

PARENT MASTER CLASS:

Supersizing Every Child's Competitive Advantage



Delivered by

MARK C. PERNA

Speaker, Author & CEO



markcperna.com

Thanks for Taking Part in this Master Class!

You'll find that although the content was tailored to parents, it's also highly applicable to any role where you interact with the younger generations—in the classroom, at work, and in the community. When you understand how young people think, how they make decisions, and what makes them tick, you can help motivate their highest performance!

Of course, when we're talking about an entire generation of people, it's a huge bell curve and there are always outliers. Each young person is unique, so adapt these insights to the young people in your sphere of influence.

After you view the master class, use this reflective guide to deepen the impact and form potential action steps based on what we covered.

I wish you all the best in your work to unleash the true potential of the young people in your life!

Warmest Regards,



MARK C. PERNA
Speaker | Author | CEO



Table of Contents

Click on the items below to navigate to your desired section.

TOPICS FOR REFLECTION:

Today's Younger Generations.....	2
The Light at the End of the Tunnel.....	2
The Shifting Education & Career Landscape	3
Competitive Advantage & Professional Skills	3
Career Planning	4
The College Question.....	4
Entrepreneurship.....	5
Education with Purpose and 2 Purpose Modes	5
Human Connection	6
Passion Versus Interest.....	6
How Kids Spend Time	7

RESOURCES:

The Competitive Advantage Track™	8
Mark's Bestseller <i>Answering Why</i>	8
The Career Tree®.....	9
A Future Everyone Can Believe In (Rally Your Community)	9

BIOGRAPHY:

Mark C. Perna.....	10
--------------------	----

Topics for Reflection

Today's Younger Generations

Excerpts from the master class:

"I like to call today's young people—Gen Z and Gen Alpha coming right behind them—the 'Why Generation,' because frankly, they need an answer to this question for everything they do."

"They're also the Benchmark Generation, because Gen Z and Gen Alpha want everything that previous generations have wanted. But they're the first generations in history to stand on principle until they get what they want."

"Previous generations did things on faith. Not Gen Z and Gen Alpha."

"I think differently about young people today than most people. Most people think in negative terms: they're lazy, they're entitled, et cetera. Don't believe it for a minute. I go completely the other way. I think young people in America today are the most extraordinary generations to come down the pike, bar none. They are the most intelligent, resourceful, and pitbull-like generations we have ever seen in this country. When they see a want-to in their life, something they truly want, they will move heaven and earth to get to that want-to. Our challenge, as parents, educators, and employers, is getting them to want something. That's where the battlefield of the future is."

- How will understanding the Why Generation change my approach to young people?
- When my student asks why, how can I give answers that advance the conversation?
- What can I do differently to better engage my student and ultimately enhance their performance?

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Excerpts from the master class:

"The Light at the end of the tunnel is a simple concept. It consists of two things: lifestyle and career. What does your career, lifestyle, or anything else you want look like at the end of your tunnel? The tunnel is the time spent in education, workforce development, and training—it's the work, the labor, the effort, the skill development, the academic rigor, everything that's necessary to feel comfortable taking a step, and then another step, and then another step towards your light at the end of your tunnel."

"How many of us will go through the tunnel, doing all the work, if we don't see a light at the end of our own tunnel? And yet that's what we're asking many young people to do—to do it on faith every day. We're not connecting the dots for them."

- How will understanding the light at the end of the tunnel concept help me motivate young people better?
- How can I help my student start to develop or strengthen the light at the end of their tunnel?

Topics for Reflection

The Shifting Education & Career Landscape

Excerpts from the master class:

“We’re dealing with a tremendous skills gap in America today and how I define the skills gap is this: There are millions of people who are unemployed, but there are millions of jobs that are open. The people who are unemployed can’t do the jobs that are open. This is happening at all levels of education and experience.”

“A lot of people think the skills gap is a blue-collar thing. No, it’s an all-collar thing at all levels of education and experience.”

“We are entering the Smart Machine Age. The age of AI and automation is going to change everything. It’s already predicted that 47% of jobs and occupations in America today will not exist by the end of the next two decades. Now, that’s not uncommon; we’re in the midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we’ve been through this before, but we have to be able to adapt accordingly.”

- How might the skills gap affect my student’s plan for their future?
- What actions can I take now to help my student thrive in a future that is hard to predict?

Competitive Advantage & Professional Skills

Excerpts from the master class:

“The world has completely changed. It is now incumbent upon all of us, myself included, to build a personal competitive advantage to achieve whatever lifestyle, goals, and aspirations we all want to achieve.”

“Today, a competitive advantage includes three things, and you have to have all three: robust academic knowledge, technical competencies, and professional skills.”

