Donald J. Trump's spacious office in Trump Tower on 57th Street and Fifth Avenue in Manhattan is chock-a-block full of collector's items, action figures, building designs, and a movie poster parodying his hit television show, *The Apprentice*. It is a roomful of memories, an ode to the large-framed (6 foot, 3 inches) titan with the swept-back blond mane seated behind his oversize rectangular desk. Surrounding him are ceiling-high glass windows, through which appears a Manhattan skyline on which Trump has placed an indelible stamp by erecting high-end residential towers bearing his name.

On the walls hang glass-covered magazine covers, all adorned with Trump's face, another ode to the man of superlatives, the real-estate developer cum casino owner cum television star who audaciously engages in “truthful hyperbole” (his phrase), one of his numerous techniques for attracting public attention.

Many business leaders seek such attention, but few receive it. Trump receives it in plentitude because millions of people delight in getting a peek into a billionaire's life—and he is very accommodating: Cheerfully, willingly, boastfully, he opens up his fantasy world of gilded mansions, sleek helicopters, lavishly accoutered jet planes, and beautiful women to friends and business acquaintances (often the same), with stunning disregard for his own privacy. Trump is certainly not the wealthiest American; Microsoft's co-founder Bill Gates is. But few are interested in
how the multibillionaire Bill Gates lives, other than to be curious about what high-tech gadgets he has in his ultramodern home near Seattle. By contrast, millions of people are interested in how Trump makes and spends money—and on whom.

Trump attracts attention because, even when he exaggerates, which is often, he is not far from the mark. He wants to be known as the best and the smartest—and, most important, the most popular. He often is the best and the smartest. And that very fact gives him his special charm and makes him an object of intense curiosity. Normally, one would not be curious about a man who openly engages in “truthful hyperbole,” who constantly says he is the best in his field, and whose stadium-size ego dwarfs the egos of so many humbler business leaders. But one forgives the exaggeration, knowing that he is the most important real-estate developer in New York, he is one of the major players in the gaming industry, and he is a television star.

Unlike so many other business leaders, Donald Trump is comfortable seeking and attracting personal publicity; he has no trouble letting millions of people into the seemingly private aspects of his life. Speaking to a jewelry convention in October 2004, a group of total strangers to him, he spoke candidly of the problems of being engaged to a much younger woman. He told the jewelers that when his newly affianced Slovenian-born Melania Knauss, 33 years old, asked him when he graduated from college, he replied, “Next question.” Of his ex-wife Marla, he said, “She cost me a lot of money, but she’s a wonderful woman.” And of his newly engaged son, Donald Trump Jr., he noted, “He wants to give his fiancée a ring that will cost $65,000. That seems cheap to me.” The audience loved the family disclosures, and Trump did not seem to mind divulging them.

He insists that he does not pursue celebrity, that celebrity pursues him. Yet, better than anyone else in the business world, he shrewdly understands the business value of bathing his persona in the klieg lights.

He is careful not to unveil every aspect of his business and personal life. He happily puts his assets at $6 billion but offers few specifics on how he arrives at that figure. To document his holdings with too much precision, he feels, would be tantamount to handing over a treasure trove of intelligence to others who could then exact larger sums from Trump in real-estate deals.

Whereas most business leaders detest personal publicity, Donald Trump thrives on it and is superb at knowing how to attract it. He is so good at what he does that some colleagues call him the greatest marketer
around, or the greatest salesman in the world; but unlike others, who sell
toothpaste and aircraft engines and software, Donald Trump sells him-
s elf as much as he sells his products. Therein lies his true uniqueness.

And, oh, how he knows how to sell himself.

Piles of newspaper and magazine articles, some of which Trump per-
sonally clips, sit on the desk. When he wants to illustrate a point, to but-
tress a claim, to cite a statistic, he quickly searches through the piles,
like a diver searching for buried treasure. If he cannot find the article he
wants, he shouts explosively to an executive assistant outside his door:
“Rhona, bring me *The Apprentice* ratings,” or, “Robin, bring me the
best-seller listings.” A clipping service locates articles in which his
name appears. He often sends these articles to acquaintances along with
a brief handwritten note explaining why he’s sending it. Some recipients
of these “Trump notes” cherish the thought; others (usually, they are
journalists) enjoy tossing the articles into the wastebasket.

