

Disrupt Yourself Podcast with Whitney Johnson

Episode 74: Shachar Orren

Whitney: Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself podcast. My name is Whitney Johnson. I think, write, speak and live all things disruption. My guest today is Shachar Orren, chief storyteller at [Playbuzz](#). Welcome to the show, Shachar. We are delighted to have you.

Shachar: Thank you so much. So good to be here.

Whitney: Well, I want to start off by asking you what did you want to be when you grew up? And where did you grow up?

Shachar: Well, I grew up, ah, in a small town called, ah, Ramat HaSharon in Israel. Ah, which is a suburb of Tel Aviv, ah, the big, ah, the big city. And, ah, I actually, it's such a cliché, but I always wanted to be a writer. Um, that's something that, um, always excited me. But I never believed that anyone would pay me for it. It really seemed like far-fetched completely.

And I remember myself as a teenager, you know, writing stories and poems and all these again cliché things that teenagers do, but then destroying them right after because I couldn't even bear the thought of how terrible they were. Um, so the fact that I actually managed to work at it afterwards is still amazing to me.

Whitney: So do you remember when you first thought I want to write? Like do you remember what that impulse was or what ... Like, you know, were, did you love books? Was there a book that you read that just really inspired you? Do you, do you have any sort of sense of how that started to germinate?

Shachar: Sure. So I guess I always loved stories. It wasn't ... I always read books as a kid. I was one of those kids that, you know, I would go to the library. And you could only get three books at a time and I would finish one in the car on the way home. And then the other one all through the night. You know, and by the next two days I would be done with all three books and I had to wait another week.

Um, so I always loved reading. But it wasn't just reading. I was also very TV obsessed. You know, sitting in front of a TV in the '90s watching a lot of American TV. It's I always say that's how I know English so well, is because I always watched a lot of American TV as a child. And stories, you know, whether in TV or movies or books, were always my passion. And I guess I just wanted to create that magic of telling stories and, and being able to bring them to life. And that's what really drew me into writing.

Whitney: Well, what was one of your favorite television shows? (laughs)

Shachar: Oh, wow, that is embarrassing. Um, well I loved-

Whitney: Oh, just tell us.

Shachar: I loved, I mean, there's nothing embarrassing about loving, ah, trashy TV is what I always say. So no, but I loved *Friends* and *Seinfeld* were, you know, big passions of mine. Ah, things like *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Dawson's Creek*, those were the kinds of shows that, you know, really, um, accompanied my childhood, I guess.

Whitney: Mm. Fun, fun, fun, fun.

Shachar: Yes.

Whitney: And what's, what's one or two books that you remember that you especially loved?

Shachar: Well, I loved reading, you know, obviously a lot of books in Hebrew but a lot of, um, I, I'm not even sure I know their names in English so it might, might be, ah, tough to tell. But I loved a lot of fantasy stories. I loved reading Nancy Drew.

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shachar: Ah, so like detective stories. I loved Goosebumps. Um, I loved a lot of, ah, I loved Anne Shirley. Um, so really a lot of female characters. You know, strong female characters were something that I remember, even as a child, that I always, um, connected really well with.

And really I was, you know, I was ready to read pretty much anything. I was sometimes I remember myself as a child sitting and opening the dictionary and just going through like interesting new words that I wasn't familiar with and, and being fascinated by it.

Whitney: So is there, um, any word right now that you're just especially entranced with? A word that you find yourself like I really like this word and you find yourself wanting to use that word a lot these days?

Shachar: Well, mostly now, you know, I, I moved to the US, um, almost three years ago and now what's mostly happened to me is that, um, I learn new English words every day. Um, so it's almost like being a child again and discovering language. And it really is almost every other day that someone says a word and, and I'm, I'm like, "Wow, I didn't, I never heard this and, and now I'll be able to use it in a sentence."

So it's, it's really it's actually like the one that comes to mind now is just really so random, but, ah, someone said the word finagler to me the other day and I was like, "Wow, I've never heard this word before."

Whitney: (laughs)

Shachar: So I'm, I'm learning new words every day and I, I love that.

Whitney: Finagler. Yeah, that's a good word. I, I, I, I think of finagle of like how are you going to make this happen in your resourceful way? But you're saying this is a, a person who's a finagler that's resourceful. Very funny.

