

TheStreet

Here's Why Donald Trump Would Make a Terrible CEO for America

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Donald Trump has experienced enormous amounts of success in the business world, but will he be able to emulate his private sector achievements as president of the United States?

Ricardo Bellino thinks so.

Trump took a meeting with the Brazilian entrepreneur back in 2003. According to Bellino, he initially encountered Trump in a "bad mood" and was given just three minutes to talk. But apparently, the now-Republican presidential frontrunner was impressed.

"By the end of the quick introduction, we got connected very positively and in a very fun way, and we ended up talking for over an hour. At the end of the day, we had a term sheet signed," Bellino said in a phone interview with *TheStreet*, describing their meeting as a "fairytale story."

Trump agreed to back the resort in Brazil Bellino had pitched and helped catapult the budding businessman's career. Bellino, who appears to have positioned himself as a sort of Brazilian version of Trump, authored *You Have 3 Minutes! Learn the Secret of the Pitch from Trump's Original Apprentice*, a 2006 book based on his experience with Trump, and is in the process of launching his own reality show, *Elevador do Milhão* (Million-Dollar Elevator). He is now a permanent resident of the United States, thanks to what he said was an "incredible letter" Trump wrote to the immigration authorities on his behalf.

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 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.

Experts aren't so sure President Trump would do such a great job as America's next Executive-in-Chief.

"Being a CEO is exactly the wrong kind of background for being a president, because the kind of authority the two positions command is just totally different," said noted political scientist Francis Fukuyama, now a senior fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University.

He may be on to something. Past U.S. presidents with business backgrounds aren't competing for space on Mount Rushmore.

"Bush, Bush, Carter and Hoover are not exactly your greatest hits list for the presidency," said Gene Healy, vice president of Washington, D.C.-based libertarian think tank the **Cato Institute**.

Will Trump fare any better as America's CEO? Not if he fails to adapt to the new and different circumstance of being president of the United States, where he can't just fire people at the drop of the hat or go into negotiations with a my way or the highway attitude.

As president, Trump would have to learn to build coalitions and work with people he doesn't agree with or like. This is perhaps Trump's biggest failing in auditioning for the role of CEO of America: He's great at pushing people away.

The most recent example of this is his call to ban Muslims from entering the United States, a stance that has drawn ire from the left and from the right. Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders called Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric "crap" in appearance on *The Tonight Show* with Jimmy Fallon, and White House press secretary John Earnest said it "disqualifies" him from being president. GOP contender Lindsey Graham wrote on **Twitter** that Trump has "gone from making absurd comments to being downright dangerous," and Jeb Bush called the billionaire "unhinged." A petition to ban Trump from the United Kingdom got thousands of signatures.

"Donald tends not to surround himself with people who think differently than he does. As a result, he often has blind spots when it comes to understanding and appreciating diverse perspectives and diverse populations," said Randal Pinkett, CEO of consulting firm **BCT Partners** and winner of the fourth season of Trump's reality television show, *The Apprentice*.

In the Oval Office, he won't be able to do the same.

Presidents are afforded numerous appointments -- Cabinet members, federal agency heads, advisers -- but don't get to overhaul all government personnel. The U.S. Constitution was designed to limit the power of a single branch, meaning Trump, or whoever becomes POTUS No. 45 will have to work with people he may want to fire.

"There are agencies with their own individual mandates that have their own discretion and their own authority to pursue objectives of their own," said William Howell, professor of American politics at the University of Chicago. "[The president] has to work with and negotiate with all

kinds of departments and agencies and bureaus that have their own discretion, and then never mind Congress, never mind upcoming elections, never mind state governments and governors."

Just as the president doesn't make all of the hiring decisions, he (or she, if Hillary Clinton or Fiorina win) doesn't make all of the firing decisions, either. Federal workers cannot be let go at the drop of a hat. "You're fired, after we go through the proper processes mandated by federal law" doesn't have quite the same ring to it.

"Many of the folks in the federal bureaucracy have civil service protections, and they're not people that Donald Trump can just say, 'You're fired,' to and have that happen," said Healy.

Trump made the "you're fired" mantra famous on *The Apprentice*, and it is an attitude he applies throughout his businesses, where the expectations for all of his employees are high. Yet, this is an area in which Trump gets points: Jim Dowd, a public relations professional who worked with Trump from 2003 to 2010 while at **NBC Universal** and his own agency, said being on the billionaire's payroll was a 24/7 gig, though "you're better off for it."

"When you're on his team, you're working really hard, you have to work ridiculously hard for him. If you don't return his call in an hour, he writes you off," Dowd said.

Hiring, firing and waiting for phone calls aren't the only places where Trump would have to deal with a slower pace in the public sphere than he has in industry. CEOs in general have a significant amount of control over day-to-day operations and are awarded rather unlimited discretion in their business decisions (provided they maintain the confidence of the board of directors). Presidents are afforded no such luxury, and steering government bureaucracy can be harder than turning a cruise boat -- or a luxury hotel and golf resort.

"It's an organization that's much larger and in general and much less responsive to the guy at the top than a private corporation," said Healy.

And if Trump hopes to have any chance of negotiating successfully, with other U.S. entities and abroad, he will need to tone things down. The question is whether he would.

"The reality of the power of the presidency is that it is essentially, primarily a bully pulpit by which an institutionally weak president can cajole people and build coalitions essentially by reaching out to other people. The most successful presidents are the ones that have done that -- FDR, Lyndon Johnson and Ronald Reagan," said Fukuyama. "The last person that would be able to do that, it seems to me, is a highly polarizing, uncivil, arrogant character like Trump, who's basically going to alienate most of the people that he's going to need to work with."

That list includes women, Mexicans, African Americans and Muslims.

So far, Trump has given no indication that anything will change him.

"Donald Trump on the campaign trail is the same person to me as Donald Trump the business person," Pinkett said. "The difference is not Donald, the difference is the context where we find Donald."

"He's intense, he always was intense. He has been like that for the last 30 years. Now maybe the media is exposing that a little more," said Gustavo Lumer, who worked with the Trump Organization in the 1990s and now runs Lumer Real Estate in South Florida.

But Dowd, who described Trump as "incredibly quick-witted" and often the smartest person in the room, warned that the GOP frontrunner "says everything for a reason." And if there is one thing a president needs, it's intelligence.

"He knows exactly what he's doing, and it's working," Dowd said, adding that as long as Trump's poll numbers increase, "he's not going to change."

Which is why in the Oval Office, he may be doomed.

"If we elect a guy like him, he's going to try to do a few things, and he's going to fail, and he's going to be very frustrated, and that'll be that, a very short presidency," Fukuyama said.