WaPo: Carney hopes and Pepco failures

Two items from today's Washington Post caught my eye. One was about Jay Carney, the new White House press secretary and the other was a letter to the editor regarding Pepco.

Speaking for the White House

Jay Carney is taking over from Robert Gibbs as White House press secretary. Carney was a journalist, and many people think he will bring a journalist's viewpoint to the White House briefing room. Dana Milbank wonders "Can Jay Carney Hack it as a Flack" in an op-ed in today's Washington Post. Few people will miss Gibbs, so maybe by comparison, Carney will already do better. I wrote about Gibbs snark here. If one thing Carney can learn from Gibbs is how not to act. I think the press corps are looking for information without sarcasm.

Proving advertising doesn't turn the lights back on

Another hot topic this week (other than the ongoing protests in Egypt) is Pepco. If you live in the DC area you know that Pepco failed, once again, to restore power in a timely fashion following a weird snow storm last week. At one point, they had 300,000 customers without power and in many cases, it took them three or four days to restore power to all of them. Witness how people felt about it, and more importantly, about how Pepco mishandled communications by reading letters to the editor in today's Post. Notice the title of the piece includes the word "outrage."

This latest episode in Pepco's ongoing reliability struggle proves my point that no matter how many nice ads and promising assertions you make, you have to back them up with real action. As you recall, Pepco started running an ad campaign talking about all the stuff they are doing to make themselves

more reliable and responsive. Well, sadly, it was just words. No one believed it then, and certainly, no one believes it now. Instead of spending lots of ad dollars on an image campaign, Pepco should spend some money figuring out how to increase its reliability, responsiveness and communications with customers.

The bottom line for both these stories is that communications matter a whole lot. How you handle communications, what you say, when you say it, can truly impact public opinion and your image.