

Former Head Of Sony Pictures Shows You How To Be Persuasive – with Peter Guber

Three messages before we get started. First, who's the lawyer that tech entrepreneurs trust? Scott Edward Walker of Walker Corporate Law. Here's what Neil Patel, founder of KISSmetrics, says about him, "Scott is a great lawyer. He is affordable, responds fast, doesn't charge you for five minute phone calls, and always gives great advice." Walker Corporate Law.

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Here's your program.

Andrew: Hey everyone. My name is Andrew Warner. I'm the founder of Mixergy.com, home of the ambitious upstart. Want to sell more? Then today's guest says you need to tell more stories. He is Peter Guber, the former Chairman and CEO of Sony Pictures, and he currently heads the Mandalay Entertainment Group, which presents hit films, such as "The Kids Are All Right," and which recently partnered in acquiring the NBA's Golden State Warriors. Among the award winning films he has produced or executive produced are "Midnight Express," "Gorillas in the Mist," "Batman," and "Rain Man."

And by the way, I cribbed a lot of that intro from the back of this great book that he recently published, "Tell to Win." There it is. "Tell to Win: Connect, Persuade, and Triumph with the Hidden Power of a Story."

Peter, welcome to Mixergy.

Peter: Great, thanks. The book is going to come out March 1st, from Crown, and you can go look it up at PeterGuber.com or TellToWin.com.

Andrew: All right. I've actually been told to hold this until after the launch, so by the time people see this interview, they'll be able to go out there and buy it right away.

Peter: [laughs]

Andrew: So one of the people in the book that you mentioned and said are especially good storytellers is Magic Johnson. You said that by telling you a story, he and his business partner were able to persuade you when you were at Sony to help build Magic Johnson Theaters. Can you tell my audience how they did that?

Peter: Well, one of the franchises that I was responsible for was—I think the third largest theatrical circuit in North America—Loews Theatres and had huge numbers of screens all over North America, and it operated in a number of international territories. It was more recently an expansion in that, but was very looking forward to that marketplace, which was so robust.

So one day I was told by one of the operating managers of Loews that Magic and Ken wanted to see me about their theaters. They had one theater they were building and another theater they were working on. They had this whole enterprise they were going to do. They said they had a really interesting proposition for me.

I said, "Yeah, well, you know, I don't really want to do that. I have COOs and managing people to come in." But he said, "Come on. Just spend 15 minutes, half an hour. It's Magic Johnson."

And that was the seduction already, to be able to do it with Magic Johnson. So he came into the office, and he was big, he's six-nine, that smile that doesn't stop. Of course, that immediately got my attention, anyways. And he sat down, and after a few pleasantries, we talked a little bit about the Lakers and Showtime, and some friends. He said, "You're in the theater business. You're going to do some expansion."

I said, "Yeah, we're going to try to put our emphasis outside the United States now. There's 6 billion people outside the United States," and blah, blah, blah. And I was listening and thinking. He said, "Well, I want to tell you about a place that we want to build theaters in. It's a foreign country," he says. "That country is a foreign country. It's got an unbelievably robust movie-going audience. Virtually 25 percent or 30 percent of the audience goes to the movies X number of times a month. They're very vocal advocates, and it's very, very powerful. This is a group that understands English. It's English-speaking. You don't have to dub it." And I said, "Yeah?" He says,

“It’s a land that is really ripe for concessions and all the merchandising of your business.” I couldn’t wait. “Where was this? Slovakia? Was this in Eastern Europe, was it in Asia?”

He says, “No. It’s six miles from here,” and I was in Los Angeles, “In Baldwin Hills.” I said, “What?” He says, “Yeah.” Then he loaded down—he had loaded down all the metrics, all the numbers, all the facts and figures about this audience. But I didn’t know where it was.

When he said it’s the African American community, and how all those numbers and all those facts and all that data, suddenly it was resonant. Suddenly it was powerful. Suddenly it was embedded in a narrative that caught me emotionally and took me on the journey of, “Wow. I could build in this foreign country six miles from where I was sitting right now and have an audience that I could reach in English and sell all my merchandise and concessions to.”

He got us interested in it, and we made the deal.

Andrew: So Peter, what I’m thinking, and what I imagine my audience is thinking as they’re hearing that story is you guys are businessmen. You’re running a big company. Why do you have time for stories?

Wouldn’t it have been more effective if Magic Johnson walked in and said, “Look. Look at the buying power. Slide number one, the buying power of the customers that we’re talking to. Number two, the competition, look at how little competition there is. Number three, this is the location where we could put the theater.” And just hit you with fact after fact, until you could just say, “Hey, this makes total sense. I could take this to my accountants. I could put this as money in the bank in the future.”

Peter: Exactly. He would have been aiming at my wallet, and maybe aiming at my feet, but not aiming at my heart. That’s where hits are born. Hits are born there. Then I would have not remembered the facts and figures and data and analytics. But I remembered the story, and my experience with the story, and the emotions with the story and the surprise in the story. That’s what I paid forward to all of my executives, to my board members, who had to also be participants in the decision. And they weren’t in the room, Magic and Ken. They weren’t there anymore. So I paid forward the story, which had the emotion.

I said, “You can’t believe the story that Magic Johnson came in and told me about this country.” I’d retell the story as mine, and I experienced the joy of telling the story, and the surprise, and the conflict in the story. Then they got all the information in an emotional context. Doesn’t mean

the information wasn't true, but the telling of it moved them to understand it in an emotional way and to benefit in an emotional way, so that they could utilize it and move forward. More importantly, when he directed it in the telling, he said, "Here's what's in it for you. You can tap into a foreign country, and it's not 50,000 miles away. It's not on Pluto. Here's what it is. The audience is already there. You know all the metrics. You're already making films for that audience. Now you can capture both sides of the food chain."

So what he did was he emotionalized his offering. When he did that, he had my heart. When he had my heart, he had the magic, and that's why they called him Magic.

