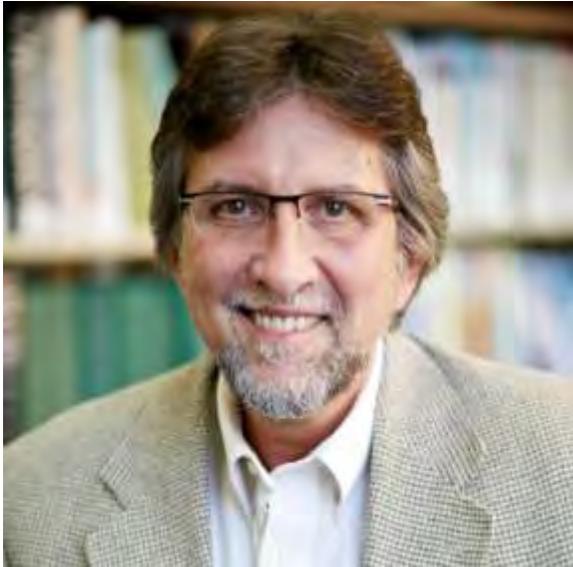


A Successful Businessperson's Presidency

Denis Collins
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If you are a businessperson, have you ever thought you could do a better job running the country than the incumbent president? For those of you getting up in years you may have one last chance to act on that challenging inner voice or impulse. Donald Trump thought so a few years ago. But do you think you could win the presidential election?

History says yes, and Trump just proved it. Prior to Trump's astonishing victory, three of the 10 most recently elected presidents were business executives — George W. Bush, George H.W. Bush, and Jimmy Carter. But they first received on-the-job training as governors or in Congress before running for president. Dwight Eisenhower succeeded without having prior elected political experience, but he did so from the springboard of being a war hero and governing the

military through a tragic world war.

Donald Trump entered the Republican Party primary as a successful businessperson and won. He appealed to disenfranchised people tired of being neglected by traditional candidates, appealed to their suffering, offered a law and order agenda, and promised to fix all of our problems. Then he seemed to implode between winning the nomination and Election Day.

Well, a successful businessperson can indeed take a leap of faith and dive head first into the White House. The vote has been tabulated and businessman Donald Trump won by a substantial margin in the Electoral College, 306 to 232 votes, although Hilary Clinton won the popular vote.

What lessons can businesspeople seeking the presidency learn from Trump's experience?

First, voters want businesspeople to run for national office and actively engage in the political process. They often have a pragmatic outsider perspective that can break suffocating political gridlock and insensitivity to the economic impacts of political policies on working-class people.

Second, we are all morally flawed, so please admit rather than deny it. Donald Trump's moral flaws were spotlighted 24/7 by the media, who took Trump literally, but not seriously. Many people who took Trump seriously but not literally forgave Trump's moral flaws for a "greater good," be it his outsider approach, economic policies, and/or choosing future Supreme Court nominees. Plus, they thought Hillary's moral flaws — ties to Wall Street, career politician, and Clinton Foundation revenue sources — were worse.

Third, your past and present business activities are your legacy. Mistakes you made during your 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s are part of your legacy. Donald Trump branded his unique business history and many people found it compelling.

Fourth, you cannot separate business ethics from social or political ethics. They are all integrated. Our ethics follow and define us. Wherever you go, there you are. Yet, Americans are a forgiving people, and about half the population who do not call themselves Democrats or progressives forgave Donald Trump's moral flaws, particularly conservative and evangelical Christians.

Fifth, moral expectations increase — yes, increase — over time. In the 1960s John F. Kennedy's sexual misconduct was hidden by the media; in the 1990s Bill Clinton's led to impeachment proceedings; and in 2016 Donald Trump's flaws were, like Bill Clinton's, forgiven by friends, supporters, and people wanting to change the political culture in Washington D.C., though not by enemies. We must think hard about this because the increase in moral expectations accounts for a great deal of moral, social, and political progress over the past century.

Sixth, people need hope, and it must be authentic.

So yes, a businessperson can become president without any prior political governance experience. As noted by the Plan, Do, Correct, Act management mantra, Trump did make mistakes. May Trump admit them and take corrective actions, rather than deny them and repeat his mistakes. And may he surround himself with highly qualified people who complement his weaknesses and support his strengths.

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