

What we can learn from the budget “negotiations”

Last week, our elected officials took the whole country to the brink. Whether you think it was ideology, intransigence, real economic crisis or plain circus, we all got a painfully clear view of what kind of government we have, and it was not a pretty picture.

But not all is bad. We can derive some lessons from this latest governmental crisis that can be applied to marketing:

- At some point, spin does not compensate for the reality on the ground so stop spinning already!
- Repeating the same phrase over and over becomes meaningless (e.g. “we are fighting for the American people,” “we do not want to shut down the government.”)
- Innuendo and doublespeak are not substitutes for clear communication.
- Say what you want unequivocally. You want cuts to Planned Parenthood—say that. Don’t make it a “rider” so that you can sneak it in under the radar.
- Don’t underestimate your audience...they can see through your antics.
- Be prepared for people to question you, your motives and your goals.
- There is a difference between justifying your actions and explaining your actions.

Politicians, like PR or advertising professionals, are in the business of persuasion. And like PR or ad people, they are beholden to special interests (or as we call them “clients”).

What did you learn about marketing from our government’s game of chicken?

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