

All GOP Candidates Failed My '4 Horsemen' Test

Wednesday night's CNN Republican presidential candidate debate was both inconclusive and disappointing for many conservatives because none of the candidates were able to close the deal and give conservatives a reason to say "YES" and unite behind him, or her.

Despite Donald Trump's regular claims to be a master dealmaker and the good performances of Carly Fiorina, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz during the main event, and to be fair, Bobby Jindal's strong showing during the early "undercard," none of the contenders broke out or clearly differentiated themselves from the others in the 16-candidate pack.

And none of them will until they and their campaign team master Viguerie's Four Horsemen of Marketing, as Ronald Reagan did in the lead-up to his successful 1980 campaign.

Viguerie's Four Horsemen of Marketing are:

- Position (privately decide what is your hole in the marketplace)
- Differentiation (publicly separate yourself from the other candidates)
- Benefit (how will electing you solve the voters' important issues)
- Brand (the combination of the above—what makes you singular or unique)

As I explained in my book *Takeover*, Reagan's position was that he filled the "hole" of being the national conservative leader that was left in the marketplace by Goldwater's epic defeat; he was a fresh face, different from establishment Republicans

because he surrounded himself with conservatives. Probably his greatest benefit to conservatives, when compared to other potential candidates, was his skill as a communicator, which made him electable; and his position, differentiation, and benefit established his brand, and his days on TV and in the movies had made it trusted.

I contrast that with what I heard and saw last night – which was each of the candidates attempting to differentiate him or herself with some form of “pick me because I’m the smartest person on the stage.”

Voters concede that each of the candidates on a national debate stage is capable of doing the job of president. It’s a given whether we agree with their policies or not, each of them is accomplished and successful – so that is not what is going to effectively differentiate them, especially for conservatives.

From the perspective of my 50+ years in marketing to conservative voters, to close the deal with today’s country class voters the candidate must do three things before anything else:

1. Establish his hole in the market
2. Differentiate himself from the other candidates
3. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, establish in the minds of conservative voters that there is a positive benefit to electing him – or her

In Reagan’s case he staked-out his hole in the marketplace through a variety of means, but perhaps the most important was his leadership and advocacy of conservative causes, such as leading the opposition to the Panama Canal Treaty, that was a conscious choice he made to fill the leadership vacuum in the conservative movement.

This also helped differentiate him as *THE* candidate of the conservative movement, despite the initial entry in the race

of other solid movement conservatives, such as Congressman Phil Crane.

But perhaps the most important element of Reagan's brand—and what has been missing so far in this campaign—was the clear communication of the benefits of nominating and electing Ronald Reagan as President.

Voters believed that if Reagan was elected he would lower taxes, rebuild our national defense and get government off their backs.

Ted Cruz came close to Reagan's approach Wednesday night, and I contrast that to the down-in-the weeds policy pronouncements and shopping lists propounded so far by most of the 2016 Republican candidates for President.

As importantly, in the lead-up to the 1980 election conservatives looked at who Reagan walked with and it differentiated him from George H.W. Bush, Bob Dole, Howard Baker and John Anderson because they saw fellow conservatives like Ed Meese, Lyn Nofziger, Marty Anderson, Richard Allen, Judge Bill Clark, Senators Jesse Helms and Paul Laxalt with Reagan and felt confident that he would bring men like that into his administration to govern America according to conservative principles.

But sending a message like that today is well-nigh impossible for most of the Republican candidates.

They are either part of the problem, like Senator Lindsey Graham, or are surrounded by poisonous campaign staff and insider supporters who are charter members of the Washington Cartel, as are Jeb Bush, John Kasich, Marco Rubio and Chris Christie.

What can a conservative like Cruz, Bobby Jindal or Scott Walker or an outsider like Carly Fiorina, Ben Carson or Donald Trump do to close the deal?

According to Viguerie's Four Horsemen of Marketing the answer is pretty simple; show conservatives how you are different than all the other candidates and how your difference provides positive benefits conservatives are desperate to obtain.

And as I read things, the benefit the vast majority of voters are looking for is change, and new leadership in Washington.

Americans of all political stripes are disillusioned with their existing leaders; that's why Bernie Sanders is rising in the Democratic primary.

The conservative grassroots are just livid at the DC insiders who have enabled Obama's destructive agenda and have been bleeding the country dry through their Big Government cronyism.

That's how outsiders Donald Trump, Carly Fiorina and Ben Carson came to collectively hold a majority of the Republican primary vote without anyone really knowing their positions on much of anything.

Conservative voters want Speaker John Boehner, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, RNC Chairman Reince Priebus and their cronies gone – and any candidate who explicitly says they will clean house will automatically differentiate themselves and establish a clear and immensely attractive benefit to grassroots conservatives.

Ted Cruz got a big boost before the Fox News debate when he called out Mitch McConnell for lying, and he's talked about "breaking the Washington Cartel," but he missed an opportunity to close the deal by clearly committing to cleaning house last night.

Similarly, in the early debate Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal came close when he said:

"We have got the majority; what good has it done us? See, they

said they were going to stop amnesty. They said they were going to repeal ObamaCare. They didn't do either. Now they're not even willing to fight to defund Planned Parenthood. They've already – McConnell has already waved the white flag of defeat.

They are not willing to stand up to fight for the issues that count. I think it is time to have term limits. I think it's time to have part-time citizen legislators. Let's pay them a per diem instead of a six-figure salary, stop them from being seven-figure lobbyists. Let's also pay them a per diem for every day they don't go to D.C. Let's keep them out of D.C., working in the real [world], let's make them live under the same rules and laws they apply to the rest of us. Not only shouldn't they be elected, they can't be elected. Let's fire all of them from their current positions. “

But other than that one passing reference to Mitch McConnell, Governor Jindal didn't name names; he didn't attack Boehner and McConnell for being spineless when confronting Barack Obama, for their craven sellouts to the special interests on issues like the Ex-Im Bank, immigration and international trade, and for their personal attacks on conservatives.

When he failed to seize the opportunity to stand clearly with the grassroots, Governor Jindal missed the opportunity to change the dynamics of the race, close the deal with millions of country class voters and raise himself out of the second tier of candidates.

And Donald Trump did no better.

When Trump says he's not beholden to the special interests and he can't be bought, many assume getting rid of the establishment Republican “leaders” is part of the Trump outsider package, but he's never said “I want Mitch McConnell and John Boehner gone, and they will be gone if I'm elected.”

In 1980 Ronald Reagan won the Republican nomination and the

White House by taking all of the discontents in the Republican Party, welding them into a coherent program and using that program to differentiate himself from the other candidates in the Republican primary field.

Today, there's a hole in the 2016 Republican presidential field for a candidate who will do the same as Ronald Reagan did; take ownership of today's grassroots discontents and change the dynamics of the campaign by using them to differentiate himself or herself, and convince voters that he or she will produce the positive benefit millions of country class voters hunger for – new leadership in Washington and the Republican Party.

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