Sathnam Sanghera

Donald Trump as US president isn't all bad … here's a few of the good things

Sathnam Sanghera is a journalist and author. Follow him on Twitter @Sathnam

We've heard no shortage of claims about how Donald Trump is a racist and a misogynist, about how he exhibits all the self-control of a toddler, all the self-awareness of an alsatian puppy, and that his narcissistic personality disorder threatens world peace and the global climate. But might there be positive things in the example that he sets for business?

I ask not because I am warming to the guy, or disagree with my former colleague Andrew Hill, who argued in the Financial Times this week that Mr Trump's "late 1990s" leadership style of "the older, white, male chief executive in suit and tie, peddling platitudes from a podium" is "dire". I ask because Boris Johnson has declared that it is time to stop the "collective whinge-o-rama" about a man he has repeatedly criticised himself, because right-wing commentators keep complaining that we liberals are "sore losers" (as if the future of the planet was some kind of board game); and because the fear is emotionally exhausting.

So I've spent the week looking for things to feel less bad about, and found more than expected. At the very least it seems that Mr Trump's success could mean:

More business leaders on social networking

Last week Management Today reported that just five of the FTSE 100's chief executives actively use Twitter. Mr Trump, on the other hand, loves the medium, using it to thank supporters, combat his critics, brag and contradict himself sometimes within the space of hours. Of course, some see this pathological need to tweet as the fact that Mr Trump has no real friends and was deprived of affection as a child, but if executives follow his example we will at least have more people to shout at if we get bad service or are overcharged by gas suppliers.

Bosses getting their hands dirty

I don't mean this literally, of course, for Mr Trump is a notorious germaphobe who reportedly loathes shaking hands, prefers to drink through straws, eats pizza with cutlery and employs someone to press the lift's call button. He has, however, shown willingness in the past to get down on to the factory floor, not least when, according to People magazine, a reporter called his company to confirm a rumour that he had dated Carla Bruni and the spokesman confirmed the story, adding that "important, beautiful women call [Mr Trump] all the time" — only for it to transpire that the spokesman uttering the words "seemed to be ... Donald Trump, posing as a fictitious PR man".

The end of the corporate fad for exercise

I've complained here in the past about how fitness fanaticism has become a feature of 21st-century corporate life, with leaders almost routinely boasting about their fondness for gymnastics, ultimate Frisbee and gruelling bicycle rides. Fortunately, there is no chance of Mr Trump encouraging the inanity, given that he has, according to The Times this week, "long professed an aversion to exercise, saying that playing golf or gesticulating on a podium are more than adequate ways to keep fit", and that, according to a former colleague, he believes the human body is "like a battery": it stores "only so much vitality" and when this is "used up", it "weakens and dies".

This is a terrible example in terms of health policy and a worrying indication of how little he understands about basic biology, but wonderful in what it might mean for blokes leaving dirty gym towels on the back of their office chairs.

Fewer formal dinners

Mr Trump famously has the diet of a five-year-old — dining routinely on fries and burgers from KFC and McDonald's, breaking off only for steak well done — but while he has been widely mocked for saying he would eliminate state dinners with foreign leaders because they cost a "fortune" and serve hamburgers at the White House instead, I can't help feeling excited by the thought. Business meals are a bore, not just in terms of the rich food, but the amount of time they take up, the cost of hiring a dinner jacket, and the heavy drinking required just to survive the boredom. Moreover, Mr Trump apparently tries to avoid breakfast, and if his election heralds the demise of the hated breakfast meeting in the West, then I can see there might be some perks to fascism.

It's easy to think of more. His fondness for nepotism and appointing relatives to as many positions as possible could herald the demise of networking, a corporate activity that no one anywhere has ever enjoyed. His loathing of foreigners might mean fewer complicated foreign names to spell. Declining diversity could make work easier to navigate: if in doubt, just assume the old, white guy is in charge. His vocabulary, meanwhile — described by his biographer, Gwenda Blair, as "extremely simple, almost to the point of being childish" — might be basic, but might also mark the end of complex corporate speak.

Then there is his wild inconsistency, of course. People seem to despair that the president-elect has denied calling climate change a "hoax invented by the Chinese" despite a tweet conveying that view having been published by his account, that he has maintained that he opposed the Iraq war when there is no evidence of it, and that he famously assured regulators he would not use high-interest junk debt to finance projects just before taking out more than $600 million in junk debt, but this could also just be seen as the behaviour of a man who lives in the moment, unrestricted by past remarks.

And living in the moment is surely the aim of mindfulness and meditation, the fads sweeping banking and enterprise. Indeed, in some ways, Mr Trump is a thoroughly modern man, and there may well be a silver lining to the mushroom cloud that his election threatens to unleash on humanity.