Shachar: Right, right. Exactly. That's, that's what I heard, yeah.

Whitney: So, um, so you wanted to be a writer when you grew up. Then you go to university, Tel Aviv University. Another notable alumni I saw was Dan Ariely, the author of *Predictably Irrational*.

Shachar: Mm-hmm (affirmative), right.

Whitney: So you are clearly in very good company. Um, so you studied film and psychology. How did you, 'cause that's not quite writing, how did you land on these two concentrations?

Shachar: Right. So I started working as a journalist even before I went to school. Um, right after I, ah, left the army which, you know, ah, as an Israeli, ah, army service is mandatory. So I went to the army for two years and then I started, ah, working for my favorite magazine and I started writing.

And so when I started school I basically already had a job in writing. And I said, "Why don't I just go and study what I'm passionate about and what I'm interested in?" Because I feel that as a writer you learn. If you're lucky enough to have a job in writing, you learn that as you go and you don't necessarily need to go learn that in school. So you might as well know more things about the world so that you have something interesting to write about.

Whitney: Hmm.

Shachar: Um, so that was always my approach. And in Israel in general I feel like a lot of the successful journalists and people that are great writers have learned other things like history or literature or, you know, anything that, that can teach them more about what they're, they want to write about.

Um, so film was always my passion, as I mentioned before, and always something. The, the type of storytelling that I was really drawn to. Um, so that's, ah, that was my immediate decision. And then psychology was kind of a, well, maybe I'll need a real job one day so I, I should study something a little more serious as well. So it was kind of a double major. Um, but really when I entered film school and I sat in class, I felt, wow, there's, this place is for me. You know, I found my true passion and it was an amazing feeling.

Whitney: So, um, I want to back up 'cause this is just fascinating to me. So you graduate from what we would call high school when you were 18 years old, it sounds like, and then you go into the military for two years. Is that correct?

Shachar: Yes.

Whitney: So what, ah, were you a journalist in the military? What were you doing in the military?

Shachar: No, I was actually the complete opposite. I was in the intelligence, so if journalists are about telling, um, about, you know, telling stories to everyone, when you're in intelligence you can't tell anyone what you do or anything about your day-to-day. Um, I remember, you know, being in the army and then meeting new people and they asked you, "So what do you do?" And then I'd say, ah, you know, I'm in the intelligence and then the conversation ends because I can't tell them anything else.

Whitney: Oh.

Shachar: Um, so it's, it's really the complete opposite of, of being a journalist. Ah, but it was fascinating and, um, I guess, you know, joining the army at 18 and, and doing something so meaningful is really, you know, helping you kind of bridge you into adulthood really fast. And faster than you want sometimes.

Um, and, and it was actually when I finished my two years of mandatory service, um, I was offered a job in the same place where I had my army service. And it was like this good, steady, you know, well-paying job that my parents were really happy with. Um, and I actually started working there but four months into it, um, I saw a job, um, at the, my favorite magazine at the time. And I went to interview and I got that job, and I left and I'm so happy I did that.

Whitney: Of course.

Shachar: My parents were, thought I was nuts though. (laughs)

Whitney: That's so, well, and that's, that's, that's what disruption is.

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: You take a step back in order to grow. So it's fascinating to me that you, here you are, a journalist, you're all about asking questions, discovering. Discovering people, discovering things. And you spent two years. What an interesting juxtaposition of, of having to be completely closed. Did you find, though, that helped you become a better journalist by being in intelligence?

Shachar: Yeah, definitely, because it helps you really kind of see a situation from a lot of different angles. And a lot of what I did there, you know, the, the little that I can say, was about, you know, dealing with texts and listening to stories and figuring out how to tell a story of something that happened from a lot of different angles.

So a lot of what I did there actually, in a weird way, prepared me to, ah, my journalism and more, more so my job as an editor, which was what I did after, ah, being a writer for a few years. So there were a lot of juxtapositions that were really unexpected.

Whitney: Right. And, and super helpful in retrospect it sounds like.

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: So, alright, so you, so you, you take this job, you've got this steady paying job. You're now 20 years old and four months later you say, "Hey, mom and dad, I think I'm going to disrupt myself." I'm sure you didn't say that.

Shachar: (laughs)

Whitney: But I'm going to go, I'm going to go work at this magazine. And they were probably thinking, "This is such a lark. What is she doing? This makes no sense."

