

Trump's Big Test

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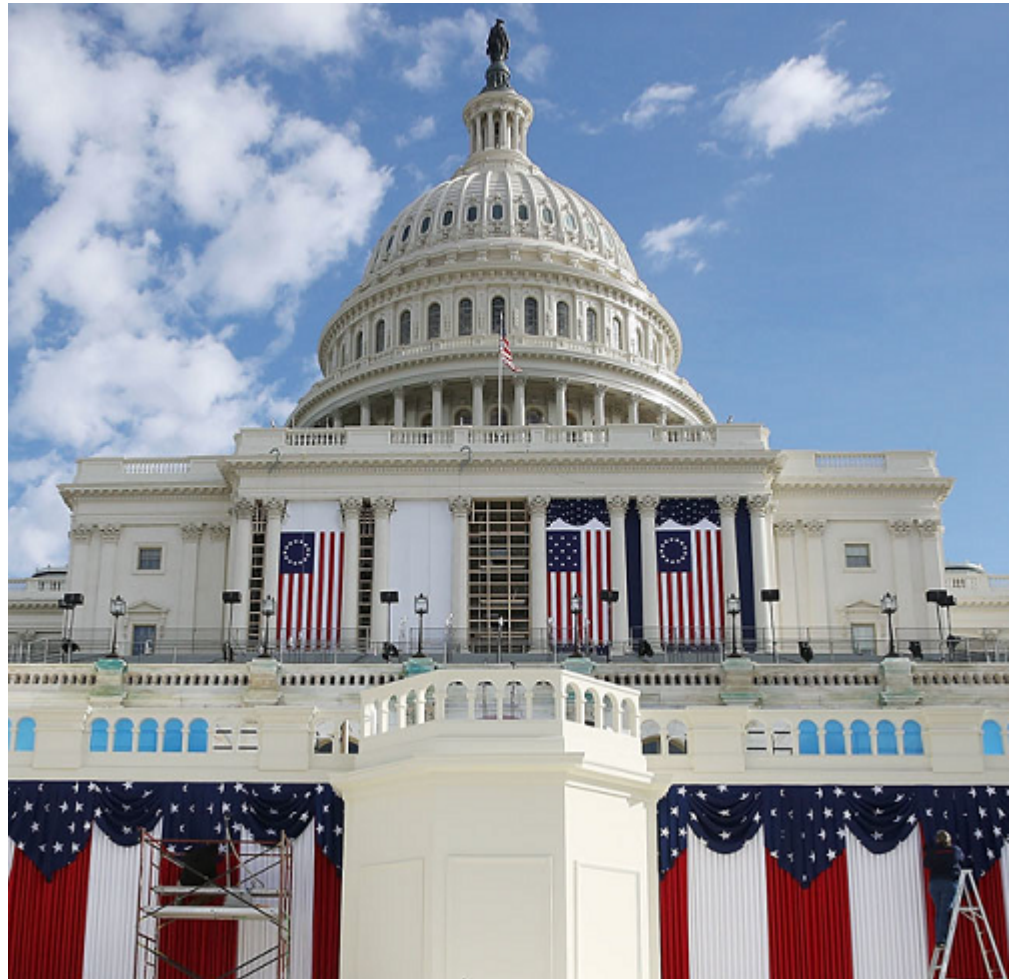
It's one thing to win an election; it's quite another to govern successfully. Just ask Jimmy Carter. Donald Trump's inaugural address will play an important role in the early success or failure of his presidency.

This will likely be the most closely watched inaugural speech in history. It will receive as much interest and scrutiny in Beijing and Berlin as it does in New York and New Mexico.

What tone will he strike? What policies will he lay out? Which of his many conflicting positions will find their way into this critical address? Will he stay on script or wander off to settle some personal score?

Presidents are not kings. As President Obama can readily attest, the leader's success rate is greatly affected by the trust and cooperation of members of Congress, foreign leaders, and the general public. At this point, all have varying levels of apprehension about the new president and what he plans to do. He has tons of reassuring to do.

His most important task will be to convince the general public that he is capable of handling the office and that he will be a leader for all Americans.



That's a huge job given the ugliness of his campaign and his snarky and childish

tweets that have followed. He's a minority president in terms of the popular vote, one who is facing big public demonstrations prompted by anger at the Russian interference in the election, the unbalanced workings of the Electoral College, his refusal to come forward with his tax returns, and his statements about women and minorities.

So, he first needs to reach out to the American public, especially minority communities, assuring them that there will be no mass deportations, no witch hunts, and no bias against any particular group or religion. He must assure all Americans that he will study issues carefully, seek expert advice, and take firm action only after careful consideration of the consequences.

This is a dicey assignment. He has to satisfy his base, which includes a radical hard core that wants him to take drastic actions immediately. But he will be challenged to do it

without frightening everybody else and alienating people in Congress and elsewhere whose support he will need.

Another key audience is foreign leaders. Trump needs to send the message that, while he plans to renegotiate certain agreements and will be a tough negotiator, he will not upset the world order in terms of economics or defense. There is a lot of work to be done here.

He'll need to extend an olive branch to the mainstream news media. Even though attacks on the media have resulted in a low level of public trust in the fourth estate, they will remain a powerful force, one that can have an important influence on the success of his programs, especially in Congress.

The business community is another group he'll need to reach. While many are delighted that he plans to reduce regulations and environmental rules, they are also wary of his bullying tactics that could force them to make un-economic decisions. Particularly concerned are those in the automotive, retail, and pharmaceutical industries.

Most of all, Trump needs to build a general level of trust. Without it, it's going to be a tough four years for the White House, the country, and the world. What he says in the inaugural address is an opportunity to get his tenure off on the right foot. But, he has to be very careful that what he says doesn't make a bad situation worse. A nervous nation and world will be watching.

About the Author: Often referred to as "The Dean of Media Trainers," Virgil is considered one of the world's foremost communication experts. In a 30-year career that has covered 26 countries on five continents, he has provided coaching and counsel to heads of some of the world's largest corporations and government leaders. Virgil is a prolific writer and speaker. His book, World Class Communication: how great CEOs

win with the public, shareholders, employees, and the media, written with his son Ken, was named one of the 25 best business books of 2012. His column, In the C-Suite, appears in every quarterly issue of the Public Relations Strategist and is read by leaders of major public relations agencies and global heads of public relations of large companies. He has written or been featured in articles that have appeared in The New York Times, The International Herald Tribune, Reuters, Investors Business Daily, and numerous professional publications. Two of his speeches have been reprinted in the prestigious Vital Speeches of the Day. Prior to founding Virgil Scudder & Associates in 1990, Virgil headed the media training units of two of the world's largest public relations firms, Hill & Knowlton and Carl Byoir & Associates. Earlier, he was an award-winning news broadcaster at major radio and television networks and stations in New York City. He was a first-night Broadway drama critic for six years during that period, broadcasting reviews on NBC's all-news radio network and all-news WINS radio.