

Jerry: Hey, Fritz. It's good to meet you.

Fritz Brumder: Good to meet you, as well, Jerry.

Jerry: Yeah.

Fritz Brumder: Thanks for taking the time.

Jerry: Sure. Well thanks for coming on the show. It, you know, before we get started, why don't you just take a minute and introduce yourself.

Fritz Brumder: Sure. Uh, my name is Fritz Brumder, I am the co-founder and was the CEO of a company called Brandlive. Um, we are based in Portland, Oregon, and I've recently, um, exited the business, and now I've moved my family to Bend, Oregon. And things are going really well right now, but, uh, it wasn't necessarily always that way, so we'll- we'll get in to kind of the- the entrepreneurial journey of Brandlive.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). Was the CEO. Was the CEO. So, um, would it be helpful to talk a little bit about the "was the CEO" journey?

Fritz Brumder: Yeah. I think, you know, what's most helpful for me, I- I'm now out of the company that I started, it was, you know, over a seven year process, but we were really in it hard for seven years. Um, I had one co-founder in the company, but he was just really on the board more, uh, of the initial co-founder, and I can explain that story a little bit more.

But I am in a period where I'm still kind of decompressing from that process. Uh, it ended well, I'm in a really good spot right now, I've, uh, you know, have some breathing room, and have time to think, and be creative, and am working on two passion projects, and hopefully going to launch my next company. But, um, as a result of some of the, like, the turmoil that I experienced as a result of starting and exiting my company, there's a little bit of fear in that process of like, okay, one, am I ready to, you know, jump back on the hamster wheel, knowing that the energy and effort that it takes to start a company from ground zero.

And just to give you a little bit of an idea of scale, we raised around five million in capital, um, peaked at about 50 employees, um, employees and contractors, and, um, had global operations, uh, throughout the world. Brandlive is a live video delivery tool. So we basically create communication and collaboration for product companies. Our customers were, you know, people like Nike, and Levi's, and GoPro, and things like that. So it was a super fun ride for the vast majority of it, but also, uh, some pain along the way.

Jerry: Hmm. So, maybe before we sort of dive into where you are now, and some of that fear, and some- and- and maybe we can spend a little bit of time just sort of plotting out a little bit of a path forward. Uh, I think for context it might be

helpful to talk a little bit about the transition out and what the last few months were like. Um-

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry: Yeah. So my first question is why'd you leave?

Fritz Brumder: Well, it's- it goes back to about a year ago. So, you know, the company was doing really well, and we navigated a number of things. I mentioned I had one co-founder and we- we were a spin out company. So, uh, you know, from the early company creation process, we navigated some pretty tough decisions very, very well. And then, we grew, and that process was insanely rewarding. Um, fantastic management team, culture of the company, momentum of the company, we made the top 400 of the Inc. 500 list the first two to three years in business. So we were growing well over 100% those first couple years.

Um, and then, just as the numbers got bigger, you know, even though we were adding over a million in ARR, it just- the percentage growth rate was tougher. And I started to notice some issues, uh, with my board in particular. I was just... We weren't seeing eye to eye in too many situations. And that started to become a problem, as we are trying to make sense of why is the company not growing over 100% anymore.

Jerry: Hmm.

Fritz Brumder: Um, even though we were making solid progress, it was challenging to make sense of that.

Jerry: Hmm.

Fritz Brumder: And I had one- one venture capitalist, one angel investor, my co-founder, and an independent on the board. And so I was, I mentioned to you, I was- had been in two reboot circles, and, um, I was looking back at my journal entries from a lot of those sessions, and there were times where I realized I don't think I have the right board or I'm not really managing my board the right way. Uh, um, and I tried a- a number of different things to sort of realign and redirect, but ultimately, it led to me trying to make some changes on the board, and then I walked into a board meeting, only two board members were there, so you know how that kind of meeting goes, (laughs) and that was February 2018.

And so they said, "Now's the time to hire a new CEO, you've done a fantastic job, Fritz, but we want to take this company to the next level. We feel like it should be growing over 100% per year."

Jerry: Hmm.

