No politics here. The truth about Donald Trump's empire

Suggested Titles:

1. **What You Didn't Know About Trump's Business Empire**

2. **What Really Happened with Trump's Business Deals?**

INTRODUCTION

https://youtu.be/tlyvCYTJCO8?si=SzkCN3bdRjNVlg2t&t=98 (1:38-1:42)

"If you're smart and persevere there's a good chance you'll come out on top"

Among all humans, Trump may rank among the most confusing when it comes to matters of business.

Here are some initiatives he pursued that didn't quite work out as planned, but some of the concepts were so ludicrous that they will surprise you. Especially his real estate encounter with Oprah Winfrey, which turned out to be... Well, you will know!

BODY PARAGRAPHS

Chapter 1: Introduction to Trump's Business Empire

https://youtu.be/TSVPDrR8GyQ?si=mdhNaQyz1vihEYN9&t=147 (2:27-2:33)

"Donald Trump's hotels and Casino resort's are in deep debt to the tune of nearly 2 billion dollars"

In 2020, it was revealed by Donald Trump's tax returns that his businesses are far less successful than he'd have you believe.

https://youtu.be/TSVPDrR8GyQ?si=_p1WQ8wjBn7ZLBfM&t=153 (2:33-2:41)

"The casinos make less than 1% of my Empire so to speak I mean it's a small relatively small investment for me"

He paid no federal income tax in 10 of the last 15 years, according to *The New York Times*. **https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/27/us/donald-trump-taxes.html**

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/05/07/us/politics/donald-trump-taxes.html

This was largely because he declared substantial losses on his businesses, which he said outweighed his income. Furthermore, his three golf courses reported $US63.6 million in losses between 2010 and 2018.

The president's three European golf courses have reported a total of $63.6 million in losses.
https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-lost-millions-on-golf-courses-tax-returns-report-2020-9

All of which will come as little surprise to anyone who has taken even the most cursory glance at Trump's entrepreneurial back catalog—he is certainly no stranger to a failed enterprise. Over the years, he's launched a string of dubious businesses, including (but not limited to) GoTrump.com (a travel search engine), Trump Ice (spring water), Trump Steaks and Trump Vodka. There's even Trump: The Game, his answer to Monopoly.

Chapter 2: Trump Shuttle

https://youtu.be/wKUpyUm3PGs?si=iVKbby92ua2i5XUr&t=94 (1:34-1:37)
"You can fly clear across the USA."

Let's start with when he tried his hand at aviation. **Trump Shuttle.**

https://youtu.be/wKUpyUm3PGs?si=wT5GIJEN1LVvKmHv&t=150 (2:30-2:41)
"How you doing? Have a good flight." +Footage

In the late 1980s, Donald Trump sought to diversify his business empire by entering the airline industry, seizing an opportunity when Eastern Air Lines, a major player in East Coast shuttle services, ran into financial trouble. Eastern had been operating no-frills air shuttles between New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C., and when they sought to sell these routes, Trump moved quickly. He acquired 21 aging Boeing 727s and several of Eastern's employees, setting the stage for the launch of Trump Shuttle in 1988.

https://youtu.be/3oT1fi4TCaw?si=ht9KS18vscKqipOx&t=4 (0:04-0:08)

"The eastern shuttle is no more tomorrow morning it will be the Trump shuttle"

His goal was to create a luxury brand in air travel, enhancing the airline's brand equity with the kind of premium services synonymous with his real estate and hospitality ventures.

https://youtu.be/wKUpyUm3PGs?si=bupQK1BNU4PcWrUI&t=235 (3:55-3:58)
"We're gonna really be a good competitor, and I think it's gonna be a lot of fun."

