

The Lustberg Communicator

Volume 20, Number 4

“Communication should be an intellectual act of love.”

Winter 2011-12

*Our
Hope
this Holiday
Season*

May this year's economic uncertainties help us all refocus from easy prosperity and plenty to those things that have even more value: health, love, joy in doing good things, and regaining some youth by spending time with the young.

*See you in the New Year!
Arch, Marguerite, Susan, Marlece & Karen*

Lustberg On... The Blame Game



Photo by Mary Norman

Arch Lustberg

Any media trainer worth hiring will tell you to get in front of a potential crisis and stop it before it snowballs into a full-fledged avalanche.

Everyone who was alive this fall

was aware of the Herman Cain sexual harassment story and quickly grew tired of it. And then there was the scandal of the Penn State child abuse cover-up. I'm sure the advice each of these parties got was more substantial than what we saw in their actual performances.

We all wondered why Herman Cain thought he was so untouchable that he didn't have to address the issue with any substance: great style, great assurance, but nothing to address the concern. Style is good but it doesn't solve the problem when the problem is trust.

The only case that comes to mind of a proven-untrustworthy person salvaging a career big-time is Bill Clinton. Certainly not John Edwards, not Governor Sanford, not Anthony Weiner. Over and over, we see politicians denying responsibility, trying to shift blame to their opponents

or to that “Old Devil” media. Yes, John Edwards had a lot of charm. He was likeable, but not THAT likeable; and he couldn't shake off his guilt.

Obviously, Herman Cain felt his base would agree with his claim to be a victim of a lynch mob and he thrashed around frantically for someone to blame. He blamed the Perry Campaign for leaking the information. He blamed the media for jumping on the rumors about him and finding him guilty. He accused the women who'd complained about his harassment and accused them of lying for book deals and fame. (Unlikely, since they didn't want to come forward.) He even blamed the “Democratic machine” of being afraid of his campaign.

The accusations against him had weight. They should have been addressed quickly and honestly. He ignored an essential rule: If the allegations have any merit, admit right away to having made a mistake. (The American public tends to forgive a mistake.) If they are untrue, then do whatever it takes to get your story corroborated. Skip the blame.

Then came Penn State's disaster. Since sports have become a religion in

America, nothing will be so serious that it will destroy that church. But the problem should not have been handled — or mishandled — as clumsily as it was, with cover-up following cover-up. Each of the parties involved must have felt the power

of their church would protect them and make the mess go away. But it didn't.

In a crisis, the simplest rule of all is to tell the truth.

Tell it fully and promptly. Promise to set things right. Then do. Anything else is like running out of a burning building asking, “What fire?” Do I need to add that the best thing is to set things right as soon as a problem is recognized — even if it hasn't become a public crisis?



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Other People's Money

I rarely devote my comments to the integrity of the people I write about. My real concern is with their communication skills. I'm intrigued, though, by those in the party of "cut spending, cut spending, cut spending" who are putting on an expensive but pointless show with other people's money.

It's a shock to see the role ego plays within the party of fiscal restraint.

Ron Paul is the only candidate who can be trusted to say what he believes. You know where he stands because it's where he's always stood. He's never changed his position on any issue. He can't win, though. Even so, he's the one most likely to cause havoc among the "anyone but Romney" crowd.

Newt Gingrich hasn't a prayer, even though he shot up in the polls when Perry and Cain faltered. But he's conned himself into believing he'll pull a rabbit out of the hat.

And Sarah Palin? She ran a disgraceful sideshow. With no intention of getting into the race, she co-opted everyone else's chances for

publicity. She was a self-marketer beyond belief, more concerned about being a celebrity — and a rich one at that — than allowing the voters to hear from the serious candidates.

Palin shares a bigger-than-life ego with Donald Trump. Neither ran since they couldn't face the possibility of an ego-deflating, super-public defeat.

There's not much to say about Rick Santorum except to ask why he'd waste a penny to run for president when he couldn't even get elected governor of his own state of Pennsylvania.

