

## Lessons from the Apprentice President

---

The Apprentice: a TV show lauded for its entertainment value and its audience-pulling nature. Donald Trump's early acts as President show that The Apprentice's leadership style is doomed to fail.

Repealing Obamacare was Donald Trump's flagship election pledge, and an attempt to do so was one of the first legislative acts of his Presidency. Yet, despite his successful election to President, he has failed to win the support he needed in Congress to pass the bill. This has large implications for Trump's America and his reputation as a leader abroad.

Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of Obamacare, and the intricacies of US politics, there are key lessons in leadership that business leaders can take from this failure to win a key debate.

- **Leaders' role is to set direction, but also to create followers.**

Taking people with you is a key success criterion for leadership. In this instance, Trump failed to turn Republican congressmen, let alone Democrats, into followers of his strategy. In business, failing to create followers has self-evident consequences: huge value and much time is lost in misunderstandings, infighting and disruptive behaviour among executives until an agreed way forward is found. Most often including a change of leader.

- **Good ideas are one thing, but without planning carefully to implement them well, they wither to nothing.**

In Trump's case, fundamentally not enough thought went into *how* to get the bill approved. Logic alone or the force of an argument is never enough.

- **"What's in it for me?" is an important driver for most people asked to accept change.**

Selling new ideas, not telling people what to do, is likely to have a much greater chance of success. This is particularly the case when those asked to make decisions have to sell the change to their own people, both in business and in politics.

- **The most effective leaders in the commercial world are masters in managed democracy.**

In other words, they're perceived to be good at listening to others' views, and finding ways to influence the debate to achieve the outcome they desire. Uninhibited democracy in politics is a much more subtle affair.

- **Bully boy tactics don't work, no matter how senior or influential the bully.**

It's a truism that organisations often hire for skills and experience, but fire for attitude and behaviour.

## **Lessons from the Apprentice President**

---

America and the international community wait to see how President Trump will respond to this setback. Whether he will alter his leadership approach, as well as his policy, remains to be seen.

One thing is clear. The Obamacare debacle has reminded us that issuing ultimatums doesn't work.

The "You're fired" approach to leadership is dead. Long live the Apprentice.

**Mike Taylor**

27<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Mike Taylor is Managing Director of Accelerating Experience, an award-winning Business Performance and Leadership Consultancy.

Our network of consultants combine high level business leadership experience with an uncompromising focus on driving tangible value creation. Taking a tailored, mentoring approach to every client relationship, we work with leadership teams large and small to improve organisational performance in a way that lasts. Collectively, we have worked with many leaders in international organisations, major partnerships and private equity backed companies, helping to create extra value in the 100s of £ millions.