Trump wanted to differentiate his airline through a unique value proposition, offering luxury where competitors provided basic services. Eastern Air's shuttle had been dubbed "the cattle car" for its simplicity, but Trump aimed for a complete overhaul, focusing on an upscale experience. The planes were redesigned with chrome seat belts, maple wood bulkheads, and faux marble bathrooms, reflecting a commitment to brand differentiation. Even the flight attendants wore new uniforms with fake pearl necklaces, further reinforcing the luxury image.

Despite the lavish upgrades, there were operational inefficiencies. The flights didn't launch until June 1989, several months after Trump's initial purchase, due to regulatory hurdles. When the airline finally took off, the inaugural flight—celebrated with champagne and string quartets—was delayed by 45 minutes, contrasting sharply with Trump's earlier ads that promised strict punctuality. This was an early sign that the company's value delivery wasn't matching its brand promise.

https://youtu.be/wKUpyUm3PGs?si=N9G9noZkWjaWhAVE&t=352 5:52-5:59)

""Hey, look," "this is not financially sustainable." It became clear that the Trump Shuttle would not grow as an airline."

The business model faced deeper issues. Although passengers enjoyed complimentary bagels, cocktails, and other perks, the short 45-minute flight durations made the luxury offerings feel impractical. From a cost-benefit analysis standpoint, the lavish service didn't justify the expense, especially considering the frequent flights, high fuel consumption, and maintenance costs associated with the aging fleet.

But Trump, always thinking ahead, had a backup plan—his version of a "just in case" move. If the airline didn't take off like he hoped, he was ready to shift his focus to other business ventures which in business terms known as **BATNA** (**Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)** and it refers to the best option someone can pursue if negotiations fail.

In simple terms, it's the backup plan or alternative strategy if a deal doesn't work out.

Trump's BATNA during the acquisition phase was likely developing other business ventures if this one didn't pan out.

However, once committed, the airline struggled under the weight of the economic recession, leading to a financial shortfall. By 1990, Trump Shuttle defaulted on a $1.1 million interest payment, signaling a breakdown in its cash flow management.

The airline's assets were eventually handed over to the banks, who sold it to US Air Group. Trump later remarked, "It worked out well for me," despite the airline reportedly losing over $100 million. **https://www.thestreet.com/politics/trump-i-ran-a-great-airline-11103249**

Simply put, brand equity alone couldn't save the airline from poor cost structure and market conditions, and the venture ultimately failed to live up to its lofty ambitions.

Chapter 3: NFL Bid for Buffalo Bills

His next venture was a total fumble like missing a wide-open touchdown pass - **NFL's Buffalo Bills**

https://youtu.be/jLOwNjtkpEE?si=zjLcyAc286Jz33X9&t=44 (0:44-0:50)

"Buffalo uh it would be catastrophic in my opinion if they lost if Buffalo lost the Buffalo Bills"

In 2014, Donald Trump made a bid of $1 billion in cash to purchase the Buffalo Bills. This venture faced significant skepticism given his past involvement in casino ownership and his role in a seminal antitrust lawsuit against the NFL in the 1980s during his ownership of the USFL's New Jersey Generals. Despite his assertive show of financial competence, his acceptance by the NFL appeared improbable, as disclosed in internal emails unveiled during Trump's recent civil fraud trial.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShdmN5ENDV8 (0:16-0:22)

Trump, however, relentlessly pursued his ambition, courting the NFL and standing as one of the three known finalists for the Bills' acquisition. Even with his serious interest and substantial financial backing, the deal ultimately fell through, and the Bills were sold to Ralph Wilson for a substantial $1.4 billion.

https://youtu.be/2kPzUwrOX2c?si=T5Fn6LJzLjOzgkDH&t=1 (0:01-0:14)

"Any disappointment you didn't get the Buffalo Bills there Donald if you don't mind flipping would that been a good Financial one's turn I think I got two look I'm most T okay I got to go"

Nearly a decade later, Trump's unsuccessful bid surfaced as a point of contention in a lawsuit initiated by New York Attorney General Letitia James. Allegations of fraudulent activity accuse Trump of inflating the values of his assets thereby misleading banks, insurers, and others. A vehement denial of any misconduct came from Trump, who interpreted this lawsuit as a ploy to thwart his political prospects.