Fritz Brumder: And, of course, that was difficult for me, but kind of the context of the situation was one of those, you know, "Fritz, do you want to be rich, or do you want to be king?" And I said, "Well I don't, you know, have a big enough ego that I need to be kind necessarily, I want to see my baby grow as much as it can. And so, um, I'm open to this learning process, and hopefully we can bring someone in who's a mentor and all that."

Well, unfortunately, what transpired after that, there just- those alignment issues that I talked about, it just wasn't- it wasn't the right situation and context to bring the right person in. So we hired somebody, you know, I tried to commit to it 110%, but it just really didn't work. And, um, and then a lot happened- a lot happened and transpired throughout that process, but basically, I hit a low point in summer of 2019, where I was just like I couldn't take it anymore, because I felt like I was watching my baby just get pummeled every day.

Um, we had, granted, a ton of culture issues, which was one of our pride points. Um, s- growth went to negative, actually, so we had the opposite financial result. Um, and it just- it got really bad.

Jerry: Hmm.

Fritz Brumder: Uh, so, there- there's more of- in that particular moment that I can talk about, um, but kind of the end of the story, or bringing- bringing it up to present, uh, I just kind of got into a fortunate situation where we- we ended up transitioning that CEO out. Um, I had an investor that was interested and willing to take the business to the next scale. Um, so I got an opportunity to exit the business and start to think about the next thing, and that's just where I was, as, um, you know, as a creative, as an entrepreneur. I just couldn't dig my company out of the hole that it was in.

Jerry: What- what-

Fritz Brumder: And so I decided to move on.

Jerry: What was that like for you? Now, w- with the benefit of hindsight, but- and- and I just want to acknowledge and recognize that your pacing, your breath, slowed down as we were talking about that period. What was that period like for you? Especially, say, the middle of last year?

Fritz Brumder: Well, the- the like mental position that I got myself in and never had experienced something like that before.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Fritz Brumder: You know, I had this like intense pressure in my chest, which I felt, you know, early on, as- once we raised money, and like the- the pressure of being an entrepreneur and build a team, that is a- a difficult thing, and you feel the stress

and the pressure from that. But this was a different kind of, like, physical body pressure that I was feeling, and I was actually concerned for my- my health. I, uh, sought treatment in a lot of different ways. I went to like a cardiologist and had an EKG, and felt like I just don't want to, you know, fall over dead someday from the stress that I'm putting myself under.

Uh, I went to see some, um, mental therapists, and really tried to work through some of those things. So that was a really tough time, and hard for me to figure out what parts of this do I talk about, I feel like there was a little bit of momentum around, you know, talking about mental health in- in the entrepreneurial process, so that helped, I would say, more comforting to talk to people about it. Um, but it was definitely a tough time, and I needed to just take some space.

Jerry: Right.

Fritz Brumder: That was- that was ultimately what I think made it, um, okay for me, was even though I was kind of needing to remove myself a little bit more and more from my baby, um, that ultimately became a healthy thing.

Jerry: Hmm. What was it like watching somebody else take care of your baby?

Fritz Brumder: That was insanely hard.

Jerry: Hmm.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah. Um, a friend of mine told me, or someone said, "You know, can you imagine sort of inviting the babysitter over and then rather than going on a date, (laughs) the- the parents stay and watch the babysitter, and the babysitter, you know, starts to do things that you don't approve of and has negative impacts." That was really, really difficult. And just not a good feeling.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). In my experience, um, one of the biggest sources of perhaps that initial pressure that you were feeling, when you first raised the five million-

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry: ... stems from when like a founder merges their sense of self with the entity.

Fritz Brumder: Yep.

Jerry: And I'll bring your attention back to that word, my baby, my baby. And recall it's not a baby. But it certainly feels like an extension of self. And then, uh, one we're- when we have that merged sense of self, when my identity stems from the positive and negative experience, right, 100% year over year growth, being named, you know, one of the fastest growing companies. On the positive, and

the negative experience of that growth slowing, not sure what to do. And then, we compound the pain of that experience, of merging our sense of self with a- with the normal rollercoaster ride of building a business.

Um, I was, uh, I was just talking to a client before who was getting advice from hi- one of his board members. And his company's gone from 100% year over year growth, to about 30% year over year growth. And he turned to his very, uh, experienced independent board member, and said, "What do you do when that happens?" And he said, "We've got to manage the downside, just as much you're managing the upturns." Right? The downturns as much as you manage the- the upturns. Um, that's business.

