

The Virtues of Staying On Message

As a marketing communications case, Barack Obama's campaign is the clear winner. The campaign has chosen a message (the economy is really bad because of the Republican's mismanagement of it and Obama can do better) and stuck with it. People are concerned about this message and are responding well to it. The McCain campaign on the other hand has not found its core message. We know that McCain is concerned about mortgages, taxes, and...Obama's association with Bill Ayers. Although all of these are legitimate issues to focus on, the campaign has not crystallized into one overarching message that can be delivered time and again.

McCain may have the ideas and the experience, but his "marketing" is getting muddled. And that may cost him the election. Obama, on the other hand, early on grasped the importance of the Internet in attracting younger voters, has stayed on message and has a flexible ad budget that has allowed him to put money in the states he considers more important. McCain's most recent ad strategy, in spite of the overwhelming economic news, was to place ads talking about Obama's relationship with Ayers. It has backfired, no doubt. At a campaign stop on Friday, McCain had to spend time assuring the crowd that they shouldn't be scared of Obama, that he is decent (subtext—he is not a terrorist).

The bottom line for any campaign, political or otherwise, is to choose a message that resounds with the target audience and stick to it.