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: Um, but it sounds like you felt like you'd, you'd found your place.

Shachar: 100%. Because it was I remember going to interview for this position and it wasn't even a writing position at the time. It was kind of like producer/office manager.

Whitney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shachar: Um, but I knew that no matter what I get to do in this place, surrounded by these people that I admired so much, I'm going to be happy. And I went to the interview for the position and I knew everything about the magazine and everything that they just, you know, they offered me to take a copy and I said, "No, I already have one." You know, it wa-it was clear that I, ah, really knew what they were about.

Um, but the, the chief editor told me, "You know, we interviewed a hundred people for this position." And I was sure that there was no chance in the world that I'm going to get it. But I did. Um, and I remember myself thinking, you know, what are you doing? But I was 20 years old so it was, it was easy to disrupt and make a change at the time. And I, got paid terribly. You know, it's, ah, it's in, in, in the media business in Israel it's such a small business. And it's, it's a struggling industry worldwide but especially in such a small country. Ah, but I knew that I had made the right choice and I obviously still feel like that today.

Whitney: Did they tell you why you got the job out of the hundred candidates? 'Cause I'm, I'm thinking about, um, listeners to the podcast and who are graduating from college and trying to figure out. And you weren't actually graduating from college, but trying to get your first job.

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: Um, do you, did, did your, did the magazine give you any insight as to why they chose you over the other candidates?

Shachar: So this is actually a really funny, um, thing that they told me then, is, ah, two things. Ah, it was between me and another candidate. Um, which I guess what singled us out was the passion towards, you know, what the magazine was doing. Um, but what eventually made them go with me was, A, because of the intelligence background because it

seemed like, you know, a really respectable, ah, you know, kind of mysterious background to them. And, B, because I had a nicer resume. (laughs) So maybe-

Whitney: You mean 'cause of how, how, how it looked?

Shachar: How it looked, yeah. Just how it looked. You know, how it was designed, um, on the page. And so-

Whitney: Interesting.

Shachar: Yeah. It's, it's, it really feels so random now but, yeah, with that, yeah.

Whitney: Well, I, you know, that's fascinating. So I'd love to just pull that apart for a second. So on the one hand this, um, this experience that you had for two years, and I think in the United States we might call it a gap year. Um, and, you know, gap two years. And what can feel like, well, I'm taking this step back, I'm going to go do this thing. I'm, you know, off, off-track for two years turned out to actually be something that really was a slingshot for you in terms of the experience that you had.

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: What, how you show up, what it looks like. Sounds like it was really valuable. And then you said something almost in passing which I think is really valuable, which is that you said you were super prepared for that interview. Like you knew about the magazine, what they did.

Shachar: Right, right.

Whitney: And it sounds like that was actually really attractive to them as well.

Shachar: Right. I think that's something that people sometimes don't spend enough time on is, you know, now in my current job I get to interview a lot of people. And often I, you know, I see people come in. First of all they will send you a letter, you know, ah, wanting to be invited to an interview, and they get the company's name wrong.

Whitney: (laughs) Oh.

Shachar: Or you see that they copy pasted from, ah, 10 other applications that they sent. So immediately this whole, you know, I can't wait to work for your company is not very believable. And then, you know, coming into the interview and not being very well prepared, like knowing the founders of the company or what we do or just basic facts.

And, you know, I, I never judge. You never know if people had time and they're, they're busy and they're probably interviewing in a lot of places. But when someone really does understand what you do and you feel that they either researched it very well or they're really just passionate about what you do. And so they know it because they care, not just because they're coming to interview. It really like they stand out.

Whitney: Yeah. It's so fascinating, so interesting.

So you've said, um, in some interviews since coming to the United States and, and, ah, becoming the chief storyteller at [Playbuzz](#) that in Tel Aviv as a journalist you were in your comfort zone. Um, what made you decide to jump out of a parachute, out of that comfort zone into the United States, a job here. What, what happened? What, what, what was going on in your head? And, and really just talk us through the, that chain of events.

Shachar: Sure. So I was a journalist for, um, almost nine years. Um, and I loved my job and I loved the opportunity to write. And it was my dream and I, you know, I transitioned from the s-producer office manager to full-time writer to editor to at my last job in journalism I was deputy chief-editor, ah, at, ah, one of the most successful magazines in Israel. Ah, and we're talking print, right? The actual physical paper.

