

# TheStreet



## Here's Why Marco Rubio Could Make a Great CEO for America

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What kind of leader is Marco Rubio?

If you've spent any time with management consultants, you know they love organizing workers into little quasi-psychological personality groupings. Deloitte's "[Business Chemistry](#)" schema labels people "pioneers," "drivers," "integrators," or "guardians" and assigns them a corporate function accordingly. Training firm Corexcel has an almost analogous [system](#) comprising "creators," "advancers," "flexors" and "executors," adding a fifth category of "refiners" to the list. Management professor Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries hocked an eight-part breakdown in an [article from 2013](#) in the Harvard Business Review.

Where might the 2016 presidential candidates fall within all these trendy taxonomic branches? While Donald Trump sounds like one of de Vries' "Communicators," who regard "leadership as stage management" and "have a considerable impact upon their surroundings," Jeb Bush has an air of Deloitte "Guardian" about him, as someone who's got a dynasty to protect and "likes tried and true" ways of doing things.

What about Rubio? Where does he fit into this little corporate parlor game? Is he a "driver" -- an "analytical thinker" for whom "business is business"? Is he an "integrator" -- a "master of empathy and nuance"? A "transactor" -- a "great dealmaker" who "thrives on negotiations"? What's Rubio's leadership style?

Whether success in the corner office translates to success in the Oval Office is an open question - - one that has become more prescient as more candidates try to make the jump. Mitt Romney perhaps got the closest in modern times to parlaying a successful business career to a stint in the White House when he became the Republican nominee but lost in the general election in 2012. His campaign, in part, [focused on the idea of bringing a more business-like approach to government](#). But he didn't invent the idea: George W. Bush has an MBA; George H.W. Bush is a former oil executive; Jimmy Carter owned a peanut farm; and Herbert Hoover was a mining engineer and business consultant.

In this election cycle, the concept is very much a part of the political discourse, with Donald Trump and Carly Fiorina -- both successful in business but with no political experience --

making a run for the Republican nomination. *TheStreet* is producing a series on how several presidential candidates would look as America's next CEO, examining qualities like leadership, energy, management and intelligence that are valued in both CEOs and presidents.

Of all the GOP candidates, Rubio may be the least coherently branded. He has working-class Latino heritage but matured under the tutelage of the mighty Bush family. He's billed himself as a tech-savvy, Silicon Valley-friendly candidate, yet supports a return to vocational training as part of his education agenda. He's frequently described as boyish and youthful in his appeal, yet subscribes to a litany of traditional social beliefs.

His "blank-slate" background is exactly why Rubio could make a great Executive-in-Chief for America, should he be elected president in 2016.

See Barack Obama. One of the major criticisms of Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, both from the right and the left, was that the junior senator from Illinois was untested and didn't stand for anything. Having served in the Senate from only 2005 to 2008, his voting record was too thin to evince any actual convictions, critics said. The accusation that Obama was "an empty vessel" and a product of marketing continued well into the early days of his presidency.

"Barack Obama is not a left-wing radical," wrote right-leaning CNN Crossfire commentator Sarah Elizabeth Cupp in a 2009 op-ed. "He is not a socialist, a communist or a Marxist, and he's not a black liberation theologian. He's not un-American, he's not an atheist, and he's not a racist. He is none of those things, because all would require Barack Obama to have a belief system, a worldview, a set of convictions about political philosophy, theology, and socioeconomics that he simply doesn't have."

His transformation from an unknown to household name didn't just win him Advertising Age's marketer of the year award for 2008, beating out **Apple, Zappos.com** and **Nike** -- it also helped him win flexibility as president.

Commentators have observed how Obama's "empty vessel" leadership style has allowed the machinery of the Democratic establishment to run with relatively few hitches. In the years since 2008, the U.S. has taken several large and programmatic strides to the left both socially and economically, with the Affordable Care Act, the legalization of gay marriage, a diplomacy-focused foreign policy, increased social spending and restored relations with Cuba and Iran.

There are other examples of empty vessel leaders, as well -- notably Ronald Reagan, whose background as a salesman and marketer helped him enact many of the modern GOP's most celebrated policies, including the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which simplified the notoriously knotty income tax code.

Reagan's affable nature also allowed him to break sharply with his Republican base on several occasions. In 1987, the "Free Trader," as he was called in the press, introduced a 100% tariff on select Japanese electronics, leading the libertarian **Cato Institute** to deem him "the most protectionist president since Herbert Hoover" in a 1988 policy paper.

It's in this tradition that Rubio would very much like to follow, though he'll only be able to do that once he's picked a cogent message for himself -- one that's compelling but also malleable, like Obama's "change."

"He needs a slogan, a focused message. That's what we're waiting on," said Bob Dilenschneider, head of the **Dilenschneider Group**, an influential public relations firm. "He's got plenty of solutions and he'll presumably surround himself with the right people, but at the moment, he's missing a message."

"Rubio has a knack for making Americans feel good about being Americans," Dilenschneider added. "He should play up on this, because whoever wins the nomination for the GOP isn't just branding themselves, they're branding the whole party. The party needs a line."