



TEL EPISODE #003:

Cause A Disturbance with Ken Tencer

Show Notes: <http://www.theelpodcast.com/tel-003-cause-a-disturbance-with-ken-tencer/>

Welcome to *The Entrepreneurs Library*, the only book-centric podcast that reviews all the top-selling business books and shares author's perspective, firsthand. This is your resource to finding the next great book that will enable you to grow personally and professionally. Welcome your host, Wade Danielson.

WADE: Thank you for joining us on The EL. Today we have Ken Tencer, author of *Cause A Disturbance*. Welcome, Ken, and thank you for joining us on The Entrepreneurs Library.

KEN: Thanks for having me, Wade.

WADE: Absolutely. Will you take just a moment to introduce yourself and tell us just a little bit about you personally?

KEN: Sure. I'm an entrepreneur by background. I started 20 years ago. I started and built and sold a manufacturing firm, and then moved on to services, where I help other entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs within larger firms understand a little bit about the opportunities that they have in front of them. So I know what it's like to get something going from scratch and all the fun and games along the way.

WADE: Great. Thank you for sharing that. It sounds like you have a ton of credibility, so now let's jump right into the book, *Cause A Disturbance*, which was just made available for purchase on June 1, 2014. Ken, we're going to move quickly, but here are some of the top questions our listeners would love to get answered.

The first one was, what was the inspiration behind writing *Cause A Disturbance*?

KEN: I think the inspiration was a lot of people that I've spoken to. I've been very fortunate, since our first book came out in 2010, to speak to and to do workshops with thousands of people around the world. And they all seemed to have this

mystical idea of innovation, that it was monumental, that you had to be a large company, that it was very difficult or cumbersome.

And I thought, you know what? I just don't see it that way. As an entrepreneur, I've been and known many other small business owners who were very innovative from the start. I really wanted to let people know that it's just not that hard.

WADE: Excellent. I'm actually one of those, when I think about innovation. I own businesses, but I've always more resold other products than actually innovated myself. So I'm actually really excited to dive into your book more.

Another question was, what makes your book different from others regarding the same topic?

KEN: I think this is written from a very pragmatic, a very practical and entrepreneurial voice. A lot of books – and they're important, but they deal with stage-gating or the steps to innovation, and they argue whether 7 steps is better than 12. This is just a very practical way to understand your business a little better, to understand your customer, to understand how to keep engaging them with new, better, and improved ideas. And in that is innovation. It's having an idea and bringing it to market. It's very practical. It's very down-to-earth, and I think very accessible.

WADE: Excellent, okay. Now that we know a little bit of background behind the book, this is my favorite part, where we take a deep dive into your creation, basically the content of your book. Will you please take me through it? It doesn't have to be chapter by chapter, but will you take me through and let myself and the reader know exactly what they're going to get out of reading this?

KEN: Sure. There's four parts to the book. The first one, it addresses, again, why I wrote it. It's all about simplifying innovation. And it's funny, because I start with a very simple example, the cake pop. It's like a piece of cake, formed like a lollipop on a stick. It was a baker who created it, basically out of some leftovers, and it's gone on to sell millions of units around the world. It just shows people that, again, innovation doesn't have to be monumental.

Within that first part, I then say to people, it's not just about products and services; it's also about processes. You mentioned that you resell other people's products. Well, how you deliver those products and services can be very different from your competitors. So you have to understand that innovation can be simple, it can be affordable. You have to understand that it can be product, process, and services.

And you have to understand, too – and in that first part, we talk about the continuum from simple innovation to disruptive. So you can sit down and start thinking about what you're doing, what you're offering to your customers, and check it off. "These two or three ideas are quite simple, but I can act on them right away. These ones will take a little bit longer, and let's put them into play over a longer period of time."

Once Part 1 is done and you actually understand what innovation is and that it is for you and it is accessible, I get into actually defining your core business. A lot of people, it's funny to say, they actually don't understand what business they're in. What I mean by that is they talk to the commodity, like "I make chairs" or "I sell pencils" or "I make coffee."

I use the example all the time of Starbucks. Starbucks, in essence, it started as a coffee shop, I guess, like tens of thousands of others. But the reason it's grown is because it didn't focus on the fact that it was selling coffee; it focused on the fact that it wanted to be an incredible meeting place, that it wanted to actually be the third meeting place in our lives. We have home, we have office, and there was Starbucks.

I think moving from thinking about a cup of coffee to the human dynamic – how do people want to meet? How do they want to relate to one another? How do they want to talk? How do they want to relax? – that's enabled Starbucks to become this giant successful company, when so many others, again, are still one-off.