Whitney: What, what it's called? What's it called? What's the name of it just so-

Shachar: Ah, i-it's called, ah, Pnai Plus. It's part of, ah, Yedioth Ahronoth, which is one of the biggest media groups, um, in Israel.

Whitney: Got it.

Shachar: Um, and, ah, so I really got a chance to try a lot of the different roles other than chief editor. You know, I'd basically tried a lot of the different roles that are out there, at least in print media, and I had, you know, I, I would call myself a typewriter at some point in this career. 'Cause you just, you write so much and you write so many different things from food reviews to TV reviews to columns to news to interviews to, you know, ah, big pieces. And, um, you really get to try so many things.

And, but the industry that I loved so much and I had spent nine years working at was shrinking. And maybe it's because it was print, but it's not just that. It was, you know, the, the magazine that I had worked, ah, in at the time, when I started it it had about 200 pages. And when I left it had about 50 to 70 pages. And it's because ads were not selling as much and, you know, it wasn't doing as well. And I felt that in a way I'm just too young to be in a dying industry.

Whitney: Hmm.

Shachar: You know, I, I, I felt that I want to be in a place where everything is growing and evolving and changing for the better. And I was seeing all my friends, that are writers and editors that I admired so much, start to either leave or some of them were let go because of budget cuts.

And, you know, in general the vibe. I remember, um, you know, if, if you wanted a, a salary raise after working at the same place for a few years, um, there was no way of getting it. And the vibe was if you're not happy with what you're getting we will, you

know, say goodbye and hire someone younger, ah, that will be willing to be paid less. And in general the, it was, ah, not an easy environment to be in, ah, for, for me at least.

And I guess I, I didn't even realize it at the time and only kind of, you know, in hindsight understanding what I felt, but I felt stuck. And I felt that I have no idea what my next step will be. And I said to myself, "For nine years, what I've learned to do is to be really creative, to find creative solutions to anything that I want to do, to every story that I want to tell. Ah, to write and to edit text. But where will that be useful other than in the media industry?" And I was really afraid that it won't be useful anywhere else and that I'm going to be stuck in an industry that I'm not sure has the future that I'm looking for.

Um, so that, that's kind of what brought me to start thinking of a change. And, ah, luckily it really happened faster than I expected, ah, because even, you know, I just had started to, to think of making that change and making that leap. Um, and one day someone had sent me a job description that was posted online. And, um, this person just said, "This describes you perfectly. You need to, you know, you need to read about this, this job offering." And I read it and I said, "You know what? I really does sound like something I can do."

And, ah, I went to the interview and, ah, it was with, ah, the CEO of Playbuzz. And, um, the company had five employees at the time. They were all sitting in one room in a tiny office in, in Tel Aviv. And, um, I really didn't know what the future was but I knew that it felt a lot more exciting and promising than the future at, you know, my journalism job which I kind of knew what it's going to be and it didn't feel exciting.

Whitney: So your friend says, "Here's this job description. Take a look at this." And you say, "Alright, I don't want to be in a dying industry because in a dying industry there's actually no future, not only for the industry or the company but probably not a future for me." So you take another big leap.

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: Um, when they offered you the job was there anything about it that you thought this feels like a step backward or did in any many ways it feel like a really big step forward? How did it feel to you?

Shachar: Um, in ways it could have felt to me like a step backward because, you know, in my magazine job I was at a senior position and I was, ah, managing a lot of writers and I wa- I already had a reputation and a name. You know, in, in journalism your name is, is all you have. And I was well known within this small community of journalists in Israel. And I could pick up the phone to anyone and get what I need. And I was, you know, invited to the right events.

And it's, for a moment, it, it's hard to lose all that. But it wasn't that hard because I knew, something in me knew, that I had to do that in order to start fresh. Um, where again I felt that wi-I, I will have a future that is a lot more promising. Um, so it, it could have felt like a step back but it really, um, felt like I was stepping into an unknown and

an exciting future. And I kept telling myself, "What's the worst that can happen? In six months I'll be out of a job and I can always go back to the journalism career." You know, it's disappearing for six months is not a disaster.