But when we are merged in that way, and then we're either forced to, or are voluntarily, give over, or some combination of both, give over responsibility for the company, and then it becomes incredibly painful.

And so, um, I think that one of the challenges, and I think you've experienced this, is that when you start to hand over responsibility, and you're in that, um... you've already merged your sense of self, but then your... that merged sense of self is still attached to the entity. And that entity is now being managed, even through a [inaudible], by someone else... it's, it's particularly painful. Particularly painful.

Fritz Brumder: I remember in one of my very first, uh, Reboot circle sessions, we had that exercise where we realized, "Wow, the company is a r- a reflection of myself, and therefore has a lot of the habits that I have." [00:01:00] And that was a really, uh, important insight.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: O-... I think over the next couple years, I was able to transition a little bit of that, you know? From my identity to the company's identity.

Jerry Colonna: Right.

Fritz Brumder: Um, which was helpful in this transition process, but it definitely didn't overcome that.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). So we're kind of on the other side of this transition now. Right? And, um, I'm really curious as to what advice you might give someone who is either going through or about to go through something similar. What would you tell them? Someone who's especially been a founder, and a senior leader, if not actually the CEO, and, uh... and is now

finding themselves off either to the side, or in a different role, or maybe even outside entity. What advice would you give?

Fritz Brumder: Well, the, the thing that I keep coming back to, and I don't have a perfect answer for this, but there was definitely things that I thought about, hard conversations that I wanted to have, that I sort of wrote about in my journal, all right? Even developed little strategic communication plans for to try and address. And I didn't. And I th-... That's one of the issues I feel like I have when, when a difficult conversation needs to be had, I don't always attack it head-on...

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: ...but having gone through what I did, it would've been a lot easier (laughs) to attack that convers-... you know, to, to have that conversation. So I'd say the, the best piece of advice I could give based on my experience anyways, is just when, when you know something you know something, and you can kind of feel it, especially if it happens multiple times. And you just have to find a way to make that the reality.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Fritz Brumder: did that for sure with, you know, getting numbers or hiring people, or making sure that we didn't run into cash... um, cash flow issues, and things like that, or cash restraints. It was more the people side of things, and I ju-... when I knew something wasn't right, I didn't address it as head-on as I should've.

Jerry Colonna: Hm. Hm. And what about before the transition itself? I mean, there was this several-month period where there was, uh, w-... I guess maybe even a year, where there was someone else in the CEO seat. And there was this, uh, "We need to change the business and the structure," and there was that transition going on. What advice might you have there?

Fritz Brumder: Yeah. Well, actually, I will j-... I'll pass... there I'll pass on some advice that I got that's been really beneficial. Uh, I talked to a guy who was founder of a company and a new CEO came in. And during his career, he was the opposite. He came in as CEO of a company where the founder was still going to stay there.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: He said, "You got to have a side project. If you're... Especially if you're a creative founder, you got to have something to channel your energy, that isn't directly back towards the company."

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: And so that was really beneficial for me to spend some time thinking about, and researching in, in my case, the topic that was interesting to me, so that my

whole world wasn't anymore. I have this [inaudible]. Um, and that's... through the transition process, that's given me kind of hope and interest and passion to put towards something that's giving... you know, taking the void of that identity that you talked about.

Jerry Colonna: You know, uh, it's funny that you say that, because I think back to my own transition, first out of... say, some of the major transitions in my life, first out of Flatiron Partners, which was the second VC firm I, I joined but the first that I co-founded. (coughs) And then to JP Morgan, and then out of JP Morgan, out of the venture business. And there was this period of wandering, if you will, with a bunch of different side projects. I served in a bunch of different boards of directors, and I was doing some writing at the time.

But it wasn't until I had this other passion play, which was learning to be a coach, that really I began to get my ground back and, and with the feeling. And then of course eventually, launching Reboot, 10 years, 12 years after becoming a coach, really having a [00:06:00] completely different approach to the work that I... than I had in the beginning. You're making me recall that time.

