

# The World. According to Trump

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COURTESY THE TRUMP ORGANIZATION

## A CONVERSATION WITH THE WORLD'S MOST CELEBRATED MOGUL.

THIS PAGE: Donald Trump, CEO of The Trump Organization and executive producer and host of "The Apprentice."

**R** real estate magnate, billionaire, casino mogul, TV star, celebrity property tycoon, best-selling author, new father—what do you call the man whose very name has become a brand, the chief executive of an organization that *Crain's New York Business* designated as NYC's largest privately held company?

You might call him a legend, because Donald Trump has amassed one of the most prestigious collections of buildings and properties in the country. His empire includes Trump Tower, Trump Palace, Trump Park, Trump Plaza, 40 Wall Street, Trump World Tower, the Trump International Hotel and Tower, Seven Springs Mansion in Bedford, Mar-a-Largo Club in Palm Beach, and three world-class casino hotels in Atlantic City. He is presently working on properties in Las Vegas, Fort Lauderdale, Chicago, Toronto, Honolulu, Dubai, Canouan Island, Panama, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

These days, most people know Donald Trump from his successful TV show, "The Apprentice," in which he fires contestants from the boardroom of his opulent Fifth Avenue headquarters. What viewers don't see is the mogul's 26th-floor spacious corner office, a testament to his achievements.

Upon entering, one first notices his seven books displayed standing up with pages fanned open on a glass coffee table. Near the books are a Trump talking doll (push a button and it voices such Trumpisms as "You're Fired!"), audio tapes from Trump University, a football signed by NFL players, Shaquille O'Neill's basketball shoe, trophies, signed baseball bats, and renderings of a new Trump property. Long rows of Trump Ice water bottles line a shelf above the coffee table. Stacked on the carpet are blow-up posters from his lecture at The Learning Annex, "Real Estate Wealth Expo." The walls are decorated with framed magazine covers featuring him as well as personal photographs with JFK Jr., Ronald Reagan, Hillary Clinton, and others. Behind his buttery soft leather chair and desk piled high with papers is a picture-perfect view of the Plaza Hotel and Central Park.

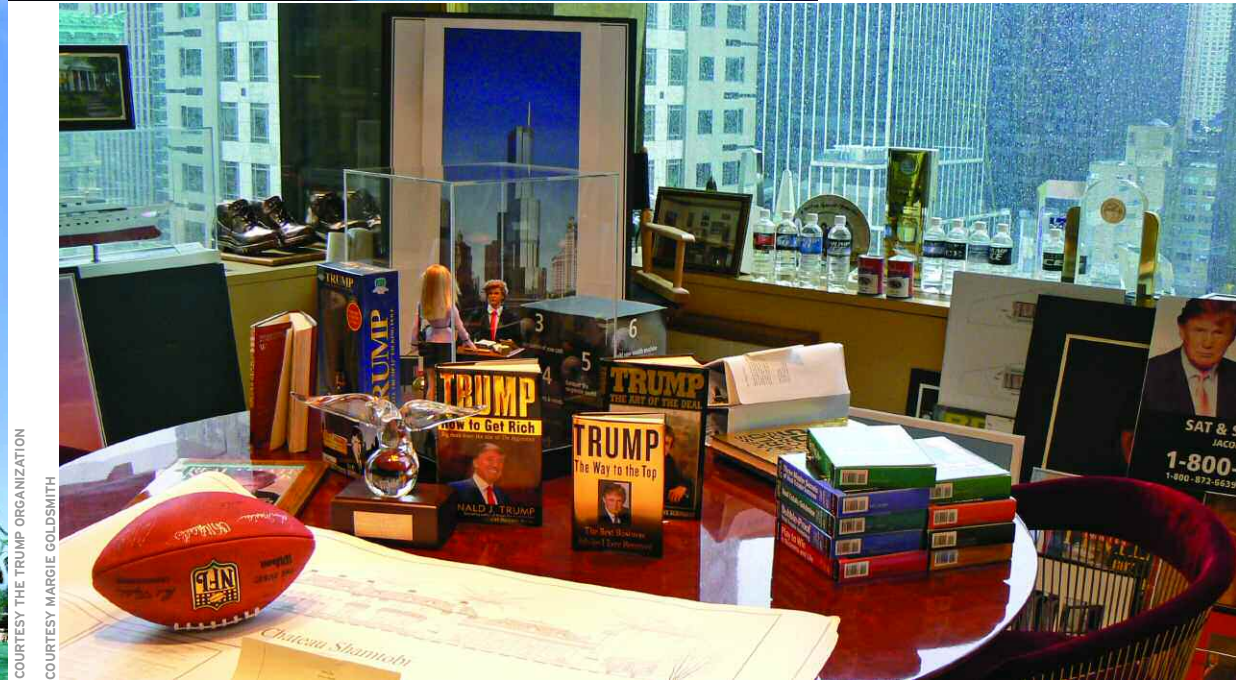
Trump enters the room and offers me a chair. With the exception of his bushy, salt-and-pepper, gravity-defying eyebrows, he is impeccable: Brioni navy blue suit, tasteful pale yellow tie, gold and enamel cufflinks, and solid gold watch. I find myself staring at the famous comb-over, to which entire blogs are devoted, a "do" that both Leno and Letterman have mocked. I had planned my first question to be, "What's with the hair?" but I don't ask, because now that I see Trump in person, I think the famous hairstyle fits perfectly with his larger-than-life image.



