

## WEEK TWO (1/24): POLITICAL SKILLS AS DESCRIBED BY CHRIS MATTHEWS AND PRACTICED BY DONALD TRUMP

I DESFOSES: negotiate, compromise, remember the good of the nation; limited # of political chips; surprised by how much politics there is in politics—and in life. Finally, I learned that while you can't please all of the people all of the time, you can't please some of the people any of the time.

### II CHRIS MATTHEWS, Hardball. How Politics is Played—Told by One Who Knows the Game

#### A. “It's Not Who You Know, It's Who You Get to Know”

1. LBJ: getting ahead is getting to know people
2. Need to concentrate on the process as well as the issues.
3. Politics is both wholesale and retail (one on one communication)

#### B. “All Politics is Local”

1. And that local issue is the most important thing to that politician or citizen. Otherwise, he or she wouldn't have come to you with it.
2. Analysts think wholesale, politicians think retail
3. Don't focus on your own ego—never take your eyes off the other person's ego.

#### C. “It's Better to Receive than to Give”

1. If you want to make a friend, let someone do you a favor.
2. People who give to your campaign are likely to do it again.
3. This chapter summarizes 4 steps to political power:

- a. Pay close attention to what motivates others
- b. Use this information to map paths to their hearts and minds
- c. Ask for help—best hardball is the willingness to ask, and also the best way to mobilize people for your cause.
- d. Loyalty is the lynchpin of the network of deals and support that's needed.
- e.

D. "Dance with the One That Brung Ya"

1. Watch out for coalitions
2. Keep checking in with your constituents
3. "Loyalty is everything in this business." (Tip O'Neill)

E. "Keep Your Enemies in Front of You"

1. LBJ: "Better to have them inside the tent pissin' out, than outside the tent pissin' in."
2. Politicians have interests, not enemies. (CONTRAST with Washington today)
3. Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer.

F. "Don't Get Mad; Don't Get Even; Get Ahead"

1. Be careful who you step on on the way up; they'll be waiting to step on you on the way down.
2. Nelson Mandela: "Let us forget the past. Let us hold hands."

3. Ronald Reagan: “I always throw my golf club in the direction I’m going.”

#### G. “Leave No Shot Unanswered”

1. Dukakis vs. Clinton

#### H. “Only Talk When It Improves the Silence”

1. Newt Gingrich lesson
2. Edmund Muskie—sitting quietly through all those bill-drafting sessions.
3. The official who wins at deal-making isn’t the one with the new ideas, but the one tough enough to withstand the process and agile enough to get information.
4. Tip O’Neill: “Whaddya hear?” (Information is power; try to get it, not give it.)

#### I. “Always Concede on Principle”

1. Reagan on Nicaragua: concede the argument and then manipulate your critics into accepting your policy.
2. Swaziland: “We are all dissatisfied.”
3. Smart politicians focus less on the principle than on the objective, the tangible result at issue. When sitting down to deal, they always separate the principle at stake from the actual stakes. Then, with the air thick with melodrama, they concede the principle and rake in the chips.

J. “Hang a Lantern on Your Problem”

1. No matter how smelly bad news it, it always gets worse as it ages.
2. Better to be the bearer of your own bad news. Remember Reagan and the age issue: “I will not make my age an issue in this campaign. I will not exploit my opponent’s youth and inexperience.”

K. “Spin”

1. Clinton—“The Comeback Kid”
2. Nixon—Checkers and Pat’s Cloth Coat

L. “The Press is the Enemy”

1. “I’ve been right and I’ve been paranoid, and it’s better being paranoid.” (William Safire)
2. Reagan: The Great Wholesaler; LBJ was not.
3. Background: can’t use your name, but can use identifying info
4. Deep background”: want the material published, but no identifying information
5. Off the record: reporter can’t publish the information

M. “The Reputation of Power”

1. Hobbes: “The reputation of power is power.”
2. Play to your strengths.

3. When you find yourself in a hole, stop digging.
4. Lowballing
5. Sandbagging—Gore in debates
6. Create new commandments: “thou shall not speak ill of a fellow Republican.
7. Pass the buck—set up a commission
8. Inchon landing—Nixon in China

N. “Positioning”

## II TRUMP’S POLITICAL SKILLS

- A. “Of all Donald Trump’s political skills, perhaps the most impressive is his ability to persuade people to support him by suspending their deepest, lifelong beliefs.” (Michael Gerson, NYT, 1/25/16)
- B. Speak plain language (non-PC) and shoot from the hip.
- C. Adopt one issue that many people care about, like illegal immigration, and they’ll let you get away with a lot of others they don’t accept. Ann Coulter put it bluntly: she doesn’t “care if [Trump] wants to perform abortions in the White House,” so long as he builds a wall and expels 11 million undocumented immigrants.
- D. “Identify with working class anger, and even evangelicals will agree that personal character, particularly on sexual and family matters, has no serious public implications. “You brag about many affairs w/ married women,” Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) said recently in a series of tweets.

“Have you repented? To harmed children & spouses? Do you think it matters?” For evangelical supporters of Trump, it doesn’t matter.”

