



# reflective guide

## on Today's Presentation

BY MARK C. PERNA

**INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE TO  
REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL**



## A Word from Mark

Thanks for taking part in my presentation! It was my absolute pleasure to cover the current education, employment, and economic development landscape and share the practical strategies to make a bigger difference for today's young people. I'm so glad you were there!



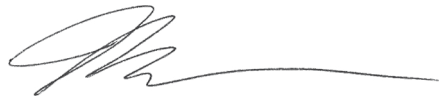
**In this guide, you'll find:**

- 12 key takeaways from my message
- Reflective questions to kickstart group discussion or individual thinking on how to equip young people for a fast-changing future
- A quick-start guide to using my free Competitive Advantage Track with the young people in your sphere of influence
- How to stay connected for the latest updates, tools, and insights straight from my desk

Building a personal competitive advantage is the thread that motivates learners, organizations, and communities to keep moving forward. My goal is to provide you with the actionable tools to make "competitive advantage" a game-changing narrative in your context.

If my team or I can assist your journey in any way, don't hesitate to reach out. I deeply appreciate your role in helping today's younger generations thrive!

Warmest Regards,



**MARK C. PERNA**  
SPEAKER | AUTHOR | CEO

## Table of Contents

12 Key Takeaways .....	2
Reflective Questions .....	3
Quick-Start Guide: Competitive Advantage Track .....	4
Connect with Mark .....	5

## 12 Key Takeaways

- 1 "Stop viewing the millennial and Z generations as a challenge to overcome—because they are actually a tremendous asset to unleash."
- 2 "If you want young people to start performing at a higher level, start expecting more."
- 3 "Build a human connection with young people—or they won't move forward with us. They're silently asking three questions: 'Do you see me? Do you hear me? Do I matter?' When the answer to all three is yes, we can build that connection and help them take steps forward."
- 4 "Understand that every decision a young person makes today is based on how it affects their lifestyle. Career has become a lifestyle decision."
- 5 "Answer the all-important 'why?' by delivering a compelling answer to the question 'why is this important and how will I use this moving forward?'"
- 6 "Respect young people first, and they'll quickly reciprocate."
- 7 "Empower young people to move forward without fear by choosing a 'for-now' career direction."
- 8 "Give young people academic knowledge, technical competency, and professional skills—and you'll give them the single most important competitive advantage in today's new economy."
- 9 "Help young people set themselves apart by developing the irreplaceable professional skills that can't be automated and never expire."
- 10 "Believe that today's young people are unique, special, and important—because they are."
- 11 "Encourage the Why Generation to invest more time building their dreams and opportunities instead of spending all their time on other people's dreams."
- 12 "Don't shield young people from the branch-creak crisis moments that propel them to focus, plan, and take action."

### More Takeaways

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Reflective Questions

### Current Situation

- How are we currently connecting, engaging, and answering why for young people?
- To what extent is “purpose” the driving force of our training and instruction?
- What roadblocks might be preventing young people from thriving in their education and career journey?
- How are we prioritizing a human connection with younger generations?
- How is the skills gap affecting our community, and how might we help solve it?

### Career Planning

- In what direction are we counseling young people for their postsecondary plans?
- Are we aware of the full range of viable postsecondary pathways and on-ramps to career success?
- Do we have a planning culture, in which researching, goal-setting, and recalibrating one’s plan are normalized and expected activities?
- What does a “competitive advantaged” student/trainee look like? What skills have they developed during their time with us?
- In career conversations with young people, how can we lead with the lifestyle that their career can allow them to enjoy?

### Motivating Young People

- How can we start aligning our educational goals with those of young people, so that they see education not as their problem but as their solution?
- How well do we understand the generational traits of young people (how they think, what makes them tick, and how they make decisions) and how will this knowledge influence our interactions with them?
- Do we view the younger generations in a positive light? Do we believe they are capable of achieving great things?
- What traits and priorities can we leverage to motivate them to greater achievement?

