

# *Why We All Need a Personal Competitive Advantage (Part 1)*

*Presented by*  
**MARK C. PERNA**



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## Welcome to the Competitive Advantage Track!

In these highly engaging, plug-and-play videos, your learners will discover the powerful skills to craft a personal competitive advantage—and why they need it.

In a fast-changing world, young people must develop strong life and career skills. Each module (or “Slice”) includes a short, heartfelt talk by Career Tree creator Mark C. Perna about a particular skill, why it matters, and how it connects to their personal competitive advantage for whatever they want to achieve in life.

▶ Click on the video to learn more, or click here:  
<https://youtu.be/o8W9X78A2fM>

MARK C. PERNA

“ Building a competitive advantage can help you move forward by getting you the skills needed to do well in life, and whatever you’re passionate about. It gives you purpose and you can get far.

— Student



You can then implement any or all of the resources in this packet:

- Facilitator Reflection
- Group Discussion Starters
- Supersize Suggestions

You choose whatever elements will make the greatest impact in your unique learning environment.



“ I liked that we weren’t pushed to be motivated and inspired, like every other video.

— Student

## Strategies for Success

**“ You need this because we need this to survive... We will be better than the rest and have a competitive advantage. And since we are learning this now we could have a lead on the others.**

— Student



How you use the **Competitive Advantage Track** is entirely up to you. It can be a bellringer exercise, material for an entire class period, or something you use at home with your child. You can use all the materials in this packet or change them up. These resources are provided to adapt in any way that best serves your schedule and learners.

**That said, here are a few best practices to consider:**

- **Make “competitive advantage” your thread:** The experienced facilitators who piloted the Competitive Advantage Track tapped into the power of repetition by constantly touching back on the concept of a personal competitive advantage. Everything the learners did moving forward was done because it related to their own competitive advantage. With this narrative, learners were more engaged when asked to complete work.
- **Connect “competitive advantage” with the lifestyle the learner wants to live:** For today’s young people, everything—including career—is a lifestyle decision. The kind of life they can live, the things they can afford, and the places they can go are what motivate young people to put in the necessary effort. Building a personal competitive advantage today is what sets you up for the lifestyle you want to enjoy tomorrow.
- **Encourage effort:** Our pilot facilitators suggest that the concept of a personal competitive advantage is a useful tool to answer questions like “Why do I have to learn this?” or “When will I ever use this?” The answer: “It is all part of building your own personal competitive advantage.” Making “personal competitive advantage” a constant thread throughout the day encourages effort and helps reframe the challenge the learner is experiencing with an end goal that matters to them.
- **Where possible, connect to the Career Tree:** While the Competitive Advantage Track can be used as a stand-alone lesson, it’s also designed to integrate with the Career Tree career exploration tool. The Competitive Advantage Track helps learners develop their Root System and ultimately move closer to their goal on the Career Tree. Find out more about the Career Tree for classroom use [here](#).



**“ It can help me by giving me something to look up to and give me ideas.**

— Student

## Slice 1:

# Why We All Need a Personal Competitive Advantage (Part 1)

**Video Runtime: 5:36**

### **Learners will discover:**

- What a personal competitive advantage is and why it matters
- How to adapt to a fast-changing world
- 3 vital components of a competitive advantage: academic knowledge, technical competency, and professional skills
- Why your professional skills will set you apart
- What these Slices will help you accomplish

▶ Click on the video above to get started, or click here:  
<https://youtu.be/DFV1oc8jvK4>

Visit [MarkCPerna.com/cat](http://MarkCPerna.com/cat) to access the full, free library of Slices and downloadable activities.

### **Facilitator Reflection**

Reflect on how a personal competitive advantage would help someone succeed in your field. Think about the types of skills that successful people at ALL levels in your field have in common and how they developed those abilities. You want to frame everything they're learning as a necessary part of each learner building their unique competitive advantage.

**Activities: Next Page**

## Slice 1: Activities

### Group Discussion Starters

- Based on this video, what is a personal competitive advantage and why does it matter?
- Of the three key components of a competitive advantage (academic knowledge, technical competency, and professional skills), which may be the most important for you to master? Why?
- What is one thing Mark said that stands out for you or that you didn't realize before?