With lightning speed, Rhona or Robin appears with the requested arti-
cle, their efficiency indicating that they know the boss’s routine. They
keep the often-requested ratings and best-seller listings close at hand
because he cannot wait to boast to visitors about his recent successes.
Virtually every conversation Trump holds on the phone or in person
begins with him asking some variant of “Are you aware how popular
I am?”

**Seventy-Third Richest in America**

It is the morning of June 3, 2004, 11 days short of Trump’s 58th birthday.
He is in an ebullient mood, and why should he not be? He is, according
to *Forbes* magazine, the 205th richest person in the world and the 73rd
richest person in the United States. He is pleased that, after much per-
suasion on his part, *Forbes* credits him with a net worth of $2.5 billion.
He would like *Forbes* to report that he is worth $6 billion, but unless he
spells out all that he owns, the magazine’s editors will simply not make
that leap. Most of the superwealthy play down their true worth, eager
perhaps to ward off kidnappers or tax authorities, but not Trump: He
urges *Forbes*’ editors to use the highest amount possible. In September
2004, *Forbes* credited Trump with $2.6 billion for 2004, making him the
74th richest man in the United States. For Donald Trump, the *Forbes*
designation seems to validate all that he has worked for the past
decade even though *Forbes* fell short of what Trump regards as his true
net worth.
Never before has his career soared so high. In a few days, he will be the star attraction at the annual Donald Trump “birthday bash” put on at his Trump Taj Mahal casino hotel in Atlantic City to celebrate his 58th birthday, his newly affianced Melania by his side. He has just returned from Ecuador, where his Miss Universe 2004 pageant topped all key television ratings categories in its time slot, garnering 10.5 million viewers. Nothing gives him more pleasure, however, than the surprising popularity of *The Apprentice*, his hit television reality show, which is among the highest-rated entertainment shows of the 2003–2004 television season. Finally, his latest book, *Trump: How to Get Rich*, the fifth one he has penned in the last 17 years, is atop *The New York Times* business best-seller list.

That summer and fall of 2004 Donald Trump appeared to be everywhere. He refused to slow down, to take time off, or to lower his profile. Business colleagues and friends advised him to cool it, insisting that the public would tire of him. But he refused to heed their advice. They might as well have asked him to dive off the roof of Trump Tower.

He knows all too well that he is at the top of his game. He was always widely known and, at least in certain quarters, quite popular. But he has now acquired a degree of fame that shocks him. He genuinely believed that he would do the television show for one season, have some fun doing it, and then go on to the next project. But, as he says about his newly acquired superstardom, “This is ridiculous. This is amazing.”

All through the first season of *The Apprentice* (from January to April 2004) and in the months afterward, he chose to live life to the fullest, giddily taking in everything it had to offer. Trump knows that his sudden stardom is prompting all sorts of new possibilities for him. Every day people want to partner with him, offering to provide a product if he would provide his name, his persona, and his fame.

He might have turned them all away, saying he had no time or no wish to have his name exploited so broadly. Instead, he chose to listen to numerous proposals, to digest them, and then decide upon which ones to endorse. He wanted to know the true value of his sudden superstardom—no timeouts for him. He often cited the classic song “Is That All There Is?,” wondering what more life had to offer a man who seemingly had already acquired or experienced all that there was.
The Multitasker

All this makes Trump seem like a man juggling a hundred balls in the air at once—and loving every minute of it. At times, he complained that he was overscheduled, that the excessive demands on him kept him on the go far too much. “I’ve been out 23 nights in a row,” he said with some exasperation one October evening in 2004, knowing full well that he could have said no to most, if not all, of the events that required his presence; deep down, he seemed to relish the attention and loved the frenetic pace of his life.

That fall, he was building nine buildings and two golf courses.

