

# For Obama, Being Lucky May Be More Important Than Being Good

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Donald Trump's increasingly bizarre statements and outlandish behavior as he explores a presidential bid make him seem, to many voters, more like the business world's answer to Charlie Sheen rather than as a potential president or leader of any kind. In some respects, the likelihood of a Trump presidency was never going to be very strong, as this might not be the best time for a presidential aspirant whose tagline for years has been "you're fired." Nonetheless, Trump's public behavior and statements have grown more outlandish as he has given more thought to actually running. He has become perhaps the most recognizable name associated with the birther movement, released a copy of his own birth certificate which turns out not to have been the official document and boasted about being the richest candidate in the race.

Unlike Sheen, however, Trump appears to be able to function in some areas reasonably well. For example, Trump's recent agreement to [license his name to a development project in Georgia](#) demonstrates that Trump is still capable of being a good businessman who understands how to make money, making his most recent political incarnation seem even more strange.

Trump has obviously been an inveterate attention seeker for years, which partially explains his behavior. Over the years he's written books, starred in a reality television show, made noises about running for president and done many other things to keep his name in the public eye, thus helping develop his brand, which has become almost synonymous with crass consumerism and offensive luxury. Trump has also been the subject of ridicule before, most notably for his frequent bouts of bankruptcy, but has periodically drawn attention to himself with other kinds of foolishness as well. More than 20 years ago when Trump was just beginning his long celebrity, he famously boasted about shaking hands with Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, only to later learn it had only been a [Gorbachev lookalike](#).

It is difficult to determine Trump's motives for his latest foray into presidential politics, which is so different from [2000, when he also briefly explored a presidential bid](#). In 2000 Trump sought to position himself as a sensible businessman willing to tell hard truths to both parties. He was concerned about the debt in a serious way, believed in substantial health care reform and generally was aware of both potential economic threats facing the country and wary of the extreme partisanship which, while quaint by today's standards, characterized fin de siècle Washington. In 2000, as we know, Trump ultimately, and wisely, decided not to run and is almost certain to do the same thing in 2012 if he is still capable of making rational political decisions.

As in 2000, one major reason why candidates seek the presidency, because they could get elected, simply does not apply to Trump in 2012. In 2000 this was because Trump had explored running as a third party candidate, but in 2012 it is because Trump has positioned himself on the political

fringe where he is unlikely to garner significant support in a general election. Accordingly, if Trump were thinking like a serious politician, or businessman, it would be clear that while he may stay in the race a bit longer and seems to be enjoying the controversy he is generating and the attention he is getting, the combination of the drudgery of a real campaign, the low chances of winning and the personal cost to Trump -- which may not be enough to damage him financially, but will likely grow very frustrating -- will push Trump out of the race before it goes on too long.

Candidates who cannot win often run anyway for different reasons. Some do it to raise their profiles for future runs, to get more attention from the media, because there is a particular issue in which they believe strongly, or so that they can strengthen their bargaining position and get appointed to something if their party wins the election. None of these conditions are relevant to Trump who has very little to gain by running and losing, and very little chance of winning. He is already sufficiently famous to receive all the attention he could want in the media and probably would not take an appointed position in government even if offered one.

A thoughtful, calculating Trump concerned about his image and unwilling to throw away money on hopeless causes would have either positioned himself similarly to the way he did in 2000 or would have abandoned this campaign already, but Trump has done neither. This suggests that Trump may be no longer be able to exercise sound judgment and may in fact run for president, while still having little chance of winning. If that happens, the Republicans will have a big problem on their hands as the candidate who, even in this field, [stands out for his weakness as a general election candidate](#), would be the only candidate with enough money to stay in until the end. If it is true that it is better to be lucky than good, than President Obama may find himself in good shape in November of 2012.