Andrew: One of the points in your book, and I'll hold up the book so people can see it, because I really like it. It's a fun read because it's full of stories. One of the points you said was that stories are like Trojan horses. They get beyond people's barriers.

I don't know about you specifically, but I imagine if Magic Johnson went in to most average, white executives and said, "Come to the dangerous, black neighborhoods with your theaters and your money and open up a theater here," that he would have gotten resistance. That he would have gotten some amount of, "Hey, wait a minute. I'm expecting shootings and all that."

Do you agree?

Peter: Yeah, and there were problems there in that marketplace. But that's the idea, that risk and reward are very close together. They're not separated by enormous distances. Inside the greatest of risk is the greatest of reward. Inside the greatest of reward is the greatest of risk. So you can't be risk averse.

Story provides the emotional transportation for you to often take a risk, to take a chance that facts and figures alone would not encourage. The idea is, and really the secret to the whole thing is, that when you do that, when you emotionalize your offering that way, you don't warp the facts or figures, they're still there. They're still there to be analyzed. Analytics still to be looked at. Numbers still to be examined.

But when the story is paid forward by the listener, your audience, when it's paid forward, that's when the magic of word of mouth, that's when the intangible happens where you become the apostle and the advocate for the story and the information embedded in there. Really what happens is people remember and experience the story. They don't remember and experience the information.

Andrew: Even at that high level of business, they wouldn't be more persuaded, more capable of remembering a PowerPoint slide, or maybe not PowerPoint slide, I'd say an Excel spreadsheet with bottom line numbers that say this is what's going to happen?

Peter: There are folks that probably their bias has been grown up that way, that they're really analogues. I should say digitized. They're maybe just, that's the way they are.

But I don't really believe very many people. The hardest are moved by their emotions. That doesn't mean... if the facts, figures, and analytics don't support the argument, the advocacy, the emotion, the experience, they're out of sync and then the accent's on the wrong syllable, it doesn't work.

Andrew: I see.

Peter: But one serves the other. In other words, you put the facts and information and data that is powered by the story. I mean, when you think about it, when you do that, that's the way we're wired. We're wired that way. We're in the emotional transportation business. We're not in the information dispersal business.

When you perspire somebody with figures and facts and numbers, as opposed to inspire them, you get a different result. The idea is we crave that. We look for that. Chris Anderson, of Wired magazine—who taught one of my courses at UCLA, a professor said, "Stories are too powerful. They confuse the truth. They're too powerful. You must be wary of them."

Yes, that's true. You can use stories. I mean, Hitler used stories to move his people badly. But a gun can be something that hunts prey, it can be something that gets you food, it can be something that protects you. It can be something for sport. It's not bad or good.

So the idea is it's the intention of the teller that's bad or good. And the facts are the facts. How you characterize them, how you present them, and how you utilize them, and how you mobilize them is what's inside you. I would posit to you that at the end of the day, it's a much more seductive experience for people who are the recipient, the audience of it, to be moved emotionally, to be inspired, rather than perspired. To be, if you will, at one with the teller. Instead of being a passenger, being the recipient of a bunch of statistics and metrics, to be a participant in the tell.

I think that's a much more rewarding, emotional experience. It doesn't necessarily remove from you the ability to analyze and scrutinize the numbers

to see if they're congruent with the narrative.

Andrew: All right. You had me at a tool so powerful that it could be used for evil. That's when you really got me.

All right. One great storyteller that you worked with is Bill Clinton. He convinced you by reminding... in fact, how did Bill Clinton get you to help him with his campaign?

Peter: Well, again, the word "help" is maybe the wrong mode of view. He was a young candidate running for President in the first term. I was the Chairman of Sony at that time, the CEO. We were really interested in him because we liked what he had to say about education.

My wife and I invited him and some of his staff when he was the Governor of Arkansas to come to California and talk about and speak with different constituencies on the West Coast about his mission, his passion in education.

The result of that was that we created a relationship. I was a more conservative person. I wasn't, I would say, a Liberal Democrat. But I was really moved by his passion and his power and his ability to put me in the boat with him, to put me in the story with him, to make me a character in his story.

So I began to support him and began to see that he would be effective as a leader. So what really happened was somewhere in the early campaign, I think it was—and again, the power of a story is you remember the story, but the facts and figures can sometimes dim. But I don't remember whether it was the first or the second campaign. I think he had come in second or third in New Hampshire, and they thought he was going to win, and he didn't have the economic wherewithal to move the campaign from New Hampshire, and I think it was to Wisconsin. Again, it could have been Montana or it could have been—it was 25 years ago, or whatever it was.

But it was to move his campaign. And I got a call from one of his Chiefs of Staff and said, "Peter, we need the money. We need this money, a certain amount of money from a certain number of people to move our campaign to the next stop. We absolutely need it."

I said, "Wow. How much?" He said, I think it was \$90,000. \$1,000 a person for 45 people. I said, "Okay. Well, when do you need it by?" "By 5:00 today." I said, "By 5:00 today, are you crazy?" He said, "Yeah, we absolutely need it."

Clinton grabbed the phone and said, "Peter, let me tell you..." He didn't say let me tell you a story, he said, "Let me tell you, it's High Noon. You know the movie 'High Noon'?" "Yeah." He says, "The bad guys are coming,

the train's coming, I got to get everything organized, and this is my big chance, and you gotta stand with me at high noon."

I said, "Okayare. I got it." And I used that story forward. Everybody I called was in the movie, television, entertainment, sports business, and they understood the metaphor of "High Noon." They understood that Clinton was stepping into the shoes of Gary Cooper. It was high noon, and we had to stand to help him.

So at 3:00 that day, or 4:00 that day, I said, "You got it. It's high noon, you got your money. Now win."

And that was a story that it really moved me. He moved me. His storytelling moved me. It was just two sentences. That's all it was. "It's High Noon, and I'm Gary Cooper," or however he expressed it, and I got it. I got what the mission was. He needed the guns, the money, the resources to stand off the bad guys. Whether they were bad or not is irrelevant. He was using that historical story, which wasn't about him.

