



Senator McCain's Communication Scorecard

From The Communication Center, Washington, D.C.

About the Scorecard

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'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.

John McCain Address to Republican National Convention:

September 4, 2008

St. Paul, MN.

Overall Communication Grade: 7 ★★★★★★

(Out of 10 stars)

Even before his acceptance speech it was clear John McCain is not the number one public speaker on the Republican ticket that much is clear. The senator's acceptance speech was more serious and deliberate than his running mate, Gov. Sarah Palin, and unfortunately started a bit rough with the interruptions of protesters apparently in the upper sections of the arena which he handled well enough.

Sen. McCain reconfigured the stage to create a more intimate setting with the audience- more like the town hall setting he finds to be more his style. Sen. McCain appeared to want to have a heart-to-heart talk with the delegates about not only changing the course of the country, but also their own party. An unusual call to action in an acceptance speech, but one very much in keeping with his "maverick" label.

Best Moment: 8 ★★☆☆☆☆

Sen. McCain's best moment was his personal story of his ordeal as a prisoner of war, and how he says the ordeal changed him- saying at one point "I wasn't my own man anymore, I was my country's."

Needs Improvement: 6 ★★☆☆☆☆

In a section of the speech where Sen. McCain was contrasting his policy objectives with that of Sen. Obama, the rhythm of the speech had the audience shouting out "boos" between each distinction. It was not an inspiring part of the speech and did not play well on television.

Criteria

Messaging **8** ★★☆☆☆☆

Several key messages were evident in the speech: He wanted to position himself as the candidate of "change" not only for the country but also for his own party; the policy differences between him and his opponent were highlighted; the key addition of his running mate Gov. Palin to the ticket was noted; and finally, Sen. McCain wanted to explain how his personal convictions and political philosophy were shaped by being held captive in Vietnam.

Delivery **7** ★★☆☆☆☆

Sen. McCain is not known as a great public speaker, so we give him credit for doing a few things in the speech that helped sharpen his message. He was plain spoken, and true to his reputation as a "straight talker." He also slowed the pace of his delivery to add a compelling and very personal tone to his personal account of being a prisoner of war. His rhetorical flourish at the very end of the speech ("fight with me") was among his best moments.

Tone **8** ★★☆☆☆☆

Sen. McCain delivered a serious and personal speech in a deliberate manner. His style is very different from that of Sen. Obama, and that may have been precisely the point.

Audience Connection **7** ★★☆☆☆☆

Sen. McCain's speech included calls for the Republican party itself to "change," citing past incidents of corruption and what he called choosing "power over principle." While well received by the crowd, Sen. McCain's message was different in tone than some on the audience may have expected and it appeared at times that "applause lines" were difficult for him to predict.

Storytelling

10 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The power of a story in a speech is the ability for the speaker to convey powerful messages in a compelling and memorable way. Sen. McCain's demeanor and delivery style dramatically changed as he related his personal story of how his capture, imprisonment and torture in Vietnam transformed him into the person he is now.

Wow Factor

8 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

As with Senator Obama the Wow factor was the staging of the speech. Sen. McCain chose to give his speech in a more intimate setting that put him among rather than above the delegates as the stage had been configured the previous three nights of the convention. The logistics perhaps allowed Sen. McCain to more easily deliver a message of "change" within the party as he rhetorically and literally puts himself in the midst of the party he now leads.

And while we've given credit to cute kids in previous scorecards, let's hand it to Sen. McCain's mother- looking proud and enthusiastic while enduring the public announcement of her age.



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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