

# Telling Purposeful Stories

**An Interview with Peter Guber,  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Mandalay Entertainment Group**

**EDITORS' NOTE** Peter Guber has been a force as an executive in the entertainment and communications industries for over 30 years. Films he personally produced or executive produced have grossed over \$3 billion at the box office and garnered more than 50 Academy Award nominations including Best Picture winning Rain Man, Batman, The Color Purple, and Flashdance. He is Co-Executive Chairman and owner of the NBA franchise The Golden State Warriors of the National Basketball Association.



Peter Guber

**COMPANY BRIEF** Formed in 1995, Mandalay Entertainment Group ([www.mandalay.com](http://www.mandalay.com)) is a multimedia entertainment vehicle in motion pictures, television, sports entertainment, and new media.

## Why did you decide to write *Tell To Win*?

For the first two acts of my life, I was a storyteller, somebody who connected the artist with the audience wherever they were – in sports, new media, theater, or television. I did it in front of and behind the camera; financed films and television; and created, owned, and operated sports franchises. I failed and succeeded often publicly and sometimes painfully.

Three years ago, somebody asked me, with all those failures and successes, what was the difference maker? I became curious, and as I began decoding my own experiences, I wondered if there was any resource that, when deployed resourcefully, yielded a significantly improved result.

And there was. In getting folks to buy my product or vote for me, join my company or my cause, it was always when I managed to get others to collaborate and engage that got a win.

I realized I had it backwards: it wasn't about storytelling; it was about telling purposeful stories to persuade and convince others of my call to action. I widened the net, decoding my experiences with a growing circle of associates and then realized that telling purposeful stories is a game-changer; being able to move people to action for a cause, making that call to action, and then acting upon it, was the key. I also realized I had to surrender the illusion of certainty because you can't be certain. You can only tell it to sell it, loading your story with the data that shows proof of process, and then

you have to surrender it and it either works or it doesn't. This isn't a promise that you'll become John Grisham, Steve Jobs, or Jack Welch. But it's a promise that if you want to have more joy and less pain, more success and less failure, and enjoy the process and feel active in your own rescue, this is the tool of choice.

**You refer to storyteller versus a teller of stories. Are those two different things?**

Completely different things because, with the telling of purposeful stories, you have a goal. You want the listener to do something, and you are using story as a vehicle to accomplish that. You're embedding the information, data, facts, and analytics inside of a story and the story gives them emotional transportation – it bonds the information with emotion and makes it memorable, actionable, and resonant.

**With technology today, relationships in general have changed, but have we lost the understanding of how important the need is to tell a purposeful story?**

No, quite the opposite. What we have are devices that can connect us in unique ways and use those digital 0s and 1s in state-of-the-art technology to power this state-of-the-heart technology. You're analog, I'm analog. All digital technology is but a cold comfort unless it serves the artist and the audience. At the end of the day, it's not the 0s and 1s – it's the oohs and aahs that move our hearts first and feet and/or wallet after that.

**You have always told these great impactful stories, but a businessperson might not have that make up.**

I didn't know I had it, that I was doing it, or even what to do, and ironically, I was right in the middle of it. So I stumbled backward upon it. Narrative is lurking everywhere. Without it, we could not make sense of our lives or engage with others. You don't need to be an entertainer – you can be an introvert, because even

an introvert knows how to shake your hand. The telling part is about as organized and direct as it can be. What's the purpose of the story? If there is no purpose, don't tell the story. You start with moving people's hearts and emotions. If you do that, you build relationships; if you do that, the feelings and emotions will migrate through the head to their feet, and to their wallet, and you'll get them in all places. It will all be congruent.

**Were you always eager to create your own company and what made you feel there was a need for Mandalay?**

I had gone through the big companies throughout my life, and I realized in the third act of my life that I wanted to march to another tune, one that I was singing. I saw myself as a teller of purposeful stories and as a person that connected artists and audiences. I understood some of the unique elements of artists and some of the unique requirements of audiences, and moving that across different

platforms was challenging and engaging for me. But I saw the benefit of leaving behind the constraints of large corporations, which rarely encourage you to dabble in different areas. I got the opportunity to contend less with managing a stream of the same products for the same audience over a long period of time and got to look at a wider range.

**Is it challenging during the tough times to get back up or do you have the ability to learn and move on?**

It's like riding a bike. You fall down. But you find you can get up and you become braver because you know you can survive. Ultimately, you get better, and

then you want to find other things you can fall down doing and get better at, and you learn that falling isn't necessarily the end. Real success and failure are so close to one another; inside of every great failure are the seeds of great success and in every great success, are the seeds of failure. But you can never test the outer range of your abilities unless you're willing to risk failure. ●

