

Ronen Gafni and Simcha Gluck

THE NEW ENTREPRENEURZ

Changing
the way you
play life



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Who Are the New Entrepreneurz?

They are the game changers who can be found playing different games across the spectrum. They are the business owners, the managers, the lawyers, the moms and dads, the lovers, the educators, the artists, and the healers.

Entrepreneurship is no longer just about business; it is the new mind-set.

Imagine this: You live on an island where you know everyone, you're familiar with the little shops and the schools, and you know exactly how everything works. Lately, things have started to become polluted; occasionally there's a natural disaster, but overall, it's familiar and comfortable and the place you call home.

Despite this, you feel a sense of something looming in the background, of something being not quite right anymore, perhaps something breaking. You choose to climb a hard-to-reach mountain: You'd like to meditate and breathe some fresh air. But upon reaching the peak, you notice for the first time, across the sparkling waters, another green, lush island.

Wow! Until that moment you were aware only of yourself and the little island where you'd grown up and to which you'd been confined. You had no idea there was another whole world out there, a New Island of potential and possibility that you could aspire to reach. Taking out your super-high-definition smartoculars, you notice something very interesting about the New Island.

Although it appears that the New Islanders share the same technology and resources as your island, what is very different

over there is the *way* the New Island citizens are using the technology and resources. They seem to operate according to a different set of rules, beliefs, and guidelines. You're awed as you watch them generate extraordinary results, create far better solutions, and express themselves creatively in ways you hadn't thought possible . . . until now.

It dawns on you that the reason people on your island can't achieve the same outcomes despite having the same potential is because they're blocked by their own outdated mind-sets. After weeks of observing the New Island, you see that it also faces challenges and troubled waters from time to time. But the people there always meet these challenges with ease, collaborations, and what seems like a mind-set of genuine serious playfulness.

By now, you are really excited about the idea of joining that New Island, but how are you going get the new set of skills that will help you make that shift in mind-set? The good news is that we're here to help you with that.

So let's cross over to the New Island . . . the New Entrepreneurz style!

In this book you won't find secret formulas, magic incantations, or a one-size-fits-all approach. We don't believe in such things on the road to self-expression and true entrepreneurship. What works for one person won't necessarily work for another, and where one person is heading isn't necessarily where you want to be headed. So your job is to mark the X on your map, and your quest is to find your own unique way there. This book is simply here to teach you how to read the map, equipping you with the smartnoculars that let you spot both opportunities and

threats, and with a sword to fight your inner and outer dragons. Now you can build the bridge and cross over to the New Island . . . as a New Entrepreneur.

So build the bridge, cross it, and really experience what life on that New Island feels like by bringing the talents that *you* have, fully into the picture.

Don't Read This Book; Live It!

That's because this book is not about *information*. It's about *transformation*.

Over the past few decades, the world went from being about stuff and having stuff to being about information and having information. The Information Age has been awesome because it unlocked for us unlimited access to everything we could want to have and know. Now we are rapidly heading into the Transformation Age, where having and knowing is nowhere near as significant as *being*. Being and experiencing life to the fullest is what the New Entrepreneurz are all about, and they look to do so with the right tools, skills, and mind-set.

Entrepreneurial thinking is the ability to turn ideas into reality, and over the course of this book when we refer to entrepreneurs, we really mean *entrepreneurial thinkers*. We never reference people who only build businesses because no one in the world *only* builds businesses. People have never been more multidimensional, wearing various hats, taking on numerous projects, and simultaneously existing in and operating multiple games across the spectrum.

Here is some fun information regarding the authors. Ronen has many dimensions; he's a great cook, a programmer, an awesome husband and dad, a considerate son, a game player, a writer, and an incredible trainer. Each of those worlds is a game that Ronen plays and in which he therefore aims to win. Some of Simcha's multiple dimensions include being a musician, a snowboarder, a pet owner of Arnie the rabbit, a great husband and dad, a helpful sibling, an engaging speaker, and a TRXer. Each of those worlds is a game that Simcha plays and in which he therefore aims to win.