- E. “Trump’s defining personal and public characteristic is pride. In making America great again, he offers not a set of political ideals or policies but he himself. He, he says, is better, smarter and tougher than our corrupt and misguided leaders. Pride is his platform.”
- F. Develop your oratorical skills to a high degree. As a writer from the Bloomberg View wrote in “The Virginian Pilot” on 9/20/16,

One of the most memorable descriptions of a strong populist orator comes from Joseph Goebbels, who knew about these things: "The essential characteristics of his speeches to the people are: clear organization, irrefutable logical reasoning, simplicity and clarity of expression, razor-sharp dialectic, a developed and sure instinct for the masses and their feelings, an electrifying emotional appeal that is used sparingly, and the ability to reach out to the souls of the people in a way that never goes unanswered."

- G. Develop a sense of humor even if it’s infrequently used publicly. As Trump said in the fall, "Used to be, they made cars in Flint, Michigan, and you couldn't drink the water in Mexico," he deadpanned. "Now, they make cars in Mexico and you can't drink the water in Flint." People in the audience mouthed the second part of the sentence.
- H. Adopt a strong sense of patriotism. "I'm not running for president of the world," he said at another point. "I'm running for president of the United States of America." He'd used the line before, but it was perfect for this particular crowd. "U.S.A., U.S.A.," his supporters chanted enthusiastically. Trump got applause every time he said he would worry about Americans and not the rest of the world. Same thing happened when he said, “Build that Wall.”

- I. “Buy into the post-factual era, and give ‘alternative facts.’ To be sure, he still arouses plenty of controversy. During the campaign, among other gasp-inducing remarks, he suggested that Hillary Clinton had originated the myth that Barack Obama wasn't born in the United States. Now challenging the pictures showing the size of the crowd at his inauguration.”
- J. “Trump may have looked inexperienced when he started out. He no longer does. He has learned fast, and he is now a seasoned politician. That, perhaps, is why some commentators talk of a softening of his public persona. Hard to notice any: He delivered the same hard-line isolationist, nativist, anti-immigrant message as before, but without making any blunders that the media might seize on.”
- K. Trump plays the political outsider role very well. But he’s shown throughout this campaign that he is an extremely shrewd politician.

- L. Learn to Manipulate the Media. According to Jonathan Ladd, “Trump’s Only Significant Campaign Skill is Manipulating the Media, But He’s Great at It.”, VOX, 9/26/16. “Here are three basic strategies he follows:

#### 1) Using shock to dominate the news

Violating political and social taboos is part of his political brand. Unlike other candidates, he won't alienate his supporters by acting this way because they already know this about him.

As the quote from *The Art of the Deal* points out, Trump sees shocking behavior as a way to dominate press coverage. In the primary season, whenever news coverage would shift toward other Republican candidates for a few days, Trump would say or tweet something controversial.

Trump has struggled to leave behind his style of being deliberately shocking. It seems too instinctual for him at this point.

## 2) Creating false balance

“One of his media tactics that works better than ever in the general election is creating false equivalence. The easiest way for journalists to avoid accusations of bias is to organize their prose so that they spend a similar amount of space on the strengths and weaknesses of both candidates. Unless they have always been opinion writers or bloggers, most journalists are socialized to use a balanced structure when possible. They will sometimes deviate if the facts warrant it, but balance has a gravitational pull that Trump is good at exploiting.”

“ One of Trump's main rhetorical strategies on the campaign trail is to take his own weaknesses and simply hurl those same accusations back at Clinton. This is why Slate's [Janelle Bouie](#) calls much of Trump's rhetoric "an exercise in projection." Bouie points out an astonishing stump speech where Trump says:

‘Hillary Clinton has been running a hate-filled and negative campaign, with no policy, no solutions and no new ideas. By contrast, I've been going around the country offering very detailed plans for reform and change. All of these reform plans are available on our website, and they're extensive, but we have no choice.’

## **3) Using ‘fake facts’ too brazenly for journalists to correct.**

“Journalists who want to preserve a reputation for being nonpartisan also have trouble when a politician lies so brazenly that there is no way to correct him without appearing to directly criticize or get in a confrontation with that politician. Most normal politicians shade the truth or spin reality. Yet almost all avoid blatant lying and will act defensive if called out for an inaccuracy.

However, when Trump states something that is clearly false, and insists on it even when confronted by a reporter, it is tough to proceed without the reporter calling Trump a liar.”

M. Become a master labeler. As Stephen Collinson stated, “How Donald Trump Defied the Odds, “ CNN, May 5, 2016,

“After all, the tough tactics from the political neophyte disrupted one of the most experienced Republican fields in a generation. He destroyed the political hopes of [Jeb Bush with his "low energy" jibe](#). Trump's brawling tongue also obliterated -- at least for now -- the potential of the GOP's next generation of political rock



stars, "[Lying Ted Cruz](#)" and "Little" Marco Rubio. He's trying to take a similar approach to Clinton, dubbing her "Crooked Hillary."

N. Revolutionizing campaigns

“With an unerring eye for a rival's weaknesses, he revolutionized how campaigns are won, becoming a master of social media, hijacking news agendas with skills honed on reality television and a mastery of targeted marketing and generating controversy”.

- O. Tweeting to reach the voters directly—without going through the media or elected representatives.

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