

Apprentice winner: Reality TV a waste

Tara Merrin
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The Sun's Tara Merrin tunes into the reality stars of the past in this seven-part series. Find out who has made the best of their 15 minutes of fame and who regrets stepping into the spotlight.

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Kelly Perdew highly recommends people do not watch reality TV.

"It's not the best use of time," says The Apprentice 2 winner.

"But, I mean, if you are going to watch one, I think The Apprentice is definitely the one to watch. There are a lot of great lessons you can learn from it."

Perdew, 39, became famous when Donald Trump hired him in 2004, but feels he'd have been a success with or without his 15 minutes in the spotlight.

"Certainly the exposure has been beneficial and I feel incredibly fortunate for having been a part of it. But I think there are a lot of different ways to accomplish what you are looking to accomplish.

"Some people went on (the show) really to work for Donald, but I just wanted an apprenticeship. I wanted to learn and I did."

Prior to winning, Perdew served in the U.S. Army as a military intelligence officer and was president of CoreObjects, a software development outsourcing company.

Today he is focusing on real estate, recently closing a US\$50 million deal on self-storage facilities called Perdew Properties, and developing a 600-acre hunting and fishing preserve in Montana.



Kelly Perdew and Donald Trump worked together for a while, but the former military man and winner of The Apprentice 2 has since branched out on his own.

— Tina Fineberg, AP

“Working for Donald Trump was fantastic — he was incredibly supportive of everything I wanted to do. I learned a lot about real estate and I learned even more about branding and marketing.

“The interesting aspect of this is figuring out what you want to be with your brand. You only have a certain amount of time before it begins to fade unless you do things to enable it to continue.”

In the past two years, Perdue has certainly taken advantage of his new-found fame. He hosted a show on the Military Channel called GI Factory, published a book titled Take Command: 10 Leadership Principles I Learned in the Military and Put to Work for Donald Trump and created the Terrorist Attack Survival Kit CD, which gives people access to the same materials used to train the federal government and military.

Perdue is also the managing director of Angel-Leveraged Capital, a US\$50 million venture-capital fund, and a motivational speaker.

President George W. Bush has appointed him to the Council on Civic Participation and Service.

On top of all that, Perdue manages to have some fun thanks to his celebrity.

“There has been some star-power stuff like walking down red carpets or being the auctioneer for Larry King ... and playing golf with Emmitt Smith.

“But the biggest thing for me would be my work with the three different charities I support.”

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SAVE THE DATE FOR MORE APPRENTICE

Martha Stewart’s, Richard Branson’s and Mark Cuban’s shows won’t be coming back, but there will be more Donald Trump and the wannabes who want to be his apprentice.

The sixth season of The Apprentice will return in January . It will air on Sundays on NBC.

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WHAT IS THEIR STOCK WORTH?

Average viewers for the finale of each business-inspired series

- Trump’s Apprentice Season 1 — 28.1 million
- Trump’s Apprentice Season 2 — 16.9 million
- Trump’s Apprentice Season 3 — 14 million
- Trump’s Apprentice Season 4 — 12.8 million
- Trump’s Apprentice Season 5 — 11.3 million
- Martha Stewart’s Apprentice — 7.5 million
- Richard Branson’s Rebel Billionaire — 3.7 million
- The Benefactor — low ratings force an early end

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW ...

• RAJ BHAKTA

The fired Apprentice 2 candidate, who became as famous for hitting on women as he did for his bow-ties, is now a Pennsylvania congressional candidate. He made headline last month when he pulled a publicity stunt on the river of the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, which went terribly wrong. Bhakta got a hold of three elephants and hired a six-piece mariachi band and took them to an area near the mouth of the Rio Grande to show how easy it would be to enter the U.S. from Mexico. But the planned backfired when members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture spotted Bhakta and called in officials. Bhakta, who was born in India, is a legal U.S. resident, but didn't have his papers so he was taken in as an undocumented immigrant. Customs and Border Protection officials reportedly detained him for almost five hours before proof he was a legal U.S. resident could be ascertained.

• BILL RANCIC

Since winning the first Apprentice, Rancic has authored two separate motivational books — You're Hired and Beyond the Lemonade Stand. His multi-million dollar company Cigars Around the World is thriving. Rancic is dating E! News co-host Giuliana DePandi.

• OMAROSA MANIGAULT

After being fired by The Donald, this Season 1 contest's celebrity profile grew. She has been on The Oprah Winfrey Show, made a brief appearance on NBC soap Passions, was featured in Burger King commercials and starred on The Surreal Life and Fear Factor. She also starred in a sci-fi mini-film called Soul Sistahs.

• EREKA VETRINI

Following her departure from the first season of Apprentice, Vetrini made headlines for appearing in a controversial lingerie spread in FHM (with other female cast members from her season), and losing her job as Tony Danza's sidekick on The Tony Danza Show. She is now the host of the HGTV program Kidspac and is engaged.

• TROY MCCLAIN

McClain (Season 1) hosts HomeTeam, a nationally syndicated TV show and online community that assists and educates prospective first-time homebuyers.

• KENDRA TODD

Todd's empire in the real estate market has grown exponentially since winning the third season. She's written a book titled Risk & Grow Rich. Todd is also keeping busy making appearances and can be heard live online at www.wbzt.com twice a week.

• RANDAL PINKETT

Since winning Season 4, Pinkett has continued in his role as president and CEO of BCT Partners, a multi-million dollar consulting firm, and is a motivational speaker. He's writing two books — Campus CEO and Black Faces in White Places: 10 Steps for African-Americans to Redefine the Game.

• REBECCA JARVIS

Due to Pinkett's decision not to share his apprenticeship, Jarvis was not hired by the Trump organization. Despite some great offers, Jarvis now works as a CNBC reporter in New Jersey.

- SEAN YAZBECK (A5 WINNER)

He may have won Apprentice 5, but he lost girlfriend Tammy Trenta, who he met while filming The Apprentice.

- LEE BIENSTOCK

Despite being fired in the finale of the fifth season, Bienstock has since heard Trump utter the words, “You’re hired.” Trump hired the 23-year-old as associate vice-president of corporate development for Trump Mortgage.

- DAWNA STONE

As a strong advocate of improving women’s health and fitness, the winner of Martha Stewart’s Apprentice, has appeared on numerous television and radio programs, including her popular monthly healthy living segment on Good Day Tampa Bay. She is also a sought after public speaker.

- SHAWN NELSON

Nelson, the winner of Rebel Billionaire, is still CEO of his company, LoveSac, which has now doubled in size. In a recent interview, he said he invested every penny of his US\$1 million US prize money into LoveSac.

- FEMIA DUROSINMI

The Benefactor winner, Durosinmi, 24, recently married and bought a dream house in Las Vegas. She’s thinking about chronicling her life story in a book.