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CAP TIMES Q&A

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Jason Rose: In pursuit of politics, polo and the best publicity

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In the world of politics, Jason Rose is known as a no-holds-barred spinmeister, the PR guru you want to bring into a political brawl.

His brand of political marketing may seem like another version of creative chaos – throw in some diesel into a cauldron of burning lava, pop some corn and watch to see who gets burned. For an example of his work, look no further than the rancor that has engulfed the state's energy regulatory agency in the last several years. You may credit Rose for exponentially upping the ante, until that rumpus becomes so untenable that the only possible recourse is to accept détente; thus, achieving what he sought out to do for his client, create a platform that becomes so boisterous it cannot be ignored.

Fewer people at the state Capitol know that Rose is also the PR genius behind the Seventh Annual Bentley Scottsdale Polo Championships: Horses & Horsepower in Scottsdale. In promoting the event, Rose says he has deployed all his cards as a political consultant, minus making enemies, of course.

I'm going to ask you a couple of questions. Give me the first thing that comes to mind. Best client?

First client. It would be Red Feather Properties at the Grand Canyon. They took a chance on me, and I think we've helped them a lot in 21-plus years, and I will always be grateful to them for taking a chance on a 26 year old.

Worst client?

I don't know that I would put it in the worst category, but some people may think that would be Amy's Baking Company. It was featured on Fox's Kitchen Nightmares with Gordon Ramsay. It was a local restaurant that became infamous virally across the United States. I would refer to that as six crazy days with Amy and Sammy. I wouldn't say worst because it was an exhilarating experience. But the vitriol, the roller coaster nature of it, the complexity of it, was otherworldly.

Do you believe in all publicity is good publicity?

No.

Best campaign?

The most thorough campaign I would say was last year for Scottsdale Mayor Jim Lane. We had a tough competitor. It was probably the best result combined with the best experience. Going way back, I would probably (count) the first hockey arena campaign in Scottsdale for the Coyotes, which we won on the same day that the Arizona Cardinals stadium lost in Mesa.

Worst campaign?

Worst loss would be Michael Monti's loss in Tempe in 2012. I say that even though I consider it among the best work we've ever done for one of the coolest cats we ever will do work for. We were up

on election night. We ended up losing by 200 votes, and that was the first sign of the incredible get out the vote machine that the Democrats were about to deploy in Arizona, and have successfully used in other races. Unfortunately, we were on the wrong side of a new model for getting out the vote. We won the mass messaging. We won in every way, except get out the vote at the end.

Canada or Mexico?

Mexico.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio or Donald Trump?

Sheriff Joe.

Why polo? How did it start?

So, two local polo guys walked into this office, into this room, seven years ago, and said, "We have \$6,000 from the United States Polo Association to hire you to help us promote our events." And I said I don't know if you're familiar with our business model but we don't do a lot of things for \$6,000. But I love sports and polo is interesting. We said rather than do a standard PR execution for very little money, we have this concept called horses and horsepower. It's essentially beautiful things on site. Polo is a beautiful sport. I've never played polo. I don't much like being on horses, but

I've always wanted to be a sports owner, so this might be as close to it as I'm going to get. And so, we've tried to create the Phoenix Open of Polo. In November of this year, it will be the most attended polo event in the United States. It's part Phoenix Open. It's part Spring Training. It's part Cirque du Soleil. There's classiness and craziness all at the same time, and my political background really helped the evolution of the event.

In what way?

So, in a campaign, you have a candidate. In this case, we have a concept – polo. In a campaign, you have polling and tracking polling. In the polo world, you have ticket sales and sponsorships. In a campaign, you have a win or a loss. In the polo world, you make money or you don't, and along the way, you experiment with what's the best way to get the message out. How do you get people on site? What's your get-out-the-vote plan, get-out-the-customer plan? And, aside from our political background, we're pretty creative marketers and have utilized that for something that is now a very successful endeavor.

If you had the chance to install a state government in Arizona, what kind of government would that look like?

A benevolent dictatorship led by me.

Do the Democrats have a prayer's chance to win a statewide race this (next) year?

Absolutely, and I believe in it so much that, for the first time in my career, I may be assisting Democrats.

Is that right?

It's correct – one because there is absolutely no point in electing a Republican to the Arizona Corporation Commission even if you're the most die-hard Republican. They'd raise your rates. They're not transparent, and they stifle innovation. What is the possible explanation for supporting a Republican? There's none.



PHOTOS BY ELLEN O'BRIEN/ARIZONA CAPITOL TIMES