“Professional skills are things like work ethic, punctuality, leadership, communication, work-life balance, stress management, critical thinking, problem solving, emotional intelligence, networking, flexibility, et cetera. These are things that most people call ‘soft skills.’ I changed that term about a decade ago to ‘professional skills’ because I think the term ‘soft skills’ makes them sound like they’re unimportant, when I think they’re the darn near most important thing we can give ourselves, not to mention the young people in our sphere of influence.”

“No matter how grand, modest, or laid back you view your life down the road (and that can change every single day), you have to build a personal competitive advantage to achieve that.”

“Why do I need to know this? Why is this important for me to learn?’ We tend to answer, ‘Well, it will help you get to college.’ For some kids, that’s absolutely accurate. But today, two-thirds of high school students do not see the relevance of going to college. They think they’ll be just fine without a degree. So we have to change the answer to ‘Why is this important?’ because if the answer we’re going to stand on is that it helps you get to college, it’s now completely irrelevant to two-thirds of students across America. The answer we give needs to move toward competitive advantage.”

“Having a competitive advantage allows them to shift the game from getting academic knowledge just for academics’ sake, to now being able to build academic knowledge plus technical competencies plus professional skills, to build something personal. Their personal competitive advantage is critical for them to be able to work towards whatever it is they see in their life, based on their own unique interests, talents, and abilities.”

- How can I help my student develop the professional skills that are so vital in a fast-changing world?
- How might the idea of building a personal competitive advantage help motivate young people, even if their life plans for now are modest or laid back rather than grand?

Topics for Reflection

Career Planning

Excerpts from the master class:

“Every decision a young person makes is based on how it will affect their lifestyle. Career has become a lifestyle decision. The ah-ha moment here is that if you want to start a substantive career conversation with a young person, don’t start with career—start with lifestyle.”

“The delta between what they want to do and what you want them to be doing can only be crossed with a compelling reason, of relevance and purpose, and an answer to the question ‘Why is this important to do?’ So I have to ask you this question reflectively: are you, in fact, compelling? Because it takes a compelling story and narrative to cross that delta.”

“If the want-to is strong enough, the how-to will come.”

“Young people today will hardly ever make forever decisions, but they will make ‘for-now’ decisions. A for-now decision can last a week, a month, a year—and you can change it any time you want. Too many young people have analysis paralysis...‘I don’t want to be wrong, so I’m not going to make a decision.’ So, unless they already have a plan in place, let’s stop putting them to forever decisions. Very few of us as adults have made forever decisions. Very few of us have had a straight line from where we started to where we are now. Most of us have had more of a serpentine route, because we were making for-now decisions.”

- What is my role in helping my student discover and strengthen their ‘want-to’?
- How can I adapt the career conversation to start with my student’s lifestyle goals rather than career goals?
- How can I use the concept of the ‘for-now’ decision to help my student keep moving forward?

The College Question

Excerpts from the master class:

“How can young people get what they want? Many can get it at a four-year university and that’s great. But there are also wonderful careers and occupations at two-year community colleges, at technical colleges, through an associate’s degree. There are also wonderful careers and occupations through certifications, licensures, apprenticeships, the military and entrepreneurship.”

“We have to advocate for everything. Everything should be on the table. The young person should be getting the education that they wish to get to accomplish the things they want in their life.”

“Why do we assume that just because somebody’s good at school, that they should get more school?”

“There are a lot of parents who have always dreamed of sending their kids to a four-year university. There are lots of reasons to go. They’ve dreamt that their kid will have the ‘college experience.’ And I’m a fan of that. And there is nothing wrong with doing that. But if you’re borrowing money to make this happen, in the hope that there will somehow be a great career at the end of it, I’m here to tell you: Hope is not a tactic. But purpose is.”

“Now I’m not saying that we as parents shouldn’t send our kids to college, but we have to understand what game we’re playing, so we can play it effectively.”

- How can I increase my knowledge about education and career pathways beyond the college degree?
- If the traditional college pathway is a part of my family’s plans, how can I ensure my student attends with purpose rather than just a vague hope that it will be worth it?

Topics for Reflection

Entrepreneurship

Excerpts from the master class:

“84% of Gen Z say they want to own their own business someday. Previous generations used to look at entrepreneurship and owning their own business as risky and they found safety in working for corporate America and a small-business enterprise. Today it’s 180 degrees in the opposite direction. Young people look at entrepreneurship and owning their own company as safety because they can control their own destiny, and working for somebody else as risky. This is an extraordinary shift.”

- How might entrepreneurship play a part in my student’s future?
- If a young person in my sphere of influence wants to own their own business someday, what actions can I take to support their efforts and set them up to succeed?