He was also laboring to breathe new life into his three Atlantic City casino hotels, trying to ease the financial burden on the casino hotel corporation, which faced a debt payment of $1.3 billion by 2006. Although newspaper accounts gave the impression that once again Trump faced financial trouble, he exuded supreme confidence that he was about to conclude “one of the most amazing deals I’ve ever done.”

He was shooting the third season of The Apprentice, appearing in often-daily photo shoots, sometimes in his office at Trump Tower or on the building’s roof. He knew that if ratings for the show dropped, his thus far brief adventure in television would end abruptly. He clearly did not want that to happen, finding the whole medium quite “infectious.” Already he has agreed to produce a new television series called Trump Tower, a Dynasty-like soap opera with an actor playing the Donald Trump character (“I want someone very good looking,” he volunteered, exhibiting the telltale signs of making a joke.)

From behind his desk, he conducts phone interviews with overseas media, targeting countries where The Apprentice opens in the next few months. Shocked and thrilled that he has become a household name in the United States, he now wants to seize the international stage.

He is getting ready to launch his third book of the year, Trump: Think Like a Billionaire: Everything You Need to Know About Success, Real Estate, and Life. He has no qualms coming out with so many books in one year, normally taboo in publishing. He argues that the publishers come to him and offer him tons of money. How can he refuse? He is, according to his publisher, Random House, the greatest-selling business author ever; senior executives at the publishing house want Trump to write yet another book. He confesses that he’s not sure he has much
more to say, but he also admits that he probably will accede to the request. He tells his co-author, Meredith McIver, to start taking notes for yet another book project.

He is putting the finishing touches on his plan to build a Trump Tower in Las Vegas. He has tried to gain a toehold in the gambling mecca for years, but this is his first actual project. He loves the idea of erecting a deluxe condo on the famous Las Vegas strip, but he is wincing at all those New York–Las Vegas trips he will need to make on his 727 jet. Though he flies often in his helicopter and jet plane, he professes no great love of flying. He is a superbillionaire, but he is no jet-setter. He prefers sitting behind his desk, juggling all those balls in the air.

If he has a hobby or an indulgence, it is the game of golf. A three- to five-handicap golfer, he loves playing 18 holes at one of his golf courses, mixing business with pleasure, keeping a watchful eye out for fallen trees and overgrown grass even as he laces into that tiny white object.

Occasionally, he enters a specially designed “studio” at Trump Tower to star in a television commercial, for which he is paid millions of dollars. Though he is a multibillionaire, he relishes the millions of dollars he earns for these commercials, often referencing his father, Fred Trump, who felt that anyone would be crazy to pass up such money. When an unfriendly reporter asked Donald Trump why he alone among the fraternity of American billionaires did television commercials, Trump replied that he did them because he was asked to do them—and they paid a great deal of money. What he didn’t say, because he didn’t want to say it in public, was that most of those in that exclusive fraternity would not be asked!

To accommodate the seemingly endless demands on his time, Trump has designed a number of board rooms within Trump Tower so that he is only an elevator ride away from the necessary backdrop for the requested events. He is, he proudly proclaims, the most efficient person he knows or knows of. He is efficient because, being Donald Trump, he can command that anyone who wants his involvement has to show up at Trump Tower.

Meeting with a writer one morning, he says he must interrupt the conversation, but only for 15 minutes so he can meet with people seeking his approval to sell a Trump Pillow (he approves). He asks the writer to wait outside his office. Sure enough, 15 minutes later, he emerges from his office, introduces the Trump Pillow people to the writer, and resumes the interview.
By the end of the morning, Donald Trump might well have spoken to 50 people either on the telephone or in person. To each one, he seems on cloud nine because, as he tells each one, he has the number one show on television. “Have you seen my ratings?” he asks, ready to produce an article on a second’s notice to read to the phone caller or office guest.

Nothing seems to faze him.

Only media attacks against him, perceived or real, big or small, bother Trump. But there are fewer such assaults today than in the past, he happily reports, and if in the past he had trouble containing his anger, he is now able to move on and cool off after a day or two. He knows now that such attacks do not hurt his business; indeed, by adding to his notoriety, they probably broaden his fame and, as perverse as he finds it, sell more apartments.

