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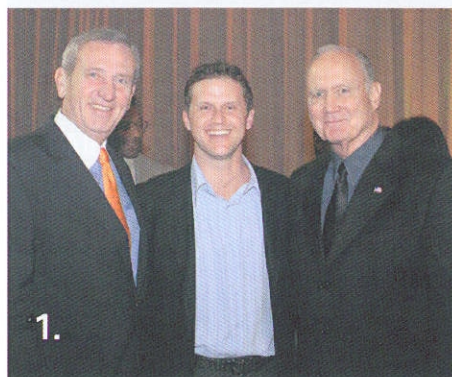
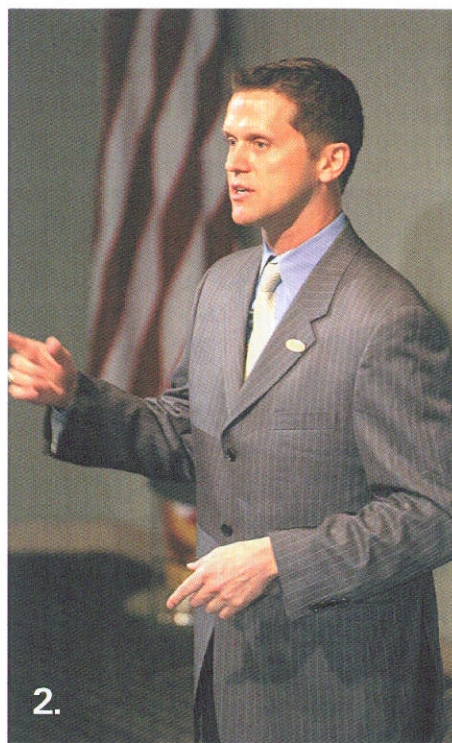
Winning isn't everything

Donald Trump's lessons learned

It's the ONLY thing on *The Apprentice*

by Kim Shumsky

Kelly Perdew "Generally, you are weakest between your ears – most of the time it's mental."



Reality shows have become a constant on North American television. We can witness "real life" courtship, weddings and child rearing. But what about a real life hire? Can we learn anything from a televised job interview?

New York real estate mogul Donald Trump thought so and the Thursday night hit, the *Apprentice* was born. Eighteen contestants from a list of applicants numbering in the thousands were chosen for each show. Generally every contestant picked has already accomplished something significant in their life and established themselves pretty well in the business world. First season winner, Bill Rancic, was a successful cigar store, second season winner Kelly Purdue held several chairman and CEO positions and the latest winner, Kendra Todd, was a real estate entrepreneur.

The chosen contestants then face a rigorous sixteen-week job interview, where their business skills are tested in a series of intense tasks dreamed up by the Donald. The end reward is a high paying, (\$250,000 US per year) high profile position in the Trump organization. The applicants have to brainstorm, create, negotiate and sell in a very short period of time, and do this better than those in the other team – all in cooperation with other incredibly talented people vying for the same spot in the sun. It's like the Olympics of job interviews, only Trump doesn't hand out silver medals.

With this huge amount of pressure, not the least of which is having to live with these same people in a specially designed suite in Trump Tower, it's not surprising that a few people crack. Third season contestant, Verna Felton, quit before she even heard the words "You're fired!" She had been well on her way to getting fired when she pulled a disappearing act, leaving her team to finish the job while she slept.

As *The Apprentice* enters its fourth season of ratings success, Trump has fired 49 contestants and hired three new proteges. So what does it take to become *The Apprentice* – or even just experience more ordinary success?

"If you say you're going to do it – do it," second season winner Kelly Perdew offers. He summarizes this almost proverbial sentence in one quality: integrity. "From that, you need to lead by example, but you also need to learn how to fall in line and execute."

This military expression is not artificial. Kelly was a military intelligence officer in the US army, and he considers this one of the things that helped him win the game. After all, unless you're Trump, there will always be someone else in command. And it's not just about taking orders well, Kelly says that working with others is part of reaching success, "Once the plan has been made, you just do it."

Kelly Perdew was born in Lexington, Kentucky to parents who were in the same business as his famous boss. His father is a land developer, and

his mother is in real estate. But this didn't mean anything at first to Kelly, who said he "bucked the tradition until Trump came along."

While he was straying from his roots, he enjoyed a variety of experiences that shaped the businessman he is today. Starting out at West Point, a military academy in Orange County, New York, he earned his BS degree, became a military intelligence officer in the US army, and completed Airborne and Ranger training. This alone has given him the ability to follow orders and get the job done. It also helped provide the determination needed for the show, and made staying up late a few nights on *The Apprentice* seem a bit amateurish from a difficulty perspective.

Not finished with education, Kelly went on to earn his MBA from the Anderson School at UCLA and his JD from the UCLA School of Law. He experienced his first taste of success while he was still there, when he wrote a business plan for a telecommunications company. The plan garnered the company half a million dollars in funds. Kelly says, "It was incredible to have the ability to communicate my vision, and to see a financial investment come from it."

And this experience is the high that Kelly gets each time he develops something. His very first company (Kelly has been chair, president and founder of several) MotorPride was born one day when he was stuck in a traffic jam. "It just came to me on the 405, (a busy free-

way in L.A.) sitting in traffic, I noticed how so many of these cars had aftermarket pieces on them," he noted of the accessories such as extra large spoilers. As a result, Kelly created a community website for car, truck and motorcycle fans. "Creating a company is pretty exciting. You not only create a revenue base, you get to bring a product to the market and give people what they want and need."

But despite a passion for the job, what about facing all those impossible tasks on *The Apprentice*? For Kelly, it's all psychological. "Generally, you are weakest between your ears – most of the time it's mental," he says of overcoming physical challenges. "Your body can do so much more than you give it credit for. You can give up before you even try." Kelly calls this "healthy optimism" an essential ingredient for both life and sixteen-week job interviews.

"I looked at *The Apprentice* as an interview with any potential employer. 15 to 20 million people were watching, and I took that seriously." This constant awareness of the camera, as well as a focus on what he was trying to accomplish kept Kelly on his best behavior, something most contestants forgot when they were cursing other team members. All three of the winners in *The Apprentice* stayed out of fights, and maintained a level of professionalism. (The third season winner was actually frowned upon by Trump for crying as she said goodbye to teammates in her last task). This need to constantly think

about the impression you're making is perhaps the most real part of this reality series. In a job interview you may not have to demonstrate your marketing skills by selling ice cream on the streets of New York like Kelly did, but you will need to be aware of what impression you are creating.

As part of his advice on success, Kelly espouses being yourself. In fact, he barely even watched the first *Apprentice* in an effort to do things using his own strengths and strategies. "I knew they'd probably change the rules anyway, (and they did)." He adds, "I can't be someone else."

Integrity and military mindset aside, what exactly did Kelly do right in the show? "I was very process focused," he says. "I created a 20-point checklist and would go through it with my team after a task to evaluate what happened. I was focused on winning every task."

Kelly was the team leader for four tasks during the show, and he won every time, creating a still unbeaten record. Every time he won, he earned an exemption from being fired the next time around. "The only time I was really in risk of losing was in the final challenge, and then I put my nose to the grind and just did it."

1. Kelly Perdew poses at a charity event.
2. Speaking at UCLA.
3. With Larry King.
4. Kelly and Donald Trump on the show.

3.

4.