Each dimension is meaningful in its own way as well as challenging, fun, inspiring, and an integrated part of reality. None of these dimensions is dependent on the currency of money for its inherent value. In other words, you don't have to be able to monetize everything you do for it to be something valuable that serves you in your life. This is the beauty of being multidimensional New Entrepreneurz celebrating all the different aspects of who they are. Each dimension allows us to step proudly forward and find self-expression and joy when we play the games that we play. Smartly.

If you love what you do and do what you love, that's the best. Who cares if others do more, bigger, louder, or differently? They're just playing different games, and in the same way that they can be winners in their games, you can be a winner in yours, too. Being a winner doesn't imply being exclusive. If there's room for collaboration, collaborate! We believe people are powerful, have integrity, and want to grow and develop themselves. Just by picking up this book you

1 Ronen Tells the Story behind FreshBiz

The value of an idea lies in the using of it.

—Thomas Edison



Figure 1.1 Or Kaplan

From a very young age I sensed, and later realized, that the games that we are all taught to play in life might not be the right ones, not for me personally, and maybe not for the world either.

School was the perfect example of my dichotomy. Inherently feeling that society was playing the wrong game of education, I never cared much about grades and was willing to invest time and effort only in those subjects that fascinated me. Even then, my goal was never to achieve good grades. Seeking the rationale behind the curriculum subjects, I was disappointed repeatedly when teachers couldn't adequately address that question. Clearly, learning more about topics that specifically interested me meant looking for more information myself. Before you shrug, smile, and think to yourself, "Well, there's the Internet . . ." keep in mind that the Internet didn't make its big splash into our lives until some 20 years later, so my only option was combing library after library, searching in physical books.

A question that puzzled me endlessly was *why* we need to learn the things we were being taught. Simply put: Why should we study math, physics, literature, and music, and how might they integrate into new holistic understandings and not just fields of accrued knowledge? But that's the structure of the game of formal education, which focuses chiefly on gaining knowledge for the sake of knowledge rather than developing new insights or creative thinking.

Having said that, there *was* one school subject I loved: economics! I could get the logic of it, the interaction between cause and effect and its application to real life.

It was fascinating, and I wanted to know more about the world of business, which gave the impression of being one tremendous, compelling game.

Books, books, and more books absorbed me totally, especially the narratives about what would later be called multinational or global companies, such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Microsoft, and others, and their founders. I was always amazed by the mind-set that enabled people to develop such huge companies more than the companies themselves. It wasn't the money, the sales, or the market value of those companies that grabbed my attention most; it was what it took to make big dreams come true.

Let's backtrack for a moment to my early years. Because I was born with a heart defect, much of my early childhood was spent in hospitals, undergoing major surgery at four years old and later needing to cope with numerous related health issues. They were all encapsulated in childhood memories as images of hospitals and a series of unpleasant experiences. Years later, a physician supervising my annual checkup expressed amazement that I was still around.

That made me wonder if a guardian angel hadn't given me a second chance, and if so, then the only and obvious conclusion was that I should do something meaningful with my life. My parents, on the other hand, had a different approach. Not wanting anything worse to happen to me, they felt that resting was vital. The upshot of their understandable concern was an overprotected childhood. But the downside of being protected against bad stuff happening is that not much life happens either.

There would be no going on school trips, sleeping over at friends' houses, or playing group sports, and it wasn't uncommon when I did leave the house to hear one of my parents yell out, "Remember, life is already challenging enough. You don't need to go looking for more trouble." I truly appreciate my parents' situation and am immensely grateful for their love and support, but keeping me from life was tough. Because we have the choice, however, of focusing on the positive aspect of any situation, I can definitely say that three good things surfaced from that period:

1. Because I wasn't out there with my peers as much as I wanted, I got to spend a lot of time getting ready for the rest of my life.
2. I developed a deep understanding of what it means to try to prevent life from happening, which I eventually realized is something many people do every day out of fear.
3. I came to see that life really is a game. As long as we're healthy, everything else is no more than mind games. In actuality, health, too, can be viewed as a type of a mind game.