But, knowing that even bad publicity might help him in business, he is still a perfectionist; he still wants complete control over his image, so he scrutinizes the media for unfriendly comments the way a young woman might look for new blemishes on her face. He wants no blemishes.

**That Cloud-nine Feeling**

The cloud-nine feeling and the personal bruising were part and parcel of Donald Trump’s complicated, intriguing persona during the summer and fall of 2004.

For years, he had searched for acceptance as a great builder and developer. In the fall of 2004, he was getting the highest dollar per square foot of any developer in New York. Apartments at his Park Avenue and 59th Street property were getting $4,500 a square foot, the highest of its kind. For years, he attached the name Trump to his buildings, all too aware that it was a high-risk strategy: The financial failure of a building meant a blow to his reputation. Today, he takes great satisfaction in knowing that the strategy is paying off handsomely. Even the most cynical professionals in public relations and marketing congratulate him for being among the best branding machines around.

Over the years, he has sought a kind of peace treaty, or at least a truce, with the media, which tracked his career with a patronizing air, as if Trump were some lesser specimen, worthy of mockery but not of praise. Because he seemed a caricature of how a billionaire behaved, he was covered in the media as if he was indeed a caricature and not a genuine, serious business figure.
Now in the summer and fall of 2004, the media is displaying new, uncharacteristic warmth toward the man. Even when it covered Trump's financial misfortunes in Atlantic City during the summer, it ran straightforward stories, accepting Trump's point that the prepackaged bankruptcy being prepared for his casino hotel corporation meant smoother sailing for the casinos.

In earlier years, the media would have fired one missile after another at Trump.

Cover stories on Donald Trump in 2004 were about the drama and excitement of The Apprentice—not, as in the past, about how much he was truly worth. Both Newsweek (March 1) and Fortune (April 26) put Trump on their covers, focusing on the new television celebrity. “He's never been hotter [just ask him]...” was part of the headline on the April 26, 2004, Fortune cover.

Trump did not allow himself to get too smug over the media’s sudden adulation. He knew it could be ephemeral. He worried about whether the media coverage of his Atlantic City troubles might affect ratings for the second season of The Apprentice, which started in September. He randomly sampled opinions from office visitors and phone callers. The general feeling was that the show’s ratings would remain high.

All throughout his career, Trump seemed transfixed by the kind of stardom that came to entertainers or sports heroes or astronauts. But to him, celebrity was a means to an end, not the end itself: He hoped that whatever celebrity he gained would give him a business advantage.

Even before The Apprentice, he was well known.

In the spring of 2000, a Gallup Poll noted that 98 percent of Americans knew who he was. (Bill Gates and Ross Perot also scored in the high 90s, but Jack Welch, Warren Buffett, Steve Jobs, and Ted Turner were much further down in the poll.) With The Apprentice, however, a whole new slice of America has gotten to know him—especially youngsters 12 years old and below. Trump senses that he is far better liked in 2004 among the public than ever before.

So, what he has now is supercelebrity status with much less of the notoriety that attached itself to his reputation in the past. That stratospheric status has brought him instant recognition whenever he walks along the street. As he makes his way along Fifth Avenue, or anywhere, for that matter, in Manhattan, heads turn, passersby shout greetings, and small crowds gather to stare. The greetings are friendly. “Trump,” shouted one African watch-seller, giving Donald Trump a warm feeling and leading him to wonder whether that might be the only English word the man knew.
Trump and stardom have now become synonymous. Not surprisingly, Donald Trump is just where he has always wanted to be: “It’s been an amazing five years for me. It’s been by far the best five years in business beyond *The Apprentice.*”

What has motivated Donald Trump through the years?
Was it, as some of his earlier critics suggested, greed?
Or perhaps it was the respect of his peers?
Or could it have been public acclaim?

