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## **Winning & Communicating**

**A media-communication expert assesses the veep debate.**

By T. J. Walker

Vice President Dick Cheney accomplished his main goals for the one vice-presidential debate of this election. He mounted a vigorous defense of the Bush administration's policy on Iraq and he painted the Kerry-Edwards ticket as inconsistent and lacking in good judgment. Additionally, Cheney came across as confident, knowledgeable, intelligent, seasoned, reasonable, steady, low-key, and earnest. And he really stuck it good to Edwards on his attendance record.

But by every traditional measure of good public speaking, Cheney is a truly wretched communicator. His sins include the following: staring down constantly, cocking his head awkwardly, placing his chin on his hands, speaking in a monotone voice, saying "ah" incessantly, and using weird clutter phrases like "if you will."

It is difficult to critique Senator Edwards's communication skills because he is consistently a technically flawless communicator. Edwards comes across as comfortable, likeable, knowledgeable, and friendly. Specifically, Edwards moves his head, hands, and body in a totally natural manner. His voice is soothing, conversational, and energetic. And you can make fun of good hair all you want, but it didn't seem to hurt Reagan or Clinton.

Edwards didn't "win" the debate in the sense of moving large numbers of voters to Kerry. But Edwards accomplished two main objectives. 1) He clearly established himself as a credible vice-presidential candidate (no Quayle moments were visible for instant replay). 2) Edwards cemented his reputation as the frontrunner for the 2008 Democratic nomination (if Kerry/Edwards lose 2004).

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