My specific circumstances led to the realization that playing the wrong games in life would be a waste of effort, and effort involves time. So what games *were* people playing, and what would classify them as good?

Like my peers, upon completing high school I enlisted for military service in the Israel Defense Forces, but because of my health status, I earned an immediate exemption from any

combat unit. Wanting to contribute what I could to the State of Israel and the security of its people, I enlisted in the capacity of computer programmer for the mandatory three years. Free time in the afternoons was an opportunity to become certified as a stock broker, along with my best friend at the time. We jumped into the deep end of the stock market game.

Although we were just two regular draftees with a monthly paycheck of about \$100 each, with some great connections and neat negotiation skills, we swung about \$100,000 in credit from the bank! It was crazy, and we had a good deal of fun playing the stock market. There were days when we made \$300 to \$500, which we thought was awesome compared to our salaries. We enjoyed playing around with our big earnings, but we also learned some very valuable lessons along the way:

1. The stock market is a game of skills. Invest time and effort in suitable education, and you can create great wins.
2. Money is a game. Win some; lose some. Either way, the experiences and anecdotes remain yours forever.
3. You don't need huge earnings to have fun; you just need to know how to put what you have to good use. Believe me; we had some unforgettable vacations with those \$300 earnings.

About three months before my military service was due to end, the Israeli stock market not only caved, but in retrospect, it also turned out to be the greatest collapse in its entire history. What perfect timing. As I stepped back into civilian life, I started out with a gift of about \$10,000 in debt.

It was pretty shocking at the time, but I recall constantly comforting myself with a simple sentence: “It’s just a game of win some, lose some, and one day it’ll be summarized as one line in a book.” So here it is: I lost \$10,000 in the stock market!

Over the years that followed, I moved into the business game through several initiatives in the StartupNation, learning about programming, sales, marketing, service, accounting, money, and many other aspects of running a business. Formal higher education was struck off my list altogether after the third time I quit college: It was so much more thrilling to spend my time doing rather than sitting in the classroom talking about what can theoretically be done. The straw that broke the camel’s back and led me to realize just how much college life was not what I wanted was when I left one of my final exams an hour before the allocated time, without finishing the exam, because it conflicted with a business meeting I really wanted to be at.

Don’t get me wrong: I’m not saying that higher education is irrelevant or has no purpose, but it wasn’t the right game for me. With hindsight, I also believe it’s not the right game for many people who are still playing it, but they remain unaware of this because they never stop to check thoroughly. In my case, however, the more games I got the chance to play in life, the more I realized what was, and what wasn’t, working for me.

At the age of 30, I realized that being a salaried employee was too slow and unfulfilling for me, so I chose to quit my job and become an entrepreneur—or in other words, be

unemployed! Although at this point I was married and had a three-year-old boy, I needed greater freedom to implement the dream of being my own boss. There was one hitch to this grand concept: I had no clear idea of what my dreams actually were or how to go about making them come true. But I did know that I needed to do things differently. That's when I flitted from one venture to another in the world of software and Web development. Simultaneously, I signed up for the most expensive higher education program there is: the university of life.

A year later my wife, Anat, and I bought a house and a mortgage and moved to a location about 40 minutes north of Tel Aviv. This seemed to me the most obvious and perfect time to come to my wife and present an idea. I suggested that instead of only me not making any money, we could both not make money together. Anat is one of the most talented graphic designers I know, so we decided on a boutique branding agency. She'd be in charge of design, while my skills would cover marketing and sales. Anat's "yes" led to our own family business, the boutique branding agency we called Fresh.

Our entrance into the world of entrepreneurship was a huge leap of faith because we had nothing and no one to fall back on should the business not succeed. We defined success simply: producing enough income to repay the mortgage and cover basic living costs.

