

# *Leveraging the Human Connection*

*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 3:

# Leveraging the Human Connection

**Video Runtime: 6:16**

▶ Click on the video above to get started, or click here:  
<https://youtu.be/PwA94RklX8o>

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

### Learners will discover:

- What a human connection is and how it's part of a personal competitive advantage
- How a human connection helps you build relationships, advocate for yourself, ask for help, collaborate effectively, and lead/convince others
- The 3 questions we're all silently asking: Do you see me? Do you hear me? Do I matter?
- The key to supersizing your competitive advantage (making others feel the answer is yes when they ask the same 3 questions)
- 3 ways to start building a human connection: eye contact, active listening, and validation
- How skills like human connection will never expire, no matter how much the world changes

### Facilitator Reflection

*"Education is the transfer of enthusiasm through the conduit of a human connection."* Think about how this quote from Mark Perna may apply in your learning environment. Reflect on how you personally build human connections with learners, coworkers, and others. You might also consider how the ability to connect with people allows you to convey your ideas and material effectively.

Activities: Next Page

## Slice 3: Activities

### Group Discussion Starters

- What is the power in building a human connection? (Human connection is defined as the ability to build relationships, advocate for self, ask for help/support, lead others, collaborate, and leverage that connection to build a competitive advantage)
- If it is significant that we all feel seen, heard, and that we matter, why is it important to make others feel those same three things?
- How will building human connections strengthen your personal competitive advantage?

### 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.

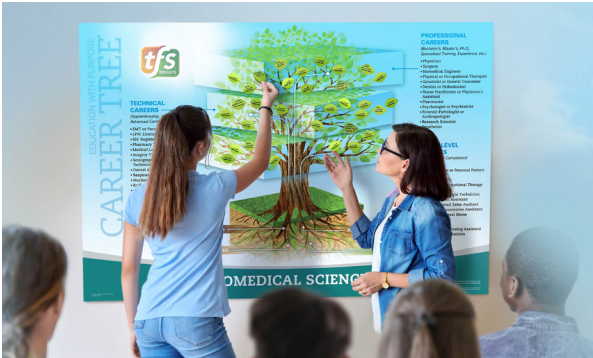
- Have learners practice giving their full attention during a short conversation.  
Ask: **Why does it matter whether we give people our full attention when we're interacting with them? What are ways we can show we are giving someone our full attention?** (phone down, turned towards the person, active listening, engaged questioning, etc.)
- Have a learner tell you a story about their day/week and model active listening in front of the group.  
Ask: **What did my body language communicate while this person was talking? Did I make them feel like what they were saying was important?**
- Have learners come up with examples of how they can validate what other people say. Examples could include phrases like, "I understand," "I hear you," "That must have been tough," etc.  
Ask: **How does it impact your confidence and feeling of connection when someone validates what you say?**
- Have learners imagine how Mark might build a human connection with someone he never met before.  
Ask: **Would that person feel seen, heard, and valued? How do you imagine that person would feel seen, heard, and valued?**
- Project: Have learners write or orally present a reflection on what they have learned about building a human connection.  
Ask: **What are some benefits (both for you and for the other person) when you intentionally build a human connection with them?**

### 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 unique competitive advantage and what they're learning.

- **How can you strengthen your human connection skills each day?**

## 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!