That leaves Jon Huntsman. Maybe you can help me understand why he can't break out of the single digits and what he hopes to accomplish by staying in the race. □



Wisdom of the Ages

"The Republicans may still hear loud clapping, but they should observe how many have left the theater. To win, their opponents don't have to be liked. They just have to be liked more than them."

*Froma Harrop
Member of the Editorial Board
The Providence (R.I.) Journal*

"The history we're taught in the form of stories will never be forgotten."

*Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)
English Poet, Novelist, Short-story writer*



"If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging."

*Will Rogers (1879-1935)
American Humorist & Social Commentator*

Dear Arch



Your session was by far the best guidance I have received concerning public speaking. And I witnessed politicians transform their communication skills right before my eyes.

*Ben Jourdan, Fellow,
El Pomar Foundation*

I have learned so much from your quarterly newsletters and video clips. I am so happy that I purchased "How To Sell Yourself" and discovered you!

Marc Shepard

I very much enjoyed learning more about how to improve my communication skills. You had so many insightful perspectives that I have already put to good use. Thanks again for your commitment to training leaders throughout Florida through this program.

*Brad Register, PE, SPHR,
Director, Compensation & Benefits,
Tampa Electric Company*

Nits & Picks



Fessing Up to Our Own Mistake!

Thanks to
Harvey M.

Choldin, Professor Emeritus of the University of Illinois, for his diplomatic email pointing out our goof: “Reading a recent newsletter of yours, I noticed a reference to a famous newspaper headline. The headline I’m familiar with appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and it said, ‘Dewey Defeats Truman.’ Was there a similar headline in the *New York News*?”

Well, no, Professor Choldin, there wasn’t. My editor and I thank you for keeping us honest.

Real Words for Real People

In an interview with *Time* magazine, **George Clooney** commented about what he sees as Democrats’ general inability to stir the voters. The question was, “Are you disappointed in Obama?” Clooney responded:

I get angry at people who don’t stand for him, actually. If this were a Republican President, Republicans would say, “We were losing 400,000 jobs a month. We stopped it. We saved the car industry.” You could go down the list. Democrats should talk to Hollywood about how to posture some of these things. Say you’re about to get into tax loopholes. Instead of “loopholes,” say “cheating.” And then on the floor of the Senate, get up and say, “We’re not going to raise your taxes, but we’re not for cheating. Are you?” I just think Democrats are bad at that.



Obama’s Issues of Competence and Vision

Polls show that Americans generally like and trust President Obama. His competence, though, has underwhelmed them. In a November 7 *Time* magazine essay, Chris Matthews explains that an acknowledgement of the problem is necessary. :

[In the last election Obama promised a transformative presidency.] The only way for him to make that credible is to admit he didn’t get it right the first time, show that he’s proved himself capable of learning from his mistakes, justify that his second effort promises to be worlds better than his first. There’s a reason manufacturers put NEW AND IMPROVED even on their most popular product lines.

He adds: *What’s missing now is a spirit of adventure, of common purpose, a positive feeling, even romance about the times for meeting the challenges in the world, a stirring national cadence, a sense of mission.*

If the election of 2012 is about the past — who got us into this mess, who is to blame — then the verdict will be mixed. If it’s about how bad things are, the verdict will be simple, negative and unfortunate for the incumbents. But if it’s about the future? Right there is the prospect for Obama.

He needs to be taking us somewhere. What does he want with a second term? Tell us. Draw a picture...

A Deep Dish of Trustworthiness

Even unattractive truths can pay off when they’re given official recognition, and that’s followed by

an honest attempt to do better. In 2009, **Domino’s Pizza** began its “brutally honest” ad campaign that acknowledged its reputation for lousy pizza. Since then, the price of Domino’s stock has increased 233%. Remember my “holy trinity of effective leadership:” Competence, likeability and trustworthiness.

