Call it “pulling a Trump”: You don’t actually have to be winning — just look like you are

Projecting a big shot image to hustle your way to the top is a move I know well — from my middle school years

Dwight Watkins

Donald Trump has to be the first president-elect in the history of the United States to hit the campaign trail after he won. It’s the dumbest thing I’ve seen in my life: The president-elect, or even a person who is trying to act like he or she wants the job, should be focusing on the transition and learning the ins and outs of the gig, not wasting time retracing the campaign trail.

But it’s Donald, so what should we expect? It’s never been about the job; for him it is and has always been about the brand.

As '80s babies, we were born into a world where the name "Trump" and the idea of success were interchangeable. My earliest memories of Donald Trump come from his early '90s "Lifetyles of the Rich and Famous"-styled days, when he and the media dangled his lavish solid-gold life in front of us common folk. Trump meant money, and money meant Trump.

I even remember how all our hip-hop heroes looked up to him, from Russell Simmons singing Trump's praises in his book "Life and Def" to Jay Z's throwing his name around in "What More Can I Say?": “I'm at the Trump International/ Ask for me, I ain't never scared/ I'm everywhere, you ain't never there.” Trump's name recognition continued to grow as his brand became a household name, from elite gated communities to the courtyards of housing projects.

And we all bought into it — this idea of Donald Trump being this flawless
businessman, the talented negotiator who got over on every deal. His success was even documented in his best-selling book that he didn’t write, "The Art of the Deal." How many people walked past literary classics in bookstores and grabbed Trump's book instead, and why not? J. D. Salinger couldn’t brand like the Donald; "The Catcher in the Rye" wasn’t promising the key to social mobility.

But Trump could — or at least that’s what his brand promised. Read this book and you can make moves like a Trump, was the implicit promise. I guess the only missing piece is that most of his readers didn't have a millionaire father. And that’s the power of the Trump brand; it’s so strong that it’ll make you think you have a rich pops.

But you don’t have to be good at business to look like you are good at business. This is what I like to call "pulling a Trump." We all did this at some point. I used to pull Trumps back in middle school when I wanted to impress a girl. I’d walk up to the snack line, pull a fluffy knot of cash out of my sock, buy a pack of powdered doughnuts and tell the lunch aide to keep the change. I looked paid on the surface, but what the girls and the aide didn’t know is that I’d keep a $20 bill on top of a bunch of singles. They’d see me in clean clothes and nice shoes and assume that I had hundreds of dollars instead of about 57 bucks.

Some of my friends got really Trumpy and would layer a $50 bill over a roll of Monopoly money. It works perfectly, as long as you never have to prove your worth. And now Donald has pulled a Trump on the entire country by letting people think he can bring back jobs that won't come, create a Mexican wall that won’t be built, and deport all Muslims, which is impossible.

We all should have known it sounded like Trump was, well, pulling a Trump when his son Donald Jr. allegedly approached Gov. John Kasich about joining the ticket, a story that Trump's camp denies. The Kasich camp says the governor was told he’d be the most powerful vice president in history, with the opportunity to be in charge of all domestic and foreign policy.
Seduce the people into electing you president and then dump all the actual work on a guy like Kasich — or former Indiana governor Mike Pence, who ended up accepting the job of fall guy? This is a perfect example of pulling a Trump.

Now our nation is caught up in a game of musical chairs because come next week, Trump won’t be able to fake it anymore. He’s going to have to figure out one of two things: Figure out how to do the impossible things he has promised or create the world’s most amazing lies to distract attention from the many failures we could face over the next four years. I can guarantee there will be failures — pulling a Trump is great for the quick hustle, but it’s a move that has no longevity. And Donald Trump can tell you that: just ask him about his magazine, his university, his vodka, his steaks and the six bankruptcies he incurred driving his businesses into the ground. Now, our country could be up next.