



# YOUR STAND IS YOUR BRAND

How Deciding “Who to Be” (NOT “What to Do”)  
Will Revolutionize Your Business

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## Chapter Seven

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# CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

At first, you might think this is the craziest thing you've ever read. Here I'm telling you to put in all this effort, energy, thought, sweat, toil, and passion into building something that starts to succeed on an extraordinary level. Then after all of that—after all of the soul-searching and everything else that went into it—I'm suggesting that you burn down some or maybe even all of it and make room for something new.

Yes, it's crazy—but keep reading because I believe in a short while, you'll see why.

A premise I hold and have shared with you in this book is that complacency is death in business. You can't continue to stay the same and expect things not to decline and eventually die. As such, the concept of creative destruction is not destruction in a negative context. It is, in fact, the ultimate act of creativity.

The mythical story of the phoenix is often used as a metaphor. The origin and nature of this widely known myth varies from source to source. After a period of hundreds of years, a mythical bird known as the phoenix perishes in a burst of spontaneous combustion, burning to ashes. Then, out of that pile of ashes, the phoenix emerges

anew, vibrant, youthful, and more beautiful than it was before. It repeats this cycle over and over again. Its initial death was seen as tragic, because something beautiful was destroyed, yet out of that destruction arose something more spiritual and powerful.

The story of the phoenix is a relevant metaphor for this notion of creative destruction. When we talk about this concept, it may only refer to a dimension of you or your business—or it might mean the whole damn thing. It doesn't mean you are committing a literal, physical act of terrorism on your business—quite the contrary. What you are engaging in is an act of love and passion. It means that you are willing to let go of how things are for the purpose of creating something greater.

I'll say that again: you must be willing to let go of how things are for the purpose of creating something greater. You must "let go to rise." This was one of the most important lessons I learned, and it happened when I sold the business that I'd started from scratch and ran as its CEO for twenty-three years.

### **Am I Having a Stroke?**

I don't know if you've ever sold a business, but let me tell you, it's a crazy and challenging experience. Most days, you feel like you're running around with your arms waving and your hair on fire (if I had any hair to burn). There are deal points to negotiate. You're dealing with a number of attorneys. You've got impasses along the way during those negotiations. Suddenly the deal is on, then the deal is off, and then it's back on again. You have a couple of ugly conversations with the prospective buyers,

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then everyone apologizes and gets back on track. Then everyone tells each other to screw off again.

Perhaps some of you have had different experiences with smaller scale, less complicated businesses. However, if you have a business that has some maturity and scale to it, one that you personally built with your own two hands and mind, there are a number of dynamics involved that can make the whole thing a somewhat harrowing experience.

With one particular business, we were getting to a point where the transaction was actually going to happen. Things were on track and the sale was getting ready to close. At the time, I was in Italy. While walking down a street in Tuscany, getting ready to join my wife for lunch, the left side of my body started to get tingly, there was numbness in my left arm. Dizziness set in. At that point, given the symptomatic picture, I thought I was having a stroke.

I was in a foreign country where I didn't speak the language, save some curse words that I learned from my aunts and uncles growing up. Naturally, my anxiety level shot up. Luckily, I happened to be walking with a friend who led me into a store where we called for an ambulance, and I was taken to the hospital. They worked quickly to determine what was happening. My heart was racing. Fortunately, the neurologist there spoke perfect English and assured me they'd run every test to determine what was wrong. In the meantime, they took my history.

I'll be the first to say that my health was and is pretty extraordinary. I took no medications. I was quite fit. I had no history of cardiovascular disease. There was no history of stroke in my family anywhere. Nonetheless, they took my vital signs to find that my blood pressure was up, my

pulse was accelerated, and I had numbness, tingling, and disorientation. They ran an MRI of my brain with contrast, along with several other tests. I lay there, waiting for the results, until finally the neurologist entered the room and said, “All your tests have come back negative. I believe that you’re having an anxiety attack.”

I thought to myself, *Do you know who the f\*@\$ you’re talking to?* I ate stress for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I had never had anxiety in my entire life—cool as a cucumber. To the doctor, I said with considerable surprise, “Me? An anxiety attack?” He smiled almost lovingly and said, “Well, maybe this is the first time for you. Are you under any sort of stress or duress?”

“I’m always under stress and duress,” I told him, “but I manage it very well.” He then asked me if there was anything happening out of the ordinary. He walked away to leave me to think about his question. I started to contemplate the transaction of the sale of my business, and as I thought about it more deeply, it became an inflection point—a pivotal moment.