TOP RIGHT: COURTESY MARGIE GOLDSMITH; LEFT & ABOVE: COURTESY THE TRUMP ORGANIZATION

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: Donald Trump, hard at work; Mar-a-Lago, located in Palm Beach, Florida, and home to the International Red Cross Ball, was acquired by Trump in the 1980s; when completed in 2009, the Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago will be the second tallest building in the U.S., boasting 92 floors.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: Trump Towers New York, the setting of Donald Trump's reality show "The Apprentice," is a 58-story skyscraper that was completed in 1983; an assortment of Trump memorabilia on display in his Fifth Avenue headquarters; Panama's 65-story Trump Ocean Club International Hotel & Tower is scheduled for completion in 2009 and is Trump's first real estate investment in Central America.



Meeting Donald Trump can be intimidating—after all, everything about him and his properties is always described in superlatives. So what do you ask first, especially when there are 12.2 million Google results when you enter “Donald Trump”? Hoping to break the ice, I said, “I Wikipedia’d you this morning and there are 35 references.”

“To me?” he asked, genuinely surprised. He arches his eyebrows. “Is it all positive, I hope?”

Where’s the braggadocio I was expecting? Where’s the “Trumpeteer” I’d heard so much about? I ask him what he wanted to be as a kid, and he said he wanted to play baseball or make movies. He’d planned to go to the USC School of Cinema until a friend said, “You know too much about real estate to be doing that.”

“That friend did me a great favor,” Trump smiles.

Donald Trump learned the real estate business in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, when he was still in high school. He shared an office with his father, Fred, who taught him the construction industry. Trump then left for college at the Wharton School of Finance and returned to work for his father after graduation. Fred Trump once said, “Some of my best deals were made by my son, Donald. Everything he touches turns to gold.”

And it’s not just real estate that has the magic Trump touch. There are also his products: Go Trump Online Travel, The Donald J. Trump Men’s Collection, Trump Ice, *Trump Magazine*, Trump University, Trump Mortgage, and Trump Golf. There’s

“Trumped” the radio program, Trump Model Management, and the Miss Universe, Miss USA, and Miss Teen USA Competitions. In spite of all these, Trump insists, “I’m a real estate person more than anything else.” Proudly, he hands me a *New York Times* article about his Trump World Tower. The review is a rave. Then Trump shows me *Crain’s New York Business*, which lists the Trump Organization as the largest privately held company in New York, with estimated revenues of \$10.4 billion. This gives me an opportunity to segue into his personal wealth and I ask, “Why is there so much controversy over your net worth?”

“There’s no controversy over my net worth,” he retorts. “The controversy is a guy wrote a book and the book was wrong so I sued him. I don’t like people printing false stuff. And this guy was just a bad guy who is a bad writer, and the only way I’d sue him would be if I had a substantial net worth.”

I can feel his anger mounting, so I change the subject. “You have all these holdings and these properties and ownerships. What’s driving you to keep on buying and building more?”

He sits back in his chair, relaxed. “Well, I think I just enjoy what I do. You know, I make speeches for The Learning Annex and everybody wants to know, ‘How do you become successful?’ And I say, ‘You have to love what you do. Never give up, but you have to love what you do. If you don’t love what you do, you’re never going to be successful.’ I make speeches on that and we have tremendous crowds. I mean, these crowds are humongous, and they all come because of me. And the thing

that I really preach is you have to love what you do. And I love what I’m doing.”

“What is the legacy you want to leave?”

