

BUSINESS

QUESTIONS? Contact editor Bob Tremblay at 508-626-4409 or rtremblay@wickedlocal.com

[WRITE ON THE MONEY]

Politics of purpose

I think I heard something about a primary election tomorrow, did you? Unless you've been buried in a snowbank – wait, that's not possible either – then you know



Maureen Condon
LOCAL COLUMNIST

there's a big vote in New Hampshire tomorrow. The media quickly turned its eyes on New Hampshire last week after Mitt Romney's slim victory in the Iowa caucuses, and the competitive claws of those left in the race have come out.

Each candidate has had highs and lows along the way, moments when they've shined and others when they've failed to look their best.

It's going to be a long election year, for sure, as each Republican (or Libertarian) candidate tries to win the Republican nomination and President Obama tries to keep his job for another four years.

Your career and/or company is similar to a politician's in the need to fight competition successfully, win the positions/clients you seek and retain your hold on success once you've achieved it.

Here are some strategies for communications that are timely in this presidential election year.

Have a clear message and communicate it consistently.

We know that no one likes a flip-flopper, especially during election season. The competition and the voters tend to jump all over any candidate who says one thing at one time and then changes his or her tune later.

Candidates who passionately believe in and defend their position – even when it's uncomfortable or difficult – tends to fare better than those who seem like waf-fers.

In business, professionals and companies also must have a clear message, communicated consistently to succeed. The stronger your personal or company brand, the more loyal followers you will build along the way.

Rise above the competition but avoid appearing aloof.

Romney has been criticized for trying to stay so far above the competition that he is being viewed as having a superior attitude.

While it may be wise to avoid participating in the mean-spirited bickering that often plagues elections, it's also important to appear accessible and in touch with the issues that people are talking about.

In your career and your company, there is a fine line here as well. Staying out of gossip and infighting –

whether with competitors, coworkers or colleagues – is always smart.

But being seen as a people person who has your finger on the pulse of your organization, department or team will serve you well.

Differentiate yourself.

When the feeling about politicians is as negative as it's been in recent years, it's critical for anyone who is running for office to show us how they are different. From a unique professional background to a compelling personal story, politicians need to leverage whatever they can to separate themselves from their competitors.

Professionals also need to differentiate themselves in their companies and industries. Do what you can to show a unique side to your career or your business. Often, this strategy involves humanizing your story so that others can connect to you in a more powerful way.

People vote for people and they do business with people – not impersonal entities – so do what you can to get people to know the unique you.

Attack and defend when necessary.

Political competition is never fiercer than during a presidential election year, and no one is immune from attack, during debates, ads and campaign stops. The key

to success for candidates is to be prepared and to react appropriately to attacks with well thought-out, articulate responses instead of knee-jerk emotional outbursts.

The best candidates will also identify the best ways to highlight their opponents' shortcomings while showcasing their own strengths.

This is a strategy worth embracing in business as well. You will compete with others for jobs, for promotions and for clients and market share, and it may get nasty. Be informed about who you are up against whenever it's possible, and make a point of highlighting your strengths in comparison.

You never have to bad-mouth another person or firm – that can backfire – but you can strategically position yourself when you have the information you need.

The candidates may never take this advice, but maybe you will – here's to winning whatever race you're in.

Maureen O'Grady Condon of Framingham is principal of Precision Marketing Group, an outsourced marketing department for entrepreneurial, B2B companies. Contact her at Maureen@precisionmarketinggroup.com.