And, and that's, by the way, what, um, the Playbuzz CEO had told me in, in our first interview is the company is likely to run out of money in six months so be prepared that you could be out of a job if we take you. And so I always had that notion in my head that in six months I can always go back. Um, of course, you know, now that I'm telling it it sounds like I really was so sure of what I was doing. But, of course, I had a major panic attack the day before starting this new job. And, um, I was sure that I'd made a huge mistake. But, ah, again I think something in me knew that even if it's a mistake, it's a mistake that I have to make. Um, yeah.

Whitney: Yeah. So with this, wis-with this particular move, what was your, the reaction of family and friends? Was this, ah, you've lost your mind again or what, what did they say this time around?

Shachar: So the family were actually very supportive because the media industry is know to be a very unstable kind of shaky one. And, um, startups or high-tech, you know, in Israel it's a really developed industry and there's so many startups. And it's kind of like the Israeli dream is to, you know, join a startup and succeed and, and move to another country and, you know, and, and work internationally and, and be a part of something big.

Um, so it did make sense to them. But I can say that my journalist friends, um, you know, were kind of like, oh, we're so sorry that you're now going to work for this six people company and, um, you're going to be wor-basically from managing many writers and being in a senior position you're going to be maybe working with a few freelancers but mostly doing everything on your own. And you're losing your reputation and, you know, everything that I've mentioned. So I think they thought that I was a little bit crazy. Ah, but they don't think that anymore.

Whitney: Right, right. Okay, so I want to just spend a couple of minutes on what Playbuzz actually does. And, um, so that would be interesting for us if you could share that.

Shachar: Of course. So, um, in a nutshell Playbuzz is a storytelling platform for the creation of interactive content. So we work with big publishers and brands like the [College Board](#), um, to create content that really engages an audience. And why does it engage an, the audience? Because it makes them interact with the content rather than just read text and images, similar to what I was doing in print, ah, a few years ago.

Um, and so specifically with the [College Board](#), um, they came to us, um, wanting to do a campaign for high school students to help them decide what they want to do, what they want to study in college in order to reach, ah, their goal in life or the profession that they want to be in, ah, later in life. And I think, you know, the, this used to be a pretty clear path in the past where, you know, you want to be a lawyer, you need, you know exactly what you want to, what you want to study. But today it's not as clear and jobs are a little more complicated.

Um, and so we used our, ah, storytelling platform and our interactive elements along with them to tell a story that will, um, address these high school students and help them make a, an informed decision or help them learn more about themselves through interacting with content that they really care about. Um, and specifically the creative solution that we found, ah, with the College Board in this case was, um, creating these, ah, list of questions that are simulating a teenager texting with their future self.

Whitney: Mm.

Shachar: So you're basically s-um, sending text messages with your future self in 2020. And, um, or maybe it was 2025. Um, and, and asking yourself questions that will help you understand what you really love and what you're really interested in. And kind of help you understand who you will be, um, in a few years, um, to make those decisions.

And then your future self is asking you things like, um, you know, what do you really care about or what are the things that really drive you? And, ah, and then, ah, at the end you get a recommendation for the type of job that you can do and what you need to study in college in order to get there. Um-

Whitney: I love that so much. Was-

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: Do people love it?

Shachar: It was so well received. And it actually, um, you know, helped a lot of people, through content, reach, ah, a conclusion of what they want to do. And really great conversions, ah, for that client. And, ah, it was I love when what we do kind of is not just about, you know, telling a story but also doing something that helps people understand themselves better. And, you know, it changes their lives even if it's just a little bit.

Whitney: Yeah, right.

Shachar: And, um, so definitely one of my favorite examples.

Whitney: So can you, is it possible, is that still available to include that in the show notes? 'Cause I think people would love to take that if it's still available.

Shachar: Yeah, definitely. I'll be happy to share.

Whitney: Okay. So fill us in on that and we'll put, put it in the show notes. Okay, so, so thinking about, um, constraints, so I, I can imagine as a journalist one of your big constraints was time. Um, could you talk about, and maybe there were other constraints, but could you talk about some of the s-constraints that you had to deal with? Either time or money or buy-in or expertise? And, and how what you learned as a journalist has helped you, um, in dealing with the constraints that you now have at a startup?