So the idea is it immediately loaded me with a narrative that I could quickly and efficiently tell 45 other people. I made probably 90 calls and said, "Listen, it's High Noon. We need that \$1,000 dollars from you to support Bill to move from New Hampshire to Wisconsin, and I'm counting on you. It's High Noon. You got to deliver."

So the idea, that's the magic of a payload of a story. It allows the payload to be delivered emotionally and very efficiently and elegantly to other folks as a call to action.

Andrew: That's why I wanted you to tell that story. Because it was so powerful to hear that Bill Clinton didn't just get you excited, he also armed you with a story, with a story that you could remember and communicate to other people and get them just as fired up as you were.

Peter: Yeah, and when I would say it, I'd say, "He called me and said it was High Noon." I actually told his story forward. Even though I owned my experience of how it moved me, which made it authentic for anybody listening to me.

Andrew: That's why I want to tell stories. Because I know that I can't get people to fully understand everything in my business, but if I can tell them a story that's memorable, then they're more likely to share that.

Now, Bill Clinton drew on a story that you had in your background because you're in Hollywood, because you've seen the movie, it's a classic. You also give an example of how Ted Turner did that with Larry King in a

similar way. He drew on a story that was familiar to Larry King, one of his backstories.

Can you describe, first of all, how you came to talk to Larry King, and then tell what Ted Turner did to steal him away?

Peter: Well, when Larry was at the height of his career, he was at a window, it was a window in the Turner arrangement that gave him the freedom to move away. He could become a free agent in baseball terms.

Andrew: I remember that.

Peter: Myself and then another executive not in the company partnered up and said, “We can get Larry King, because we can make a really unique deal with him, an entrepreneurial deal. We can get Larry King. If we can get in the same room with Larry King,” and that was the idea, “and tell him that we have the secret sauce for his success.”

I didn’t know about telling purposeful stories at all at that time. I just felt that if we could get in the same room with him, we could show him the economics of him owning his programming, of him being able to be diverse, of him owning other content, and it had a lot more economic runway than he was experiencing with Turner.

Andrew: Because at CNN he didn’t own his show. He was basically an employee.

Peter: No, he didn’t own his shows.

Andrew: You were showing him in black and white how to get more money and own his show, at a chance that he has to move.

Peter: Yeah, and we told him the show was called “Wired,” and how it would work around the country, and how we would wire up the country with his stories, and how he would own that, and it would provide other, if you will, intellectual property assets and opportunities that he could use and make more money, more economic reward. We weren’t going to make him a better host. We were going to make him more profitable as a host.

We had it all lined up. We thought we really had the secret sauce. It was all set. Ultimately, he didn’t make the deal. He stayed with Ted Turner for a lesser deal. We could never figure it out, never figure it out. It was, like, weird. What kind of a whammy, that a guy would stay with that?

It was years and years later when I was interviewing him about this experience for my book, I was at his home in Los Angeles. I said, “Okay. Now it’s over. Give me straight, what was it? What went on? What occurred?”

He said, “Well, you know what happened is Ted Turner knew that we had these other offers, and that we were going—a couple of other offers, not just you, but ABC as well, and that I was very strongly considering them, and it was for more money. Then my agent, who was Bob Wolf, a fellow from Boston who also represented Larry Bird at that time, said, ‘Listen, Ted. He’s got these other opportunities, and he’s inclined to take them. And he really thinks that that’s what he wants to do.’ ”

And Ted says, “That’s okay with me. You can take them. But I need to have him talk to me and tell me. I need to have him say just goodbye to me. I want him to say goodbye to me. That’s all.”

The agent, Larry King’s agent, Bob, went back to him and said, “We got it all set. Just call up Ted Turner and say goodbye.” He said, “Okay, okay, okay.”

So he waits, waits, waits, nothing happens, and finally he calls Larry, he says, “So what happened?” “I can’t say goodbye. I’m going to stay.” “Can’t say goodbye? Just say, ‘Good bye.’ ” “No, I couldn’t say goodbye.”

Ted Turner knew the backstory of Larry King and his father that he couldn’t say goodbye to. He just couldn’t say goodbye to him when he was not well and couldn’t bring himself to that kind of relationship with a father, of saying goodbye. Ted Turner knew he was Larry’s surrogate father.

So by tapping into the story, just by being able to know his backstory, and how it drove Larry, he was able to emotionalize the process, having Larry himself tell his own backstory to himself, which he rode into getting a new deal with Larry King for another ten years.

Andrew: Is that because... I don’t remember this. Did Larry’s father abandon him? Do you remember, or did he just not say...

Peter: No, I think it was an emotional relationship. I don’t think he abandoned them. I think that it was just his inability to say that to his dad.

Andrew: Okay.

Peter: That story was told both, not only by Larry, but also by Ted Turner as well. They knew it.

Andrew: Another example of good storytelling in the book comes from Bill, is it Haber? The guy who ran Save the Children.

Peter: Right.

Andrew: When he got into Save the Children, they had a story—well, what was the story they were telling then?

Peter: They were making the case that these young people need help, and that we need to show up for them, and the call to action is it depends on you. Give money, you'll feel good. All the normal ritual and folderol around getting folks to contribute to very worth causes, clearly a worthy cause.

What he saw that they were showing scenes of destruction, and scenes of random violence with children, and scenes with terrible conditions that children were living in, and squalor, and their inability to escape from it. Just talking about that and randomly showing it.

Instead, his decision, or part of his decision, was to focus on connecting with one story. Giving the drama and tragedy of terrible earthquakes, and pestilence and plague, and disease, giving it a face. Giving it a human face. A young person who didn't have the quality of life or opportunity to escape that situation.

They were literally captured not by anything they did, by fate and circumstance. By not having safe water. By not having a place to sleep. By not having enough food. By having an unsafe environment.