**Getting to the next level of your life and your career is less about what you need to do and more about what you need to let go of.**

I should say that much of this book is about my reflection since the sale of that business. The maturity of the thinking in this book comes from the lessons learned throughout my life, but especially since the sale.

Sitting in that hospital room, I realized that, to a large extent, my entire identity was tied up in being the CEO of that company and the activities of the company. What



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was happening on a subconscious level is that I was having a complete identity crisis. The actual prospect that this deal was going to close, that the business was going to sell and I'd no longer be involved in it, produced this physical anxiety attack. Once I realized this, it pushed me into deep introspection. The transaction did happen. The business sold, and I had to move on to what I called the third act of my career.

Act One was my chiropractic practice. Act Two was the business, which I was selling. Act Three was going to be things that I had been contemplating for some time, along with working more closely with my wife. We formed a holding company together—Action Potential Holdings—to start a new chapter in our relationship. The old chapter of our relationship had been “divide and conquer.” I handled my side of things, she handled her side of things, and together we set out to conquer the world. As mentioned earlier, the new chapter was going to be “combine and conquer.”

### Letting Go to Rise

My lesson from that health scare is this, dear reader—and I want you to spend some time thinking about it, as I did, because it might be the most valuable takeaway from this entire book: *Getting to the next level of your life and your career is less about what you need to do and more about what you need to let go of.*

I realized that in my own predicament, starting this new chapter of my life, the third act of my career was not about what I needed to do next. It was about what I needed to let go of first. I had to let go not only of the company

I'd built and run for twenty-three years, but on a deeper level, I had to let go of the identity I had—my sense of self—in order to create space and open up possibilities for new things.

In the Philosophy Formula course that I teach, the second module is called Letting Go to Rise. In essence, that concept is what's at play here, at least in part, when it comes to creative destruction. What I'm asking you, right now, is: What do you need to let go of so you can rise?

Like the phoenix.

The process of creative destruction and letting go is not a one-time thing. The scenario I just described about the sale of my business happened almost ten years ago. I had to let go of my identity. Let it burn. I had to go through this creative destruction to reinvent myself and my business activities—my purpose and my vision. Over the year prior to writing this book, I went through it all again.

With my wife's help and coaching, I developed a strong meditation practice. I had quite an interesting experience when I reached a deep level of meditation. I found myself in a zone of being in a place where there was really almost no time and space. Barely on the edge of awareness, I found that I became an almost third-party viewer of myself. I witnessed burning within me, from the bottom of my neck down to my pelvis, in my entire chest cavity. Energetically speaking, there was a bonfire burning.

I know, you came to this book for business advice, but bear with me. At first, when I witnessed this, I wasn't sure what to make of it. I wasn't afraid of it, but at the same time, I didn't understand what was burning. Over time, I realized that it was my sense of identity burning and it

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was a raging fire. Rather than try to resist it, and rather than try to put the fire out, I listened to a little voice that kept whispering to me, “Let it burn. Just sit back and let it burn.”

Over time, I took comfort in the flames, realizing that this was a necessary process—something that I had to surrender to and let happen throughout the period of almost a year, until it finally did burn down. That was the edict, the sense of the voice that whispered to me to let it completely burn to ash. Out of the ash, a new thing would rise—this phoenix, the next chapter of my expression.

Commensurate with that was the acceptance of my proposal for this book and my becoming a first-time author, finally writing a book after all these years. I don’t yet know how much this process is in alignment with the magical mystery of life or how things will unfold. I was a force-of-will entrepreneur, a self-made man who takes the world and shapes it into the way he sees it, a man who was willing to run through brick walls and fight all of the battles necessary to succeed in the world. It was something I’d spent decades doing. I did so only to find out how beat up and broken one can end up as a consequence. There is no doubt that the force of your own will can make things happen—but there is also no doubt that it alone is inherently limited. Just like any drug that can *force* your blood pressure to lower or *make* your cholesterol go down, those same drugs will have adverse side effects and consequences that are not desirable.

I believe that all of this is an evolutionary process of the human spirit and experience. Learning and understanding how to surrender and let go comes from a unique form of strength and can sometimes—I dare say most times—be much more powerful and expansive than the

force of will, particularly when it comes to outcomes. When I talk about creative destruction, I'm talking about this idea of a willingness to let a current sense of identity and way of doing things burn down so that something bigger and more powerful can emerge.

## Back to Eleven

Recall how I discovered what it meant to find your Miles Davis back at Eleven Madison Park—the one-time two-star *Michelin* restaurant striving for its third star. The story didn't end once they achieved it.

