



UAE, Wednesday September 7th 2005



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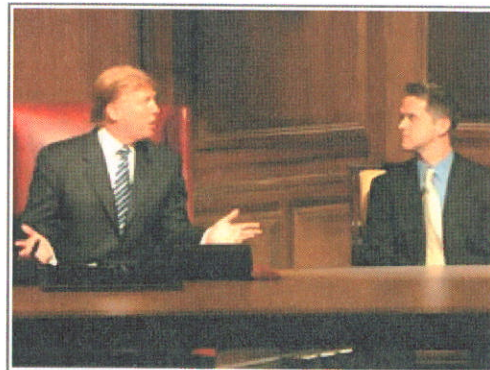
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The Apprentice Comes Of Age

Sunday, 04 September 2005

Nine months after winning The Apprentice, former software executive Kelly Perdue is bringing Donald Trump to the **UAE**. When Donald Trump spoke at the Leaders in **Dubai** conference last year, he said he was excited by Dubai and was considering doing business here.



The expectation among most of us was that the world's most famous real estate mogul would join the Dubai real estate boom and create a landmark tower of some description.

At the time there were also plans to bring his TV show The Apprentice to the **Middle East**, to be fronted by Mohamed Ali Alabar, CEO of **Emaar** Properties, but that fell through following some unwanted publicity.

Now, eventually, the Trump Organisation is coming to Dubai, through his most famous emissary, Kelly Perdue, winner of season two of The Apprentice.

Perdue has not yet graced Dubai with his presence, but he has bestowed upon us the gift of Trump Ice, Donald Trump's foray into the designer mineral water market.

Originally created for consumption in his casinos and hotels, Perdue has been tasked with taking the brand nationwide in the US, and looking into international distribution. The first on his list of international targets is the UAE.

So what have the residents of the United Arab Emirates done to deserve the gift of Trump Ice before places considerably closer, such as Canada, Mexico, or the numerous countries making up Europe.

"The UAE has one of the highest per capita consumption of bottled water in the

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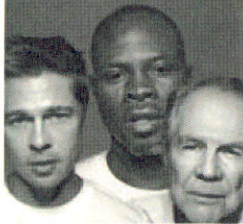
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world and from what I understand from our partners, Donald Trump has a great reputation in your country," Kelly Perdeu tells me via a less-than-intimate, mediated email conversation.

"His emphasis on quality is also very important to you," he flatters. I am not convinced that much formal research has gone into these insights into the UAE market, but there is undoubtedly some wisdom in launching the product somewhere that has some of the same values as Trump himself, ie a love of money, tall buildings, and the trappings of success.

In fact, if Donald Trump built a city from scratch, it might look quite a lot like Dubai, with its outlandish mega-projects, some of the tallest buildings in the world, a large number of limousines per capita, and lots of gold.

But will that be enough to make a success of the brand, which is slated for launch later this month?

Not everyone is targeted by Perdeu, and his local distribution partner, The Supply Chain. "Mr Trump stands for high quality. He only accepts the best and his water is no exception," says Perdeu. "Trump Ice is a premium brand and we are targeting only those that want the best."

Distribution-wise that means "premium supermarkets, restaurants and hotels", according to Syed Saif Hussain, managing partner of The Supply Chain. The quality of the product should satisfy that market's needs.

Trump Ice boasts a very low mineral content, and claims to be the first sodium-free water in the UAE. Market leader, Masafi, on the other hand, has very high sodium content, something that has been discussed at length in this newspaper and others.

The taste of the water is also very good. Our impromptu focus group here at 7DAYS described it variously as "sweet", "better than Evian" and "curiously neutral".

The big question facing Perdeu is, do diners want to look at a picture of Donald Trump while having their dinner?

Unfortunately I had not seen the packaging by the time I put my questions to Perdeu. But really it is consumers who will decide whether or not the famous quiff is an appropriate dinner accompaniment, so I wheel in the focus group again, and the news is not quite as good as in the taste test.



The use of fire as a backdrop to Trump's visage and coat of arms was not popular at all, and inspired one wit to point out that it made the bottle look like it contained lighter fluid, and not water.

Trump was asked about the fiery theme in a recent interview with the **New York Times** magazine: "It is fiery, isn't it? It's fire and ice! The water puts out the fire."

Having read this through a number of times, I am sure it makes no sense at all. But as I said, it is consumers who will decide whether or not Trump Ice is a success or not.

The Supply Chain's Hussain cannot reveal any distribution deals yet, but assures me they are in the pipeline. For Perdeu, this is a toe in the water, so to speak.

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