



## TEL EPISODE #017:

### *The Road to Reinvention with Josh Linkner*

Show Notes: <http://www.theelpodcast.com/tel-017-the-road-to-reinvention-by-josh-linkner/>

*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 Josh Linkner, author of *The Road to Reinvention*. Welcome, Josh, and thank you for joining us on The Entrepreneurs Library.

**JOSH:** Thanks so much. Glad to be here.

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

**JOSH:** My name is Josh Linkner. I am a four-time entrepreneur, so I've started, built, and sold four technology companies over the last 20 years. I currently run Detroit Venture Partners; it's a venture capital firm investing in early stage tech companies here in the city of Detroit. I am also the author of two New York Times bestselling books. One is called *Disciplined Dreaming: A Proven System to Drive Breakthrough Creativity*, and my most recent work is *The Road to Reinvention*, and it talks about driving disruption and accelerating transformation.

And then also, a fun fact: I've been a jazz guitar player for over 30 years, so I'm a hardcore, old school, crusty jazz guy.

**WADE:** Okay, excellent. Thank you for sharing that. Now let's jump right into your book that you were just discussing, *The Road to Reinvention*, which was made available for purchase on May 23rd, 2014. Josh, we're going to move quickly here, but we're going to go through some of the top questions that our listeners would love to get answered.

The first one is, what was the inspiration behind writing *The Road to Reinvention*?

**JOSH:** I saw so many great brands fall. I saw brands like Polaroid or Oldsmobile or Circuit City and Borders Books, and realized that they didn't need to. Those were once great organizations that failed to reinvent. They didn't take the stewardship of that brand seriously enough, and ultimately many people suffered.

To me, it's one of the most common pitfalls, and one of the easiest ones for both organizations and individuals to really fix, is how do you go about a proactive reinvention process on an ongoing basis to make sure that your brand or yourself retain relevancy and enjoy sustainable success?

**WADE:** Okay, great. What makes your book different from others regarding the same topic?

**JOSH:** There's a few things. One is, having reinvented myself several times career-wise, but also I've been on the frontlines of the launch of over 100 startups, so I see how startups think and how they work to dislodge the old car and bring in the same ferocity to reinvention.

The other interesting aspect is that I talk a lot about my hometown of Detroit. Detroit's a fascinating story. A hundred years ago, we were the Silicon Valley of the United States; this is where people came to build their fortunes. We reinvented from a fur-trading industry to a lumber industry to manufacturing, and when we did that, our city prospered.

Then we stopped reinventing in the '50s and we felt we were untouchable, and we were enamored with our own success. And as a result, our city crumbled. Now, once again, we're reinventing ourselves, and things are starting to go great again.

So I follow the arc of that story. It's a very powerful metaphor for us all, that if Detroit can rise from the ashes and reinvent itself here in these challenging times, that really is very inspiring for all of the readers as well.



**WADE:** Now that we have a little bit of background behind the book, can you take us through a deep dive? It doesn't have to be chapter by chapter, but can you take us through and really give the reader an excellent idea of what it's all about?

**JOSH:** Sure. I really start by making the case for reinvention. It's hard, because many of us feel uncomfortable with change, we become set in our ways, and there's this myth that success is a permanent condition. In other words, we've arrived at some level of success, and that will last forever.

But really, success is a temporary condition in the context of many external factors that today are changing at a rate like none other in history. So one of the scariest things that we can do is stand still, rest on our laurels, and allow someone else to come and disrupt us. It's much more productive and fun, certainly, to be the disruptor instead of getting your clock cleaned, as they say. It's a call to arms for organizations, for communities, and certainly for individuals as well.

Once we really make the case of why reinvention is needed, why it's important to think of it as an ongoing process rather than a once-a-decade endeavor, we talk about the reinvention ethos: what does it mean philosophically? How do reinventors think? What are they obsessed with? We get people in the mindset very quickly.

From there, I take people on a very practical journey and one that systematically breaks down an organization into six key areas. Product and service, which is the obvious one; you're reinventing what you offer to customers. But we go way beyond that. How do you reinvent your processes or your internal approaches to work? How do you reinvent your culture? How do you reinvent your sales and distribution model? How do you reinvent your customer experience?

So we break a business or an organization into several areas and help readers with some very not only inspiring stories, but very practical tools, lay out a roadmap on how specifically to reinvent those areas of the business.

In the last few chapters, we have a lot of fun, because we now move into personal reinvention. In this case, we talk about how do you reinvent your career, and

sharing examples of people who've reinvented their career in many fun ways. Also, how do you reinvent yourself? How do you reinvent personal attributes and be the person that you want to be, more so than just the person you always were?

**WADE:** Okay, excellent. Very good. Thank you for taking us through that.

**JOSH:** Sure.

**WADE:** If the reader could only take one concept, principle, or action item out of your book, what would you want that to be? I know that can be difficult since there's a lot of good content in there, but what would you want that to be?

**JOSH:** I would want it to be that reinvention is mission-critical, but really accessible. You don't have to be Picasso or you don't have to have tons of money or resources. It doesn't have to be overwhelming, like it's a bet your whole life kind of deal. If you break it down into the systematic process, it can feel very accessible, very un-risky, and in fact very inspiring.

So I hope that people walk away feeling that they now have a practical toolset that they can apply immediately to their own life, their own career, their own company, to protectively craft their own future rather than just being subject to the work of someone else.

