

October 25, 2011

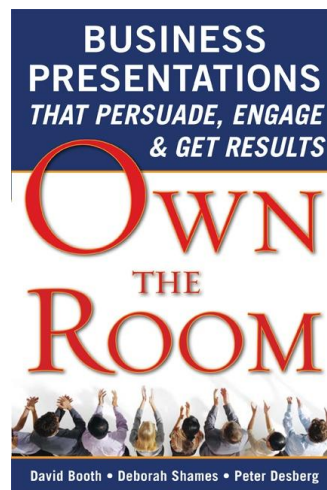
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[Mark Goulston, M.D.](#)

["Own the Debate" - President Obama, enter stage Left and Right](#)



An interview with David Booth, co-owner of [Eloqui](#) and co-author of ["Own the Room" Business Presentations that Persuade, Engage, and Get Results](#).

Mark Goulston: We're certainly seeing a lot of President Obama. Given your background in the theatre prior to being a presentation specialist, coach and trainer to executives and seeing the President being on stage nearly every day, any thoughts on how he's coming across?

David Booth: Masterful speakers or performers can be undone by good technique if they, as author Lillian Hellman said "...let the stitching show."

MG: What do you mean by "let the stitching show" and how does that apply to the President?

DB: After eight years of listening to a President garble simple words and sentences, we now have an accomplished debater with a command of rhetoric and his vocal instrument. However, there is a delicate balance--because if the American public senses that Obama's easy delivery denotes a lack of authenticity, his skills undermine the message.

MG: How can his easy delivery cause him to come across as inauthentic?

DB: Like a Broadway actor who performs the same show eight times a week, President Obama must keep stripping away the veneer that results from multiple speaking engagements. Like a trained actor, he needs to ask himself, "what do I want--right now; and why is this important to me?" Only then can he put himself back into the moment and bring spontaneity, immediacy and presence back to his speaking. This is how he will connect to a nation hungry for leadership.

MG: So he needs to make sure that his elegance does not obscure his being impassioned about what he is trying to accomplish?

DB: Exactly. As history has proven, it is never the most "elegant" speaker who wins hearts and minds. It is one who can speak unadorned, with passion and a clear point of view. The voice that connects with us is the voice that sounds like our own conscience. When we listen to Obama, we want to believe our better self is speaking to us, urging us to take the action that we know is right for ourselves and others.

MG: Are you saying that rather than taking a "convincing" approach with debate point followed by debate point to take on his detractors, he should adopt a "compelling" vision that will rally all of us to make it happen?

DB: Yes. President Obama, with all his rhetorical gifts, must do what's counter intuitive. Rather than listing specific debate points, he needs to share what he believes in and why. For example, when rallying the country around health care reform, we'd recommend that he deliver a simple theme that resonates with both sides of the aisle. This theme should reflect his ideology and conviction, e.g. "we can lead the world in providing medical care." Only then will Obama exhibit strength of spirit and a resolve that will overtake the naysayers. Only then will we see a change in public opinion. And only then will he "own the debate".

MG: Thank you David, you have certainly *owned* this interview. How can President Obama and other interested people learn more about what you do?

DB: A good place to start is to visit our [Eloqui blog](#) where they can also find out how to contact us.

MG: Thank you. I've already added it to my must read list.