They made that person tell their story in a letter or a video directly to you, the contributor. Then they made you continue that story. They made the connection. So you saw your capital, your money, your interest, your involvement going to change one person. So instead of talking to an audience of 10,000 or 100,000, they had it one-to-one.

"You will make a difference in this child's life, and here's their story. And you can see how you can interface, affect and change their story, and you can feel purposeful in what you're doing." So they realized one story can change the whole face of the whole problem. Rather than making the whole problem so overwhelming that no story could achieve that.

Andrew: And that story comes to you every—I think it's every month, via letter. We had someone in my previous company who sponsored through Save the Children, and she would bring in the letter every time she got it. She would put it on the company refrigerator, and we'd all get to follow along with the story.

Peter: See, what would happen there, the beauty of that process was that's viral advocacy. The story virally advocated, told and retold, over and over again to so many different people. You know what you said about that? I want to feel good like that. I want to do that. I want to feel I make a difference. I want to feel the touch, and feel my philanthropy that way, too. I don't want to feel it went into some administrative [??].

So they really captured the art of that one-to-one relationship millions of times over.

Andrew: Okay. So I'm convinced, but how do I do it? How do I tell a story? I'm not a guy with a Hollywood background. I'm not a guy who's been studying story structure for years. But I'd like to do some of this in my interviews, maybe when I give presentations at conferences, maybe even in my writing.

How do I become a good storyteller if not a great storyteller?

Peter: I don't know how you become a good storyteller or a great storyteller. I know how you are a purposeful teller of stories. It's the other side of it. [??] [interrupted]

Andrew: What's the difference?

Peter: There's a big difference. Storyteller, whether it's television programming, or movie programming, or any kind of programmatic element, you're using story to entertain, you're using story to make people laugh or cry, or it's the product itself.

I'm saying now you're using story for another goal. A different kind of goal. A purposeful goal, whether it's to get a job, get a new client, get a raise, raise money for your charity. [interrupted]

Andrew: Are you telling me having a purpose will make me a good storyteller [interrupted]

Peter: No.

Andrew: Or are you saying, don't be a good storyteller...

Peter: No, I'm saying...

Andrew: Be one who has a purpose. Sorry, you go ahead.

Peter: No, no, no. I'm saying my process, my promise, is to show that there is a tool for getting what you want done from other people. Moving other people toward your call to action, whether it's to vote for you, or join your church, or contribute to a charity, or give you a raise, or buy your product, whatever it is. There's a purpose to it. Every telling of the story that way has a purpose to it.

And here's the point. You're already it. It's no gift from me to you. You're already wired that way. You're doing it every single day, maybe not as well as you should, probably not as well as you could, and definitely not with the joy and satisfaction of knowing what you're doing. You're doing it.

Actually, most of us have been disabused of using that and doing that somewhere in our life. Maybe when they were 8, or 9, or 10, or 11 years old. "Stop telling me a story. Don't confuse me. Just give me the facts and figures and numbers. Just do it."

So what happens is we're wired that way. It's in our DNA, 30,000, 20,000 years of telling stories. It's only the last millisecond that we've had it with written story, maybe four lifetimes, 3, 4, 500 years, and the last nanosecond that we've had it digitally, electronically.

So we're wired as telling each other stories. Everything in our life, we organize all the facts, figures, and information, generally in a narrative form because we couldn't make sense of it otherwise.

How do you make sense of a .400 batting average? How do you make sense of it? Say 400. What does it mean? What's the context. What does it mean. Well, that means 4 times out of 10 you've hit the ball, a little white ball, by 5 people in an infield, and you're a multi-millionaire for doing that.

90 feet away. Wow, what's that about? Well the skill of a ball is being pitched at a 100 miles an hour, and blah, blah, blah. You tell the story of it.

So the conceit is that the way we make sense of our life, the way we design, is to take the elements and tools of facts, figures, and information and put them inside of a narrative so that the call to action is emotionalized. When it's emotionalized, it's aimed as an experience. It's aimed here, at the heart. Not aimed at the wallet. Not aimed at the feet. What happens is that it migrates there.

So what you're really doing is you're saying this is the way you are wired, and there are certain elements to that, and if you recognize and validate, you will get better. You may not become Jack Welch. You may not become John Grisham. You may not become Robert Frost.

But if I said to you—I don't know if you play golf, but if you played

golf and I said to you, “Do this and you can take 12 strokes off your game,” they’d be lined up from Los Angeles to New York, every single person who played golf. Every single person on the planet would line up all the way to New York to take 12 strokes off the game. But I didn’t promise you’d be Tiger Woods. I didn’t promise you’d win the championship. I didn’t promise you wouldn’t have a bad day, or a bad game.

The conceit is this is the way you’re wired. Look at it, use it. If you don’t use it, you abuse the very quality of what your life is about. Your life is about connection. This is the tool of choice for connection. It’s a Swiss Army knife. It’s used in different ways, different places, but the trick is all of it is inside of you. No gift from me to you.

Andrew: You’re saying it’s inside of me, so I don’t need to learn how to do it beyond just doing it, and it’ll naturally get... No.

Peter: No.

Andrew: What do I...

Peter: What you have to...

Andrew: At the end of this interview, I would like my audience to say I’m convinced. Peter and Andrew showed me that telling stories is great. I want to start practicing and get better, but I need a framework. I need a way of getting started. What do we tell them?

Peter: So let’s think about what a framework would be. So let’s assume you believe there was a magic that was inside you, call it m-a-g-i-c, magic. It was inside you. Not Magic Johnson, but magic. And that magic was being able to literally narrate your offering. To be able to tell a purposeful story, to get somebody else, or a group of somebody else to act for your product, your business, your service, your religion, whatever you want.

So how does it work? What’s inside of you? Well it’s the ability to emotionally connect. Then embed inside that emotional connection the facts, figures, and analytics you said that are important, that are vitally important, to support it.