Backing up an Apology

In November, Michele Bachmann received an apology from an NBC executive. When Bachmann was a guest on Jimmy Fallon’s “Late Night” program, the show’s band chose to greet her stage entrance with a 1985 Fishbone song entitled “Lyin’ A— B——.” (Rhymes with mass itch.) The NBC vice president of late night programming later wrote Bachmann that the incident was unfortunate and unacceptable and that the band had been “severely reprimanded.”

I’m no fan of Bachmann’s, but a television network treating a presidential candidate with profane incivility is more than unacceptable. The apology should have come from the top, and been backed up by more than a severe reprimand. There are plenty of musicians out there looking for work.

Speaking of Incivility...

Rick Perry’s response to the question of why he still acts as though the president’s place of birth is in question, “It’s fun to poke at him a little bit,” is an example not only of incivility but of childish rudeness. No wonder his poll numbers have plummeted. Who wants a nasty adolescent in the White House?



See “NITS & PICKS” on page 4

Nits and Picks

Continued from page 3

Taking the High Road

Political Analyst Mark Halperin thinks Mitt Romney has played it smart in his public attitude toward the likeable President Obama. He never attacks the man, only suggests he's in over his head.

Make Them Part of the Team

Friend, client and frequent newsletter contributor Dave Wilson, president and CEO of Graduate Management Admission Council, shares these thoughts:

In reading reports of Mr. Obama's address to Congress I was fascinated by the number of times he was quoted beginning a sentence with the first person singular: "I will... I am... My administration..." or in the second person plural: "You must pass... You need to..." The first gave the impression of self-adulation. The second seemed hectoring. He sounded more like an adult scolding a wayward child than someone who wanted to lead the country through a difficult time. I never saw that he addressed the House and Senate with "We." It is a good lesson for any leader. If you really want followers, bring them along.



Five Rules to Remember

Many thanks to Kelly Workman of Planters Bank for sending on a *Chicago Tribune* column by Mary Schmich

entitled "Rule No. 1 of Public Speaking: Use Discretion."

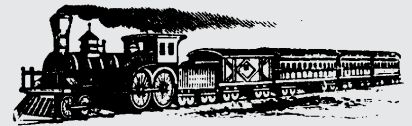
The column was instigated by the president of the Chicago Teachers Union who said this about U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan in a speech at a union event: "You know he went to a private school because if he had gone to a public school he would have had that lisp fixed."

Schmich follows up her rule number one with numbers two through five. Two: Just because someone laughs doesn't make it clever. Three: Ask yourself, "Would I say this if my boss were here?"

If my worst enemy were here? If the person I'm dissing were here?" Four: There will always be a recording. Five: The most outrageous thing you say will drown out the most important thing.

It took me back to my days at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In the early '80s, Interior Secretary James Watt came to deliver a speech. In that speech he said something like, "We've put together an ideal coalition. We have a black, a woman, two Jews and a cripple." There was a smattering of embarrassed laughter, but the fallout included Watt's losing his job.

I can recommend Schmich's entire column, which can be found at this link: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-11-16/news/ct-met-schmich-1116-20111116_1_chicago-teachers-union-arne-duncan-karen-lewis □



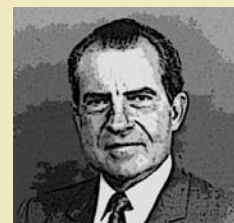
Bringing Arch To Town

Bringing Arch to your group is how you'll get attendee reactions like the one that came in this fall from Tena Pate, Chairman of the Florida Parole Commission: "**I wish I had been able to receive private lessons from you! You were awesome and many of us are still talking about you.**" Call or e-mail Marguerite Stone — (703) 979-4150, lustberg@erols.net — to bring Arch to your group. For information on all of Arch's training programs go to www.lustberg.net



Pausing to Reset

The moment is tense. You've been accused of something terrible you'd never consider doing. How to react? The first step is to pause, giving yourself time to reset the tone and develop an answer more informative and less damaging than the typical, negative-reinforcing "I did not..." denial. Then respond with a complete, HONEST and positive statement of what you actually did do. Remember the granddaddy of all denials: "I am not a crook!"



The Lustberg Communicator

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