



Can this Wall Street insider sell Trump to the Republican establishment?



“The Mooch” makes his case.

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By **Vivian Giang**

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Donald Trump wants to “Make America Great Again.” But if Trump is going to win the twisted popularity contest that is the US presidential election, he’s going to need some outside funding. Although the presumptive Republican nominee self-financed a large portion of his primary campaign, his most likely challenger, Hillary Clinton, has spent months building

an impressive campaign war chest. In the general election, Trump will not be able to go it alone.

So far, big-name donors have seemed reluctant to open their wallets. Enter high-profile New York investor Anthony Scaramucci, the man ambitiously trying to re-brand Trump as an empathetic, entrepreneurial-minded businessman.

Scaramucci, the colorful founder and co-managing partner of hedge fund SkyBridge Capital, says he believes his fellow New York mogul has the ability to “recruit world-class people” and unite a fractured GOP party. That’s an interesting stance for a man who had previously called Trump a “hack politician,” “an inherited-money dude,” and “anti-American.” His dramatic shift could be a one-off. But it could also encourage other former Trump detractors to get in line behind the nominee.

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So what changed his mind? “Mr. Trump has gotten more votes than any of the other candidates by millions of voters,” Scaramucci said in an interview at the SkyBridge Alternatives Conference, or SALT, earlier in May. “But in addition to that, he probably has the highest vote count of any Republican primary candidate in the last 50 years ... The fact that he’s the people’s choice is good enough for me.”

The endorsement was preceded by a series of meetings between Scaramucci and Trump. Affectionately called “The Mooch” on Wall Street, the investor announced he was joining Trump’s national finance committee just days before SALT, the

nation's largest hedge fund conference.

The timing was no accident. His conference brings together some 2,000 hedge fund managers and investors representing an estimated \$3 trillion in global assets. A dinner that Scaramucci hosted for Trump's new chief fundraiser, Steven Mnuchin, included former House speaker John Boehner, billionaire hedge fund manager Kenneth C. Griffin, and former CIA director David H. Petraeus. Mnuchin, a hedge fund manager at Dune Capital, also reportedly met with oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens, former Massachusetts senator Scott Brown, and businesswoman Georgette Mosbacher while in Las Vegas.

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Like many Republicans this election cycle, Scaramucci's first choice for president never made it out of the primaries. Over the course of the 2016 election, he's aligned himself with Scott Walker and Jeb Bush. Shrugging off suggestions that this background might make his current support for Trump seem disingenuous, Scaramucci notes that “a little bit of egg and tomato throwing” happens in every political race. “But I think what we realize is we're all on the same team. We're all, more or less, sharing the same values.”

“Have you've ever had a fight with your family member or your friend before?” he continues. “You can like each other but still disagree on things.”

As Republicans wrestle with the prospect of a Trump presidency, there were some uneasy moments in Las Vegas. When billionaire energy tycoon T. Boone Pickens told the SALT audience that he supported Trump's controversial proposed ban on Muslim immigration in the US, audible gasps could be heard among the crowd.

Confronted with Trump's long history of racist and sexist statements, Scaramucci says he won't "offer an excuse for that kind of rhetoric." But he claimed he had also called the candidate out on his most incendiary remarks.

"He's gotten the message from his family members and his advisors and smart people who he's got a lot of respect for, he's going to tone that stuff down," said Scaramucci, who denies that Trump is a racist. In fact, he argues that Trump is a "guy who has a lot of empathy."

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"I think some of the things that he has said in the campaign process have probably engendered some bad feelings," said Scaramucci. "But I think, in general, people are looking at him and saying, 'You know what, I can get comfortable with this.' I can say this for sure, the more time I spend with him ... the more comfortable I am with is analytical depth and his personality."

From an economics perspective, Trump also recently raised eyebrows after claiming that he would be open to pushing the

US government into something akin to bankruptcy. Scaramucci, however, seemed convinced by Trump's business acumen and connections.

“I see the opportunity for Trump to disrupt something that's going wrong in Washington,” said Scaramucci. “What happens is entrepreneurs come into a situation and they see it differently than the way the situation is currently being practiced and so, I think [Trump] can be a hugely positive disruptive force in government.”

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Exactly how much money Scaramucci raised for Trump at SALT is unknown. His campaign to win over Republican hearts and minds, however, seemed to be working—at least in the desert. At the very least, by the end of the four-day conference, people seemed less shocked by pro-Trump statements. As billionaire after billionaire stepped up to make the case for Trump, the mood shifted from awkwardness to levity. Speaking at SALT, billionaire investor and Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban joked that Trump is the “friend that you just shake your head at ... he's that guy who'd get drunk and fall over all the time, or just says dumb shit all the time, but he's your friend.”

It's a message Trump supporters have been using more and more often. Trump may be a bit of a loudmouth, they say, but his provocation serves a purpose. He may be a little politically incorrect, but he's ready to roll up his sleeves and *get things*

done.

It remains to be seen whether this attempt at rebranding Trump will translate into campaign pledges. Scaramucci seems to think it will. His confidence is a quality he shares with his fellow New Yorker.

“I think you and I can both agree that [Trump] has a fairly large ego,” Scaramucci said. “When you have a large ego, you want to be super successful at the job. What you do is, you reverse engineer and you think about, ‘How will I be super successful at the job?’ And the answer is, I’m going to bring all-star people around me to make this thing happen for myself. And I think he’s going to be able to do that.”