So what do you do? First of all, you think, well the first thing everyone says, I’m going to motivate somebody else. You don’t control anybody. You barely control yourself. I mean, think about it. Do you think anybody in this audience controls their wife? Raise your hand if you control your wife.

I see no hands. No hands. How about your kid? No hands, unless they're 4 or 5. No hands. Your boss, definitely not. Your priest, rabbi, imam, no, definitely not.

You only control yourself. So if that's the case, the first thing you motivate is you. You make sure that before you go into the room, before you be with somebody to tell your purposeful story, that you get in state. That your intention is aligned. That you're congruent. That you own what you're going to say.

Because that's what they see before the first word is spoken. They see your authenticity. If it doesn't shine through, they ain't hearing, forget let alone listening. And they're not acting on it. So you have to say to yourself, how do you get in state? How do you bring yourself to that place?

Well you look at it. Is this something that you really want to do? Do you believe in what you're doing? Do you believe in it? Are your feet, tongue, heart, and wallet all aligned? Or are they going in different directions? If they're going in different directions, they'll see it.

The second element, you'd say, what's the second element? There's many elements. Anyone can be a game changer. You don't have to do all of them. The second one is, you look at the person that you're talking, not to, but with. Not to, but with. That's the key word. You say to yourself, if you think of them as a customer or client, they protect their groin or their wallet. If you think of them as an audience, they open their heart up. And they expect an experience.

When you do that, they smile like you smile. They engage. They emotionalize the connection. When they participate in it, that audience, you cut through the cacaphony of their mind, the noise, the convulsion of their bandwidth, which is so [??], that they really hear you. They get you. They can actually feel you.

When they do that, magic happens. Because then they become in the boat with you. You are turning "me" into "we." Then the people, those folks, one or many, are no longer passengers. They're participants. That's the key to the audience.

Then you say to yourself, what's the goal? The "G" of it, let's say, right? Don't hide it. If you hide, then they're going to see you when you walk in the room as hiding, rather than priding. Rather than feeling confident and comfortable and exciting. Why would anybody want a gift that nobody wants to have, or that you didn't like. [??]

So the idea is you have to say to yourself the goal is generous, worthwhile. You have skin in the game. You're going to laugh and cry together. Use whatever words you want. But if it isn't that, they don't see what's in it for them, yeah, you got a problem, Houston. OK.

Then you go the next one. “I”, interactive. All good telling of stories is interactive. Look at the media today. All the technology is only moving towards interactivity. People want to be participants, not passive.

Andrew: How do you make the story interactive?

Peter: How do you make it interactive?

Andrew: Mm-hmm.

Peter: You do two or three things, which is really the key element. You leave space for them to participate, whether it’s asking questions, whether it’s recognizing, just like you, shaking your heads and saying, “Yes.” I have to be as a teller an empathetic listener. I have to see that you’re really getting it. If you’re not, I got to shift. I got to be able to look at and recognize and acknowledge you’re engaged.

When you engage with me, and you participate, and you laugh or smile, and I notice it, and I feedback with you, you’re in the same boat with me. We’ve turned “me” into “we.” You may not buy it at that point. You may not fully close at that point, but you’re on the road. You’re on the path. And that’s the key part of it.

That interactivity happens if you can change their physiology. If you think about everywhere where you see it, you see it online, you see it in theatrical, when people clap and applaud or sing along with the person onstage. Or even in a movie theater, when they talk back to the screen. People want to be participants. They want to be active in their own experience.

So the idea is that’s the way we are wired. Then the last part is the story itself. That’s actually the easiest part. Use any story. Your own personal story is the best. The story you observed is just as good. News, history, books, television, metaphor, analogy. All you’re using them is as a Trojan horse to set the emotional stage so that information rides in on it.

Andrew: Here’s one of the notes that I took from the book. Structure is, of a good story, is challenge, struggle, and resolution. Tell me if I’m being too anal if I start to look for a clear map. Challenge, struggle, and resolution. Let me put you here on the spot and say how would we sell this book, “Tell to Win,” if we were to use that structure.

I’ll tell you that before this interview and before I read the book, if I wanted to sell this to my audience, I might say this is Peter Guber, the guy’s a former Chairman of Sony and Sony Pictures. I might list your whole

resume, and then I might also come up with a stat that says, “Storytelling increases sales by 47%.”

And I think, all right, now my audience has bought, because I told them the facts, and I gave them the conversion rate. But we’re going to do storytelling to sell them on why they should get this book. How do we do it with a story that has a challenge, struggle, and resolution in it.

Peter: Well, you make a good point. So you say to yourself, what kind of problems to people have? People are focused always on their problems.

Andrew: Okay.

Peter: So what kind of problems do they have. They have problems of getting a raise, raising their family, getting admitted to a club, whatever they have. You have a problem. And you’re unsure about how to execute on the problem, or how to get somebody to agree, to vote for you, to get membership, or to get somebody to buy your product. You all have that problem.

You have to ask yourself, what do I do? Do I do the same old, same old. Shut my eyes? Shout buy me, buy me, buy me? Get me, get me, get me? Give me, give me, give me? Or let somebody else do it? So then you have to find a way that there’s a promise. What’s the promise? The promise is that there is a tool that you have already that can change the trajectory and increase the momentum for success.

Would you want to use it? Especially if there are no side-effects. After four hours you don’t have to call your doctor. You don’t have to do anything. It’s not illegal. But it’s a steroid. It is an absolute steroid. And it’s inside of you.

Andrew: Is there a story that we can tell to convince them to buy this book?

Peter: Yes.

Andrew: Okay.

Peter: So you say to yourself, okay, and so what’s the process? The process is something that is already inside of you. Be able to narrate that offering in a unique way. To be able to show them in a unique way. To say that, really, you’re going to have failure in your life. You’re going to have success in your

life. You want more of one and less than the other, and more joy and less pain.

