

# Donald Trump's Business Isn't Only His Business; It's Ours Too

As we stand on the verge of the "SEC primary" on March 1st, I have yet to see in-depth reporting on the reality TV star and presumed successful businessman who could be our next President. I'm not saying there is none; I'm only saying there's not much of it – especially on the broadcast networks.

It strikes me that part of the media's job is to play a role in vetting the candidates. But the networks seem satisfied with watching the horse race and abdicating their role as journalists who hold the powerful accountable.

I have seen virtually no detailed reviews of Trump's business dealings or investigative reporting on the failures that litter his "winning" past – unless it's in the old fashioned print media. This, despite his business experience being the primary – really, the only – qualification Trump points to as justification for trusting the largest economy in the world to him.

Instead, the media report the latest shocking comments from him or about him – and then the show's host tosses the subject around to a panel of so-called experts before going back to the polls to figure out who's hot and who's not.

Trump has had more than a few business failures and he dismisses bankruptcy as simply a tool he's used to work the system – as if there are no consequences to the parties on the other side of that maneuver. Except there are. There's an old saying in business: "If you owe the bank a million dollars and can't pay it, you can't sleep at night. If you owe the bank fifty million dollars and can't pay it, the bankers can't sleep at night." It's possible that bankers have lost a lot of

sleep over Trump loans.

I know from experience that there aren't many reporters in local newsrooms across the country who are savvy when it comes to business. There is also a blatant bias against big business in many newsrooms. And there's a news industry joke that, "There better not be any math in the next story." That's why the public counts on the networks, where there are some fine business-savvy journalists who can discover whatever information exists about Trump, to verify and vet his claims to supposedly awe inspiring business success. It's time to put the Racing Form aside and present some useful information to inform the voter – and not depend upon Trump's opponents to do it. They have a personal interest. Journalists, at least theoretically, don't.

Among the things we do know is that Trump's dad gave him a "modest loan" to start a real estate business. How modest? A million dollars! The equivalent amount today would total almost \$7 million. I've got news for you: That's not a modest loan. That's a gift that says, "This is a rich kid." And rich kids don't get to claim Horatio Alger type success the way Trump likes to tell it.

And he reportedly inherited about \$200 million in net worth when his dad passed away in 1999. To paraphrase Ann Richards whose target was George Bush the Elder: Coming from a family like that is like being born on third base and going through life thinking you hit a triple.

In this case, Trump tells everyone he hit a *home run*.

So I would suggest that it's time for television news divisions to dig into Trump's business background the way they would a new exit poll on how "people under 30 without jobs living at home with dogs" voted in the last primary. Oh, and one more thing. When reporters confront Trump with the information – have your facts and have a backbone. You don't

have to be rude, but you also don't have to be his friend.

You're supposed to be the public's friend.

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