Education with Purpose and 2 Purpose Modes

Excerpts from the master class:

“As adults, we’d say to ourselves, ‘Of course education has purpose,’ but I don’t mean from our perspective. I mean education that has purpose from the learner’s perspective. The learner has to recognize what the purpose in their education is – each day.”

“If the learner understands what the purpose is, then they can move into active purpose with us. There are two purpose modes. The first is active purpose and it describes those young people who show up every day and they’re stepping through the tunnel, they’re doing the work. They see a light at the end of the tunnel, they’re going for something. We might call them self-motivated.”

“On the other side are those in static purpose. They either don’t see a light at the end of the tunnel for themselves or they’re afraid to take a step toward something they want, or there could be one or a myriad of things holding them back from being able to take that step.”

“Young people can go in and out of these two purpose modes, but they can also get stuck.”

“Today’s young people are already lifelong learners—for relevant, purposeful learning. If they don’t understand the relevance and the purpose, there is no purpose.”

- Why is it important that education have a purpose that matters to the learner?
- What actions can I take to help my student develop a habit of operating in active purpose?

Topics for Reflection

Human Connection

Excerpts from the master class:

“Young people today have three questions in the back of their mind. We as adults have the exact same three questions. Are we seen? Are we heard? And do we matter? These three questions are sitting in the back of the mind of everyone in our sphere of influence. And if the answer to even one of these questions is no, you’ve lost them—and you may never get them back again. They have to feel that they’re seen, heard, and that they matter, just like we do. That’s how we build the human connection with them.”

“One of my favorite quotes is from a Greek philosopher named Plutarch, who lived around 100 AD. He said, ‘The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.’” I have to ask you in a reflective way: in education today, are we simply trying to fill vessels or are we kindling flames? We’re in a system nowadays that seems to double down on filling vessels and almost doesn’t allow time and bandwidth to build a human connection that gives us the ability to kindle that flame.”

“Gen Z and Gen Alpha, as their resting pulse, require a human connection to move forward. You have to leverage the human connection at home, in the classroom, and in places of business. You have to leverage the human connection to inspire them and kindle their flame before they will allow you to fill the vessel.”

“Respect works completely differently today than it did when I was growing up. When I was growing up, I respected my elders first and I worked hard to earn their respect. Today, it’s the opposite. Young people expect to be respected first, and then and only then will they turn around and respect you.”

“Do we need to kiss kids’ butts today? No, on the contrary. I think we need to be tougher on kids. We need to hold them to higher expectations. We need to push them further and faster. But you can’t do that without the leverage of a human connection as the conduit to those higher expectations. You have to have the relationship to be able to do that.”

- How does having a human connection with someone allow me to influence them more effectively?
- How can I leverage the way respect works today to create better interactions with my student and other young people?

Passion Versus Interest

Excerpts from the master class:

“I think kids can have a high degree of interest in something, but that doesn’t mean they have passion. Passion is where grit, stick-to-it-iveness and resilience live. When I talk to young people, I tell them, ‘Don’t spend one minute trying to find your passion. Spend every minute you can finding what you’re good at. You may find something you’re good at and you don’t like doing it. That’s an important nugget of information! You may find something you’re pretty good at that you like doing. You may have a number of things you’re good at. Start doing it. Do a little job shadowing. Is there a career out there where I might be able to do something like this?’

Find what you’re good at, and then become good at doing it. When you like something, you become good at it, you start getting some success, you start getting some confidence, that’s where passion one day comes. I don’t think we trip over our passion; I think passion finds us.”

- How can I adapt to meet my student where they’re at in their interests?
- What is my role in supporting their journey in discovering what they’re good at?

Topics for Reflection

How Kids Spend Time

Excerpts from the master class:

“What do you learn in play time? Everything! You learn to regulate yourself, coping skills, how to adapt, how to self-manage, leadership, communication, work ethic—you learn everything in play time! Most parents and educators would agree that what is missing in many young people is their ability to handle stress, self-regulate, and manage themselves because we’ve taken the opportunity of play time away.”

“How many of you have looked at a young person in your sphere of influence and thought, ‘wow, they are completely wasting their time’. I’m here to tell you definitively: young people do not waste their time. At any given moment, they’re doing exactly what they want to do, exactly the way they want to do it, and they’re going to do it for how long they want to do it. They may not be doing what you want them to do, but that doesn’t mean they’re wasting their time.”

“Young people today, by default, are looking for cheat codes, hacks, and shortcuts. And they want to shortcut everything they’re doing. You can either help them create that, or they’re going to come up with it on their own. I don’t view that as a bad thing. I view it as being efficient and productive.”