So how do you change those metrics in your favor? Anybody who is selling snake oil will say it's an absolute, money-back guarantee. All you get is your money back, but not your time back, and you usually don't send it back, and then you're really pissed off because you wasted everything. All right? You bought the snake oil, and it is snake oil.

Here, there's nothing to send back. You already got it. There's no return stamp. So what would I say? Here's the way it works.

Andrew: Okay

Peter: You walk into a room, and they're going to have the opportunity to fulfill a dream that you have. A dream to buy an asset that you thought about all your life. All your life. You built your business around aiming for that particular point. You want to buy a major league professional franchise. An absolute franchise.

You said to yourself, "Okay. We're bidding for this franchise now. We got in the game, but now all these heavyweights are in. People who have more capital, maybe bigger reputational value, more experience of the local community, and we're in the bid."

Now this just happened. It was called, "buying the Golden State Warriors," the NBA franchise, which was 40 or 50 days ago.

Andrew: Congratulations.

Peter: And I had gone through trying to buy the Dodgers with a partner, with Frank McCourt. I had gone through actually buying with Billy Beane the Oakland A's, then get that skunked. Worked on the Miami Heat with Pat Riley and got skunked there.

So lots and lots of places. And I certainly had some economic resources and some experience, but this was big time game. I was sitting there with my partner, and we knew that we might not have the absolute best bid, and we knew that other people had a lot of force behind them. I knew that he was the person at that point, at least a connection, with the person that owned the team. And the jig was up, it was one day away, and the person was going to make the decision.

He was pondering it. He had gone with his son back to the East Coast to talk about what schools the boy was going to get into. So I thought, and I thought, and I thought, what would I do? I said, "You know something?"

I listened to Joe Jacob, who was my partner, he said, “You know, this is my dream. I live in this community. I’ve been a 20-year, lifelong seat holder of this team. I sat on the floor and felt the pain and felt the joy, and I understand what this person feels giving it up and also making a profit. I’m the right guy, we’re the right team to be able to do this.”

I listened to him, and I heard the passion, and I heard the narrative of what he’s done. That where he wanted to protect the legacy, that fan base, and that he was the right person. I said, “You have to stop. You’re telling the wrong audience the story. You have to get on a plane, get a plane, and fly all the way across the country and see him, and sit in the same room, breathe the same air, and tell him this story.”

He says, “For a 15-minute meeting I can do it on the phone.” “No, no, no. You gotta go do it. You gotta go do it.” Now did I really know all the [??]? Yeah, probably, by that time, [??] that was 40 days ago. I hope I did.

But the real question was I absolutely believed it. I was convinced. I said, “Look, my whole synthesis of my life,” I said, “was there is a difference when you’re in the same room, breathing the same air. There is a moment where somebody looks at—and here’s the emotionality of the story—even though the information is all the same, the emotion can change the result. It can change the result. Go back there and do it.”

He said, “Well, what if he doesn’t see me?” “No, he’ll see you. You’re going to fly all the way back there.”

So, we went and made the call, he said, “You want to come all the way back? Tell me now what it’s about.” He says, “No, no, no, I gotta go back, come back and see you.” He said, “OK. Come back. I’m in-between two schools,” I think one of them was Duke, “with my son. We’ll have a quick coffee or a quick lunch.”

Went back there, told him the story, came home, he said, “Well I don’t know.” He said, “I spent 20 minutes, told him, a half an hour [??]. Nodded his head. Didn’t seem particularly moved or anything by it.”

So the next day, we won the deal. The newspaper in San Francisco said the other guy won the deal. The newspaper had it wrong.

Andrew: It was that close.

Peter: We won the deal. And the reasons why—do I believe the facts and figures weren’t important? They were crucial. Do I believe not presented in that way would have made a difference? I do believe it made the difference, and my partner does, too.

So I can only tell you through experience, and that’s a big one, and very

recent, that my feet and my tongue believe that. I believe what Arianna Huffington said, and told me in the book. She said,—this is the queen of blogging and Internet—she says, “When I absolutely, positively, 100 percent have to convince or get something done, I got to get in the same room, breathe the same air, and tell them face-to-face.”

Andrew: I see. You know what? I would like to tell you my experience with your book. As a teacher of storytelling at UCLA, and as someone who’s told your own—more than your share of stories—critique the way that I do it. I’m going to try to use the same structure that you gave us in the book. Challenge, struggle, resolution. Okay?

So two days ago I was on a flight to Atlanta, Georgia, and I was nervous out of my mind. I was sitting there going, “I’ve got an audience of 150 people. I’ve got a keynote for them.” They flew in some of them to come watch me live. And I don’t have a presentation because I was sick and couldn’t put together the PowerPoint slides. And I said, “What do I do?”

Well, because you were coming here to do this interview, I had with me a copy of “Tell to Win,” the book. I was reading it in preparation for you and trying to get my mind off of the worry, so that I could relax and come up with a presentation.

Well you said in the book that everyone has a story inside them, that we could just remember what’s going on in our lives, and we could just use that to persuade. And I said, “Who cares if I don’t have the PowerPoint. Who cares if I don’t have data because I don’t have time to put it together. I’m going to tell a story up on that stage.”

So I get up on the stage, couldn’t even write out or rehearse the story because I didn’t have enough time, but all I did was I wrote some notes on stories from my life and from past interviews, just like three words to remind me of them.

Got up on stage, and do you know what happened? I bombed. I was still nervous. My mouth was dry because of the audience. In my head I was still very worried. But I just went and told my stories, sometimes kind of badly, and I walked off the stage saying, “You were smoother. You’ve told stories better in the past. You’ve told facts better. You were more on onstage. You failed.”

But then afterwards I went out and I had drinks with everyone there, and they started telling me the story of how I returned my clothes to J.Crew to get money to start my business. They started telling me about the story of a guy who I interviewed here who got Richard Branson to wear underwear over his jeans as a way of helping this entrepreneur promote his underwear

brand.

