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NEWS

Friday July 22, 2016

Analyzing Trump's Speech

Marketing professor Randy Sparks offers the following initial comments on Donald Trump's address to the Republican National Convention in Cleveland Thursday night:

"From a rhetorical and from a branding standpoint, Donald Trump did what he needed to do in his acceptance speech. First, he did not go off script. He read his prepared speech, through a teleprompter and did not start ad-libbing, which is often what leads him into controversy. Second, the speech itself was written in a style that suits him. Mr. Trump needed to avoid the soaring, flowery, visionary language that characterize many great speeches. While Mr. Trump offered his visions of America, current and future, he did so in the plain spoken terms that his followers expect.

"In terms of delivery itself, Mr. Trump at times seemed somewhat off-cadence, and at other times very much on. Vocal intonation and pace can be used to build points and then to punctuate the conclusions to those points. Accomplished orators know how to use cadence along with rising and falling volume and tone to do just that. Many times Mr. Trump hit those cadences very well.

"His line, 'I alone can fix it,' for example, was delivered with vocal intonation and rate that communicated authority and conviction. In other instances, he seemed to miss the opportunity to pack the punch into lines that were designed for that purpose. For example, in forwarding his proposal to build a wall along the Mexican border to prevent illegal immigration, Mr. Trump had the opportunity to deliver a slow and measured line in time with the audience's cries to 'Build the wall!' Instead, after building to that moment, Mr. Trump said, 'We're going to build a great border wall.' While the audience in the convention hall roared its approval, rhetorically, the line did not convey the drama, conviction, and certainty that it could have. It was momentarily anti-climactic.

"In term of branding, Mr. Trump stayed true to his marketplace position as a political outsider who does not play by an old and failed rulebook. He attempted to give a slightly more philosophical tone to his rhetoric by positioning himself as a voice for the voiceless and champion of the working class. He even overtly made an appeal to

supporters of Sen. Bernie Sanders to join him in this crusade. In doing so, he attempted to reinforce the position of Secretary Clinton as a particularly egregious example of a corrupt political system.

"Overall, Mr. Trump did not hit a home run, but he certainly did not strike out."