And I think that, again, in Part 2, that getting away from the commodity to thinking about your purpose, the value you bring to your customers, is really



important. And it doesn't matter what business you're in, because there's no more commodity business, from the outside, than coffee.

Part 3 of the book, we actually go through 6 steps, the process behind causing a disturbance. Again, I think for Part 3 you have to understand that there's a lot of words we use that are interrelated. We use "branding," we use "innovation," and we use the customer and "customer experience" a lot, and the reason is because branding today is not static. It's about building relationships with your customers. Innovation is about introducing new, improved, better ideas to those relationships to keep them fresh. Because I don't care if they're business relationships or interpersonal relationships; if we don't keep them fresh, they go stale and people get bored. And in business, if your customers get bored, they shop elsewhere.

So the key part in Step 3 is to understand your customer, what motivates them, what's behind them, what their pain points are. Because a lot of customers today are buying products or using a service, and it's not because they like it; it's because it's the only thing available. So we teach you or help you to understand how to speak to your customers – not to sell to them, but to speak to them and find out what their pain points are. Because once you do that, you can find solutions to those pain points.

Now, once you've done that, we go through our process and we have a number of questions to help you come up with and rank the different opportunities you have. And again, you have to understand your business, and you have to understand your customer, and also the competitors, before you actually start coming up with new ideas.

I think that's really important, because a lot of companies sit down and they have brainstorming or ideation sessions, and they wonder why they don't go anywhere. Well, if you don't understand – my favorite word in business is "context," and again, with innovation, the context is it's your business, it's your customer, and your competition. If you don't understand that, then how are you going to come up with a good idea, or more importantly, a relevant idea?



From there we go on to some ideas on how to rank. I use three different things: I use high level – we'll call it your vision, your mission, the purpose of the company; we use your sales and marketing goals; and we use financial goals.

I think the really important thing here is that, as I like to say, you can't cheat. And I know that a lot of us do this as entrepreneurs or businesspeople. We sit back and say, "That's a really great idea. It's a little bit off strategy maybe, but it's going to make me so much money in the next quarter that I'm going to try it." Well, unfortunately, it doesn't always work that way, and most often it doesn't. We find ourselves two, three, four quarters down the road, and our great new idea that was off strategy actually didn't work.

So I say to people, don't cheat. Your new ideas have to hold up against your company's purpose and strategy, its sales and marketing goals, its customers, and its financial goals.

And finally, in that part, we have some ways to build teams and get things to market. Because again, I find with innovation, we have these ideas. We think they're so wonderful, so great that they're going to walk themselves to market, and I've never seen an idea do that. So you have to treat it with the same rigor as anything else in your business. Build the teams, build the plan, build the process, and follow it to market and make sure it's working.

The last part, the fourth part of the book we call "The Next 10%," and it's my basic philosophy, is get up in the morning and ask myself what the next 10% is: what that new idea, product, process, or service is that I'm going to bring to market. Because that turns the 6 steps that we talked about in Part 3 into an everyday function in our business.

Because you don't go through the book once, you don't go through the process once and say, "Hey, great, we're done." you have to get up every day and think, "How am I going to delight my customers one more time? How am I going to engage them? How am I going to make this relationship incredible and ongoing?"

And in the last part, we give you tips and ideas on how you and your team can do that so that it becomes as natural as accounting or selling or anything else you do in your business. So I guess that's really the four parts of the book.

WADE: That was an excellent summary. It doesn't sound like there's a whole lot of fluff in the book. It sounds like it's direct and gives you exactly what you need, and not much more.

KEN: No, I'm not too much for fluff. Nobody has that much extra time, so I'm not here to waste it.

WADE: That's exactly right. I ordered it I think close to the actual date that it came out and just got it, so I'm only 10 or 15 pages in, but I loved – and the description of it, “simplifying innovation,” is the perfect introduction, because that's what it – I don't know if it was you that were talking about walking in – were you in New York, and you were walking through New York and saw two different ideas on innovation?

KEN: Yeah, that was me. I say to people in that part of the book, the keys to innovation are your ears, your eyes, and I guess your feet. And I think a lot of what we do in the book is teach people to become more aware of their surroundings. If you're traveling on business and you're in a subway or taking a cab, how can you take a look at what's going on, in store if you're a retailer or you develop products, or on billboards? Just take the time to get out, to look around and let yourself be stimulated by other people's ideas.