I realized, even if you suck when you tell stories, people remember it. Even if you don't have time to prepare a story, you can come up with a story that has that kind of impact on people.

The fact that I'm here saying to my audience they should get this book, and I can state with full confidence that storytelling works, is because even when I told it poorly, it worked. Even when I told it to an audience of people who were waiting for me, and paid to hear me, it worked. Even for an audience that said, "I paid. I better get my money's worth out of this." I feel they did.

So how'd I do? Challenge, struggle, resolution. People who were watching the video and not listening to the MP3 of this interview might have seen me looking at challenge, struggle, resolution. I think I did a pretty good job there.

Peter: Yeah, absolutely. But let me curate that for you. Let me [interrupted]

Andrew: Yeah, okay. Good. This is what I like.

Peter: ...annotate that for you. You had a script. You didn't write it down, but you had a script. It was your experiences in your head, in your heart, right?

Andrew: Okay. For a second there I thought you were going to say either you cheated, you had a script, I was going to say [??]

Peter: No, no. You came from your heart. Your authenticity shined through.

People love people that are authentic. They'll forgive any kind of foible if you're authentic. They want that aliveness. They don't want the words on the page. They want the words from you. That's what they want. They're buying that aliveness. That's the only thing they could possibly want.

That's the first thing. The second thing was you were vulnerable. They got that you were vulnerable. That was really important for the connection to them. They had empathy for that. You could have even told them I had forgotten my script, I don't feel well. They would have even liked you more.

You know what I mean? Because everybody has that. So that's the other part of it. And you did something else. You were spontaneous. You

dropped the script. I mean, how much better it is to be with someone that's serendipitous, and can see that and shine through.

So all of that is what opened them up. Then what happened is they shared with you that same emotion. You ignited that inside them. And that told you it was successful. You hit the right target. You could have fired all the freakin' information you wanted, and data and everything, had a sheet in front and read it to them, they wouldn't have remembered one number. They wouldn't have remembered one fact. They would have been there and said, "You could have sent me that in a text."

So the idea is we want aliveness. We crave it in everything we do. We want that spontaneity. Why do we go to sporting events? Because we feel we make a difference at that sporting event. I know that's insane to believe that, but people do.

So the idea is inside the sporting event of your life, you recognize that. Now here's what happens. Do you recognize that and say, "You know, the next time I'm going to still prepare ferociously, but I'm going to make sure I leave that in my dressing room, or I leave that upstairs, and come whole to that experience."

Because what you did was you talked to that audience of, how many? A couple of 100 people?

Andrew: A couple 100 people.

Peter: As if they were 1 a 100 times over. I could see the way you just did it then. You talked in that way. You didn't speak at them, you spoke with them. And that's really the key.

Andrew: Keith Ferrazzi, here, when I interviewed him, told me the same thing that apparently that he told you, which is be vulnerable in business. Why does vulnerability work? I'm still not even convinced that it does. Because I feel like in business, people pay you for authority and confidence, and to be able to get things done. When you share any vulnerability, I'm concerned that you're risking losing all of that.

So why do you think vulnerability works?

Peter: Well, there's two elements. You want to create the equation of trust. You want to create the equation of feeling some equality between people that are connecting.

Vulnerability doesn't mean you don't have strength of information. Vulnerability doesn't mean you're not assured at all, it doesn't mean that at

all. Vulnerability means that you let warts and all show through. Your imperfections are part of the quality of your humanness.

That the perfect email is written and edited—one of the things about emails are, text, it's read, it's edited, it's reworked, it's rethought, it's redone, it's [??], it's rethought, and it's perfect. All right? But it's not you. It's an artifice.

Right now, I have “uh, ooh, oom, ma, th-, d-,” all those words in [??]. If you put that all in one text, it would look like gibberish. But what the other person does is they fill in the blanks. They feel that you're really present with them.

It's not that we want to be with somebody that's perfect. We want to be with somebody that's real. We crave that experience. We're looking for it.

Andrew: How did you do that at one of the top positions in business as the Chairman and CEO of Sony Pictures, how did you show your vulnerability?

Peter: You know, I'm not sure I—I certainly didn't know what I was doing, maybe on a lot of things, but I didn't know what I was doing in regards to that. This was more of an epiphany that happened a few years ago after a couple of big failures, and a couple of big successes.

Andrew: Tell me about them. What made you realize this? What were some of the failures that made you realize you needed to change?

Peter: I had so many failures, it was unbelievable. Really, really, big failures. Failures to be able to accomplish a deal to buy the Dodgers. Failures to be able to build a certain public company that I was working on, because I didn't understand the constraints of that kind of an enterprise. Failures in life with friends, failures in life with investments.

I mean, it's huge numbers. Lots of, all kinds [interrupted]

Andrew: Tell me one of those stories. I'd like to hear where your vulnerable spots are through a story. Which of them do you feel most comfortable sharing?

Peter: After a number of years at Sony, I left Sony, and about—oh, about three months after I left Sony, they wrote down a huge, couple of billion dollars write-down. I expected that. I knew it was going to happen. That was the way it was. There was nothing much made of it. That was what happened, and the information was there.

And then somebody wrote a book.

Andrew: You left, and they took this big write-down. Who, and in the world...

Peter: They took this big write-down, and people wrote a book. They wrote that book about the process. I said, I'm not going to engage it. I'm going to just—it was a hateful, difficult book filled with other people's views and information that was slanted. It wasn't entirely about me at all, but I was a central figure in it.

I made the mistake. I didn't tell my story. I let somebody else tell my story. I said silence. I stuffed it. That became denial, and denial became regret, and regret became anger, and ultimately I didn't have the opportunity to do anything but just stuff it.

I realized that I let somebody else tell my story, and I had a lot of drama and angst because of it. I said to myself, I'm not going to let that—and it hurt, and it hampered me. It hampered me in my business for a year or two, even though I had a very successful business. It hampered my success, it hampered my reputation. It had a lot of impact.