He seems far more motivated by the struggle to build a fortune than by the opportunity to use the accumulated items of wealth. He loves to negotiate. He loves to make deals. He loves running a successful business, trying to expand it wherever possible. But most of all, he is motivated by a desire to nurture the one aspect of his life that is so unique and so characteristic of him: the Trump brand.

If that means appearing in public as much as possible, that is fine with him. If that means promoting all things that bear the name Trump, he is comfortable with that. If it means exploring any idea that might expand the Trump brand and, hence, deepen his fortune, he has time for that.

He is prepared to work zealously at pumping up the Trump brand because he is all too aware of how difficult it was for him to make a genuine comeback. He is all too aware that, even as he showed an incredible resilience in the early 1990s, erasing that huge debt and rebuilding his fortune, he had remained a marginal figure in the business world. He wanted the public to honor his comeback and to treat him with new respect. But even as he attracted attention—because he was, after all, famous, or, perhaps more accurately, infamous—he was still, even in the late 1990s, not taken as seriously as he wished. His face did appear on magazine covers, but, as often as not, he made the cover of the tabloids, not the business magazines. Most books written about him were negative. The media stood aloof from Trump, not quite sure what to make of him, not liking his all-too-personal approach to public relations and never really falling in love with him.

So he sought to improve his image, choosing a unique approach that focused on himself.

 Dating back to the mid-1970s, when he first entered the real-estate business in Manhattan with a great flourish, attempting to rebuild one of the city’s more important but crumbling landmarks, the Commodore Hotel on 42nd Street next to Grand Central Station, Donald Trump sought to build an image for himself that spoke of unalloyed success. He
promised efficiently built edifices that spelled high quality and elegance. “I’ve never seen anything he does that’s been second rate as far as money can buy,” said developer Lou Cappelli. “He doesn’t cut corners. You may not like the brass at Trump Tower because it’s too ostentatious, but it’s the best that money can buy.”

He boldly chose to employ his name atop his buildings even as close advisers thought little of the gesture. But for Trump, this kind of high-risk yet monumentally powerful marketing technique represented an in-your-face assertion of self-confidence that was part and parcel of his ego-oriented persona. Even his last name had a Dickensian sound to it. Had the British author created a character of massive wealth that erected skyscrapers and lived in high style, he might have given him the name Trump because it connotes strength and success. Trump loves the name for signifying those qualities.

Other business personalities have sought to brand themselves, but no one has had the temerity to put his or her own name on so many prominent landmarks: hotel casinos, high-priced residential towers, a shuttle airline, a game, a bicycle race. An ad from Trump’s early days proclaimed, “Everything does seem to be very Trump these days.” And indeed, it was. He had to swallow some ridicule for marketing himself as if he were a bar of soap or a box of Corn Flakes.

But he sought to equate the Trump brand with high quality, and he succeeded in most instances; for years, no business rival tried to emulate his branding technique (in a kind of tribute to Trump’s success at personal branding, Steve Wynn planned to open a casino hotel on the Las Vegas strip in April 2005 and call it simply Wynn Las Vegas.)

Because so much of his business success depends on the value attached to the Trump brand, he has had to make sure that the public has only positive thoughts about the brand. To ensure those positive thoughts, Trump has chosen a unique way of dealing with the media—unique for business leaders, that is. He has decided to handle the media himself.

Instead of relying on public-relations specialists either inside or outside his organization, he, in effect, has become his own public-relations agency. Those specialists might from time to time advise him to steer
clear of the media, and he did not want to heed such advice. More than any other business leader of his era, he understood the business necessity of whipping up a public-relations storm around his name and his projects. As he wrote in his 2004 book, How to Get Rich, “If you don’t tell people about your success, they probably won’t know about it.”

By thrusting himself into the public spotlight, Donald Trump differentiated himself from all other business leaders of his time. Caution and shyness were not part of his DNA. He fervently believed that the burnishing of his ego was critical to his business success. And he burnished it on a regular basis: “Billionaire authors are harder to find ... than millionaire authors,” he boasted in his 2004 book, How to Get Rich. “Billionaire authors with interests in real estate, gaming, sports, and entertainment are rarer still. And billionaire authors with their own Manhattan skyscrapers and hit prime time TV series are the rarest of all.”

