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It's the Message

The 2012 presidential campaign and the 1992 campaign seem to feature the same theme, "It's the economy, stupid," but is the message clear this time?

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Almost 20 years ago, Bill Clinton Campaign Strategist James Carville helped his candidate position his message in a concise and memorable phrase: "[It's the economy stupid.](#)" As of right now, the 2012 election is on track to be primarily about the economy just like the 1992 election. For the growing 2011 Republican Presidential Candidate field, no one has gotten past sound bites to really offer a distinct message on what to do. As the [Wall Street Journal](#) wrote in next-day coverage, "...the debate became a showcase for personal style more than policy positions."

Whether it's the Republican candidates, troubled corporations, [Anthony Weiner](#), [LeBron James](#) as well as anyone else or any other organization on the front lines, the key is having the right, differentiating message. "It's not about you," I often tell clients; it's about the message. Organizations, whether public, private or NGOs, must convert their mission into a "unique selling proposition," as Rosser Reeves taught us. Individuals, too, need a [USP](#). For those running for office in a crowded field, the candidates who often seem on a mission have yet to define a divergent message. The Republican debate in New Hampshire was more about [blaming the president](#) blaming the president than one candidate providing more than rallying cries.

While Carville may have been harsh in using the word 'stupid,' it seems to have stuck in the vernacular of American politics. Perhaps PR professionals need to be as direct as political strategists to get the point across. The bad news is that failures continue time and again with either a lack of focus, a lack of clarity or, worst of all, a lack of [telling the truth](#). The good news is that there is help. A good media trainer, a good writer, a good presentation skills expert knows how to get you or your organization's message not only heard, but understood. Being willing to tell the truth, to be bold when it comes to differentiation and to 'not be stupid' just take courage.

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