

# THE APPRENTICE

**WHAT A SHOW!** Host Jimmy Kimmel checks President Donald Trump's Twitter account on a giant screen at the Oscars on 26 February.



## ITCHY FINGERS CLUMSY TWEETS

### PR LESSONS FROM 'THE APPRENTICE'

BY Angelo Fernando



**B**ack in the day when Twitter was not a loudspeaker for angry old men, there were unwritten rules of engagement to which we adhered. One such rule was thou shall not be rude and bombastic. The other being thou shall always check your facts before spewing them on Twitter.

And then the politicians came on board!

Remember that golden age when most people were polite online? That was when tweeting involved visiting the Twitter website (yes, that was the Stone Age of social media before the advent of apps!) and crafting what you wanted to say in 140 characters or less.

Later, when we were able to do this through our mobile phones, it involved punching in Twitter's SMS 'short code' (40404) and firing off a text that updated our Twitter feed. Now, as we watch with our jaws wide open, the rules are being revised.

Take for instance using words in all caps. To use all caps in a tweet is considered poor

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the ‘stone’ age and instead of scrawling things on cave walls, we leave strange messages on other people’s feeds. You’re probably asking what we can do?

Here are some lessons we could learn from following the @POTUS venting machine. **VERBAL DIARRHOEA** Often when angry, weird words pop into the frontal lobe of your overheated brain. Take a deep breath and chill before composing your thoughts. Take a bathroom break and only then should you hit the send button. This prevents you from unleashing typos and nonsense into your Twitter feed.

Trump has called Chuck Todd of NBC “sleepy eyes@chucktodd,” and tweeted jabs at Arnold Schwarzenegger, a judge and even Twitter! Rolling Stone magazine found that he sprinkles these rehashed jibes with words like ‘dishonest’ 36 times and ‘dumb’ or ‘dummy’ 33 times. **TWIT HAPPENS OFTEN** Worse than a typo is what my friend and social media consultant Jay Baer calls ‘an air ball of a tweet’ thrown up when someone says something outside acceptable social and societal norms.

The example he cites is the brand Kenneth Cole that tweeted: “Millions are in uproar in Cairo. Rumour is they heard our new spring collection is now available.” The brand was trying to sell fine clothes by making light of the 2011 revolution that cost lives. It backfired.

Similarly, Trump’s tweet with a picture of him eating a taco to feign his love for Mexicans was disingenuous and fell flat.

**VAGUE FOLLOWING** Despite the science involved in Twitter ‘metrics,’ acquiring a brood of ‘followers’ (or ‘likes’) doesn’t mean one is popular per se.

In March, Philip Davies (the British MP for Shipley, West Yorkshire) admitted that opening a Twitter account was probably “one of the worst

things I did in my life.” Why? Because he discovered there were about 16,000 followers who hurl abuse and can’t seem to stand him.

Trump has as many followers as the population of Sri Lanka. Big deal! Only about three million are active users in the US.

**AVOID HASHTAG ABUSE** I’m so done with hashtags! In the good old days, they were created by #responsible adults, who #valued #keyword clusters by dropping the ‘hash’ or ‘pound’ sign in front of a word. Do hashtags like #justsaying do anything to you?

Thought so!

A report in #USAToday said hashtags hit a peak in 2014 and are on the decline although people sprinkle them all over their Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook posts. Late night TV host Jimmy #Fallon parodied hashtag #abuse in a conversation with Justin #Timberlake. Dig it up on #YouTube – it’s to die for!

Fortunately, Trump doesn’t use this. And let’s hope it stays that way.

**RESIST ALL CAPS** The most irritating feature of @realDonaldTrump tweets besides factual inaccuracies that drive the press nuts is the trouble he has with his Caps Lock.

It seems to come on mid-sentence to emphasise a word just in case we don’t understand the emotion attached to it. It’s considered boorish, and signals that one is SHOUTING and not communicating. Punctuation marks were invented for a reason – something we learned in third grade.

So the question that often arises is why Trump takes on so much of his own PR with clumsy tweets?

If you’re one of those who think it’s a clever distraction strategy, let me propose an alternative charitable explanation: The fingers are itchy. The chisels are still crude. And ‘The Apprentice’ is learning on the job.

etiquette – remember a similar practice with email ‘netiquette?’ We assumed anyone who took up the tool would be engaging in rich conversations.

But President Donald Trump seems to play off a different handbook and liberally uses uppercase words in his tweets. You have to go back to the Roman era to find such a use of all caps for when chisels with large crude blades were used to write in ‘capitalis monumentalis’ on stone.

Perhaps we’re still stuck in

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