

20 00 2009 - The Media Talk Too Much

Watching the inauguration today, I was reminded of something that I've noticed ever since I was a little boy - the media (in this article, television media) don't have a lot of material to talk about (but they try to anyways). As hordes of people congregated into the constricting vessels of the National Mall, reporters on every channel from Fox to NBC pointed out anything and everything that came to mind to ensure that not a second passed without their commentary.

There are times when this is okay. Sports, for example, occasionally warrant play-by-play status updates. Apple's famed Keynotes, too, deserved to be described in minute-by-minute detail as Jobs' unleashes never before seen products on the world.

Inaugurations, school days, and lunches however do not need to be narrated piece-by-piece. In the past week, every major news network has spent an innumerable number of hours reflecting on what Michelle Obama was wearing, what President Obama's children were doing, how President Bush was acting, and how much security surrounded the events of today. It's reached a point where most of their audience doesn't even notice the commentary anymore but, nevertheless, they continue on in their quest to put every visible detail into sentence format. It's almost eerily familiar to the scandals of paparazzi followed princesses and celebrity relationships.

It's important to talk about things that are happening in the world. It isn't important to say that the Secret Service dress in black and protect the president. We know.

In terms of marketing, these lessons couldn't be more relevant. People don't need to be told things that they already know in a way that they're already aware of.

You have two options: 1) Give people something new to care about or 2) Show them a new way of seeing something that they already know. The media doesn't (usually) do this. They're very good at what they do but what they do isn't always exactly newsworthy. How many times have you turned on your TV only to learn something that you already know?

Of course, they're there when something happens and they bring live and breaking coverage of everything from natural disasters to terrorist attacks to screens all over the world. That's why people watch the news. But, when there isn't much to talk about, they keep talking.

If you've ever fallen victim to an infomercial late at night, you know what happens when companies act like the media. How much is there to really learn about the Bowflex, OxyClean, the ShamWow!, or even the Snuggly? They don't have a lot to say but they keep saying it and saying it anyways.

Before you talk, ask yourself "Do I really have something to say?" You'll be amazed at the results.