

My advice, Mr. President? Just keep tweeting

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Dear Mr. President,

Ah, the dawning of the Trump era! It's been a long time coming, but like you, I rejoice in the possibilities. Think of the merchandise tie-ins! Consider the reality-TV potential! But let's not get ahead of ourselves. I caution you that to achieve maximum brand impact, we must focus first on this nasty matter of actually, you know, running the United States.

Fortunately, I've come up with a complete action plan for your first year in office.

It goes like this: Tweet.

That's right. Tweet.

Don't, for the love of all that is holy, try to actually do anything. You don't have to.

The make-America-great thing worked splendidly on the campaign trail, but we both know that your predecessor is handing over a country that is already pretty darn good and getting even better.

Unemployment, at 4.7 per cent, is half what it was just a few years ago and verging on full employment. Wage growth is running at its fastest pace since the financial crisis, according to the Council of Economic Advisers.

Meanwhile, output growth is ripping ahead at 2.8 per cent, as measured by the Atlanta Fed's GDPNow indicator. That feels nearly like olden times, before the housing bubble popped.

Our challenge now isn't to rescue an imploding economy – that was what's-his-name's problem back in 2009 – but to manage perceptions. Hence, the emphasis on vigorous, all-in tweeting.

Is that all, you ask? Not quite. As your chat with Billy Bush demonstrated, you're a man who likes to keep his hands busy. So I'm not expecting you to just snooze when you're away from the keyboard. No, I would suggest you focus on doing what you excelled at as a hotelier – putting your brand on other people's properties.

Doesn't Trumpcare sound a lot better than Obamacare? And doesn't NAFTA sound positively dowdy compared to what we could relabel as TrumpTrade™?

All it takes is a few cosmetic changes and a lot of tweeting to put your personal stamp on a recovery already in progress.

Believe me, the public won't notice the sleight of hand. We live in a partisan world where people see what they want to see. Between 2011 and 2015, when that other guy was running the show, 30 per cent to 50 per cent of Democrats rated the U.S. economy as excellent or good. Barely 15 per cent of Republicans felt similarly.

What makes this truly remarkable is that Republicans generally had higher incomes than Democrats and were more likely to be employed. So despite better personal circumstances, Republicans insisted on emphasizing the negatives so long as a Democratic president was in office.

The reality filter distorts viewpoints in both directions. "Democrats tend to rate the national economy more favourably than Republicans when a Democrat is in the White House and Republicans tend to rate the national economy more favourably than Democrats when a Republican is in the White House," according to Jonathan Rapkin, Patrick Tucker and Steven Smith of Washington University.

The moral here is that you shouldn't try swaying Democrats to see things your way. Just keep tweeting your victories to those who already believe in you and you'll do fine.

Of course, this all rests on what should be our lodestar, our guiding principle – a program of radical inaction.

It was fun touting border walls and trade wars when we were campaigning. But we now have to move those pledges into the subjunctive mood. It's a matter of stepping from "We'll build a wall ... " to "If we were to build a wall ... " Just grammar, really.

No matter what the temptation, we can't let our rhetoric collide with reality. Like matter colliding with anti-matter, the results would be explosive.

It makes no sense, for instance, to embark on a big program of tax cuts and other fiscal stimulus at a time when the economy is already running close to capacity. The Fed would simply hike interest rates to offset the impact of the increased spending.

Neither does it make sense to slap big tariffs on Chinese and Mexican imports. Such a move would increase the cost of living, damage American exports and disrupt supply chains. Four million American jobs would be lost and the United States would slide into recession, according to the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

So let's focus on other initiatives. Things like tweeting. Brand building. Vigorous self-promotion.

Mr. President, nobody does those things better than you. Like billions of other viewers around the world, I can truthfully say you've redefined my notion of reality. I wait, with bated breath, for what the next four years will bring.