

Political communication is a two-way street

Well, it finally is here. Election Day. Never before in my lifetime have I seen such a long election cycle, and yet so much interest. We have seen positive ads and negative ads. We've seen staying on message and going off message. We saw how the current economic situation shifted the message. But the bottom line is that each candidate used **MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS** to reach his/her **TARGET AUDIENCE**. Yes indeed. An election is a real live, measured test of the success of your marketing communications. If you got your message across and people bought, you win. Simple. And the voters get their say today. For the past year, we've heard from the candidates. Today, they hear from us. What we bought and what we didn't buy. In fact, I dare say that political communication is the pinnacle of this field...it uses all methods of communication from simple lawn signs, to expensive TV ads to social media. It needs strategy and it has to appeal to the largest majority. I am jealous of anybody in an American politics class this semester. What a way to see and understand the process.

So, did you vote today?

On knowing your target audience

Knowing your target audience is the primary task of any marketer. How can you craft your message if you don't know who you are speaking to? How can you make sure your potential

clients buy your product if you don't where they live, what they like and the other elements that make up your demographic profile? Often, ads don't work because they don't target the right audience. Or, they target the right audience but don't communicate properly. So this brings me to Sarah Palin and Joe Biden during the debate last night. It was very clear that each of them knew who their target audience was and used the proper language to communicate with it. Palin used her folksiness to establish connection with "Joe Six Pack and Hockey Moms" around the US. She used terms like doggone it and gosh darn it to make the point that she is an average person from Main Street Wasilla. Biden spoke in a more formal fashion, to communicate with an intellectual audience and to those seeking a traditional politician. He threw in references to Scranton and Home Depot to assure "Main Street" that he's also in touch with them. In the end, I think both politicians understand who they need to communicate to and did so well. I think if you are a liberal Democrat with environmental leanings, Sarah Palin rubbed you the wrong way. But then again, you are not her target. She knows she can't connect with you. On the other hand, if you are someone who feels politicians are out to get you with their misguided policies, then you loved that Palin spoke to you.

If there is a problem with appealing solely to your target audience during a presidential campaign is that you don't motivate the other side to vote for you. This debate proved that—neither side did much to convince the other to switch allegiances.