**WADE:** Josh, I like to give the author, yourself, a chance to brag on themselves a little bit. Is there something that you wrote that you have in your book, I guess a favorite quote that you have that you've written?

**JOSH:** I think there's a couple concepts that are important. One of them is that so many people, so many organizations live their lives trying to play it safe, only to discover that today, playing it safe is the riskiest move of all. So there really has not – maybe in the past it's worked, but resting on your laurels, clutching to the status quo, protecting old ideas instead of creating new ones, is a very risky proposition.

On the other hand, all of us have the tools within our reach to craft change in a meaningful way and to be part of the solution instead of just protecting the past. So again, I think it's an accessible process.

The other thing I would just say is that in the business lexicon, the word "cannibalization" comes up often, like "Oh, we don't want to cannibalize our business." I'll argue that it's a much more effective approach to flip that upside down, and in fact to be the cannibal. You're asking for a quote, and maybe that's it. In other words, I'd much rather be that source of disruption than having it thrust upon me.

**WADE:** Okay, excellent. This last question is just, obviously our listener base is full of readers; what is one other book, besides one that you've written, that you would recommend that is a paradigm-shifting book that you think they should read?

**JOSH:** I'm such an avid reader, it's of course very, very difficult to narrow it down to one book. But one that maybe is less traditional from a business standpoint is *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, Robin Sharma. I thought it was a really important book, and it didn't talk so much about certain business techniques, but it talked about how to make yourself a better person, and how do you prepare yourself to embrace success.

**WADE:** Okay, excellent. Josh, on the first book that you actually wrote, *Disciplined Dreaming*, is this somewhat of a sequel to it? Is it kind of a one-two punch?

**JOSH:** It's not so much a sequel, although they are very complementary. *Disciplined Dreaming* demystifies the creative process. Many of us have this myth that you're either born with creativity or not, and the research shows otherwise. In fact, the research shows that creativity is 85% learned behavior. So those of us that feel that we're not creative actually have enormous creative capacity if we develop those skills.

So the book really helps readers connect with their inner creativity and help nurture that within their colleagues and teams and companies. Because really

what's happened is that creativity has become the currency of success in these challenging times. It's the one thing that you can't outsource, and it's the one source of sustainable competitive advantage. So that book is all about building and harnessing creative energy.

The Road to Reinvention, they do work well together; they're both sort of in the same lane of innovation, but this talks about much more of the specific process of crafting the next leg of your journey.

It's funny; the words turnaround and reinvention are often used synonymously, and they're very different concepts. Turnaround is generally reacting to negative things and adversity.

In a turnaround, people clamp down and they batten down the hatches and they stop R&D, and it's a very survivalistic effort. Whereas reinvention is something that happens early, and ideally from a position of strength, and that is much more in line with the creative processes that I talk about in Disciplined Dreaming.

**WADE:** Okay, gotcha. And is there another one – I know this one just came out, and I know how difficult books can be to write, so maybe this is a sore question, but is there already an idea for a third book in the future?

**JOSH:** You know, I've taken a little bit of a breather, so I don't have anything specific to share at this point. I have a desire to write a quasi-fictional book about – the same way that John Grisham wrote *The Firm*, about a lawyer who had this experience at a law firm, I do have sort of a desire someday to write a book about the inner workings of a startup, because there's gripping drama, there's incredible highs and crushing defeats. I think it would make for good reading.

**WADE:** I've never really thought about that, and I don't know of a whole lot of books – maybe that's just because I haven't looked all that hard, but there's not a whole lot of books like that, that actually take it through. I'm someone who loves actually learning the back story of how a startup got started, so I love reading it. I've actually never seen someone take it in story form, so that'd be a great idea.

**JOSH:** Yeah, thanks. It would be probably a fictional book, although like certain business fables, you could certainly extract a lot of business value from both the protagonist's victories and defeats.

**WADE:** Yeah, absolutely. I think some of the greatest books – the Og Mandino books and some of those books, it's always a story, but even *The Alchemist* and some of those, the overlying principle that you learn throughout is phenomenal. Excellent.

Very good. Josh, before we depart, can you recommend the best way for our listeners to get more information on you and on your book, *The Road to Reinvention*?

**JOSH:** Sure. I would certainly encourage those who are interested to visit my website, which is just my name, [joshlinkner.com](http://joshlinkner.com). In addition to learning more about the book, I write a weekly blog that's free. There's all kinds of free creative resources. There's a creativity assessment quiz that's free, there's recommended reading, there's inspirational quotes. So it can be hopefully a home for those who are looking to embark on a creative journey. And like I said, nothing to buy; it's just a lot of free content.

**WADE:** Okay, excellent. Josh, thank you so much for coming on. We look forward to speaking with you again in the future.

**JOSH:** Thanks again. Have a great day.

**WADE:** You too. Thanks again for listening in today. If you would like to get your hands on *The Road to Reinvention* or any of the other resources mentioned by Josh, just look at the show notes at [TheELPodcast.com](http://TheELPodcast.com).

*Looking for your next book idea? Head over to [TheELPodcast.com](http://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](http://TheELPodcast.com). Till the next time, keep it on the EL.*



**LINKS AND RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THIS EPISODE:**

Buy [The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari](#) by Robin Sharma on Amazon

Buy [Disciplined Dreaming](#) by Josh Linkner on Amazon

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