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Norman, Don't Do It!

Headhunters say you're hot property. You've displayed such military leadership and so much style that any corporate position in the U.S. is yours, and you can name your price. H. Ross Perot is drooling over you. Harold Simmons wants to name you CEO of Lockheed.

Norman, don't do it.

You're a superpowerful guy basking in the glow of success, all justified. But join

Manager's Journal

By Gerald C. Meyers

any corporation of size and you'll be a fish out of water. In the Army, when you order soldiers to kill, they salute, bust their butts and do it without asking questions. But preparing to wage war is a whole different ball game from organizing to meet a market need. You'd be battling against first-raters all the way, including many who would outgun you, not a fourth-rate power with a second-rate army.

Your stock is high because you're a top-notch military leader, but most business leaders are also outstanding day-to-day managers. Corporate managers deal with commercial complexities, and produce results with limited resources. You're a question mark as a business manager. The vicissitudes of the marketplace would likely leave you high and dry. You can't

fight market battles on your own terms, your own schedule. That's not the way business works. If you think it does, try it.

Business wouldn't know how to handle you, Norman, and I dare say you would be uneasy grappling with a market-driven business. Don't believe the theoreticians who will claim that you have transferable skills usable in any situation. Don't be suckered by headhunters who don't know anything about leadership. They are meat peddlers looking for a fee.

Still, if your heart is set on a corporate career, there are places that would welcome you and might be worth a try. You might make a go of it at Raytheon, General Dynamics, Martin Marietta or Northrup. For them you can open all of the doors in the Pentagon. After that, you'll have spent your currency, and you will have to get back to the grind of running a business.

University president? Steer clear. Eggheads and prima donnas rule academe. Furthermore, you wouldn't be running the show. You'd need thick kneepads, because you are down on your knees a lot, begging

for funds. That's not fun.

You could go on the lecture circuit for about 98 days and command top dollar. What would you say? It doesn't really matter. You'd earn instant millions. But your tour would be short.

Don't believe your press clippings. You'll start to feel invincible. You'll believe you have megapowers nobody really has. You will fall just as fast as you were fabricated.

Norman, you are an outstanding general. You're very good at pointing where to go, marshaling troops to go along and motivating them to get there. That's leadership on a military battlefield.

And this desert war was made for you. You had endless advantages, including stockpiles of supplies and vastly superior technology. You led the war for which this country has been arming and training for 28 years. You don't get credit for winning it, Norman, but for how fast you won it, and with so few American casualties. Business battles are never so lopsided.

My advice to you: Keep doing what you do best. You're a courageous military man with four stars to prove it. Forget about the vice presidency too—it's an exercise in humiliation. You're 56 years old. If you still want to retire, do it.

Mr. Meyers, a business professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, is the former chairman of American Motors and a former Air Force officer.



Gen. Schwarzkopf

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