



## Obama/Romney III: 7 Talk Radio Take-Aways

*By media consultant Holland Cooke, reprinted from Talkers magazine*

Last night's winner now enters the ultimate contest with renewed confidence. But enough about the Giants' National League Championship win.

Even after months and months of primary debates ("NINE...NINE...NINE" was THIS year, right?), Americans were engaged by the presidential and VP debates. Both sets of ratings prove it.

- TV had a hit mini-series, and any News or Talk station that didn't air the debates was MIA.
- And this year's did something debates don't often do: change minds. Debates tend to be a Rorschach test. Your guy always wins. But this election will be decided by very few Undecideds. Romney's first-debate performance turned-around his poll numbers, and stemmed the bleeding of campaign contributions to down-ticket races. Now watch the president's numbers after what are being scored as back-to-back comeback wins.

An engaged electorate is good for America, especially with such tight numbers foreboding what some are already calling "another 2000." Watch the map. This year's hanging chads could...theoretically...produce 2000-in-reverse, a Popular win for Romney and Electoral win for Obama. Or an Electoral tie! In which case the House elects the president, one vote per state; and the Senate elects the VP. Imagine?

### What these debates meant to radio:

1. For all-of-the-above reasons, the 2012 vote is a great show. The tighter, the better. **Milk it.**
2. **Don't treat the election as something that happens in two weeks.** Early voting is underway across most of the USA. Which-parties'-voters-are-early-voting is already telling.
3. **Keep doing good car radio.** Smart Talk stations promoted debate coverage by reminding that, "IF YOU'LL BE IN THE CAR TONIGHT..." Certainly anyone with the choice would have watched rather than listened. And going forward, it continues to make sense to approach campaign coverage as car radio. Assume that you're sharing attention. Tell 'em the-very-latest, then – because audience is constantly tuning-in – rinse and repeat. Between very-latests, "play the hits" by rotating-and-repeating major sound bites, which light-up your phones, and arm listeners for the watercooler. Example: Obama's "horses and bayonets" line, which demonstrated another Talk Radio take-away...
4. **Behold Twitter.** Highest Tweet count of the night was 945 ET, when "horses and bayonets" hash tags and chat threads and Facebook cartoonists and joke writers all got real busy. As broadcasters, we've taken false comfort marginalizing Social Media as back-channel, a shadow medium. Not anymore. It's now a full component of the legacy media consumption experience. Be there or be square. SHARE – rather than attempting to LEAD – Social Media conversation, and you'll make the most of this powerful platform.
5. Best very-latest of the night: CBS News' instant "Who won?" poll (Obama: 53%; Romney: 23%, Tie: 24%). Getting their numbers out first got CBS lots of play, demonstrating what marketers call "First Mover Advantage." **What local data can your station create, as The Big Game approaches?**
6. **What listeners care about depends on where they are.** TV is downright unwatchable in select swing-state markets. Netflix must be doing real well in Columbus and Orlando, and now Denver. Expect Senate and House surprises on Election Night. Congress' approval numbers have been embarrassingly low, for a long time, and voters have had-it-up-to-here with gridlock. If your state is as insignificant as mine in Electoral College terms, you're probably seeing what we're seeing here: big interest in down-ticket races. Smart stations take ownership of those contests, and super-smart stations own local debates.
7. **It's a great time to be Sports Radio,** and not just because it's respite from the political noise. GREAT sports stories abound, and are fueling the format that's becoming the long pole in the Talk Radio tent. Go Tigers.

*Read my Talkers magazine and Radio-Info column archive at [www.HollandCooke.com](http://www.HollandCooke.com),  
and follow on Twitter @HollandCooke*