Shachar: Sure. So, um, one of the biggest constraints that I had, um, you know, starting my startup job, was just knowledge, right? I was in one industry my whole life and then I joined this new industry. And I wanted to pretend that I knew everything but I didn't.

And there, there was a big knowledge gap in knowing the industry, what companies were in our landscape? Even a lot of the lingo of startup talk and, you know, the things that we were doing.

I'd never even worked in digital before. Um, even though I, digital was always a huge part of my life but not officially in, in my profession. And so I had to make up a lot of knowledge in a short time. Um, but what always, you know, what I always loved to say and going back to my concern of will my creative skills ever be useful in the real world, world outside of media, ah, was that the creativity and my ability and understanding or, you know, hopefully understanding what kind of content people love to consume, was what led me and led us at Playbuzz in, ah, reaching success.

Because, you know, you can know all the right lingo and all the right terms and, and, you know, and have all of that, um, kind of official knowledge that you need to work for a startup, but in our particular field we are telling stories to people. And that's what I was doing for nine years of my life.

Whitney: Right.

Shachar: And I always kind of got back to that and, ah, you know, found my like inner, ah, voice that was telling me this is what feels right or this is what I think people will love to read. And all those skills that used, that I used for nine years still guided me and still helped me. Ah, even with all the constraints around.

Whitney: Right, right. So, um, how many employees does Playbuzz have now? I mean, y-when you started it was five employees. How many employees do they have today? Or do you have?

Shachar: So we're now, we're now a little over 150.

Whitney: Wow.

Shachar: So it's definitely growing massively.

Whitney: Yeah, okay.

Shachar: And, ah, we're, we're global. We have, ah, ah, five offices globally. Um, so, yeah, it's, it's the growth that they said. In startups everything happens quickly. So it, it grew very fast and, ah, and, and it also, ah, two years in I moved to New York. So it, you know, changed my life completely as well.

Whitney: What's been the most exciting thing for you, um, or not exciting but surprising thing for you of living in the United States? Moving from Israel to the United States.

Shachar: Well, let me tell you a funny story in that context of a surprising moment that I think really kind of encompasses the, you know, what, what it's like to move to a new country. Um, so my husband and I, we moved here together and, ah, we moved into a new apartment.

And, ah, um, we move-we'd lived there already for about four months and one day we had a, a cleaning person come in and, ah, to clean the apartment. And, ah, after we came back all of our bathroom items were gone. And I'm s-talking about my contacts, my toothbrush, my hair brush. You know, nothing that anyone would steal or throw. It's just everything was gone. And we were just shocked. We had no idea what was going on and after pretty much opening every drawer in the house we realized that there is a little cupboard behind the mirror in the bathroom, and the nice cleaning person just put all of our items there because she didn't understand why we're not using it.

And the thing is, in Israel that's not a thing. There's no cupboard behind the mirror in the bathroom.

Whitney: Mm.

Shachar: So, and it, you know, it's inside the wall so you can't really see it. And we felt like, wow, you know, we, we have no idea what we're doing.

Whitney: (laughs)

Shachar: So I always love to tell that story because it's just those, those moments where the little things are surprising to you. So that's, that's just a story that I love. But, um, on the high level, um, I'm always surprised by, ah, how in Israel I'm, I always considered to be very polite and very nice. And, ah, you know, in the workplace or out of it. And here I'm very direct. And, you know, it's like, ah, ah, I argue with people.

Whitney: Oh, very interesting.

Shachar: Right. So it's like the, the, the behavior is perceived very differently. But honestly I think it, it helps me, um, you know, in, in the new setting. And, ah, it's, it's good to have a little spunk, I guess. Yeah.

Whitney: Yeah. So that's interesting what you're saying is behavior. So it's the same behavior but given the context, there you were considered polite.

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: And here that behavior is considered more aggressive.

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: Which is fascinating, just because of the different cultural context.

Shachar: Exactly.

Whitney: Huh. And I love that story of the medicine cabinet. That's a lovely little vignette or, you know, emblematic of, of how different it is for us to uproot ourselves and, and, and move to a different environment. You're now, you know, the chief storyteller at Playbuzz. You come up with stories and ways for your clients to engage and, and, and for consumers, whether they're businesses or individuals, to engage with your clients via content.

Shachar: Right.

Whitney: Um, are there any stories of yours that you, um, you want to tell? So you tell stories about other people all day long. Are there stories of yours that you feel like haven't yet been told?

