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Trump's business skills not translating to political world

By Joe Garofoli | June 19, 2016 | Updated: June 20, 2016 11:57am



Photo: ERIC THAYER, NYT

Trump-on-a-tank artwork in the crowd as the presumptive Republican nominee spoke at Gilley's Club in Dallas, June 16, 2016. Donald Trump's campaign schedule is being driven by his fund-raising needs, prompting him to appear in heavily Republican states like Georgia and Texas and diverting his attention from battleground states where Hillary Clinton is spending her time. (Eric Thayer/The New York Times)

Ever since he **glided down an escalator** into the marbled Trump Tower lobby to announce his presidential campaign just over a year ago, Donald Trump has touted his art-of-the-deal business acumen as why he'd be a great president.

Now the presumptive GOP nominee is getting a preview of how tough it would be to translate his singular type of business experience into the political realm. If he continues to flail, he risks sinking even lower in the polls, where **70 percent of voters now view** him unfavorably.

His deal-making chops will be tested in the coming days when he tries to persuade one of the nation's most powerful interests — the National Rifle Association — to reverse one of its key positions.



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Going it alone might work in a milieu where Trump's name is plastered in gold across hotels and golf courses around the world. In politics — where he can't fire Congress or the Supreme Court or personally negotiate every deal — not so much.



“The psychology of having your name branded like that makes you feel more powerful, less cognizant of consequence of your actions,” said **Jo-Ellen Pozner**, a professor of management and organization at the Walter A. Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley.



Photo: DAMON WINTER, NYT

Donald Trump attends a rally Tuesday in Greensboro, N.C. The presumptive Republican presidential nominee says he can go it alone — but he can't fire Congress or the Supreme Court.



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Former Apple CEO “Steve Jobs got fired. (Oracle co-founder) Larry Ellison ran a public traded company. (Former General Electric CEO) Jack Welch had to work his way up, and he had several people below him who could do his job,” said **Jeffrey Pfeffer**, a professor of organizational behavior at the Stanford Graduate School of Business and author of **“Leadership BS: Fixing Workplaces and Careers One Truth at a Time.”**

“Trump,” Pfeffer said, “has had no real constraints.”

Still, this presidential campaign is offering Trump the opportunity to flash his business skill set. Last week, in the wake of the Orlando massacre, Trump met with Chris Cox, a former Orange County congressman who is now executive director of the NRA Institute for Legislative Action, the organization’s political and lobbying arm.

Trump hopes to persuade the organization, which has endorsed him, to back “no fly, no buy” legislation proposed by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., that would ban people on federal terrorist watch lists from buying firearms. Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks told The Chronicle that more meetings are being scheduled with the NRA.

If the author of the best-selling “Art of the Deal” succeeds in persuading the NRA to abandon one of its core tenets, the Republican Congress will probably do the same.



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Photo: Rodger Mallison, TNS

Donald Trump shakes hands with supporters after he speaks at a rally at Gilley's Dallas on Thursday, June 16, 2016. (Rodger Mallison/Fort Worth Star-Telegram/TNS)

But that will be tough, as the NRA has a political choke hold on GOP legislators. In December, when Feinstein proposed a similar measure, the senators who voted against the measure **received 30 times more money from the gun rights sector** than those who opposed it, according to MapLight, a nonpartisan organization that analyzes the role of money in politics.

In 2016, the NRA's political action committee has contributed \$436,150 to candidates running for federal offices, nearly all of them Republicans, **according to MapLight.**

The NRA doesn't appear inclined to melt under Trump's deal-making spell. After Trump said that he would be meeting with the organization, NRA officials **responded via Twitter:** "Happy to meet @realDonaldTrump. Our position is no guns for terrorists — period. Due process & right to self-defense for law-abiding Americans."

"He will be asking the NRA to change positions to suit him, and that's not going to happen," said **Garen Wintemute**, a professor of epidemiology at UC Davis and one of the nation's leading gun violence scholars as director of the Violence Prevention Research Program.



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Meanwhile, Trump is trying to silence opposition within his own party — much of it coming after his widely panned post-Orlando speech that even fellow Republicans riddled as “incoherent” and filled with errors and exaggerations. He also suggested expanding his proposed ban on all Muslims entering the U.S. to forbidding immigration from areas of the world “where there is a proven history of terrorism against the United States” or its allies, he said.

Afterward, House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., said Republicans should follow their conscience when it comes to supporting Trump.

In the past few days, top Republicans like Rep. Fred Upton, the senior GOP congressman in the swing state of Michigan, piled on. Upton said he wouldn't endorse Trump because the campaign has “gone off track.” GOP Govs. Larry Hogan of Maryland and Rick Snyder of Michigan are also not backing him. Texas Sen. John Cornyn, the No. 2-ranking Republican in the Senate, said he wouldn't respond to questions about Trump until November.

At a rally in Atlanta, Trump swung back at his fellow Republicans. “Our leaders have to get a lot tougher,” he said. “And be quiet. Just please be quiet. Don't talk. Please be quiet.”

If they won't back him, Trump said, “Let me just do it by myself. I'll do very well. I'm going to do very well. OK? I'm going to do very well. A lot of people thought I should do that anyway, but I'll just do it very nicely by myself.”

Not everyone is convinced.

“In business, going it alone is risky, but Trump has had the appetite to take on risks for decades,” Pozner said, noting that if he couldn't borrow money from one source, he'd go to another.

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have the choice of going to multiple judiciary branches.”



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If Trump doesn't change, Pfeffer said, "he's going to have a lot of trouble."

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