

Trump
Reasons for His Success Through the Republican Primaries to
Become the Republican Candidate for President of the United States
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Why Was Such an Unqualified Political Maverick So Successful - So Far?

- 1) The Republican Party set up a structure for its primaries and the selection process to determine the party's nominee for President where the party establishment itself retained little influence. This setup empowered the party base and removed the establishment [the Party] from exercising control.
- 2) In the first 12 primaries, Trump won by gleaning only 20-30% of the vote in an otherwise crowded field of candidates. So, while Trump got more votes than other candidates, he was supported by only a minority of the voters.
- 3) Only 17% of registered Republicans bothered to vote in these early primaries. This situation meant that Trump's minority success was really a minority of a minority of Republicans. But the impression of success was established.
- 4) Trump's minority included the Tea Party Republicans whose numbers were bolstered by outside independent and unaffiliated voters who were allowed to vote in most of these open Republican primaries. The result was that non-Republicans played a significant role in giving Trump an early lead. And after securing this "lead," Trump was successful in expanding this "outsider" contingent of voters as the primaries proceeded. Because of the inclusion of significant numbers of non-Republican voters, Trump's early "success" was actually based on an even slimmer minority of Republicans. These facts were not exposed and the impression of success prevailed.
- 5) Trump's candidacy was not taken seriously by politicians, commentators, or competing candidates for months into the primaries, and all thought he would implode and "go away." As a result, neither the other candidates nor the RNC did anything substantial to counter what became the Trump "movement."
- 6) Because Trump's competition did not take his candidacy seriously, they failed to highlight Trump's many fundamental weaknesses. As a result, Trump essentially got a pass on his vulnerabilities until the horse was out of the barn.

7) No one [media, commentators, candidates] exposed the Trump fanciful image - the illusion of strength and competence and caring for the “little guy” that Trump projected.

8) Trump got away with just claiming “I am your voice,” “I am smart,” “I have the words,” “Believe Me,” “I will get it done – fast.”

9) Trump's non-standard, aggressive political behavior and his controversial pronouncements throughout the primaries [and beyond] called attention to him from the media. The media is inherently drawn to the sensational [entertainment value], and media savvy Trump exploited the stage the media gave him. As a successful reality show celebrity, Trump offered a “show,” and Trump is aware that coverage, whether good or bad, amounts to exposure, and that exposure gives him an advantage over candidates who seem to be less “interesting,” though they may be much more substantive. With the assistance of this media attention, Trump was able to separate himself and move to the front in a field of 17 initial candidates.

10) The moderate candidates, whose behavior was more restrained and “appropriate” lost the attention of the media and thereby of the public and faded into the background. Ted Cruz was the only exception; his controversial status and fundamentalist base made him extreme enough to garner some media attention and subsequent primary success. But Cruz was viewed so negatively by the Party that the Party establishment could not coalesce around him as an alternative to Trump toward the end of the primary process.

11) Trump uses social media [esp. tweets and call-ins to talk shows] effectively to keep himself daily in the spotlight and to attack all who contend against him. Using this strategy, Trump manages to attack and react in the moment without being exposed to examination. And he keeps himself in the spotlight.

12) Trump claims to be a successful doer in a sea of talkers and policy wonks, and the discontented and down trodden, working class conservatives were drawn to someone who claimed to be a doer – “hands on,” like them.

13) Trump took on the political elite, the establishment, the educated, the intellectuals, and he scoffed at them and prevailed. This process and its result was attractive for those who are not intellectually inclined and who feel themselves to be overlooked or misrepresented by the political elites.

14) Trump is an outsider in an electorate that is fed up with the failure of the establishment [politicians and their entourage at all levels] to get anything done – gridlock, and especially anything done to help the middle class. Trump is attractive to the fringe that just want to scapegoat any political insider. So, establishment candidates were not favored by the extremists who dominated the voting. Trump benefited from being a flamboyant, total outsider, and many voters regarded his complete lack of political qualifications as a plus.

15) The frustrated, angry American working class has seen its expectations of participating in the American Dream wane or disappear in the last 45 years as a result of the negative effects of the world economy on their standard of living. Trump grabbed a hold of this anger and became a vehicle for that anger to be vented [against outsourcing, trade deals, job loss, wage stagnation, immigrants, terrorists, Muslims].

16) Trump is a showoff bully who crudely attacks everything that challenges him – individuals and ideas. When he gets away with his bullying tactics, some conservative voters regard this as proof of Trump's strength.

17) Trump's unqualified support for a law and order response to domestic protest and violence, his strong support for building up the military, and his pledge to defeat ISIS “fast” supported the notion for many conservative voters that Trump will be a strong leader – especially important among Republicans.

18) Trump caricatured his opponents with negative epithets that were extreme [“Lying Ted,” “Little Marco”], and he used these epithets so frequently that they stuck and penetrated the “mind” of much of the conservative base. In social science, it is recognized that with repetition opinion tends to be converted to accepted fact. Trump's competition suffered from his use of this tactic.

19) Trump's positions on the issues had often changed historically and continued to change during the campaign process. So, without recognizable targets, it was difficult for his opponents to attack him on policy, programs or implementation strategy. And Trump's opponents failed to attack him in ways that stuck for his total lack of consistency in his positions.

20) Trump got a pass on not having provided what is supposed to be the most important component in a political candidacy – a substantive platform. Instead, Trump offered simple and often extreme positions on issues and avoided providing anything like a policy program [platform] much less any indication of

how he would accomplish his stated goals. As a result, it was difficult to attack Trump on his political “substance.” Politically, Trump exemplifies the Texas attribution – a person who is “All Hat and No Cattle;” but no concerted criticism of Trump along this line that stuck ever emerged.

21) Even though Trump's claims were factual less than 20% of the time [Factcheck.com], nothing substantial was made of his hyperbole, and he never admitted he was wrong or apologized. He just bulldozed his way forward ignoring or dismissing as insignificant the mistakes that were called to his attention.

22) In the primary “debates,” Trump got away with not answering many of the questions that he was asked. And Trump was allowed to interrupt and “shout down” his competition. Moderators, journalists, and other candidates failed to insist on effective follow up questioning or proper debate behavior.

23) Having established himself prior to the primaries as a recognized “brand,” Trump exploited his brand to gather “groupies.” In effect, Trump was successful in creating a populist, political personality cult with enthusiastic supporters.

These are 23 reasons for Trump’s success as a candidate for President – so far. There are no doubt more! And if the role of the media and the debate conditions of the primaries persist through the general election, and if Trump is allowed to continue to behave as he has to date and to not commit to and justify a substantive platform, he may have a real chance of becoming the next President of the United States. This is especially the case 1) because Hillary Clinton is viewed by many general election voters very negatively as an establishment politician, 2) because she has been painted as untrustworthy, 3) because she lacks charisma, 4) because she has committed to a very progressive platform that may not attract enough independent voters, and 4) because she is potentially very vulnerable to the ongoing attacks from Wiki Leaks in the form of the hacked emails that the organization possesses and is releasing continuously into the campaign. And any significant ISIS attack [especially in the U.S.] near the time of the general election could easily justify the fear of terrorists that Trump is trying to promote in the electorate and significantly advance support for Trump and his proposed unilateral militaristic stance for the nation.

These are challenging and dangerous times, and it is not at all certain that if put under more pressure Americans are up to the task of selecting a leader that can address the needs of the nation and of the international community, and not treat what is a complex political reality as if it is a simple “Reality Show.”