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August is the perfect time to kick back and relax. School is out, many businesses seem to slow down a bit, and it is time to take a vacation. Joe and I just got back from the Sherren Family Reunion held in Jasper, Alberta. Perfect weather to get together - my favorite part was soaking in the Miette Hot Springs. It seems we just can't get enough of the heat! Unfortunately, I wasn't able to view the Republican Primary Presidential Debate from Jasper, but that didn't dissuade me from commenting on the process. I'm looking forward to a more spirited "debate" in the future. Have an amazing and relaxing August -

Kristin

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IS YOUR BABY UGLY?

It's hard to get feedback on something that you've worked on. You thought about it, mullied it over, formulated some initial thoughts and put it on paper.

And then you presented it to the team. OF COURSE they have some additional thoughts and ideas. "Change this", they say. They question, "Have you thought about that?" "Why did you say that?" They press you, "Could you do this better?"

You could become defensive. After all, it's your baby. You created this. You put a lot of work into it – shaping and forming it so that you could present it to the team. And all these comments are basically saying, "Your baby's ugly." That's darn hard to take.

Or you can recognize that it's part of the process. It not only makes the final product better, but it helps the entire team get onboard with the idea. Now, it's more than your pet project; it's now the team's project.

Your baby isn't ugly. We just want to make it look prettier, be smarter, be more efficient, and be less expensive to produce. Okay, we want your baby to be gorgeous – and you can't do it alone. You need your team to help make it *better*.

Even though I know all of this, it is still hard to accept feedback. I was recently working on a report for a non-profit association, and I sent my "draft" report out to the team requesting feedback. Encouraging them to "bleed" all over the report – write your new

ideas, corrections, and deletions. After all, I was not going to be the only one deciding on the report recommendations.

Even knowing what I know, it was HARD to see the comments role in. It was HARD to integrate their comments into the report – even though I knew the report was better and stronger. It was HARD to see that my baby was, in fact, ugly.

It had to recognize my feelings for what they were. It wasn't a personal attack. It was just part of the process and I had to let it go.

Which I did, but it's still HARD to do.

And that's a big reason why working on teams is HARD to do. Letting go of your own preconceived notions and allowing the team to make it better.

A CRITIQUE OF THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY DEBATE PROCESS

Moderating a nationally televised debate is never easy. Just ask Fox News anchors Bret Baier, Megyn Kelly and Chris Wallace, the moderators of Thursday's first Republican Presidential Primary debate.

The Fox Team agonized for weeks over the format, the questions, the logistics and details...and they should. Preparation is critical as all these little nuances set the tone for the debate and determine how well it will go.

This had to be a formidable task balancing the objectives and developing a meaningful format.

The Four Key Objectives (as far as I can determine from press clippings):

1. Entertain the audience with surprise and drama to keep them watching
2. Introduce the candidates to the audience
3. Reinforce Fox News as the "must-watch" channel for viewing for presidential debates (according to [Roger Ailes](#), Fox News chairman and chief executive).
4. Feature [Facebook](#) data illustrating how the issues of the day are resonating with people on today's largest platform for political conversation. (It's also a nice way to mix various forms of media to keep the audience's attention).

The Format:

Introduction. Happily, the moderators decided to dispense with the typical introductory stultifying remarks by each of the candidates. Instead, they quickly introduced the candidates, shared a simple statement of the rules (with a bit of humor) and then launched immediately into the first question posed to all candidates. It was a classic "raise your hand" poll asking the candidates to "pledge your support to the eventual nominee of the Republican Party and pledge to not run an independent campaign against that person."

Donald Trump is the only one who raised his hand. Not a surprise since Trump has stated this position before. Moderator Baier dug a little deeper to make sure he (and the American public) understood the repercussions of his stance – when Rand Paul burst in to say, "This is what's wrong. He buys and sells politicians of all stripes..." and so the provocative discussion begins!

This opening poll deliberately created the drama and tension television craves. It was a brilliant opening strategy that got everyone to sit up straighter and be a bit more attentive. (My intuition makes me believe that this poll was vetted between Fox and the Republican National Chairman (RNC) beforehand. In a post-interview on CNN, the RNC didn't seem to be particularly phased by the question...nor the answer).

Round One. After the initial poll, the moderators asked each of the candidates (all ten of them – which is way too many people) a specific question about that candidate's ability to

be president. Each of the candidates had 60 seconds to respond. Round One completed with no bloodshed and no rebuttals. Only Kasich got the buzzer.