Most business figures have peanut-size egos—or, if they have large egos, they are eager to conceal them, believing that the very act of parading themselves in public is a flamboyance that might prove bad for business; they also feel that self-glorification is a sin that only distracts from the selling of the company’s product. In stark contrast, Donald Trump believes firmly in a nexus between the forging of his ego—his image—and his success in business.

To initially forge his ego, he felt he had to open up to the world, to nurture a persona that was of interest to the public. In doing so, he had to reveal himself in a way that other business figures rarely did. He had to exhibit a good deal of his lifestyle to the public, be accessible to the media, and deliver colorful yet pithy quotes.

Other business leaders exhibited much restraint in their public statements, not wanting to cause even the slightest discomfort to shareholders. Trump, with less than 1 percent of his net worth tied up in a public company (which controlled his casino hotels), had no such concerns, openly calling people idiots and, worse, cursing routinely, exhibiting bouts of anger and fire and passion, making fun of himself.

If most of his business colleagues wanted to avoid the public spotlight, Donald Trump seemed to be perfectly comfortable with it.
The media responded to Trump’s openness and flamboyance by covering his business achievements to a certain degree, but by monitoring his personal life far more passionately and aggressively. Because he invited the media to cover him, he seemed to be open game, and almost any aspect of his personal life hit the newspapers. When second wife Marla Maples was quoted in the newspapers as saying that Donald Trump gave her the best sex she ever had, it was a front-page headline.

He had no way of knowing where his self-promotion might lead, only that he wanted to be accepted (by whom was always an open question), to be taken seriously, and to be given full credit for his accomplishments. Thus, the marketing of his persona became a major business strategy for him, a strategy tailor-made for his unrelenting egocentrism. He needed to be seen and heard at every possible time and place. Hence, he saw no value in limiting his exposure.

Trump’s operation was small (20,000 employees) in comparison to the large corporations; it was highly segmented and depended entirely on the man at the top. It was no accident that the main business strategies Donald Trump adopted had to do with managing his own persona and building his celebrity.

There are, of course, important business lessons to be gleaned from the way Trump behaves. Because he spends so much time negotiating, many of those lessons have to do with how best to negotiate. And because Trump advertises himself as a highly competent money machine, he has ample advice on “how to get rich” and how to “think like a billionaire” and, when things got tough, how to make a comeback. His most novel business lessons are those that encourage executives to burnish their egos and trumpet their achievements in public; these are not lessons that most business leaders will find easy to adopt. But they have worked for Donald Trump.

What the story of Donald Trump offers to other business executives is a roadmap of how to succeed in business by not being afraid of seeking out and taking advantage of the public spotlight. Most business leaders have an inherent aversion to that spotlight—but by watching Trump in action and understanding the way he turns the quest for publicity and the nurturing of his personal brand into successful business strategies, other business leaders might become a little more willing to make the media and other means of communication work for them in a positive way.
A Unique Figure

It is Trump’s unabashed willingness to be so public a figure that makes him unique on the business landscape.

Cautious, even mistrustful of the media, other business leaders openly worry that merely granting an interview might arouse jealousy among colleagues. They wince when magazines put their faces on covers. They eschew television. Despite the marketing power inherent in such major media outlets, these leaders think it best to keep low profiles. Even as these people made the magazine lists of the most powerful and most influential, few know their names outside of the business world. When Fortune magazine published its “Power 25: The Most Powerful People in Business” on August 9, 2004, the top 10 were, in order of importance, Lee Scott, Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, Jeff Immelt, Rupert Murdoch, Michael Dell, Chuck Prince, Ned and Abby Johnson, Sam Palmisano, and Hank Greenberg. Were any of them to walk down the street, few would recognize them, with the possible exception of Gates.

Donald Trump did not make that list. But when he walked up Fifth Avenue nine days after the Fortune list appeared, nearly every passerby recognized him. And he had labored hard to attain such a status.