Trump's bid to buy the Bills was both audacious and controversial, peppered with his constant claims of tremendous net worth. While his lawyer and long-time associate, Michael Cohen, insisted on Trump's seriousness and commitment regarding the bid, he also admitted that Trump was resistant to paying above market value for the team whose worth was estimated to be around $870 million.

The unfolding trial has revealed the skepticism of investment bankers about Trump's potential to purchase the Bills. In addition to questioning his liquidity, they indicated the necessity of assessing management contracts for Trump's casino ventures. Despite the reservations, Trump stayed in the running, an approach admired by the bankers, though some believe he was strung along merely to drive up the team's price.

Trump's failed attempt to purchase the Bills had profound personal implications for him. Had the bid been successful, he stated in a 2016 interview, he probably wouldn't have pursued the presidency.

Chapter 5: Trump in the WWE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVxVDDYwNvU (0:00-0:03)
"Why are you here - to trump)"
https://youtu.be/dVxVDDYwNvU?si=ZD29aahGetYeeEKw&t=50 (0:50-0:56)
"I will kick your ass"

But just when you think Donald Trump might be out of the game, he decided to pivot to a different kind of spectacle, **professional wrestling.** **WWE Appearances**

There was a time when Donald Trump was a professional wrestler before he became famous in real estate and business. Through his brand and public image, Trump made a lot of progress in the WWE (then WWF) in the late 1980s. He carefully set up his Trump Plaza

Hotel as a top spot for big events by hosting WrestleMania IV and V there. This move was part of a bigger plan to make Trump Plaza's brand more well-known and take advantage of the media attention that comes with big wrestling events.

Trump's participation went beyond just hosting and he also became an important part of WWE's entertainment value by taking part in storylines that happened on TV. His match against WWE Chairman Vince McMahon was one of the things that people will remember most about him. Not only was this match a spectacle, but it was also a perfect example of cross-promotion, since Trump's fame was used to get more people interested in WWE's products. **https://youtu.be/5NsrwH9I9vE?si=O4twxJYaTGhw4Pp-&t=55 (0:55-1:04)**

The plot, which put Trump in a wrestling ring, was meant to blur the lines between reality and entertainment. This created a unique brand relationship that was good for both Trump and the WWE.

This strategic relationship gave Trump a lot of marketing power because it showed he was willing to take part in high-profile, but unusual, projects. It also helped him build a reputation for wealth and excess that fit with his real estate brand. Trump took advantage of media attention and public relations chances by adding his character into WWE stories. He used wrestling to reach new audiences and improve his public image.

Trump's visibility in the entertainment industry was raised by the WWE's global reach. This not only made Trump's brand stronger, but it also gave the WWE a famous person to draw in fans and get people talking about their events.

https://youtu.be/5NsrwH9I9vE?si=d9HfxNQz94GTho6N&t=90 (1:30-1:34)

Chapter 5: Trump Ice – Bottled Water & a Splash of Vodka

Now, there was also a time when he decided to take on something a bit cooler, literally, **Trump Ice.**

https://youtu.be/tlyvCYTJCO8?si=VrlstlyHrgdOoTSD&t=70 (1:10-1:14)
"Trump even sold bottled water under the name Trump ice"

In the late 1980s, Donald Trump launched a bottled water brand called Trump Ice, aiming to extend his personal brand into consumer goods. Positioned as a premium product, Trump Ice was initially available only at Trump-owned casinos and select markets. By 2003, the brand sought broader market penetration through national grocery chains and specialty food stores across the United States.