To keep the debate on schedule, the Fox Team got creative. Rather than using the usual gentle “ding” that signals that a candidate’s time has expired, they used the actual shot-clock buzzer used during Cleveland Cavaliers basketball games, which are played at the same arena. Moderator Baier came up with the idea over dinner Tuesday night at a local bistro. “I was inspired,” he said with a smile, “by a beer.” (Fortunately, it only had to be used five times – and each candidate wrapped up his thoughts quickly).

Round Two then tackled specific subjects. A question was posed by the moderator to a specific candidate to answer. Then, if allowed by a moderator, another candidate could have a 30-second rebuttal.

In both Round One and Two, the moderators’ questions were crucial. They needed to be well stated (introduce the candidates and inform the public), concise (time will never be your friend), and encourage discussion between the candidates (that’s where the “rebuttal” comes in).

According to the New York Times, “The moderators have spent weeks writing (and rewriting) about 100 potential questions, roughly half of which will actually be asked. Though they have eight to 10 broad topics they plan to raise, including immigration and the economy, the moderators found themselves working down to the wire to refine their questions and think through smart follow-ups.”

They also integrated questions from Facebook users through video and in the questions the moderators posed.

Moderator Kelly said, “Everyday I spend a fair amount of time on my iPhone tightening them, redoing them, refining them, further researching them, bolstering them, eliminating them, and starting anew on some.”

According to Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times, it is precisely *because* their questions were so well researched “and so barbed, the television audience learned more about the candidates from what they were asked than from how they answered.”

So what happened? In Round Two, Moderator Wallace took the lead asking candidates about illegal immigration asking 6 candidates about their opinions. Still no “debate”. I felt like I was watching a ping-pong match. Ho-Hum.

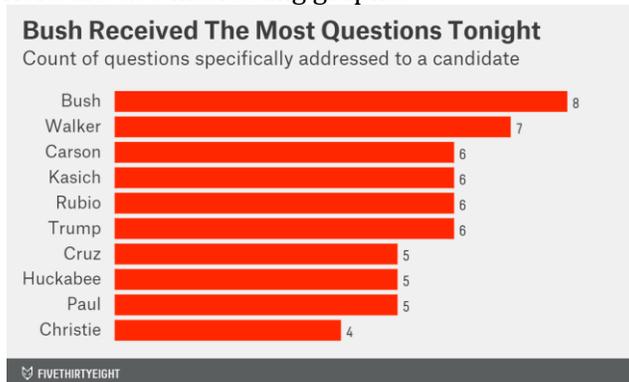
Moderator Kelly took on the topic of terror and national security posing a question to Christie. When Christie finished, Paul asked to respond – and then the fireworks started to fly from opposite ends of the rostrum! Finally, it gets a little more interesting! Kelly allows the sparks to fly *between the two* for a minute and then asks Christie to “make your point.” She let’s the cross talk go on for another minute or so, again encouraging Christie to continue. “Go ahead, governor.” After Christie has another few minutes to pontificate, she then stops the conversation by saying, “Alright, we’ve gotta cut it off there.”

While interesting to watch the sparks fly, Kelly didn’t follow the FOX rules. Rand should have had 30 seconds of uninterrupted rebuttal to Christie’s comments. Instead, Christie got even more airtime!

In Round Two, the moderators explored a total of fourteen topics with a total of 31 questions directed to a specific candidate. Of those, only 7 were redirected to another candidate for rebuttal. Paul interjected himself into the questioning a total of three times whereas Cruz asked to jump in and was declined due to an upcoming commercial break!

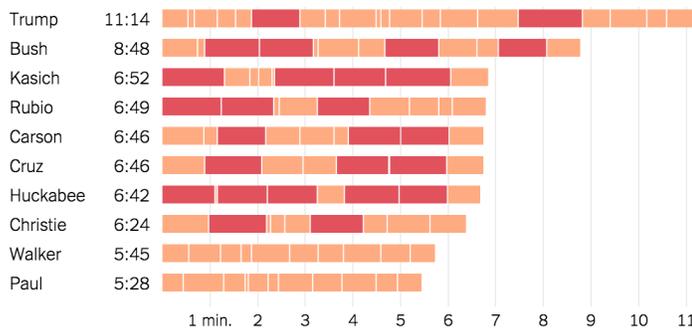
If the goal was to introduce the American Public to ALL the top ten candidates, then the format as stated would have worked if the questions were dispersed equally to all the candidates and if the rebuttals were dispersed as best as possible so each candidate had roughly the same amount of airtime. Unfortunately, they were not.