### Paradigm Shift Toward Competitive Advantage

- How are we currently equipping young people with the three components of a dynamic, personal competitive advantage (robust academics, strong technical competencies, and valuable professional skills)?
- How can we learn from and potentially use strategies like the Competitive Advantage Track and Career Tree to deepen the impact of our existing career exploration tools?
- How can we partner with other community stakeholders and business/industry contacts to help young people develop a personal competitive advantage?
- How do we become the catalyst for competitive advantage in our community?
- As we connect the pipelines between education, employment, and economic development, how can we leverage these pipelines to create a tremendous competitive advantage for our community in attracting new investment, opportunities, and growth to our region?

## Quick-Start Guide: Competitive Advantage Track



As Mark shared in his presentation, today's young people must build a personal competitive advantage to thrive in a fast-changing world. That's why he created the [Competitive Advantage Track](#)—a free, plug-and-play tool to coach learners on the vital career and life skills they need.

Teachers, parents, counselors, coaches, and facilitators in any learning environment can use the Competitive Advantage Track Slices with learners in middle school through college, and even beyond. With almost zero prep, it can be used as a bellringer exercise, a full lesson, or an ongoing topic with the assignments and reflective journaling components (coming soon).

Each module (or "Slice") includes a short, heartfelt talk by Mark about a particular skill, why it matters, and how it connects to their personal competitive advantage for whatever they want to achieve in life. You can then implement any or all of the resources provided to maximize learning and reflection in your environment, including:

- **Facilitator Reflection:** A thought-provoking question or concept for you to consider prior to sharing the video with your learners.
- **Group Discussion Starters:** Questions to launch a productive conversation about the video and what learners took from it.
- **Supersize Suggestions:** Activities to dive deeper, including assignments, further discussion topics, projects, and more.



“ *Building a competitive advantage will help me move forward because it will allow me to grow in my personal and academic career*

— Student



Plus, our [Career Tree](#) community has exclusive access to additional curriculum in the Competitive Advantage Track to maximize their efforts—keeping learners' goals at the heart of everything they do!

[Find out more about the Career Tree here.](#)

In our fast-changing world, everyone needs a personal competitive advantage, but it's not always clear how to develop one. The Competitive Advantage Track will help learners discover what they want out of their life and career—and take the practical steps to develop their skills so they can make it happen.










“ *It made me think on how I can build my future and be successful.*

— Student

## Connect with Mark

Connect with Mark for the insights and strategies to make a bigger difference with your younger-gen children, students, and coworkers.

-  Mark's Forbes.com Contributor Channel: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markperna>
-  Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/markpernaleadership>
-  YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@markpernaspeaker>
-  X: <https://x.com/markperna>
-  LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mark-c-perna/about/>
-  Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/mark\\_c\\_perna/](https://www.instagram.com/mark_c_perna/)
-  Newsletter with actionable content 2x a month: <http://bit.ly/pernalist>

## About Mark C. Perna

Mark C. Perna is the founder and CEO of [TFS Results](#), a strategic consulting firm leading the national paradigm shift in education and workforce development. As an acclaimed generational expert, regular [Forbes.com contributor](#), and [podcast host](#), Mark today delivers 80+ keynotes annually across North America and has spoken at Harvard University by special invitation.

Mark, who serves on the Advisory Council for the Coalition for Career Development in Washington, DC, founded the Education with Purpose & Employment with Passion ([EWP](#)) movement to help communities connect education, business, and economic pipelines. His bestselling book, *Answering Why*, received 8 national awards and has empowered countless parents, educators and employers to unleash the true potential of today's young people. Mark is the father of two successful millennials and resides in Cleveland, Ohio.



**MARK C. PERNA**  
SPEAKER | AUTHOR | CEO

[MarkCPerna.com](http://MarkCPerna.com)  
[TFSresults.com](http://TFSresults.com)  
 330-840-2680  
[contact@TFSresults.com](mailto:contact@TFSresults.com)