

POLITICS AS USUAL: All press is good press?

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

I understand that some candidates may not have access to the funds necessary to hire good message managers. When you aren't yet the nominated candidate ? and sometimes even when you are ? campaign funds are pretty tight, so volunteers are usually relied upon to do virtually all manner of campaign tasks from manning phone banks to hammering in lawn signs to drafting speeches and speaking notes.

There are many, many candidates out there that have access to folks with pretty decent skills who will offer their time and talents for free to the right candidate. One doesn't have to be a professional to have the chops to do the job.

That being said, there are also many folks out there that most decidedly do not have the skill set, the abilities, nay, even the tiniest tidbit of capability to be involved in, let alone take charge of the message management of a serious political candidate for office.

That truth was laid bare recently in the now savagely mocked video put out by a ?leading? candidate for the Conservative leadership, Kellie Leitch.

I saw a link to Ms. Leitch's campaign video in a FB feed.

I knew it would probably be something risible (she seems to have a penchant for saying inflammatory things these days) but I decided to watch it anyway as, well, I will watch anything to do with politics, so why pretend otherwise.

So, I clicked on the link, opened the video and then proceeded to sit there positively gobsmacked by what I was watching.

It was simply horrendous. No. I don't think horrendous truly covers it. How about bizarrely horrendous?

It was like watching a car wreck: you want to avert your eyes lest you see any more of the horror, but you cannot not as your morbid curiosity simply won't let you.

I am not being mean. I am being politely honest.

As message management goes, the video is a complete and utter failure. From the truly weird pausing between sentences, while she looks off into the distance, then returning her gaze to the camera in a sideways glance as if to say, ?Get a load of what I am saying?? To the stilted delivery of some truly awful throw away lines. To the nausea-inducing camera work (panning in and out, side-to-side?). From start to finish it is just terrible.

And what's worse? It's long. Very long.

Over eight minutes long; which, given what is being said, and how it's being said, it seems interminably long. Online videos ? especially campaign videos ? should be short. Max two minutes. If you can get it under a minute, even better.

People have short attention spans. You need to get your message across succinctly ? and quickly. Or folks will simply ?change the channel. To expect that folks will sit through an eight minute long one-note message, replete with awkward pauses and dead air, is misguided at best.

As political strategies go, I am not sure what the intent of the video was. It clearly wasn't about getting her message out because it's doubtful that anyone bothered to actually listen to it. It was too long and too weird to accomplish that. Maybe it was designed to get folks to talk about her? If that was the goal, then mission accomplished.

Perhaps it was simply a case of, all press is good press. Not sure I agree that axiom applies in this case. But we shall see.