

# MSNBC Anchors' Fights Go Live

Dana, Rebecca . Wall Street Journal , Eastern edition; New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]28 Aug 2008: B.7.

[ProQuest document link](#)

---

## ABSTRACT

Audiences have responded positively to shifts at the network, making MSNBC the fastest-growing cable news network in 2008 and the top-rated one among viewers between 18 and 34 years old, the most desirable to advertisers.

## FULL TEXT

Since the start of the Democratic National Convention, ratings have exploded for the cable news channel MSNBC.

So have tensions among the network's top anchors.

The convention was supposed to be the network's coming-out party as a hub for politics. But a year of programming and personnel changes have led to behind-the-scenes strain, which bubbled to the surface repeatedly this week in open arguments between hosts.

In an uncomfortable moment Tuesday night, an exhausted-looking "Hardball" host Chris Matthews shouted at a producer ("I'll wrap in a second!") before a stilted exchange with "Countdown" host Keith Olbermann, in which the two argued about who was talking out of turn. Mr. Olbermann made a flapping-lips hand gesture, and Mr. Matthews took umbrage. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer sat quietly on-screen, waiting to be interviewed.

That incident followed a seven-minute back-and-forth Tuesday afternoon between "Morning Joe" host Joe Scarborough and network correspondent David Shuster. Mr. Scarborough, a former Republican representative from Florida, accused Mr. Shuster, a registered independent, of taking a "cheap shot" by mentioning his party affiliation. Mr. Scarborough sarcastically added: "I feel so comforted by the fact that you're an independent. I bet everyone at MSNBC has 'independent' on their voting cards."

Since the early days of CNN's "Crossfire," cable news has relied on strong personalities to keep drama high and viewers tuned in throughout the day, when news isn't always exciting enough to keep the audience's attention. Passionate debate can make for great television – and terrific ratings.

But some found this level of personal bickering hard to watch.

"My reaction to that is: 'Grow up!' They have to just grow up," said Connie Chung, a former MSNBC host and former co-anchor of "CBS Evening News."

The network's chief played down the acrimony. "Look, I want honest, authentic people on our air. I don't want phonies. So if the price of that is every once in a while one of these bubbles up, I'm not concerned," said MSNBC President Phil Griffin.

"Like any good manager, I give and I take and I massage and I deal with it," he added, "but the fact of the matter is this is what we want: a diverse, fun, rough-and-tumble look at politics."

General Electric Co.'s MSNBC has tried to capitalize on strong interest in the presidential election in the past two years by making a series of programming moves. The changes have made a star of the liberal firebrand Mr. Olbermann and left several news people feeling marginalized, including Messrs. Scarborough and Matthews and former General Manager Dan Abrams, people familiar with the situation said. An MSNBC representative declined to make the on-air personalities available for comment.

The sudden death this summer of NBC News Washington bureau chief Tim Russert, who made frequent appearances on MSNBC, removed a political and temperamental rudder for the network. Mr. Griffin has tried to fill the power vacuum since, struggling to shepherd the network's big personalities through a period of transition.

Audiences have responded positively to shifts at the network, making MSNBC the fastest-growing cable news network in 2008 and the top-rated one among viewers between 18 and 34 years old, the most desirable to advertisers. The network drew 2.15 million viewers on its first night of convention coverage, 88% more than tuned in for the first night of the 2004 Democratic convention, according to Nielsen Media Research. MSNBC also beat Fox News among younger viewers that night.

Fox News is owned by News Corp., which also owns Dow Jones & Co., publisher of The Wall Street Journal.

## DETAILS

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Subject:</b>                | Television news; Political conventions; Television networks; Politics; Professional relationships; Presidential elections |
| <b>People:</b>                 | Matthews, Chris Olbermann, Keith Scarborough, Joe Shuster, David  |
| <b>Company / organization:</b> | Name: MSNBC; NAICS: 511140, 515210  |
| <b>Classification:</b>         | 1210: Politics & political behavior; 8330: Broadcasting & telecommunications industry; 9190: United States                |
| <b>Publication title:</b>      | Wall Street Journal, Eastern edition; New York, N.Y.  |
| <b>Pages:</b>                  | B.7   |
| <b>Publication year:</b>       | 2008  |
| <b>Publication date:</b>       | Aug 28, 2008  |
| <b>Section:</b>                | Media & Marketing   |
| <b>Publisher:</b>              | Dow Jones & Company Inc   |
| <b>Place of publication:</b>   | New York, N.Y.  |

**Country of publication:** United States

**Publication subject:** Business And Economics--Banking And Finance

**ISSN:** 00999660

**Source type:** Newspapers

**Language of publication:** English

**Document type:** News

**ProQuest document ID:** 399047722

**Document URL:** <http://library3.webster.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/399047722?accountid=14944>

**Copyright:** (c) 2008 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

**Last updated:** 2017-11-02

**Database:** Business Premium Collection

## LINKS

[Check Article Linker for full text!](#)

---

Database copyright © 2017 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)