

# Chasing Squirrels: Tweet Storms & 'Weapons of Mass Distraction'



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President Donald Trump has mastered the art of daily tweet storms where he dictates policy and distracts the public and the press. The result: the people and the press end up focused on issues that change daily, kind of like a dog chasing a squirrel. On any given day, the president can make a comment that drives the daily discussion in a direction that only creates confusion, conflict and counters any commonsense communications or brand strategy. During President George W. Bush's Administration, many pundits called these kinds of activities "[weapons of mass distraction.](#)"

What we know about influential communicators and successful brands is that they are authentic and consistent. Effective leaders, like brands, deliver on their brand promise or risk losing the trust of the people – and its customers. Author [William Aruda](#) writes, "It is the consistent, desired experience that builds trust and trust is the foundation for loyalty and promotion." If the brand promise of this administration is confusion and distraction, then perhaps President Trump is fulfilling his promise to the American people and the world. If that is the case, then marketing and communications experts better get busy. They will have to

rewrite the textbooks to reflect his flawed and disheartening strategy.

Confusion and distraction will not lead to “loyalty and promotion,” but only generate unrealistic expectations – on a daily basis – eventually eroding the credibility of the brand.

For the public and for customers, the inconsistency only leads to distrust in the leader and the brand. We see this playing out in [recent surveys](#) in the U.S. and around the world as people grow increasingly more wary of what to expect from the United States. Erosion of the brand will have long range effects because no quality brand is built over night. It is earned after years of consistent, authentic and well thought out methods to reinforce the brand at every step along the way.

Founder and communication expert [Stacey Hanke](#) writes, “An influential communicator is always consistent. Their delivery (body language) consistently aligns with their message. For example, an executive who stops you in the office hallway should have the same experience with you at that moment as they do when observing you deliver a high-stakes presentation. If not, your authenticity, reputation and influence are at risk.”

Alex Josephson, head of global strategy for Twitter, summed it up nicely in a recent [CommPRO.biz](#) webinar, “Turning Leaders into Influencers.” He says authenticity along with engagement and content are the three core tenets of how leaders can become influential. Let’s take this a bit further. Without a clear strategy of any leader or brand involving these three components the result is a haphazard, zigzagging brand message that leaves people chasing squirrels. The influence gained is fleeting because those folks chasing the squirrel – a different one every day – are exhausted, frustrated and defeated. Aruda offers more relevant insight, “Too often, leaders hope that branding can cover up or distract from a flawed system – that they can convince the world of

something that's not true if they throw enough money at it."

Hmmm. No additional context required.

The only comforting notion is that the United States, like any strong brand (IBM, McDonald's, Ford), has stood the test of any attacks on its brand due to the conscientiousness early on to establish, then reinforce, its credibility year after year with consistent, authentic, forward-looking messaging. Let's hope this president and his administration are willing to listen and observe the fatigue the American people, the world and the media are all experiencing. In the end, chasing these elusive squirrels is a vapid, useless method of communication, brand-building and governing.

***About the Author:** Neil Foote is a veteran journalist and media executive. He draws from his experience at the Miami Herald, Washington Post, Belo Corporation and Tom Joyner's Reach Media. He also teaches digital and social media for journalists, media management and business journalism at the University of North Texas' Frank W. & Sue Mayborn School of Journalism and runs Foote Communications, a media consulting firm. The native of Brooklyn, NY also is president of the board for the National Black Public Relations Society and founder of PoliticsInColor.com*