

What if You Were Hope Hicks?



By Wendy Alpine, President, [Alpine Communications](#)

It's no doubt that being Donald Trump's PR person would be a nail-biting experience. From his politically incorrect, off-the-cuff remarks to his blacklisting certain media because he doesn't like what they write or say about him, representing Trump would be a tense job.

In a recent [article](#) in *GQ*, writer Olivia Nuzzi suggests that his PR representative, Hope Hicks, is little more than a traffic cop, whose main job is protecting Trump from the media. "Hicks's job...involves keeping the media at bay and operating as Trump's chief gatekeeper," she writes, adding: "Usually, she alone decides who gets in and who's kept out. But sometimes it's Trump who plays bouncer for his own private party."

The article notes that Hicks "never appears on TV and rarely talks to reporters," not your typical press officer. She didn't want to be interviewed directly for the story about her, preferring to have Donald Trump do the talking.

What would you do if you were Hope Hicks? It's clear that Trump has a new campaign spokesperson, Republican pollster Kellyanne Conway, who, by the way she responds to reporters' questions, appears to be a seasoned spokesperson. But here are some of my thoughts:

Get him to appeal to women and minority voters.

It's clear that Trump has a problem with women voters, from his stance on certain issues to remarks he's made about women and other minorities. Trump needs to bridge the gender gap with town halls or media interviews showing what he has done in the past to promote women and how his policies would benefit them. He also needs to do this with African-Americans and Hispanics, and apparently, according to recent news reports, he's already started that.

Embrace media that he's excluded.



Hope Hicks, PR representative for Donald Trump (Image Source: Twitter)

It's not going to help Trump to pick favorites and restrict access. He will increasingly come under scrutiny and the perception is that he will be the same way if he is president. I'm sure Trump's people already do this, but a rule of thumb in crisis PR or any media interviews for that matter is to try to get as much information in advance about the tone of the interview and ask for questions in writing, if possible. I've done this for many media interviews and reporters will agree if you are respectful and have established a good relationship with them.

Put more reasonable people on TV that support him.

This looks like it is already happening, as I saw a great interview with his new campaign manager, Kellyanne Conway. She seems reasonable and rational and is perhaps the best Trump surrogate I have seen so far.

In the interview, she answered CNN's Alisyn Camerota's questions directly and with poise instead of getting rattled and emotional. She was able to redirect difficult questions using bridge phrases like "here's what I want to say..." and stayed on message throughout the entire interview. For instance, when Camerota asked her about campaign CEO Steve Bannon and recent controversial Breitbart headlines, she deflected the negative and instead praised him, saying he's "a highly effective, brilliant tactician." She continued to do this throughout the entire interview, directing her comments about the campaign's direction going forward. The interview was a classic case in how to handle tough questions posed by the media.

Most PR people would have a hard time representing someone like Donald Trump because he is used to doing things his way and it is doubtful that he would listen to advice. While most CEOs seek to avoid controversy, Trump seems to relish in it. He's turned a lot of crisis management on its head and has gotten away with it because he loves the limelight and it makes for good copy.

Now we keep hearing the word "reboot," and the media are waiting to see whether things will change. Will this be a kinder, gentler Trump? No one knows, but one thing is true: he will continue to generate headlines and dominate the news cycle, as he has been doing since he started his run for the presidency.

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