

Making Your Miles Count: A lesson on Trump

Trying to get a balanced opinion of President Trump in a world of extreme media bias and nearly infinite internet partiality is like wading through a septic tank looking for an edible apple. Personally I shy away from the mainstream media as a viable source of facts, my opinion of internet sites that shout strong pro and strong anti are also suspect.

During my Master degree I was taught to go straight to the source (original documents) rather than second hand or opinionated material. In making a realistic evaluation, the closer we get to original documents the better. I have read a couple of Mr. Trumps books (The Art of the Deal and The Art of Survival) and an unauthorized publication (The Making of Donald Trump, David Cay Johnston). I think it provided opposite extremes and a natural balance.

I have read nearly a hundred biographies of business people and politicians. Mr. Trump's business stories are very readable. Though I cannot confirm some of the boasts he claimed I do admire his ability to focus of getting things done (such as the Wollman Rink in Central Park NY). In the Art of Survival Mr. Trump described the 2000/2001 recession as a "Depression", and confessed a time when he was worth NEGATIVE 200 million. As he walked along a sidewalk with an acquaintance he pointed at a homeless person and said "...this guy is worth \$200 million more than I am..." (paraphrased). Then, he rebuilt his empire. That takes courage and tenacity. I know many business people who, after failure, rebuilt. To the person they are better, stronger and of higher quality.

Mr. Trump (during the building of Trump tower) claimed to have saved \$10,000 by spotting an add error in an invoice before signing... What billionaire signs checks in a project of that size? I know CEO's of much smaller million dollar companies that do not look at invoices. This reflects a hands-on detail orientation. I am convinced his workaholic detailed mindset has not, and will not change.

However, the most relevant examples I found that reflected the mindset of this new President was actually in David Johnston's book (not recommended reading). The bias is unmistakable but he took "evidence" and combined personal opinion and wild interpretation. Let me share a few examples that every independent operator should relate to. He openly argued against using depreciation on assets as a means to "avoid" taxes. Stating that the tax savings is an "...interest-free loan from the government..." is such a leap of nonsense it clearly shows the ignorance of the author to business tax law. Something that the author thought a strong point against Mr. Trump actually was clarity against his bias.

If a reader can filter out the bias there are other stories (depicted as negative against Trump) that are fascinating as a business person. Here are a few.

Donald Trump owns 14 golf courses. On one (in Bedminster Township) he reduced his property taxes from \$80,000 to \$1,100 by penning in a small group of goats and having it classified as farmland rather than commercial.

Owning buildings in Chicago he fought (and won) to have his property taxes reduced 48-49%. In order to do this Donald Trump must argue that the buildings he owned are/were valued at

much less than what he claimed publically they were valued. I know several property owners who do this regularly. Yes, they may well be cheap... but they have total right to do so.

In my opinion Donald Trump is one of the most aggressive legal tax reducers I have read about. I have met many people who hate taxes, some even willing to lie to avoid paying. Mr. Trump was not one of them. I did not find any evidence in a book (designed to malign his character) that he was willing to go that far. However, his aggressiveness in my opinion is legendary, still legal, but legendary. He very much appears to loath... no HATE both taxes and government while adoring to save money.

The most common line I get in tax consulting reflects a serious contempt for government spending habits. What Canadian wouldn't adore his antigovernment frugality? This, coupled with his workaholic personality will be nearly impossible to keep up with.

Being that the United States is in a cultural civil war it's important to remember that the first casualty in war will always be the truth. One thing everyone agrees on is that Donald Trump is not a typical politician. All I can say is put on a helmet, maybe even wear a cup.

About the Author:

Robert D. Scheper is a leading Accountant and Consultant exclusively serving the Lease/Owner operator industry in Canada. His first book in the Making Your Miles Count series "taxes, taxes, taxes" was released in 2007. His second book "Choosing a Trucking company" is the most in-depth analysis of the independent operator industry today. He has a Master degree (MBA) in financial management and has been serving the industry since he and his wife came off the road in 1993. His dedication, commitment and strong opinions can be read and heard in many articles and seminars. You can find him at www.makingyourmilescount.com or 1-877-987-9787.