

[Presidential Debates, “Zingers” and Client Development](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on October 3rd, 2012

Tonight we get to watch the political equivalent of a 15 round heavyweight world championship fight. The sad thing is it will be reported and analyzed the same way. Instead of reporting and analyzing how each candidate will create jobs, reduce the debt, deal with Iran getting a nuclear bomb, deal with terrorists and a variety of incredibly important issues facing the country, the pundits will tell viewers whether either candidate:

- was able to get in a “zinger,”
- had a “Rick Perry” moment,
- looked more “Presidential,”
- appeared “thin skinned”
- was more likable.



I hope I am wrong, but I fear that in the end, voters will not get the substantive answers they seek from the candidates or the analysts.

That kind of analysis even started before the debate. US News reported: [6 Best 'Zingers' From Past Presidential Debates](#). The New Yorker, in what it apparently thought was humorous, published [PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT](#), suggesting that the Romney team was having him practice the 6 zingers from the US News article. Vanity Fair reported: [Presidential Debate Prep: The Drinking Games, the Zingers, and Lowered Expectations!](#). I could go on with link after link from respected publishers writing about debate style rather than substance.

If either candidate tries a zinger, it had better be a good one. If, not, viewers will almost always side with the candidate on the receiving end. If you want an example, watch this short clip from one of the Bush-Gore debates. In this short clip, when Jim Lehrer asks Bush what the difference is between the candidates, Bush answers "I can get it done" and gets a small response from the audience. Al Gore does not make a verbal zinger. Instead, he moves in on George Bush's space in an apparent effort to intimidate him. Gore's move and Bush's nod received greater coverage than anything substantive the candidates said.

[Al Gore George W Bush Debate 2000 Election](#)



I suppose

there are

some clients who want to hire lawyers who have a knack for one line zingers to use in a tough negotiation or trial. After all, we have all heard of clients looking for a lawyer who is meaner than a junkyard dog. But, I believe most clients are looking for lawyers with good judgment and innovative ideas to deal with problems.

A very high percentage of voters have decided whether they will vote for Obama-Biden or Romney-Ryan and whatever happens in the debate will not sway them to change. For those undecided voters who watch the debate, do you think a candidate's performance will make a difference? If so will it be demonstration of good judgment and ideas to deal with problems, or the candidates zingers and debate style?

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