

Creative ways to pick a president

Don't look now, but it's time to begin the presidential election process again.

You know, if we all wanted to make a change, we could do better. What if, in electing a president, we forgot about partisan ideology and focused instead on hiring someone committed to leading rather than poll-watching and political posturing? Wouldn't it be nice to have a strong, dynamic and nonpartisan leader at the helm of our gigantic American government — someone with abundant, honest-to-goodness, real-life executive experience? A prominent leader from the military or business world (someone like Gen. David Petraeus or Bill Gates) might know how to get things done, make critical decisions and control costs.

Unfortunately, it is we, the people, who repeatedly turn the presidential election into a partisan image-crafting contest instead of an executive search process. Our alignment under one of two principle ideological banners seriously constrains our selection results. Shouldn't we have a defined set of criteria for a candidate to meet — as we would if we were hiring a CEO or promoting a general? What if every candidate needed to show:

- 10 or more years of executive leadership experience.
- A proven track record of accomplishment in a large, complex organization.
- Demonstrated ability to allocate limited resources to

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Commentary



highest-priority cost centers.

■ Comprehensive knowledge of foreign affairs.

No board of directors in its right mind would hire a CEO without similar qualifications. Shouldn't we expect those kinds of qualifications from our president?

Sure, Barack Obama can read a teleprompter like nobody, Donald Trump knows how to make a buck in real estate and Sarah Palin can field-dress a moose. Those are all admirable qualities that make them interesting people. But shouldn't our presidential choice have a significant amount of demonstrated leadership ability — *before* taking the oath of office?

So, I propose we change the presidential election process. This time around let's try something more in keeping with current American culture. How about instead of 12 months of terrible campaign commercials, we develop a new 12-week reality TV show, similar to "American Idol" or "So You Think You Can Dance?" We could call it "American President" or "So You Think You Can Lead?"

First, we hire a team of hard-core human resource types to whittle the pool down to 12 candidates. You know, ruthlessly screening resumes for target criteria. Then, the

program begins. Each week we confront the candidates with a different simulation scenario and observe how they respond. One week they might have to deal with a nuclear attack by a rogue nation. The next week they might need to cope with a severe shortfall in government tax revenue. Then they might have to respond to an asteroid wiping out half of Ohio. You get the picture.

Each week, a panel of expert judges (perhaps former presidents) would critique candidate performances. Then, viewers would text in their votes. The following night, the candidate with the lowest vote total gets the axe. After 12 weeks we'd have our new president. And we'd know a whole lot more about that person's leadership ability than we usually do when marking our ballots at the polls. Moreover, the process would be entertaining. People might actually get seriously involved!

I guess we'd have to tweak the Constitution to allow this, but I'm sure there are plenty of television producers who would jump at the chance to put the program together.

Or, we can do it like we always have, and end up with two less-than-optimal choices because we just want our party to win, and don't pay much attention to real leadership criteria.

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