

And President Obama agrees

In an interview to 60 Minutes (which is excerpted in this CBS News piece and which will air on Sunday, November 7), President Obama says:

“I think that’s a fair argument. I think that, over the course of two years we were so busy and so focused on getting a bunch of stuff done that, we stopped paying attention to the fact that leadership isn’t just legislation. That it’s a matter of persuading people. And giving them confidence and bringing them together. And setting a tone,”

Leadership is about inspiring people to follow you. Inspiration requires that you have an ability to communicate.

I will be interested to see if the White House changes how it communicates. And to see what the Democratic leadership does—will Harry Reid still be Majority Leader in the Senate? Perhaps not such a great idea, since his failure to communicate nearly lost him his seat to an extreme candidate.

Editorial: The Obamas need better communications advice

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From the start of the Obama presidency, I have been surprised at the lack of good communications advice given (or maybe it is received) by the president. Last year, the president irritated DC residents by saying they weren’t tough enough about winter. Robert Gibbs, the current press secretary, has

gotten himself in many a bad situation, most recently calling left wing critics of the president “crazy.”

And then there are two more troubling, recent missteps. First, Michelle Obama chose to take a mother-daughter trip to Spain, and did so at considerable expense. The trip was roundly criticized as being in poor taste as many Americans are in dire financial straits. Kathleen Parker in today’s Washington Post calls the trip “tone deaf.” It’s like Michelle Obama had no reality check, no perception check before embarking on her trip. I am sure that she could have found a great place to vacation, with her entourage in tow, in the United States. In my opinion, Obama’s Spain trip is the result of a lack of communications counseling. Someone at the White House is not thinking in terms of public perceptions.

The other recurring and ongoing communications issue is President Obama’s apparent obsession with blaming George Bush. Instead of referring to the current GOP power base, Obama keeps blaming Bush’s policies for the economic slump. After nearly two years in office, this economic mess is Obama’s, not Bush’s. Also, as Frank Rich pointed out in the excellent New York Times opinion piece, “How to Lose an Election Without Really Trying,” many ideas that Obama is saying are Bush’s are not. Again, this is a lack of communications advice. People are looking for reasons to vote for the Democrats, not reasons to vote against the Republicans. Most people have lost track of George Bush and are more interested in knowing what OBAMA is going to do.

What the White House needs is better communications advice. And stat. As midterm elections approach, people are going to be deciding to vote for Republicans or Democrats, and if the Republicans gain momentum, they may kick out Obama out of office in 2012.