### Supersize Suggestions

This is just a starter list to help you supersize the impact of this Slice. Customize these activities or create your own to fit your unique learning environment and course of study, if applicable.

- As the facilitator, use your own knowledge of people who are leaders in your field or topic to tell a story about that person and how they reached their position.  
Ask: **How do you suppose they built their competitive advantage to get there?**
- Referencing learners' career goals on the Career Tree, have learners visualize themselves as successful in their chosen career and enjoying their lifestyle.  
Ask: **What does that lifestyle and career look like?**
- Project: If resources allow, have learners interview a person they consider to be successful (in any field or topic) to find out how that individual achieved their goals and how they maintain their success. They can ask questions like:
  - What is your career and what steps did you take to succeed in it?
  - Was this your original plan for your life or did your goals change along the way?
  - Did you face any challenges? If so, how did you adapt to overcome them?
  - What would you have done differently (if anything)?
  - What advice would you give to someone who wants to succeed?

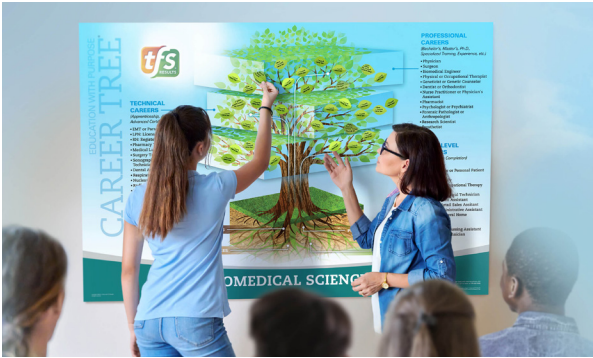
If time allows, have them report the results of their interview to the group.

### Big-Picture View

This closure question is designed to show learners the relevance of what they're learning to their lifestyle and career goals. They should be able to connect the dots between their personal competitive advantage and the material being covered in your learning environment.

- **How will your personal competitive advantage help you reach the next step in your learning?**

## Discover the Career Tree



**Created by education leader Mark C. Perna, the Career Tree is the first career exploration tool informed by a generational perspective.** Through meaningful self-discovery, ongoing dialogue, and real-world goal-setting, this groundbreaking approach is helping organizations across North America to enroll, engage, and complete students in higher numbers. [Find out more about the Career Tree here.](#)

Within the Career Tree, the Competitive Advantage Track helps young people build a strong foundation to reach their desired career and lifestyle goals. On the [TFSCareerTree.com](#) portal, our [Career Tree](#) community has access to early releases, curricular elements, and training materials not available to the general public.

You can use the free elements of the Competitive Advantage Track without being part of our Career Tree community, but we encourage you to schedule a demo to explore how the Career Tree can supersize your efforts.

Please note the Career Tree is a classroom tool and is not designed for home use. New resources created especially for parents are in the works, so subscribe to our [free Paradigm Shift newsletter](#) to stay posted as those are released.

### Mark C. Perna

CREATOR OF THE CAREER TREE & COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE TRACK

**Mark C. Perna is a generational thought leader on a mission** to effect a national paradigm shift in education, employment, and economic development. He delivers 80+ keynotes annually across North America, including a special address at Harvard University. At Forbes.com, his weekly column on generational issues in careers, education, and the workforce reaches an audience of more than 4 million. His *Perna Syndicate* micropodcast is heard in more than 70 countries.

Mark, who serves on the Advisory Council for the Coalition for Career Development in Washington, DC, founded the Education with Purpose & Employment with Passion movement to help communities connect education, business, and economic pipelines. He is a frequent guest on television and podcasts, including the #1 economic development podcast, *Develop This!*

Mark created the Career Tree and Competitive Advantage Track to empower parents, educators, employers, and community stakeholders to unleash the tremendous potential of today's younger generations. This is also the topic of his bestselling book, *Answering Why*, which won eight national awards, including the Nautilus Award which is given to books that make a positive difference in the world.

You can contact Mark [here](#) and follow his mission on these platforms:



MARK C. PERNA



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**Want to stay posted on our latest releases in the Competitive Advantage Track and other free resources?** Subscribe to our [free Paradigm Shift newsletter](#) now to receive actionable strategies, insights, and tools 2x a month from the desk of education and generational thought leader Mark C. Perna!