Fox News Should Watch Dancing With the Stars

I have to be honest, I watch Fox News more often than any other cable news network. CNN comes in at second place for me, followed by MSNBC. So let’s get that out of the way.

I watched Fox News and MSNBC during the election cycle because they told me the worst possible elements that could be found about President Obama and Governor Romney. Both networks work hard at branding every possible negative issue about the other side that it’s an educational opportunity in branding and marketing. Neither network truly reports the news. Their actions and strategies show us how they believe a negative brand can be built. Not only did each tell us how negative the other brand was, they were relentless in trying to create confirmation of that negative brand by bringing in “experts” to confirm their brand bias.

You know who both networks reminded me of? All of their shows, with the exception of Bill O’Reilly, remind me of Art Bell’s old Coast to Coast radio show. Every night, Art would bring on-air crackpots talking about life on Mars, alien abductions (accept for the true ones of course), Black Helicopter operations, and pretty much any crazy thinking across the board. Art was masterful because he interviewed these people and talked to them like there was absolutely no doubt in his and his listeners’ minds that everything the interviewee said was true. *Of course* there is life on Mars. *Of course* there are aliens living among us who can morph into different animals. *Of course* the government has been working with Planet X for years. Callers would share their personal experiences about all the above. Art confirmed for his listeners, callers, and the crackpots he interviewed that all the theories were so true. Art Bell made you believe that he believed it was true. I have no idea whether or not he actually believed this stuff. Regardless, his show had a huge nationwide audience.

Both MSNBC and Fox News do the same thing with their branding efforts. No matter what the story, true or not, both stations are going to pull out every stop to make you think it is true; facts be damned. Governor Romney lies about everything, and here are three “experts” who confirm it. President Obama is running the dirtiest campaign ever, and here are three “experts” who confirm it. For every attempt to create a negative brand association for the other side, there were always three “experts” confirming it multiple times a day.

During the last week before the election, I noticed a subtle change in branding by Fox News. Maybe MSNBC did it too and I just didn’t see it. Fox started branding the notion that Romney had all the momentum and was on his way to victory. Dick Morris predicted a landslide victory for Romney. Karl Rove told stories about Romney’s momentum and Obama being on the run. Any poll that showed Romney in the best light immediately became the focus. Charles Krauthammer was relentless in talking about the imminent disaster for Obama and win for Romney. In hindsight, I feel that only Bill O’Reilly (whose show I like and who is a master of asking pre-spun questions that force answers to fit his needs, and at disengaging when he knows he is beat) and Chris Wallace really tried to temper the branding blitz. (I like Chris as well. He asks tough questions that others seem afraid to ask.) Outside of these two people, Fox News was relentless in sending the message that a Romney win was imminent. There was no doubt about it, and if you didn’t believe it you either followed mainstream media or were simply stupid.

But Fox News had two huge problems. The first was that their audience was far bigger than MSNBC or the other networks. Fox News also attracted the biggest audience during the debates and leading up to the election. You would think this to be a boon for Governor Romney, right?

Wrong!

The second huge problem for Fox News, and as a result Governor Romney, is that they didn’t know about the *bottom-two principle* from Dancing With the Stars. You would think that when one of the couples on DWTS is in the bottom two, that is a horrible sign. It must mean these couples are close to elimination. However, the *opposite is true* for couples with a large voting base. When you have a large voting base and find yourself in the bottom two, your voting base recognizes that you are at risk of losing. Because they want you to stay on the show, and voting counts as much as the dancing on DWTS, the base will step up and vote to keep you on the show until you find yourself up against couples that have a bigger voting base than you.

So what does this have to do with Fox News and the presidential election?

I truly believe that supporters of Romney who watched Fox News thought it was a no-brainer that Governor Romney would win. I live in Texas and was around a lot of Romney supporters on election night who had no doubt that Romney will win.

On the flipside, MSNBC doesn’t have as big an audience as Fox News, nor do they do as good a job at branding as Fox News. When President Obama’s team reached out to minorities, women, and others who felt threatened, it was easy to convince these people that Obama was the underdog and he would have a hard time winning. It was easy to motivate people to get out and vote because each person will make a difference.

So, they did.