Here are two interesting graphs:



I would have expected the same number of questions to be asked of each candidate, but that's not how it worked out. Bush had 8 questions directed to him whereas Christie had only 4. That's not particularly balanced.

When it comes to airtime, the closer a candidate was to center stage, the more airtime he had. Since the placement of the candidates was based on their ranking in the FOX poll, it simply reinforced the "pecking order" in the American mind and didn't give us any more new information.



Time Spoken During the Debate. Darker bars indicate responses that were longer than 60 seconds

Just because the top ten made it to the debate, doesn't mean they had to stand in the same order. It's similar to a horse having the inside lane. It gives the horse and jockey an unfair advantage. In this case, I think I would have had the candidates draw lots or go alphabetically.

Round Three started after the second commercial break where Moderator Wallace cautioned the audience "We're also going to change it up every once in a while....where we ask (you are not going to like it) only a couple of candidates questions on those subjects." Whew! This is the wild card where the moderators could have balanced the questions and airtime. He asked two questions here of Kasich and Carson. Then, at the end, just before Round Four/Final Thoughts, Kelly asked a Facebook question to three candidates (Cruz, Kasich, Walker) and then added a specific twist on it for the last two candidates (Rubio and Carson). This makes no sense to me as Kasich and Rubio didn't need more airtime. (Paul and Christie might have been better choices.)

Round Four asked the candidates to make a 30-second closing statement which were obviously prepared by each candidate.

Throughout the debate, there were surprisingly few interventions – where the moderators choose to interject a comment theoretically to bring the group back on track. It means everyone was on his best behavior. There were only two "sparky" episodes

including the riff off of Trump talking about campaign contributions and the pledge to the Republican Party (see above).

- The moderators' styles seemed quite complementary to each other. Baier played traffic cop, queuing up the candidates and telling them to move on, Kelly challenged the candidates and their statements, and Wallace was the facilitator of the conversation.
- Of the 24 interventions, seven were to "queue" the candidates, six were to challenge a statement, five were to clarify and refocus the question, five were to encourage the candidates to move on, five candidates got "buzzed" and one candidate actually challenged the moderator!
- Baier led the pack with intervening a dozen times, Kelly had seven and Wallace had five.
- From the candidate's perspective, eight were involved in some kind of intervention with Trump leading the pack with eight interventions; Christie, Cruz, Paul, Walker tying for three interventions; Kasich had two, and Carson and Rubio had only one.

All in all, it was a credible introduction of the panelists to the American public, done with a bit of drama – all while keeping Fox and Facebook as credible sources for presidential debates. The moderators did a great job asking tough questions, keeping the flow moving and intervening when necessary.

On a scale of 1-10 with one being the lowest and 10 being the absolute best, I give it an "8" due to the strength of the questions and the format. I still don't think this was much of a "debate," since there were so few rebuttals, but we'll see how things go in the future.

WHAT TO DO WHEN EMPLOYEES JUST DON'T SEEM TO CARE

I was having breakfast at the Red Rooster in Crapaud this week with my cousin Charlie Sherren, and we were discussing how people conducted business in our fathers' time. His father, my Uncle Ned, was a man of solid values who would give more than take, and truly cared about his customers and workers.

Charles was adamant to continue this tradition and even today; the services he provides to others is done the way he would want it done unto him. This may seem like common sense, but he (and many others) feel the concept of personal accountability has been lost and workers just don't care.

He might be right.

There is now significant research that employee engagement is at an all time low. In fact, a recent Gallup survey found that employee engagement levels in America fell to an average of 31.7 per cent in March, down from 32.9 per cent in February.

Though the average for the first quarter of 2015 is higher than it was last year at this time (32.1 versus 31.7 per cent), it's still declining overall. So what is that doing to overall morale, and productivity in our organizations?

One interesting part of the survey said that women are more engaged than men in the workplace (34.7 versus 29.2 per cent). Typically, women are more engaged than men by a factor of five to six percentage points.