- **What activities/hobbies might I view as a waste of time that my student does not view as a waste of their time?**
- **How can I ensure that my student has adequate time to ‘play’ and interact with others in a fun environment? What skills might they be learning during these leisure times?**
- **Is there any overlap between what my student is currently doing and what they need to do to build a personal competitive advantage? How can I help them see those connections?**

Resources

THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE TRACK™

When it comes to careers, young people don't know what they don't know.



We—their parents, educators, coaches, counselors, and influencers—need to talk to them about their future.

The **Competitive Advantage Track** gets these conversations started! This free, easy-to-use tool will drive the dialogue to help young people think constructively about their future, develop crucial career and life skills, and ultimately thrive in a fast-changing world.



In each module (or “Slice”), generational expert and [Career Tree](#) creator Mark C. Perna delivers a short, heartfelt talk about a particular skill, why it matters, and how it connects to their personal competitive advantage for whatever they want to achieve in life.

Facilitators, parents, and learners themselves can then implement any or all of the resources provided below to maximize the dialogue, learning, and reflection. The Competitive Advantage Track is the catalyst for critical conversations!

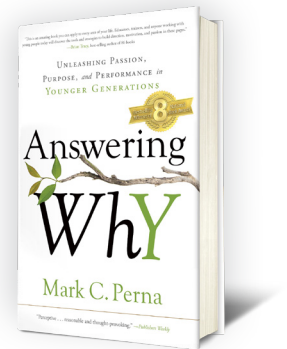
Access all the free videos and downloadable resources for the Competitive Advantage Track at <https://markperna.com/cat>—and start the dialogue with your student today!

MARK'S BESTSELLER ANSWERING WHY

Today's young people get a lot of bad press—but what if it's all wrong?

In *Answering Why: Unleashing Passion, Purpose & Performance in Younger Generations*, join international speaker Mark C. Perna for a journey that will reshape everything you thought you knew about young people.

With humor and candor, Mark unlocks the secrets of the Why Generation: how they think, what makes them tick, and how they make decisions. They can achieve beyond all expectations, if we bridge the generational divide and answer their why.



Who Is Answering Why For?

- **Parents:** With more than 100 million people in today's younger generations, you're not alone in your parenting struggles. Lean in as author and single dad Mark shares the motivational strategies that made the difference for his sons.
- **Educators:** Young people are capable of higher performance, and your job is to unleash their true potential. In *Answering Why*, discover the national best practices to empower students and trainees to make the most of their education and career journey.
- **Employers and Community Leaders:** The skills gap is getting wider for almost every industry in America. *Answering Why* provides the proven strategies you need to build pipelines and recruit, retain, and engage the best young talent out there today.

Answering Why is a landmark bestseller that won eight awards, including the Nautilus Award which is given to books that make a positive difference in the world. Find out more about *Answering Why* at <https://markperna.com/answering-why-book!>

Resources

THE CAREER TREE®



The Career Tree is a powerful classroom tool to help young people discover the career that's right for them—along with the motivation and practical steps to take to reach those goals.

Born of years of experience and research, the Career Tree is the first generationally focused solution to make education feel relevant to young people everywhere.



The clear path the Career Tree shows, between learning to employment, can be incredibly motivating to young people, and this is the story that our custom Career Trees tell. Discover how this classroom strategy brings your school's existing career development tools to life in a whole new way—so that real action is the next step.

PLEASE NOTE: The Career Tree is not designed for home use. If your child's school district is not currently using Career Trees, please share the [Career Tree](#) with your school administrator/superintendent. Get in touch with us any time at contact@tfsresults.com to set up a discovery call with your school's leadership team.

A FUTURE EVERYONE CAN BELIEVE IN



Together, your community can find common ground, build serious buy-in, and move forward with confidence. The secret is setting a community rally point everyone can believe in.

A dynamic speaker at the unique intersection of education, employment, and community growth, Mark C. Perna specializes in setting the rally point that compels everyone's fullest contribution toward the agreed-upon outcomes. (And we do mean everyone.)



In a powerhouse single keynote or series of targeted events, Mark has delivered relevant data, powerful action steps, and real hope to organizations and communities across North America. It's a mission for education, an objective for business and industry, and a plan for economic viability for any and every community.

To learn more and connect with Mark directly, [click here](#).



Biography |

MARK C. PERNA



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.

Mark 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!*. His library of episodes on *The Perna Syndicate* podcast reaches listeners in more than 70 countries.

As a weekly contributor at *Forbes.com* since 2019, Mark has published more than 300 articles, reaching an audience of over 4 million. Mark serves on the Advisory Council for the Coalition for Career Development and is a member of the International Economic Development Council, both in Washington, DC.

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:

STAY CONNECTED

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!

