



Presidential Debate Scorecard



Presidential Debate

October 7, 2008

Belmont University

Moderator: Tom Brokaw

A non-partisan evaluation from
The Communication Center, Washington, D.C.

As we enter the home stretch of the Presidential campaign, the public is paying particular attention to the communication styles of Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates.

The Communication Center has steadfastly maintained a non-partisan approach to our communication consulting throughout our 25-year history, but we 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 each party ticket, we can continue to offer counsel and encouragement to individuals interested in improving their abilities to become compelling communicators.

Barack Obama

Demeanor/ Delivery-

Sen. Obama seemed quite comfortable and at ease in the town hall setting, speaking directly to members of the audience and using the stage to address the entire group. Kudos to him for his active listening skills as well. He sat in rapt attention while listening to Sen. McCain's answers, looking directly at him. Sen. Obama could have

John McCain

Demeanor/ Delivery-

It's obvious Sen. McCain's favorite venue is the "town hall" format for a lively discussion on the issues. He did a very good job engaging the audience and speaking directly to the ones who asked questions. As with the first debate, Sen. McCain does not listen very well when his opponent is talking, often looking away or

done a better job of objecting to some of Sen. McCain's answers. Sometimes it appeared that correcting answers made by Sen. McCain took precedence over answering the actual question.

Best Moments-

Sen. Obama is well-versed in giving thoughtful and well-organized answers to very complicated questions. And, he gets high marks for including the price of a gallon of gas in Nashville (where the debate was held) in an answer on the economy.

Not So Best Moments -

It is expected in a debate format like this one that your opponent is going to criticize you and say unflattering things. It's not wise to repeat the same phrases about yourself. We're referring here to Sen. Obama's answer on foreign policy where he said "My opponent criticized me for being green behind the ears."

Memorable Lines-

Sen. Obama's most memorable line was when he related to the charge of being "inexperienced" --only this time he turned the issue to his favor by saying: " It's true, there are some things I don't understand. I don't understand how we ended up invading a country that had nothing to do with 9/11 while Osama bin laden and al Qaeda are setting up base camps and safe havens to train terrorists to attack us."

taking notes-before the debate even began. Sen. McCain's answers on foreign policy were made stronger with personal examples and mentions of his military service.

Best Moments-

Sen. McCain's best moment was when he shook the hand of a man serving in the military before he even answered his question: "Thank you for your service to your country. I want to say, everything I ever learned about leadership I learned from a chief petty officer."

Not So Best Moments-

Sen. McCain has the habit of going to the phrase "my friends" too often. The number of times he said "my friends" grew throughout the evening-- about 16 by our count -so that it began to not only become a bit annoying, but also distracting during what otherwise were strong answers.

Memorable Lines-

Sen. McCain ended the debate on a high note saying: "I believe in this country. I believe in its future. I believe in its greatness. It's been my great honor to serve it for many, many years...But I'll also tell you, when times are tough, we need a steady hand at the tiller and the great honor of my life was to always put my country first."



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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