It was no accident that before he embarked on his business career, he toyed with the idea of entering the film world, dreaming of becoming a Hollywood mogul. He abandoned that dream, but he could not stop being a promoter, a marketer, an entertainer. To understand how Donald Trump functions in business, one should think of him not necessarily as an entertainer, but rather as someone with the skills of an entertainer. Neither he nor some of those who work with him on The Apprentice like to hear him described as an actor, perhaps because to do so might appear to denigrate his business acumen. Yet he certainly employs the same skills of an entertainer—especially an actor—and he gets very far with those skills.

In promoting his products—his real estate and his casinos—he has as much stage presence and as much self-confidence in front of an audience as many actors in Hollywood. In working out the details of a negotiation, he acts out the role of victim (“Hey, your price is way too high”) with skills that seem to be honed in some acting school. He is not at all embarrassed to be called a showman; after all, as he has commented often, he enjoys injecting show business into the real-estate world.
In his own phrase, Donald Trump was “hot” and he did not want to let it go. He was certainly the hottest new star on television, and he got a great kick out of comments that he was helping NBC in the same way that the cast of *Friends* had lifted the network. The surge to the top made him no less immodest: He eagerly told friends that they (the cast of *Friends*) are six people, while he was one person: “They are on for 30 minutes; I’m on for an hour.” He relished it when Jeff Zucker, the president of the NBC Universal Television Group, joked in front of thousands attending an NBC publicity gathering that Jennifer Anniston might have better hair than Donald Trump, but he was getting higher ratings.

Oh, how he was enjoying the stardom. When Harvey Weinstein, whom Donald Trump referred to as the biggest producer in Hollywood, told him he was the largest star in Weinstein’s town and no one else was even close, Trump repeated the comment to his closest 1,000 friends. He was a true entertainer now, so a little harmless hyperbole would not hurt, he was sure, so rather than note accurately that he was the biggest star of reality television, he took a slight liberty and described himself as the biggest star on television. No one questioned that statement. There seemed little purpose—he was soaring through the heavens, and he loved the altitude.

If anyone required proof that Donald Trump during that summer and fall of 2004 had attained a degree of acceptance and popularity that was, even for him, beyond his wildest dreams, there he was, seated behind his desk suddenly reaching for a copy of the *Palm Beach Post*. He opened the newspaper to a full-page article on him and *The Apprentice*, and then proudly proclaimed that he had made “the bible,” as Palm Beach royalty call it. Here was another moment for him to savor: “Now what do you think of all the bluebloods of Palm Beach when they see this (article)? They get sick to their stomachs. They say, ‘I can’t fuckin’ believe this.'”

It was Donald Trump’s colorful way of saying, “I made it. I finally made it.”

This was Donald Trump in 2004, conscious of how close he had come to the edge of financial disaster in the early 1990s, vowing that he would never let that recur, and thrilled at becoming a superstar.

How had all this happened?

How had so many facets of American society—the business world, the media, the world of society, the entertainment world, and, last but not least, the world of young people—after marginalizing Donald Trump for so long, now have turned him into a household word?
How had Donald Trump gone from that neophyte real-estate guy hoping to make a big splash in Manhattan real-estate to one of the most famous people in the country?

How had he gone from the mainstream media’s gossip columns and the tabloids’ front pages to nearly iconic status, author of the most famous two-word phase in the America of 2004 (“You’re fired”)?

Finally, why are so many people from all slices of life—young and old, rich and poor—interested in this man?

This book deals with these questions.

The first part of this book looks at the way Donald Trump works and what he is like personally.

The second part covers his childhood years and his early forays into real estate in Manhattan.

The third part focuses on his conquest of the Atlantic City world, his subsequent fall, and his comeback.

The fourth part takes a careful look at how he employed his skills in promotion and marketing and public relations to burnish his image.

The final chapters examine in some depth Donald Trump’s achievement of household name status through *The Apprentice* and his willingness to exploit his new status by embarking on a whole new set of media-oriented initiatives aimed at keeping his name before the public.

We begin with a behind-the-scenes look at the way Donald Trump works.