

Podcast Precis

Abi: Ken, you have an interesting background and how you got to where you are today. You had a very long career in the Marine Corps, so thank you for your service. Can you please talk about that experience?

Ken: *When you are 19 – 20 years old, such experiences become formative in shaping who you are today. I did learn many things in the Marine Corps that I have applied to my current life. Many of these I did not realize were applicable until later on, but I have come to appreciate the ability to leverage some skills and some tricks that I learned and use them in the business world.*

Abi: What are some of the transferable skills that you feel that you picked up early in your career that have been valuable as you progressed?

Ken: *Some things are skills while others are probably tricks. Rangers are taught to operate independently in small groups and learning how to build, train, and motivate a team so that they know what to do is something that takes a while to appreciate. The Marine Corps' concept of backward planning which is based on objectives or targets you want to achieve is a trick which I have found very useful in M&A*

Abi: You wrote this book, *The Marine Corps Way to Win on Wall Street*, which got great reviews and inspired many of your readers. What inspired you to write the book?

Ken: *Early in my career, when I was faced with some challenges and was trying to figure out what to do, I realized that I could apply Marine Corps principles and solve the problem. I was talking to people about the fact that I was leveraging these skills which I learned when I was in the Marine Corps, and I saw that it was working. I started thinking about ideas, and every time I got one, I would see an article that I thought was relevant and saved it in a file. I spent a couple of days organizing what I had put in there into logical themes that eventually became 11 chapters in the book.*

Abi: What are the key principles and practices that one would take from your book that you would recommend?

Ken: *The book goes through 11 traits and some of the key ones start with the idea of having an objective because if you do not have an objective, no road will get you to where you want to be. Once you understand your objective, all your tactics need to be oriented towards achieving that objective. You need to use discipline, so you do not get diverted. Discipline and focus are not about what you do, but rather about what you do not do.*

Abi: Let us talk about Marlin and associates. Can you give us a background of how you started, how it has evolved, and what are you guys focused on today?

Ken: *While I was in the Marine Corps, I focused a lot on corporate strategy as part of my MBA. I was hired by Dun and Bradstreet where I was initially brought in a troubleshooting role under the CFO, but eventually got into strategy and M&A. As I was doing strategy and M&A, I got to see a lot of investment banks and I started to think that working for one of the boutique investment banks would be a good thing to do. After I left Dun and Bradstreet, I ran a B2B fintech firm called Telecore and bought a piece of that eventually after a few years and formed a company called Telesphere. I raised debt and equity capital for Telesphere, and when I sold the company, I got a call from a boutique investment bank to lead their practice which will be focused on B2B fintech. After the dot-com bubble, I thought that the best time to start a boutique investment bank would be now as the markets were down in 2000 and 2001 and would eventually pick up.*

Abi: You have been through a dislocation and turned it into an opportunity. Where do you see the opportunity coming out of the current disruption?

Ken: *I think that this disruption that we are going through is not going to be over soon. There have been some trends that were going on and have been accelerated by the pandemic. Online shopping, for example, has put pressure on some retail stores and the pandemic has accelerated that. There has also been a movement in the investment banking world for the use of technology for a long time which has also been accelerated by the pandemic. We have been very strong believers in the use of technology and outsourcing. I think that we have another two years to get things back to normal. There are a lot of businesses that will survive through this, but a lot that would not.*

Abi: I would like to change gears and talk about your racecar driving hobbies. It is an interesting thing that I learned about you recently. Can you share with us how you got into racecar driving and how someone who does not do it but is excited to get into it?

Ken: *I have always liked the idea of racecars but did not know how to get into it nor could have afforded it. I was once talking to a local mechanic who fixed sports cars and this mechanic had a used Ferrari sports car which I bought. My wife bought me a five-day race school pass at a nearby track and that is how I got into racing. All I accomplished was burning up \$2,000 worth of tires.*