Over a period of years, not only were they in the rarified air of being a *Michelin* three-star restaurant, but they took it a step further. Recently, as referenced to the time of the writing of this book, Eleven Madison Park was voted the number one restaurant in the world. Not only did they have their three-stars, but they were considered the best of even those other three star establishments. As you can imagine, when you're recognized as the number one restaurant in the world, you're going to have a waiting list almost every night of the week. You can raise your prices and ride that out for years and years—and rightfully so. You've earned it due to your achievement.

Shortly after they achieved this extraordinary acknowledgment and award, do you know what they did?

They closed the restaurant down in order to “burn it down” to start from scratch and recreate the whole thing. Again, to most, this would be the craziest thing a business could ever do. They had achieved so much and could monetize it for almost as long as they wanted, yet they decided to burn it all down and reinvent themselves. Same restaurant, same name, but when the chef

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co-owner Daniel Humm and his business partner, Will Guidara, were interviewed about why they were doing this, they answered that their philosophy was that you can never stay the same and stay on top. You have to constantly reinvent yourself.

To quote Humm: “In a way, it was kind of a beautiful thing. Kind of unexpected. Maybe it’s not the smartest thing from a business point of view, you know, closing when you have the most demand, but in a way it’s kind of badass, too.”

You have to be creatively destructive.

It’s a fascinating story in so many ways. They took all the metal, the pots, and the pans from the kitchen and had it all melted down and reformed into a step that’s at the front of the restaurant. Humm stated that every time people come into their establishment, they’re stepping over the past and into the future.

The type of person or people that it takes to start a restaurant, build it over years, and have it become the number one restaurant in the world are the same type of badasses who, once they achieved it, decide to burn it all down and create something new. They would do this in spite of many people telling them how foolish they were—how they should have kept a good thing going and should have kept on cashing those checks. The type of person who would have thought that way would never have taken the restaurant to number one in the first place. Only someone prepared to tear it all down has the mentality to take something to those great heights.

They let go to rise again—for the possibility of an even better, more beautiful Eleven Madison Park. Was it a great risk? Yes. Is it possible that the critics won’t like the new restaurant as much, and could it lose much of its social

esteem? Quite possibly. However, I can tell you that when I saw the interview with the executive chef co-owner Daniel Humm, I was looking at one of the freest human beings I'd ever seen in my life. He was unattached.

It's our attachments that confine us. It's our attachments that limit us. It's our attachments that put boundaries around our freedom. In that interview I saw a human being who was as free as any human being I'd ever known. He had achieved great things, yet he was untethered by the social self-esteem that went with those achievements. He was someone who knew how to surrender, let go, and to rise.

## Lonely Hearts

I'm sure you've heard the term "Beatlemania."

If you know the story of The Beatles, you know that they were big in Europe, and when they came to the United States and appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, the phenomenon called Beatlemania ensued. If you look back at any of the old stadium concerts they performed at the height of that craze, which are things of legend, the arenas were sold out. The crowds screamed so loudly, you could barely hear the music at all. Mania was an understatement.

Beatlemania had such a fervor attached to it that it was practically immeasurable. These four working-class kids who'd grown up in Liverpool, England, suddenly became the biggest musical phenomenon the world had ever seen. They were thrown into unprecedented superstardom and the accompanying wealth that went with it.

John, Paul, George, and Ringo were cultural icons with an identifiable brand signature that encompassed their look and their sound. They were the biggest musical brand

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in the world—The Beatles—the four “mop tops” with their Beatles haircuts and Beatles suits. At their peak of fame with many more venues to be sold out, and much more money to be made, what did they do?

They quit touring—stopped it altogether. They disappeared into the studio, and after a great deal of time had passed (they spent more than thirty times the amount of time on this album as compared to the first one they did), they reemerged with something that had never been done before: they had recorded a concept album. That album was *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

Not only did they not sound the same, they also didn't look the same when they returned to the scene. Now The Beatles had long hair, beards, and mustaches, a far cry from the mod haircuts and black suits that everyone associated with Beatlemania. They burned their old identity to the ground at the pinnacle of their success. What they surfaced with was something completely new, creative, and different. In fact, many audiophiles to this day consider *Sgt. Pepper* to be the greatest album of all time. *The New York Times* music critic panned the album when it debuted. He hated it. In an interview on the fiftieth anniversary of the album, he said something to the effect of, “Yeah, I got that one wrong.” He said it was just so different and such a departure with all of these long songs that kind of ran into each other that he just didn't get it at the time. He gets it now. It changed the face of music.

