

# Why the Weird Attack Line is Working for Democrats from Communications Expert John Theriault

*Communistrata Strategic  
Communications CEO with Four Reasons  
the Weird Attack Line is Working*

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Weird is packing a punch because we all remember the "weird kid" in school. It also appeared just as Vance's statements began to appear online. It's a case of word meets moment and that's powerful."

*John Theriault, CEO  
Communistrata*

Last Saturday Minnesota Governor Tim Walz referred to Trump and Vance as "these guys are just weird" on a cable TV news hit. The phrase took off online and quickly became a standard line for Democratic leaders campaigning for Vice President Harris. But why is it working?

Communications expert John Theriault, CEO of [Communistrata](#) PR in Boston, MA says there are four reasons why its working so well.

## What Makes It Effective?

- 1. Relatable Narrative:** Nearly everyone has had the experience of being in high school, and we all remember that so-called weird kid. When you hear Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer refer to Trump and Vance as weird, it immediately places them in that space of the high school kid you didn't want to be associated with for fear of being ostracized.
- 2. Cross-Generational Understanding:** The word "weirdo" was introduced in about 1955 to US pop culture, so there's almost 70 years of cultural relevance behind the term. That's a lot of Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z, etc. going through their high school years, so the word has cross-generational relevance, unlike "Brat", which no one over 25 can figure out.
- 3. Historical Background:** The word weird dates to around 1400 but takes its current connotation from Shakespeare's Macbeth in 1605. In the play, Shakespeare uses the term "weird

sisters” to refer to the three witches. Later, in 1815 the English writer Shelley uses the term in Alastor (The Spirit of Solitude) to refer to one as odd in appearance.

4. Benefit of Speed: In our time-starved over stimulated online world, people gravitate to any shorthand that explains things fast. After another week of this media and online discussion, you’ll be able to place the word “weird” on a bumper sticker and people will know exactly what it means in the same way a major brand works.

Timing is Everything:

The timing of the comment, at the outset of the campaign, when there was no existing perception of Senator

Vance nationally meant the epithet could stick. There was nothing in people’s knowledge or memories about Vance to refute it. In addition, it was offered in a comedic way by Walz and resonated as funny to the audience, which it meant it had a higher likelihood of being shared. The result was a meme that quickly took hold.

This isn’t new, as memes about politicians have been around for as long as we’ve had elections. Think about Nixon’s “I am not a crook” or Carter as a peanut farmer image. Parties have always used memes to frame their opposition. What’s new here is the speed. The spread of this meme was within minutes and was quickly formalized as a talking point, so fast it makes Bill Clinton’s “rapid response” operation look quaint. It will only get faster from here when AI takes the work out of spreading it online.

In a highly fragmented media environment, the ability to tap into shared context and history can translate into the ability to dominate the conversation. The old adage in politics is that if you’re explaining you’re losing, and calling the other guy weird requires no explanation. The question now is how long this “weird” moment will last - likely shorter than the 90+ days left to the election.

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