Shachar: Of mine personally?

Whitney: Yeah.

Shachar: Definitely yes. Um, I love storytelling in every aspect of my life. I do it all the time, even without realizing it. Things like, ah, Instagram stories which everyone around me knows I am very much obsessed with. And I update what I do all the time, and it's really easy for my family and friends in Israel to always know what I'm up to. Just follow me on Instagram.

Um, but other than that I, a few years ago before I started at Playbuzz and, and my life became crazy, um, I started writing what will hopefully one day be a book. Hopefully. It's, it's still, you know, ridiculous to even think about it. But, ah, ah, that's one of the things on my bucket list is, you know, I, I love writing and it will always be part of my life. And I hope to, ah, complete that as well one day.

Whitney: Is, is it fiction or non-fiction?

Shachar: Fiction, yes.

Whitney: Okay, so if I can give you just a little coaching moment here.

Shachar: Please.

Whitney: Um, I dare you. There's no reason why it cannot be a book. So I would really encourage you and challenge you, um, after we're off our interview today, or you can do it right now, is to set a date, today we're in 2018, that you are going to turn in a manuscript to an agent for review in three years time. And just do it. You know, by the time you turn ... I'm, I'm doing my math, I'm guess you're t-31, 30 at this point?

Shachar: 33.

Whitney: 33? Okay, so you could do it by your 35th birthday.

Shachar: I wish, yeah. But I, I love that idea. And, ah, it, it actually takes me to one of the best tips that I got recently from speaking to a professor at Columbia. Um, and, ah, you know, her best advice for writers was stop wasting time on the anxiety and just sit down and write. And it sounds so obvious. But I think anyone who's ever done any writing in their lives knows exactly what this means, and how much time we waste on the fear of writing.

Whitney: Right, right.

Shachar: And I, I love that advice.

Whitney: Right, right. Good, good, good. So are you going to take the dare?

Shachar: I'm taking the dare.

Whitney: Yes. Okay. So I'm so excited for you.

Shachar: Thank you.

Whitney: Yeah, because it sounds like you've got it in your head. You've been planning it your whole life. It's just time to do it. And, and what's exciting is that as you write this book it will, it will only help and, um, bring more attention to the platform that is Playbuzz, which is it sounds like it's a really exciting, fast-growing, um, Israeli dream type of company.

Shachar: (laughs) Exactly.

Whitney: So congratu-congratulations to you. Um, so, Shachar, thank you so much again for joining us. It's, it's been an absolute pleasure.

Shachar: For me too. Thank you so much.

Shachar is a great example of stepping back to grow. We tend to think of stepping back as something you do late in your career, but as Shachar demonstrates, it can be very advantageous early on. Sideways can be a slingshot.

In recent episodes we've heard some great stories, like [Sloane Davidson in Episode 62](#), [Harold O'Neal \(Episode 73\)](#), [Carine Clark \(Episode 67\)](#). Shachar's work with College Board is an example of innovating AROUND storytelling. And a reminder that when we put people into the story, making them the hero, like we learned from [Donald Miller in Episode 34](#), they engage. Which is the whole point of the story in the first place--to connect us to other people.

Practical tip: The next time you go to share something on social media, see if you can come up with a way for people to interact with you. Whether it's asking a question, or when people comment, comment back. Find ways to interact, to connect, rather than to merely broadcast.

Thank you to Lewatle for leaving a podcast review on iTunes. She says (or he says. I'm not sure if it's a he or a she. We'll take either!)

This podcast gets the balance of being educational and really interesting. I started listening to it at a stage in my life when I knew I needed to disrupt myself. It gave me lots of insights through really well thought out topics and guests. I love the recaps at the end of the episodes and have bought books because of it.

Thank you so much! If any of you have been listening for a while and haven't left us a [review on iTunes](#) or wherever you listen to podcasts, would you take a moment and do so now?

If you'd like to learn more about my new book *Build an A-Team*, you can download the first chapter at whitneyjohnson.com/ateam.

Thank you again to Shachar Orren for being our guest, thank you to sound engineer Kelsea Pieters, manager and editor Macy Robison, content contributors Emilie Davis and Libby Newman, and art director Brandon Jameson.

I'm Whitney Johnson
And this is Disrupt Yourself.