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'Apprentice' shares his tips for success

By **Fresia Rodriguez Cadavid**
Decision Times

How did a former West Point graduate and Army Airborne Ranger win an apprenticeship with Donald Trump? Kelly Perdeu shares his secrets to success in his new book, "Take Command — 10 Leadership Principles I Learned in the Military and Put to Work for Donald Trump."

In 2004, Perdeu became Trump's second protégé in front of millions of TV viewers in the live season finale of "The Apprentice," in which candidates compete for a coveted apprenticeship in the Trump organization.



Although his four years at West Point and three years of active duty ended more than a decade ago, Perdeu is quick to credit his military background not only for his "Apprentice" win, but for the business ventures that preceded and followed it.

Perdeu currently is a managing director of Angel-Led Venture Partners, is the host of the Military Channel series "GI Factory," and with Trump, has started in a business that provides direct marketing for premium brands.

So how did Perdeu accomplish so much in the private sector? "My military background and training were absolutely crucial factors — not only for winning 'The Apprentice' but for succeeding in every venture I have undertaken since that influential time in my life," Perdeu says in his book. "What I learned at West Point and my subsequent military service centered on 10 essential principles for effective leadership."

Those principles — duty, impeccability, passion, perseverance, planning, teamwork, loyalty, flexibility, selfless service and integrity — play out as themes enhanced with Perdeu's own experiences as a cadet at West Point, an intelligence officer in the Army, a graduate student and subsequently, an entrepreneur. Perdeu sheds light on his 16-week "Apprentice" job interview by focusing on various tasks assigned by Trump.

In the book, business leaders who served in the military also share their insights. They include Marsha Evans (Navy, former chief executive officer of the Red Cross), Jim Kimsey (Army, founding CEO of American Online) and Ross Perot (Navy, founder of Perot Systems).

Perdeu reinforces that former service members can apply what they learned in the military to succeed in the private sector. Among his top recommendations to service members looking to make the transition: "Be confident because you do have the leadership skills. Be confident of what you've accomplished."

He says there are not many people in the private sector who have accomplished as much as military members have.

"Knowing that helps," he adds. He also urges readers to get out and learn about the business sector and meet people. "Learn the lingo — you can't fall back on military speak when you are talking to the human resources department. Learn the language of business."

Networking is also vital. "Use your networks," Perdeu recommends, adding that many people in business leadership positions have served in the military. "Do your homework into organizations headed up by those who have served or those that have hired military."

Perdeu's networking skills helped land him a nomination to West Point. While still in high school, Perdeu met then-Rep. Dick Cheney, R-Wyo., during a speech at a rival school. Perdeu introduced himself and expressed his desire to attend a military academy. It was Cheney who later provided the nomination.

One of the key principles Perdeu emphasizes is planning. "Treat your new job search as your new mission and



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identify your primary objectives and the intermediate objectives that lead up to it,” Perdew recommends. “Fail to plan, plan to fail. It’s really that simple. Personally, professionally, financially, you name it — you need a plan.”

Passion is another key principle, and plays a crucial role in the risk people take to become entrepreneurs. “Every time you walk away from a high-paying, secure job and launch something of your own, it’s risky,” acknowledges Perdew. But that is where passion comes in to help you succeed. “I really love helping young companies grow,” he explains, adding that when separating from the military, you have to be introspective — to examine your personal goals in order to reach them.

Before “The Apprentice,” Perdew was already successful in the corporate world. He developed a community Web site for car, truck and motorcycle enthusiasts as chairman and co-founder of Motorpride. As president of CoreObjects Software, Perdew provided leadership in strategy, sales, business and development, legal, finance and operations. And as the former acting president for www.eteamz.com, Perdew helped secure venture capital funding, increased the company’s value through acquisitions and strategic relationships, and led the negotiations for the successful sale of the company, which now serves 2.5 million amateur sports teams.

Perdew’s realistic outlook and determination will resonate with people retiring or separating from the military and looking to transition to the civilian world, or just looking for inspiration and guidance. He says it is service members’ strong sense of selflessness, duty and passion that sets them above the rest in accomplishing their goals.

Readers should gain not only a new perspective and greater confidence, but will know that one of their own also wants them to succeed.

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