I thought to myself, "You know, if you're not willing to stand up and tell your story, if you're not willing to be present and confront facts, information, and let somebody else tell the story of you, you deserve the result."

And I had done that before when I was a child. I had done that before when I was 10 or 11 years old in school. That had become a pattern for me.

So now I decided in my life, a number of years ago, that I would be active in my own rescue. I wouldn't let somebody else tell my story. I would tell my story, and if it didn't work for somebody, it didn't work. But at least I was active in my own rescue. I wouldn't let the story be written without me being a participant, rather than just being a passenger. Rather than just not saying anything and be stuck with denial.

Andrew: Your camera just froze up. Can you turn your camera off and turn it back on? I want to make sure that we get to see you.

Peter: I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Andrew: No, it's okay. It happens all...

Peter: Did the audio go out, too?

Andrew: No. We got the full audio in there. That's good.

Peter: Okay.

Andrew: So that reminds me of one of the African sayings that you brought up in your book. You said, "If the lion does not tell his story, the hunter will." I love that.

That's one of the reasons why I love having entrepreneurs here telling their stories. Because if we don't tell our stories, our haters will tell our stories about us. They're the ones who are going to get to let the world know who we are.

Peter: I think that's so true, and I think that, more importantly, that story lives in your own psyche, your own brain. It rolls around in your head. It wakes you up at night. It makes you something less than or different than you really are. Your authenticity has trouble shining through. Because that boogymen is right there whispering away in your ear. "You're not good enough. You're not smart enough. You're not big enough. You're not this, you're not that."

And that thing can upset you, because the balance of success and failure is so close. So my own instinct, and I say this to you, Andrew, in a strange way, my own instinct is that you have to be willing to confront your adversaries, confront the information and stories about you, you have to be willing to do it. You have to be willing to have your feet in the fire.

You may not convince anyone, but you have to convince yourself. If you convince yourself of that, you'll live a better life for yourself. I think the truth is really, for me, that I failed cataclysmically many times and publicly. And painfully.

But I would not have achieved the success had I not had those failures, because I would have moved so far from the goal line that my story would have been a very pedestrian activity, one that was guaranteed to get somewhere, but not where I wanted to be.

Andrew: All right. I can't end this conversation without veering away from storytelling for a moment and just ask you about owning an NBA team, the Golden State Warriors. You worked hard to do it. What's the best part, now that you've had a chance to get into that position?

Peter: You know, [laughs], I'll tell you a story that'll be funny. The story of once upon a future time. Not this week, but next week. I'm smiling when

I say it, because I laughed.

I was a young boy, and the NBA was like six or seven teams. They were New York, it was Boston, it was Syracuse with Dolph Schayes, it was Oscar Robinson in Rochester, New York. I mean, it was a little, tiny league.

I would go to Boston Garden, which is this old, storied factory building in Boston, where the Bruins and the Celtics would play there. I would sit up in the third balcony in obstructed view. That means you're going like "this" all the time, because there was a post in front of you. You could see half of every game, half the time.

I kept thinking, "Who are those folks that sit down right next to the floor. Who are they? How did they get there?" I know they didn't just walk down there. How did they get there? I always kept thinking that question. I mean, what's the secret sauce of that? What special juice did they have to do that? Never dreaming, thinking, believing that I'd ever get to sit down there one day and do that.

I smile because I know next week I'm going to my board—I'm the Co-Chairman of the Board of my team up in the Bay area—for our first board meeting. The team's done, arguably, unbelievably better than last year. Unbelievably. It's won the last three games, as a matter of fact, beautifully against difficult teams.

I'm sitting there, and they're playing the Celtics, and I'm center court, in those seats. Now granted, those seats are really expensive. I mean they're much more than what's printed on the seat, to have that seat. But now I know how you get there.

You get there through success and failure, hard work, creating a story for your life that you can live, and hopefully God will take care of the details.

Andrew: All right. Well that's a great place to leave it. I'm going to tell people one more time about the book. But beyond the book, how can people connect with you? Are you online, are you blogging?

Peter: Yeah. I blog all the time. I just did several blogs for Arianna Huffington about that. I do some stuff on the NBA. I tweet a lot. You can follow me on Twitter. I'm constantly around, doing that.

I really enjoy the connection. I think the one thing that new media like this has given one, it's given one an auxiliary voice. A chance to not be held by the gatekeepers to an audience, whether it's your tribe or a wider tribe.

So it's very appealing to me. A guy that grew up when there were only three channels, NBC, ABC, and CBS, and you had to get out of your seat to change the station. You know?

Andrew: [laughs]

Peter: I grew up with that. The idea that now everybody's on all the time, and you got a chance to be on, too, is pretty fun.

Andrew: It really is. If anyone in my audience is especially ambitious and wants to sit in on your class, wants to audit the class, do you still teach in UCLA, and can they pop in?

Peter: For 38 years I've been teaching there. And I do a lot of stuff online. I am constantly online, so they can check it out.

Andrew: Will you allow them to audit a class?

Peter: We can't do that, because the state university doesn't allow it. [??]

Andrew: The state university doesn't allow it?

Peter: No, UCLA doesn't allow you to do that. They have an online operation, but they don't allow you to use that ID, online, against the folks that have paid tuition. Now, let me say this to you.

Andrew: A nice try on my part, though.

Peter: I don't get paid for doing it at the University for all those decades. I'm a payer. But I'm also a beneficiary. I learn more than I teach in those schools.

Andrew: All right. Well thanks for doing the interview. I'm going to hold up the book one more time because I promised I would. It is "Tell to Win." By the time you guys get to watch it, it'll be available at Amazon and just about every other bookstore out there.

Peter, thanks for doing the interview.

Peter: Great. I hoped you liked it as much as I do. I'm glad you liked it.

Andrew: I really did. I loved it, and thanks for doing the interview. Thank you all for watching, and when you read the book, come back, give me your feedback, let me know what you thought of it. Bye.