouTube pretty well says it all - I think.

Prime Minister's Prison Ship Interview
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sv5upLCx4Ao>

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8.) WHERE DO WE GET OUR NEWS?

Where people get news today has a big impact on how they consume, interpret, and use it.

From Pew Research - based on a fifteen-year trend;

Newspaper readership decreased from 58 to 34% Radio news listeners decreased from 47 to 35%
Local TV news viewers decreased from 77 to 52% Network news viewers decreased from 60 to 29%

More recent formats for news delivery, however, are doing better:

Morning news show viewers held fairly steady since 1998 Cable TV news increased from 33 to 39% since 2002

Online news viewers increased from 2 to 37% since 1995

These numbers tell only part of a very complex story, so when you have time, browse the report to see how trends are changing.

The full report is a PDF document published by Pew Research <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/444.pdf>

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9.) CULTIVATING A GOOD REPUTATION

News and PR are now more closely intertwined than ever before. As you saw in the Pew segment above, more people everyday get their news online. Look the other way at your company's peril.

Transparency is an approach some companies adopt, while others avoid. It's important for either group to do an accurate assessment of their weak points in an effort to stave off criticism.

Pay careful attention to what key people in your industry might be saying, good or bad, about you. Also ensure you know what employees are publishing in their blogs, and be aware of what they share in internal email. Follow as many sources as possible, and keep in mind that there is a wide variety of software, and also companies available to help make the process efficient.

If you do see something that casts you in a bad light, study it carefully to make sure you are not overreacting. It's easy to shoot from the hip and make a situation worse. Ask sales and customer service if the issue surfaced in their systems. It's possible it's a rumor surreptitiously proliferated by a competitor, which means ignoring it won't make it go away.

Ensure all employees communicate in a professional manner, especially regarding information concerning clients. Social networks like Facebook can be incredibly revealing and caustic.

If you feel you've been defamed, a lawsuit is not always the best course of action. Treat each issue on an individual basis, and use risk management policy to ascertain whether or not you can afford the added publicity of legal action. Winning in a court of law, but losing in the court of public opinion can have a detrimental impact on reputation and share prices over the long term.

Use tact, diplomacy, and speed to manage your reputation online.

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10.) LIES, DAMNED LIES, & THE INTERNET

The old Mark Twain chestnut, "There are three kinds of lies; lies, damned lies, and statistics," now has a 21st century dimension, because now liars have to contend with the internet.

I have always recommended that people tell the truth, especially in crisis situations when journalists are digging deep for the facts.

Politicians also have to be honest, especially today, because if not, and as I've written many times here in my newsletters and taught to thousands of students, your words live on forever, and "forever" today is only one click away.

There are many websites devoted to carving in stone what an errant person says, and during this very heated election period, some of these web sites target politicians. For example, a site called

www.FactCheck.org is listing in explicit detail all the minor and major transgressions of parties on both sides of the fence.

Truth?

If you want to know what Obama, McCain, Palin, or Hillary really said, check out the link below, but be prepared for the truth, the whole truth, and truth as interpreted in the following statement.

“According to the law, political candidates have a “legal right” to lie to voters just about as much as they want.”

Yes, you read this FactCheck.org quote right – read why here . . .
<http://www.JeffAnsell.com/46/BTruth091808.html>

That's it for this edition of News & Views.

I hope you found it informative and valuable.

Sincerely,
Jeff Ansell

Be well and Thank You !!

DON'T FORGET TO PRINT THIS NEWSLETTER.
Read it on your commute or at home.

Check into my site for updates between Newsletters.
<http://www.jeffansell.com/>

I'm always interested in your comments and viewpoints.

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