



A TALE OF TWO PRESIDENTS



Like the cities referred to in the title of Dickens' classic novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, former President Barack Obama and now President Donald Trump share some similar, yet dramatically different, speaking styles. No matter your political views, both men have become iconic not just due to what they've done in their lives, but how they've communicated and used public speaking.

A number of articles have spotlighted the public speaking styles of both President Obama and President Trump – they are fascinating to read and addressed a number of techniques that are very effective. These articles reaffirm the significance of *The Ten Commandments of Public Speaking*, which you can read about in any number of my blogs or my latest book, *"A Climb to the Top."* For those of you who have followed along with my articles and blogs, you'll find that both Obama and Trump exemplify some of those speaking tenets that every speaker should be employing for themselves. Be thinking of those times you've seen both men speak.

PRESIDENT OBAMA

Rumblings of Obama's effectiveness as a speaker began when, as an Illinois Senator, he delivered the keynote at the 2004 Democratic convention. The NY Times refers to this as, "The Speech That Made Obama." Many would agree, since four years later Obama was elected president using similar tones and themes he used in 2004. While he has utilized several effective speaking principles throughout the years, the following are some that stand out.

Appealing to the Emotion...of Possibility and Hope

From iconic campaign art that immortalized the words "HOPE", to a message that was based on ideals and possibilities...Obama employed a similar communication strategy that genius Steve Jobs did with Apple products. When Jobs first introduced the iPod, he didn't strictly talk about the hardware and software. He talked about the possibility of having a thousand songs in your pocket. Very simple language. Very clear tones. Very emotional language.

A thousand songs in your pocket? What an awe-inspiring concept for people at the time. That's a veritable dream for those of us who grew up with Walkmans and boom boxes. Who wouldn't want a put a thousand songs in their pocket? Obama did the same for millions of individuals looking for answers and help; Obama inspired a belief amongst voters that his administration would provide the relief they were looking for.

The Pause

While we all know that he was an unmatched storyteller and author, but Mark Twain was also an amazing public speaker. His speeches sold-out everywhere he went and made his listeners laugh, cry, and cheer. It seems everywhere he went his oratory skills were met with fawning praise. One of his most impactful techniques was the power of pause. He said, "the right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause."

President Obama certainly utilized this technique often, causing his audience to absorb what he was saying and wait for what was next. Watch any of his speeches and you'll see his use of pause throughout the delivery.

Repetition

In an article written by Carmine Gallo for Forbes, he says regarding repetition, "Speechwriters call this technique 'anaphora' repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences. I simply call it, repetition. Repetition used artfully helps to clearly emphasize one idea and make it memorable. One of the best examples of repetition can be found in the famous speech by Martin Luther King Jr." He goes on to quote a portion of the "I Have a Dream" speech that many of us are familiar with. Obama too, used repetition in conjunction with emotion to get a point across – making it memorable for all who heard it. This strategy, used with the "Rule of Three" – also mentioned by Mr. Gallo - made for a powerful combination.

The "Rule of Three" is so effective, it's used everywhere. The combination of three words, thoughts, facts, etc. makes a message more memorable. Obama frequently employed this to attract, interest, and convince his audience.

TRUMP

While Trump has just recently become the President, not giving us a lot of material to review in his new official capacity, we have seen quite the phenomenon happen during the primaries – much of it involving his rhetoric and communication style. In a recent article written for Forbes, Nick Morgan summed it up best when it said, "Mr. Trump's cyclonic passion put the other 16 or so Republican candidates to shame – and drove them out of the race. Most of them were still trying to get along as

American political candidates have instinctively done in the past – leavening their indignation with a desire to attract as many voters as possible. That even-handedness simply didn't work against Mr. Trump's firehose of anger." Trump's approach to the following public speaking principles have been delivered quite differently than Obama; however, it's still been effective in capturing attention.

Using Emotion to Persuade

After eight years of George W. Bush as president, many Americans were looking for a new message and tone – one that was effectively communicated by Barack Obama. Eight years later, with Obama as president, many Americans' feelings had shifted; this is in part how Donald Trump was successful. He came on the stage and spoke like no one else ever had or dared to. For good or for bad, Trump recognized the powerful motivator of frustration and anger...and he fanned the fire amongst voters who wanted a voice.

In *The Power of Communication*, Helio Fred Garcia, a well-respected crisis manager and phenomenal communicator, wrote, "Humans are not thinking machines. We're feeling machines who also think. We feel first, and then we think. As a result, leaders need to meet emotion with emotion before they can move audiences with reason."

Just as Obama moved audiences with emotion, so did Trump...just from another angle. Take a look at any good sales person or business person in regard to persuading others. They will not only highlight the facts that make their product/service/position superior to others, they will focus on why those facts matter; and how it will benefit them. They'll communicate how the specifics of their product/service/position can help a client solve a given problem. There is emotion wrapped up in that appeal - you're promising that what you plan to deliver will take care of the challenges you're facing. Speaking to this need and its associated emotion fuels motivation, which yields action. Trump was specific about some of his policies throughout the entire primary process; from calling out companies, deals and countries to building walls, Trump not only tapped into the emotions of his voters, he gave them reason – with specific ideas – to believe their frustrations were legitimate and would be resolved.

Removing the Pedestal

As a part of truly being able to connect with your audience, I've often addressed the need for speakers to eliminate the barriers between them and their audiences. Arguably, Obama strived to do this where possible. However, Trump's approach to communication removed the barrier of staged and rehearsed speeches with his unconventional use of social media – specifically, Twitter. It's become quite the topic of discussion amongst analysts and pundits; perhaps it will be something that changes once he's been in office for some time. However, it has been a medium of communication used frequently and casually by Trump, which has kept his audience engaged and waiting to hear what he says next.

When I've talked about barriers, I've typically talked about those physical items that get in your way on stage, whether it be podiums, tables, or computers, etc. In this case, Trump has removed the barrier of the curtain that separates you from the "behind-the-scenes." It's an interesting approach to consider in today's world of social media – this idea that your interaction with the audience via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc. could be enhancing – or distracting – your ability to communicate. It's a new normal that must be considered by all professionals with an audience.

Two drastically different men. Two drastically different ideologies. Two drastically different approaches to the 10 Commandments of Public Speaking. And yet, both very successful in their results. Learn more about how to apply the 10 Commandments of Public Speaking in your next presentation by reading *A Climb to the Top: Communication & Leadership Tactics to Take Your Career to New Heights*.

Chuck Garcia is founder of Climb Leadership Consulting, Professor of Organizational Leadership at Mercy College in New York, and Author of "A Climb to the Top." He coaches executives on public speaking, leadership development, and sales skills. A 25-year veteran of Wall Street, he spent 14 years in sales and marketing at Bloomberg in a variety of leadership positions. He was Director of Business Development at BlackRock Solutions, an arm of the world's largest investment manager, and was a Managing Director at Citadel, a prestigious alternative investment manager. www.chuckgarcia.com



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