

A templative tale from  
**Mischief Marketing**

## Mischievous LBJ

[ ... ]

### Mischief Marketing in Politics

#### *Many Trips to the John, Son*

The following historical snippet is about a 22-year-old giant with big ears. Two weeks earlier, the young man had been teaching high school in Houston, Texas. Now, as secretary to a member of Congress, he was already inching his way (mischievously) toward becoming President of the United States.

*[H]is first night at the Dodge [Hotel in Washington, D.C.], he did something strange, something he would admit to biographer and intimate Doris Kearns in the months just before he died. That night, Lyndon Baines Johnson took four showers. Four times he walked towel-draped to the communal bathroom down along the hall. Four times he turned on the water and lathered up. The next morning he got up early to brush his teeth five times, with five-minute intervals in between.*

*The young man from Texas had a mission. There were seventy-five other congressional secretaries living in the building. He wanted to meet as many of them as possible as fast as possible.*

*The strategy worked. Within three months of arriving in Washington, the newcomer got himself elected Speaker of the “Little Congress,” the organization of all House staff assistants.*

— Matthews, Christopher. *Hardball: How Politics Is Played—Told by One Who Knows the Game.* New York: Summit Books, 1988.

But wait a minute, you may be thinking. The definition given above includes something about “barely legal strategies.”

Well, what’s that about? Is this stuff cheating? Is it trickery? Does it have a note of chicanery? Is it a sin?

Let us consult a higher authority on this matter.

*Self-aggrandizement, of course, is a business as old as mankind itself. In the book of Judges, God told Gideon to ramp up only 300 soldiers — so long as they all blew rams' horns and carried torches. Scared the sandals off 135,000 Midianites.*

— Dan Morse

If any reader would like to argue the point with the Higher Authority to whom this passage refers — please be my guest. Just don't come whining to me if you happen, one fine day, to hear the Voice That Has No Echo.

### **What Mischief Marketing is Not**

Almost every new idea is confusing at first. Well, let's put it this way: almost every new idea — if it's any *good* — is confusing at first.

This is because nearly every novel concept hovers close to *other* ideas — older ideas to which we're more accustomed. This proximity to related ideas makes it easy to get the new concept mixed up with the old ones.

It's like learning the alphabet. Remember when you first learned the alphabet? The letter 'd' looked a lot like the letter 'b' and 'p' looked like 'q' and so on. Many different letters so closely resembled each other visually that it took a while to tell them apart, didn't it? We had to learn that one letter may resemble — but is *not* — the other.

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