



Work

Life After 'The Apprentice'

Lacey Rose 05.23.06, 3:00 PM ET

Getting fired is never easy. But try having it happen with a million people watching.

That misery is saved for 17 of the 18 men and women who compete each season on NBC's *The Apprentice*. Now in its fifth season, the reality TV program pits 18 telegenic contestants against each other in a battle to win a job with host Donald Trump. At the end of each week, one contestant hears the real estate mogul's catch phrase, "You're fired," and is cast off of the show.

"It's quite unpleasant," recalls season two's Raj Bhakta, who was fired during week nine of the 15-week process. "You think, 'Oh well, the music has ended.'"

But most, if not all, of the contestants--several of whom had built successful careers prior to the show--have been able to pack up their bags and move on and up.

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"I always say [reality programming] is like this tornado that comes through your life, and all you're left with is the wreckage," explains season one contestant Omarosa Manigault Stallworth. Rather than fall apart after being fired, she says she chose to ride out the tornado.

And she's not alone. While only one contestant wins a job with Trump--and the accompanying six-figure salary--many of his castoffs have transformed their experience and exposure on the show into lucrative careers. For some, this has meant expanding existing career with new clients, opportunities and endorsement deals. For others, it's meant landing motivational speaking gigs (which can garner some \$17,000 a pop), writing books, launching TV shows and even running for office.

"[The show] definitely opened up so many doors for me," says Tana Goertz, a third season contestant who made it to the last round before getting the ax. Goertz has since published a children's book and will be appearing on another reality TV program, NBC's *Fear Factor* in coming months. She has also become a spokesperson for several products, including the Bedazzler, a stud and rhinestone setting machine, which she used during one of her *Apprentice* tasks.

"Life stays the same pretty much, but *The Apprentice* gives you a limited opportunity to get a message out or to do what you want to do on a broader scale," adds Bhakta, who is currently pursuing his lifetime political aspirations as the endorsed Republican candidate for Congress in Pennsylvania's 13th district.

In some cases, Donald Trump has helped open doors for contestants that he publicly--and in some cases viciously--fired. Trump has lent his voice to Bhakta's campaign and has given his endorsement to season two contestant Wes Moss' book. Season two's Andy Litinsky was a Harvard University senior when he was fired during week 12--but after graduation, Trump offered him a position at the Trump Organization.

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**Wes Moss**

Season: Two

Fired: Week 11—Trump was none too pleased by Wes' lack of control, and said he had failed as a leader.

Wes has maintained his wealth management business, which has increased exponentially since his stint on *The Apprentice*, and has done more than a dozen speaking engagements. He has also written a book, *Starting from Scratch*, and serves as host of his own segment on the NBC affiliate morning talk show, *Atlanta and Company*.

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"You almost have to try to NOT be affected by the experience. Being on *The Apprentice* helped me pursue a lot of new opportunities and go after things I've always wanted to do. I haven't gotten many people who said, 'You were on *The Apprentice*. Will you manage my money?' But I've received speaking engagements before business groups and have gotten referrals that way."