If The Beatles had decided to run out their success, clinging to the identity that accompanied Beatlemania, there never would have been a *Sgt. Pepper* and all of the incredible work that came after it by them and many other bands that the album absolutely influenced. Most consider The Beatles to be the greatest rock band of all

time, and you can include me in that category. The reason they hold this title and why no one will ever replace them is because not only were they responsible for the greatest music phenomenon of all time, but they were willing to burn it all down and reinvent themselves, over and over again.

This is the nature of creative destruction. It's not for everyone and it's certainly not for the faint of heart. Maybe you've got a good thing going at the moment. Maybe you even have a mediocre thing going that sort of pays the bills. What I can tell you is that if you want to have a true journey in your life and in your career—if you want to explore the depths of what's possible for you and your business and you want to have multifaceted, multilayered life experience, then creative destruction is the only way to make that happen.

I've seen lecturers, authors, and thought leaders who give the same signature lecture with the same concepts for decades on end. They struck gold forty years ago with a certain conceit, a certain theme or idea, and their entire life and career continued on the same circuit, talking about the same thing. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it. I'm not saying they weren't able to be financially successful and help people through their work. What I do know is that it isn't the journey for me.

The biggest compliment I get when I'm out lecturing these days is from people who have followed me for decades. They will walk up to me and say, "My goodness, you've reinvented yourself again." As of the time of this writing, I gave a talk in a large auditorium with approximately three thousand people in attendance. Many had seen me speak time and again at an event called Cal Jam, which I feel quite connected to.



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Cal Jam is a fascinating event, founded by Dr. Billy DeMoss and his companion, Mary Jane, who have become close friends. He was another perfect example of finding your Miles Davis. He had two loves in his life, one of which was rock-and-roll music, and the other the chiropractic profession and natural healthcare. So, he organized an event with a live band on stage playing fantastic rock and roll between each speaker. The spark and energy of this event is such that it feels like a revolution. You have people there committed to a vision and a cause—they want to make the world a healthier place.

Many great speakers attend this platform. A distinction I have is that I'm the only speaker who has presented at every single Cal Jam event for more than a decade. I have never given the same talk twice. Based on the bonfire that raged inside me, my old identity burning down, and a new one emerging, when I stepped to the stage this past time, my talk was even more different still. The message was nothing like anything I'd ever presented before. The energy had shifted in a very different way.

This can be a bit unnerving because you're known for a certain thing. People have their expectations when they come to hear you speak. I imagine, on a much grander scale, when The Beatles released *Sgt. Pepper* that they were proud of the album and loved it, but they might have had some concerns about how the world was going to receive it after Beatlemania.

I held that same concern regarding people's expectations, but I didn't let it derail my intention for the talk. I didn't rally them as strongly as I normally would have. They didn't get as fired up as they did in some of my other presentations. I had to push all that aside and recognize that this was a different talk for a different

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purpose coming from a different person—one who had shifted his identity to something new, which was less high-pitched motivation and more deep contemplation and inward reflection.

You have to let go to rise. Creative destruction is the path where you can burn down the old identity and old way of doing things and let something more powerful, more beautiful, and more evolved emerge from those ashes.

As we near the end of this particular journey together, I feel it would be critical to be a bit vulnerable and share some of the more intimate aspects of my personal life. By now I think you see that the principles I share in this book aren't just for business; they apply to your entire life. Even the most precious and intimate areas of it. Knowing your values, having a vision, and taking a stand in my marriage has been transformative. Relationships were a very rocky road for me based on bad premises, which led to regrettable decisions and toxic outcomes. What good is great business achievement if the other areas of your life fail? Too many entrepreneurs suffer in the most humanistic areas of their lives where real joy and fulfillment should exist. So let me share with you as a final thought how, with my wife, I learned to combine and conquer.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Patrick Gentempo** is a serial entrepreneur who has founded and led multiple multi-million-dollar companies. Early in his career as a practicing chiropractor, he co-developed diagnostic technologies, for which he received multiple patents. With his decades of experience having founded and co-founded over 15 businesses in various fields ranging from diagnostics to filmmaking, Dr. Gentempo has mastered a specialized skill in the practical application of philosophy in business. A celebrated international speaker, he has been published by Forbes.com, has testified in front of Congress on the use of technology in healthcare, given testimony to the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine, and received numerous business and healthcare awards. He lives in Park City, Utah, with his wife, Laurie, and his three children, Connor, Antoinette, and Hudson. You can visit him online at [www.Gentempo.com](http://www.Gentempo.com).