“I think my big legacy is going to be what I built,” he replies. “You know, I’m building the largest building in Chicago—92 stories. I’m building a building in Las Vegas that’s a tremendous success, that you’ve probably read something about. It’s the most successful building—I mean, other guys have all failed in Las Vegas, but my building is totally sold out. I’m going to start a second one now, and I’m building a job, it’s called

Trump International Hotel, it’s a huge success in Las Vegas and Chicago. I’m building jobs in Miami, I’m building jobs all over. I have a golf course that just opened in California in Palos Verdes, two miles on the ocean. It’s phenomenal and it’s being compared to and even said to be better than Pebble Beach, which is a great golf course. I think probably my legacy is going to be what I did the most, and now a lot of people will say what I did on television, because when you have a show that becomes the number one show, that’s a pretty good legacy in itself. But that’s only a very part-time career, which is pretty good.”

“So is it the Trump name? Is it the brand that makes it so successful?”

“I think it’s the brand, I think it’s the whole package. I also think it’s great architecture, great location. You can’t have the brand in a bad location, you know. I have the best location, the best architecture, and the best brand. And everyone knows what I’m doing.”

Maybe he likes the sound of his own voice, but he is smart—really smart. How else can he possibly have succeeded this way? “Who do you respect?” I ask.

“I respect a lot of people,” he says. “I mean, my mentor was my father more than anybody else, but I respect a lot of people, a lot of people do a good job.”

“How about the T.V. show?”

“Well,” he muses, “at some point, like everything else, it has to go away, it just can’t keep going like it’s going. It became the number one show on television, it continues to get good ratings, and it continues to be a great success. But at some point I will not do that any more.”

“And what do you want to do?”

“I don’t know, I can’t tell you that,” he replies. “I mean, I wasn’t going to do ‘The Apprentice’ until Mark Burnett gave me a fantastic sales pitch. But that’s the first time that a businessperson went on television and became a star. And that’s the first time in the history of show business that a business show worked in prime time.”

“What is the most humbling experience you’ve ever had in your life?” I ask.

“I don’t like to talk about humbling experiences.”

“Okay, what’s your favorite destination in the world?”

“Palm Beach, Florida. I think it’s a great place. It’s beautiful, it’s safe, and it’s close to New York.”

“Where do you go when you want to go on vacation?”

“I don’t go on vacation. And I usually only go to one of my places, Canouan Island. You know, I own the best properties in lots of different places, so why should I patronize somebody else’s property, get them a lot of publicity? I mean, I own the best golf course in California, I own the best golf course in New York and New Jersey, I have the number one rated course in the state of Florida, so why would I want to go to some other location in Florida and play somebody else’s course?”

“Do you like to travel or is it just part of your business?”

“No, I don’t like to travel, but I do, and I actually travel more for business. But you know, my business is my pleasure, it is my vacation.”

“What kind of car do you drive?” I ask.

“Well, I have numerous different cars. I have Ferraris and I have Rolls-Royces and I have limousines and I have Mercedes-Benzes. I have different cars in different locations.”

“Out of the year, how many weeks would you say you have to travel?”

“I would say I’m traveling three weeks. Not that much. Often times, I’ll go in the plane, travel, do the deal and come right back. I won’t even stay overnight.”

“And what do you bring with you?” I ask. “A BlackBerry? A laptop?”

“I’m not heavy into the world of computers,” he replies.

## “Leadership is the ability to get people to do what you want them to do. Okay?”

“Everybody who works for me has the latest and the best. But I just missed the computer generation. My kids eat and breathe computers; they read everything online. Whereas me, I like to read a newspaper. So no, I’m not into that at all.”

I ask if he keeps a journal. “I wrote six,” smiles Trump, pointing to his books. “Every one of them was a number one best seller.”

I ask him to describe his typical day. “Well, I start in the morning early,” he says, “about five a.m. I read the papers, and I’m in the office by seven, seven-thirty; I get home by seven in the evening. Sometimes I go out—this is a bad week, I have five events. To me, a great luxury is to be able to go home and not go out. But I sort of am forced to go out.”

“What do you do in your free time?”

“I like to play golf, I like to play tennis, anything having to do with sports.”

My time is up, he tells me. He has to go to a meeting. I ask, “Can you just finish the line, ‘Leadership is . . .’ what to you?”

“Leadership is the ability to get people to do what you want them to do. Okay?”

“Okay.” A perfect answer, and a remarkably candid one—no waxing philosophical about guiding people toward their bliss, or the absence of an “I” in the word “team.” And, as I dutifully exit his office, it occurs to me that, as he defines it, perhaps no one knows how to lead better than Trump. **ET**