What made us go for it, despite the fears and risks, was the fact that we saw this as a step in the right direction toward greater self-expression for us both. It was a move, we knew, that would make us grow as people, as a couple, and as professionals. It was appealing: an exciting challenge.

Actually, our mutual agreement to take this path wasn't a complete surprise. Anat and I met each other at a self-development seminar; she was actually my coach, so from the start our thoughts about personal growth as a main life goal were in alignment. Jim Rohn says it best: "Don't wish it was easier; wish you were better."

Was there a price to pay for making this move? Of course, but it was one we were willing to pay. There were some people who made it clear to us that they thought our venture was irresponsible. On the other hand, we considered foregoing our dreams as irresponsible. Because I was such a "successful" entrepreneur at that point, we set out on this adventure with a net worth of about \$100,000 in debt! Here's a thought to consider: If you're starting out right now with nothing, you're already \$100,000 ahead of where we were.

Around that time, the aha! moment came in the form of an insight. I wanted to show people that the game of business could be played in ways other than those to which they'd become accustomed. I wanted people to realize that business didn't have to focus on who makes the most money but could be a much more expansive, fulfilling, and awesome game if they changed their approach and mind-set.

On a mild October night in 2003, I found myself sitting in the yard, writing down all the ideas and concepts for the board game. FreshBiz was born.

I couldn't configure the fine details of the whole picture back then, but now, 10 years later, I see that the game's basic elements were already clearly outlined. What I *was* certain of was that the game had to be completely new, nothing like any other game that had been played before. It had to take

people through the challenges and excitement of being an entrepreneur. More accurately, it had to lead each player into becoming an entrepreneurial thinker.

I knew that our new branding business could be successful because I'd gained an understanding on how to turn debt into opportunity. I knew that given sufficient time, I could turn things around, overcome the challenges and obstacles, and be a winner.

That was precisely what the game should contain.

In retrospect, that's when the realization clinched about the life games I'd played so far and didn't enjoy, whether they were called education, business, and relationships or Monopoly, bridge, and chess. They were all fear-based games, and the fear was of losing because losing was a negative. To not lose, one had to win. To win, competition was deemed essential. In the world of gaming, this type of zero-sum game is known as last man standing. This means that to be the ultimate winner, everyone else has to lose. What a horrible way to train children who later become adults!

How do students win at school? Simple, by getting higher marks than other students. Is there any motivation for collaboration in that system? No, none at all. How do you win at college or university? Simple, by getting a great job. Any collaboration there? No. If you don't find that great job, and you have no money, well, it's game over for you, right?

From childhood on, we've been trained to think that a healthy business can function only in a state of competition. We're sold, even brainwashed, to believe that success means killing the competitor and dominating the market. Actually,

none of that is true, and this book will explain why in more detail.

Even relationships have been tainted by this prevalent competitive approach. I've seen many couples keep a running scoreboard on who is a better parent, trying to get more points from simple household chores, such as doing the laundry, to activities that shouldn't even be considered a chore, such as spending quality time with the kids.

Then there's the scariest game of all—the money game. Layer upon layer of fear drives it. Have any of these thoughts ever entered your head? *Wow, what if we won't have enough money for food? What does it say about me if I have less than others? How can I risk leaving my job and ending up poorer?* Also, have you noticed that when talking about money the tone of the conversation suddenly changes? That's because people are trying to keep track of the rules they've been told are vital to the money game: Don't share how much you make, don't give any information away, and keep your cards close to your chest.

Think about this: There are so many limiting beliefs and fears about money that too often they either drive us crazy or make us freeze and be incapable of breaking loose. In the game I was outlining that evening in the garden, I wanted to present an alternative to those fears, I wanted to present the dimension of money as only one of many dimensions, and I wanted people to understand that business and even life itself are not competition-based games at all. It was important to me that the game reach its end because of a restricted time frame and *not* because one player beat out all the others.

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