



# Candidate Communication Scorecard

From The Communication Center, Washington, D.C.

## About the Scorecard

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As we enter the home stretch of the Presidential campaign, the public is paying particular attention to the communication styles of Presidential candidates, Senators McCain and Obama. The Communication Center has steadfastly maintained a non-partisan approach to our communication consulting throughout our 25-year history, but we'd like to offer our "Candidate Communication Scorecard" as our way of participating in the excitement of the Presidential race.

It's our hope that by highlighting the communication triumphs and challenges of two talented communicators at the top of their party's tickets, we can continue to offer counsel and encouragement to individuals interested in improving their abilities to become compelling communicators.

## Barack Obama Address to Democratic National Convention:

8-28-08, Denver, CO.

**Overall Communication Grade: 8** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

(Out of 10 stars)

It's called an acceptance speech, but it's difficult to call Barack Obama's address in Denver simply a "speech." It was an event that may change the way our national political parties think about their conventions in the future. How could it not?

Sen. Obama has been criticized by some as being more about style than substance. It's clear his intention tonight was to get as specific as he could on a number of issues and was successful in doing so.

**Best Moment: 9** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There were many high points in the well-written and well delivered speech. However, how could you top the opening shots of Sen. Obama walking into the stadium following the conclusion of his video and not be impressed by the magnitude of the event? Call it the "Audacity of Scope," to prefer the vast space of a football stadium to the center where the rest of the convention was held. Great pictures.

## Needs Improvement: 6 ★★★★★

Yes, a tough grade here for Sen. Obama, but there were several competing themes in the speech, and we're not sure which one was supposed to be the primary "takeaway" message. "Enough!" would have been a good framework for much of the speech, but it came and went as did "Now is the time." And we missed "Yes we can!" We bet more than a few folks in Denver were looking forward to shouting that last night.

### Criteria

## Messaging 7 ★★★★★

It was a more traditional political speech than we've come to expect from Obama's campaign. It's clear Sen. Obama wanted to differentiate himself from Sen. McCain, and spell out, issue by issue, the differences between the two parties. He did a very good job.

Senator Obama was also tough on Sen. McCain directly at one point saying he was looking forward to having a debate on the issues delivered in a forceful "Bring it on" manner which played very well to his audience.

Another key message which came through was Sen. Obama's answer to the charge he is more "celebrity" than leader. We liked the line "It's not about me, it's about you." The crowd loved it.

## Delivery 8 ★★★★★

We are not the first to point out Sen. Obama can deliver a good speech. He did an excellent job starting in a conversational manner and building momentum throughout the speech in an engaging and passionate way.

The applause lines were also well crafted and almost perfectly timed. A very good job.

## Tone 7 ★★★★★

For a politician defined by his ability to deliver speeches full of hope and promise, the Denver address was a bit of a departure. More nuts and bolts than hopes and dreams, the speech was a bit more traditional than some of Sen. Obama's past speeches.

He was also fiery on a few occasions, perhaps indicating his campaign's themes and messages will take a more aggressive tone as the election nears.

## Audience Connection 8 ★★★★★

There were two audiences for Barack Obama to focus on last night: those before him in the stadium and the undecided voters watching on TV at home. Both were carefully considered. It was of course a tremendous setting for the speech and it played very well on television. It also appears the audience in Denver was attentive and enthusiastic throughout Sen. Obama's speech and the speeches and music leading up to his address.

Storytelling n/a

We can't really give a ranking for this component of the speech. The video shown prior to Sen. Obama's speech included many of the expected family stories and personal reflections which would typically add to the richness of an address like this one.

Wow Factor 9★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The "wow" factor of course was the setting. Part acceptance speech and part Olympic-style closing ceremonies, the pictures from last night speech will be shown for years to come.



**Led by Susan Peterson, a veteran network correspondent for CBS and NBC News, The Communication Center is a nationally recognized leader in communication coaching and consulting since 1983. Our expert team of coaches and consultants deliver highly interactive, custom-designed media and presentation coaching across the country.**

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