WADE: Yeah, absolutely. Your book, I love books like this, because they create a paradigm shift. Even at the very beginning, when I'm telling you that that's how I saw innovation, was it requires some kind of genius, like a Steve Jobs or someone, and if you don't have the confidence that you are Steve Jobs or someone like that, you don't think that you can innovate. But I completely agree with you that it's not always just about creating the product, but processes and the whole thing. So I appreciate that.



Moving on to our next question – and this is one of my favorite ones, too – if the reader could only take one concept, principle, or action item out of the entire book, what would you want that to be?

KEN: Well, it's in the title, Wade: cause a disturbance. What's behind that is pretty simple. As parents, for the parents listening, they'll really appreciate that we think that it's our kids who have shorter attention spans today, but the truth is, we all do. All of the consumers out there, our customers have shorter attention spans. We expect things to be new, better, different, improved all the time now.

So you always have to be thinking about your next step, your next opportunity, the next way that you can delight or reengage your customers. It's just something you have to do continuously. And the truth is, unfortunately, if you don't, your competitors will.

WADE: Yeah, absolutely. I completely agree with that. Do you have a favorite quote from your book? And I really wanted to give you the opportunity, because I feel like this is a time where we should allow the author to kind of brag, if they've written something that they really feel is impactful, that they can bring it out of the book. In the short reading that I've done, I've actually picked out a couple, but I'd love to hear what one of your favorite quotes is from your book.

KEN: It's pretty straightforward, like the book. It's one of the chapter titles. It says "Don't forget to change the oil." What that refers to is that if you don't change the oil on your car, the engine's going to sputter and die. Well, if innovation is the engine that drives your business, the new ideas, products, or services that you bring to market are going to generate sales, and if you don't do that, if you don't continue to oil the engine of your business, it's going to sputter and die. So yeah, it's pretty simple, "don't forget to change the oil," but it has a lot of meaning to it.

WADE: Yeah, absolutely. If there was one other book that you could recommend to our listeners, obviously besides your own, that has impacted your life, created a paradigm shift, what would that be?

KEN: There's a book by Sir Ken Robinson, and it's called *The Element*, and it says "finding your passion changes everything." For anyone who's interested or watches the TED Talks, I think Ken Robinson has nearly 27 million views on this one particular video. It really goes to the fact that your element is about having passion and having aptitude for something, and when you have both, you can become incredibly great at it, and you can enjoy it.

As an entrepreneur, I think the first time around, I built a very successful manufacturing firm, and I know I had an aptitude for it, but honestly, I didn't have a passion for the business. And ultimately, I did sell it successfully, but I did so because I really didn't love it. Whereas today with this new business and the way that I'm able to help so many people, I have both the passion and the aptitude, and it just changes your approach every day. As an entrepreneur, there's so many challenges that we are going to have, that we really have to love what we're doing to get through those challenges because we're the ones who they fall to. So yeah, Ken Robinson's *The Element*, talking about passion, talking about aptitude, it was really eye-opening for me in this second go-round as an entrepreneur.

WADE: I think in the first chapter, or throughout the book, you actually have a couple of quotes by him, don't you?

KEN: Oh, absolutely. I think one of the first ones is "If you're always thinking about possibility, you'll find it." I think that was so important, it's right at the outset of the book, is that people go "Wow, do you have to be creative," "Wow, is this too hard." No, you just have to change your mindset. And I think that that's what the book helps people to do, is change their mindset, open their eyes and ears to the possibilities. Because when you do that, as he says, you're going to find them. They're everywhere.

WADE: Definitely. Ken, thank you so much for breaking down your book. One last thing before we depart: I was wondering if you could recommend a way for our listeners to be able to either reach out to you, to find more information about you, and you even talked about books that you've written earlier, and more information on *Cause A Disturbance*. What's the best way they can do that?



KEN: Sure. The website is CauseADisturbance.com. There's a lot about me, and there's some videos in there, and there's some easy ways to contact me. So everything is on that site.

WADE: Excellent, very good. Thank you very much for your time, and I look forward to speaking with you more in the future.

KEN: Thank you, Wade.

WADE: Thank you. Thanks again for listening in today. If you would like to get your hands on *Cause A Disturbance* or any of the other resources mentioned by Ken, just look at the show notes at TheELPodcast.com.

Looking for your next book idea? Head over to TheELPodcast.com, where Wade shares his amazing resource, "The Top 10 Business Books Recommended by Over 500 Entrepreneurs," with you for free. That's TheELPodcast.com. Till the next time, keep it on the EL.

LINKS AND RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THIS EPISODE:

Buy [The Element](#) by Sir Ken Robinson

[Ken Tencer's website](#)

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