

How you say it

We've all heard it before, "it is not what you say, but how you say it. " Well, in my opinion, it is both. What you say is also important, but how you say it makes the difference in how it is received. One person who does not seem to understand or care about this is President Obama's press secretary, Robert Gibbs. Gibbs is forever being snarky, sarcastic and just plain unpleasant. I would lay bets that most, if not all, of the White House press corps despise his guts.

In my opinion, Gibbs is one of the worst press secretaries I have ever seen. He can't answer questions straight on, he uses big words he doesn't seem to understand, but worst of all, he seems bored and above the job. This morning, I read a great column on Gibbs in the Washington Post, by Dana Milbank. Most of the time, Milbank's own sarcasm and unpleasantness make his column a must-skip, so imagine my surprise when he points out his own apparent dislike of Gibbs' snark. Here's an excerpt from the column:

Gibbs acts as though he's playing himself in the movie version of his job. In this imaginary film, he is the smart-alecky press secretary, offering zippy comebacks and cracking jokes to make his questioners look ridiculous. It's no great feat to make reporters look bad, but this act also sends a televised image of a cocksure White House to ordinary Americans watching at home.

This is the most visible manifestation of a larger problem the Obama White House has. Many Obama loyalists from the 2008 race still seem, after a year on the job, to have trouble exiting campaign mode. They sometimes appear to be running a taxpayer-funded rapid-response operation

If Obama is sinking in the polls, and his agenda is failing (and now he has managed to lose a historically Democratic

Senate seat, although that may have had more to do with the Democratic candidate's lack of campaign skills –Read this great blog post on it by my friends over at Fresh Ground Communications). It may have something to do with HOW the White House is communicating its message, which is poorly. Gibbs' holier-than-thou approach to everything and everyone is not helping one bit. If Obama wants to regain some footing I would suggest he replace Gibbs with someone a bit kinder, a bit gentler. Replace Gibbs with someone who gets that how you say things really does make a difference.

What are your thoughts? Do you like Gibbs? How about a poll:

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