Trump Ice was distributed by Mountain Spring Waters of America, which aimed to elevate the brand's presence in the consumer market. This distribution strategy included expanding the product line from 12-ounce bottles to 5-gallon tanks, aligning Trump Ice with established premium water brands. Kelly Perdew, winner of *The Apprentice 2*, was appointed as the executive vice president of Trump Ice, a role linked to his contract with The Trump

Organization. Trump personally invested $498,000 into the venture, which shows a huge capital allocation to support the brand's development.

https://www.ebay.com/itm/234664293933

But despite all these efforts, Trump Ice never quite took off. By 2010, it had quietly fizzled out. However, a successor brand, Trump Natural Spring Water, is still kicking, but only at Trump hotels, restaurants, and golf clubs. Fun fact: according to his 2016 financial disclosure form, Trump's water brand had $413,339 in the bank as of 2015. Not bad for something that didn't hit mainstream shelves.

One of Trump's more amusing marketing stunts came in October 2015 when he sent a case of Trump Ice to Marco Rubio—you know, the senator who awkwardly grabbed a water bottle mid-speech during the 2013 State of the Union rebuttal. Trump, never one to miss a moment, sent the water with a note:
"Since you're always sweating, we thought you could use some water. Enjoy!"
It was classic Trump—taking a media moment and turning it into clever branding.

https://theweek.com/speedreads/581610/donald-trump-pranks-marco-rubio-care-package

But water wasn't the only drink Trump tried to sell. Around the same time as Trump Ice, Trump also launched Trump Vodka, aiming to tap into the luxury alcohol market. Marketed as "Success Distilled," Trump Vodka was supposed to become a hit with wealthy partygoers. Unfortunately, much like Trump Ice, it couldn't keep up with the competition and was discontinued by 2011.

So, whether it was water or vodka, it seems Trump's beverage ventures struggled to make a lasting splash.

But still in a strange way, it shows how Trump uses smart marketing and brand positioning to take advantage of media moments and change how people see him.

Chapter 6: Trump vs. Oprah

Trump has plenty of tricks for making money even from his failed business ventures, but the most interesting has to be his **real estate showdown with Oprah.**

SIDE STORY

https://youtu.be/bc90K7Kieek?si=TWTsN2QH93OtEVAd&t=55 **(0:55-1:01)**

At the beginning of the 2000s, Trump and Winfrey had one of those rare business meetings. When Oprah was looking for a fancy place to stay, Trump, who is always a real estate mogul, came up with the Trump International Hotel and Tower in Chicago. Trump and his team really wanted to sell, and they thought Winfrey, who has a lot of money and power, might be interested.

Trump was assertive in the discussion, using the value of his name to stress how exclusive and high-class the property was. He sold the Trump Tower as more than just a fancy place to live; he sold it as a sign of wealth and success. Trump's strategy for negotiating was to stress the property's unique selling points, like its great location and high-end features, and to use his personal brand to make the deal seem urgent and desirable.

Oprah, on the other hand, went into the discussion with the usual tact and strategic awareness that she is known for. She was known for giving investments a lot of thought and often bought something after carefully checking out its long-term value and how well it fit with her personal and business goals. Even though Trump made an aggressive pitch, Oprah decided not to go through with the buy.

https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=158354077095933 (0:35-0:44)

This meeting between Trump and Winfrey was kinda funny, but not only does it show how smart they are as businesspeople, but it also shows how important negotiation skills and brand value are in real estate deals.

In the world of high-profile, expensive real estate deals, people have different ways of handling deals, like Trump's aggressive selling and Oprah's careful evaluation.

Outro:

So that's it! From Trump's expensive but failed airline trip to his big-name turns in wrestling matches and his ice-cold bottled water disasters, it's clear that not all of his business ventures are huge hits. Who knew that Trump's offer to buy a house from Oprah would turn into a lesson in how to negotiate? One came in with a great sales pitch, and the other brought a cold, hard list.

CTA:

More business stories will be coming soon. If you liked this trip through Trump's not-so-perfect company, don't forget to hit the like button. Until then, remember to set high goals for your projects and keep your standards reasonable.