In fact, an article in the New York Daily News reports that nearly 70 per cent of U.S. employees are miserable at work and over 30 per cent are actively disengaged. Gallup's research also suggests there is a strong correlation between employee engagement, and customer satisfaction, increased productivity, and overall profitability.

How did we get here and what can we do about it?

I believe a big part is that many people who rose quickly to management, or became business owners, did not learn the skill of truly delegating and involving.

Yes, they assigned tasks, but they did not truly empower staff and teach them to accept responsibility. This denied workers development and the skill building needed to take on accountability without fear. I have heard it over and over from managers who say: "It's just quicker to do it myself", or "Employees today will just mess things up".

This is the consequence of a "sink-or-swim" or "baptism-by-fire" culture. Under those circumstances employees will certainly lay low and play CYA (cover your arse!) when they see responsibilities coming down the pipe.

The good news is it's not too late. Here are just a few ideas you can implement that will ensure people will step up, be engaged and even enthusiastic about their work:

1. **Develop a culture where managers share responsibilities.** Empower your employees to make decisions, take on accountability and do their work the way they think is best. If the end result works, even if it's not your way – let it go!
2. **Involve employees in management responsibilities.** I remember as a corporate manager I had employees that were ready for promotion, but there were no openings. Of course they became discontent. So I would say, "How would you like to be even better prepared for an opening when it does happen.?" Then, one at a time, I would delegate them something I was responsible for and let them run with it.
3. **Be transparent.** Be open about how the company makes money and what activities are most profitable. Review any long-term strategies you may have and how they fit in the big picture.
4. **Set up on-going coaching sessions.** Forget the annual performance review ritual. Make course corrections and provide feedback on any accomplishments on a monthly or at least quarterly basis.

Are you mentoring your employees to take on greater responsibilities in a confident, constructive manner?

FROM THE BOOKSHELF: VERNE HARNISH'S *SCALING UP!*

I often use the "One-Page Plan" with my clients based on one of my favorite business books: Verne Harnish's, *Mastering the Rockefeller Habits*. Well, he just came out with a newer version, his "2.0" called *Scaling Up! How a Few Companies Make It...and Why the Rest Don't*. I can't recommend it enough to any small to medium-sized business owner or executive. It's full of practical advice and templates to help you and your leadership team stay focused on what matters most in your business.

The "Overview" is a bit of a sip from a fire hose, so don't let that dissuade you. There are four sections to the book:

1. Leading People - We all talk about getting the right people on the bus, but how, precisely do you do that? How do you have a meaningful conversation about the vacant seats on the bus? The function still has to be done by someone on the leadership team - or you need to hire for the right cultural fit. Verne's guidance makes this conversation easier to have and do. (Note, I didn't say "easy to do", just "easier to do"). He gives a process methodology that anyone can follow.

2. Setting Strategy - Verne says, "You don't have a real strategy if it doesn't pass two tests: First, what you're planning to do really matters to enough customers; and second, it differentiates you from the competition." It also is not a one-time event. Setting strategy is a process - and you have the roadmap right in this book.

3. Driving Execution is all about the habits you have in setting a handful of priorities, reviewing the qualitative and quantitative data on a routine basis (daily and/or weekly),

and establishing an effective daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual meeting "rhythm" to keep everyone in the loop. "Those who pulse faster, grow faster."

4. Managing Cash - You have to have cash in order to grow. This chapter tells you how to pay as much attention to how every decision affects cash flow as you would to revenue and profitability.

With this book, you can scale up rapidly - and intentionally - while being able to sustain that growth over time. Even if you don't want to "scale up" - Let's say you just want to stay in business, then this book will help you maintain a vibrant and healthy business. And who doesn't want that?

P.S. I saw Verne speak at a conference and he was just as mighty and powerful as his book - full of practical advice for business leaders. He even stayed and autographed my book for me - such a gentleman. You can tell, he practices what he preaches.

UPCOMING WEBINAR

How to Run a GREAT Brainstorming Session

Thursday, September 10, 2015

Brainstorming sessions have taken a bad rap lately in the press. However, a well-run brainstorming session can unlock team creativity and provide innovative thinking that can't happen individually. In this webinar, I will share the difference between "listing" and brainstorming as well as terrific techniques to tap in to the synergy of the team's brilliance.

If you lead a team - an intact team, project team, or you are just trying to get your team to look at things differently, this webinar is for you!

Register here today at www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com/webinar-series/.

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