

It may be all about likeability

There's all sorts of analysis going on right now about Tuesday's election results. Chris Christie, a Republican, got re-elected as New Jersey governor with a 30% or so margin over his opponent. In Virginia, Terry McAuliffe, a Democrat, won the governorship with a razor-thin margin of 2% over his opponent Ken Cuccinelli.

If you have been following the Virginia race, you know that Ken Cuccinelli is very conservative. He has publicly-known views against abortion, birth control access, equal rights for homosexuals and he denies climate change. He is also very vocal in his opposition to the Affordable Care Act known as Obamacare. Apparently, many people in Virginia share these views, but not enough people to catapult him into the governorship.

Pundits have been saying that Cuccinelli lost because he was outspent by McAuliffe. Some say it is because of how the nominating process took place (no primary, just a convention of the party faithful who tend to be more to the right of the general voting population).

I think that one of the reasons Cuccinelli lost is because he is not likeable. You could never imagine hanging out with him. He rarely smiles and when he does, it is not a "real" smile. Contrast that with Christie. Christie is a big bear of a man—hugging people left and right. He is a huge fan of Bruce Springsteen and not afraid to let that be known. You could definitely see yourself having a beer (or two) with Chris Christie.

Cuccinelli is a sour, judgmental kind of a guy. He doesn't approve of many things and he has made it his mission to rid

Virginia of these things. His rigidity is antithetical to likeability. Christie, on the other hand, is more pragmatic. In spite of his party's opposition to Obama, he embraced him (literally and figuratively) in the aftermath of Sandy. His pragmatism helps boost his likeability.

The Washington Post reported that Cuccinelli did not call McAuliffe to concede or congratulate him after the election and he says he will *never* call him. That sounds like both sour grapes and lack of sportsmanship. Not likeable.

People don't elect people they don't like. It's that simple. It goes beyond politics and policy and it comes down to likeability. I think George W. Bush won against John Kerry because Bush is the more likeable person. Kerry seemed very patrician and detached (not unlike Mitt Romney, if you think about it) while Bush had his Texas twang and swagger.

How does this translate into marketing and communications? Simple. Focus on the likeability of your product or service. Don't advertise a product by denigrating the user or a potential user. People like positivity, and they are turned off by negativity.

It's not random that Facebook asks you to "like" pages/companies/products. If you like something, you want to find out more about it, right?

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