Fritz Brumder: Well... Yeah it's a interesting creative time period, right, where you're sort of decompressing from a prior situation, starting to get curious and interested and passionate about something else. But that's kind of the place I find myself in now, "Well, what, what do I want to dedicate myself to? You know, [inaudible] want to make my next identity in," um... Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. I'm remembering that time period. And that time period, uh, for me, was spent with a lot of books and a lot of conversations and a lot of interesting little experiences. Um, and a groundlessness that would occur. I remember thinking about my... the passage of time and the days feeling either inexorably, or excruciatingly slow, or incredibly fast. Like, "What just happened that day?" And, n-... like, not really having a sense of cadence and time. Does that resonate at all?

Fritz Brumder: It does. Yeah, I- I've said to a couple people, um, "I want to move fast and slow at the same time."

Jerry Colonna: Yeah.

Fritz Brumder: That's what it feels like, yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. Yeah. You know, I have this picture (coughs) way back then. And this is probably about 15, 16 years ago. I was spending a lot of time, um... At the time the house we lived in, we had a, a separate pool house which I had organized as my office. And there was gorgeous fireplace there, and big library, it had all these books [inaudible]. And I remember spending time with a lot of the books, and... But, b-... and reading, and d- doing some writing, and... but still feeling like the groundlessness and n- not having a center. Not having a direction. Um...

And uh, uh, when I was studying... I was deeply studying... immersed in studying Buddhism, and I would talk to a lot of teachers, and they would, uh, kind of infuriatingly just nod and (laughs) tell me, "Good. Stay in that spot." And it was awful. (laughs) I wanted to get through that spot as quickly as possible. Um, you're smiling. I wonder if that feels resonant as well.

Fritz Brumder: It does. Yeah, I feel this, like, uh... the weightlessness, like you talked about, but also this sort of anxiousness.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah.

Fritz Brumder: And, and a little bit of it, fortunately, a way that [inaudible] wrapped up. I've got a little bit of cushion, but it's, you know, nowhere near the exit and opportunity and cha-... life change that I thought it was going to be. So I have this, like, personal interest of moving, what's next, forward. But also a little bit of financial constraint, too. So it's k-... it's a tough time where you want to give that space, but also kee-... you know, keep going, launch, go, go. Kind of...

Jerry Colonna: And tell me, uh, Fritz, how old are you?

Fritz Brumder: I'm 41.

Jerry Colonna: Ah. Men at 40, learning to close off doors to rooms they will not be going back to. A Jo-... Donald Justice poem. And are you married?

Fritz Brumder: Yes. I'm married, I have two kids.

Jerry Colonna: How old are the kids, and what are their names?

Fritz Brumder: Eight and ten. Uh, the eight-year old is Ike, and then ten-year old is Solari.

Jerry Colonna: Hm. And what's your partner's name?

Fritz Brumder: Molly.

Jerry Colonna: So we're just going hold them... Because there's that. How long ago did you found Brandlive?

Fritz Brumder: We started Brandlive... It really was a side project from 2010 to 2012, and then 2013 we spun it out. My co-founder stayed inside of that company, and I, um, started raising money and built a team. Um, so 2013 was kind of an exciting year. We won a big pitch competition, and then closed... at the very end of '13 we closed our angel round. And then 2014 was really fun and exciting, kind of building a management team and going from, you know, a few 100,000 to over a million in a year.

Jerry Colonna: And if I recall correctly, you said Ike is eight?

Fritz Brumder: Yeah. Yeah, so... Solari was born... let's see, right around the time that we were founding Brandlive, but it was a side project, and then in 2011, Ike was born. So they were both there when I, you know, dedicated full-time to Brandlive, and that growth process.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. Right. So you've had three children.

Fritz Brumder: Yes. (laughs) Yes.

Jerry Colonna: And, uh... And so... And now here you are, sort of on the other side of 40, still responsible for the family. Um, got- gotten a little bit of cushion, but, but now also trying to figure out who are you and what do you do?

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: With your own life. Right. Does that "who are you" question resonate?

Fritz Brumder: feel like I'm pretty clear about who I am. But the thing I struggle with more... I remember early in the Brandlive journey, it felt like Brandlive was this perfect, um, creation out of background and experience I had prior to that. I went to film school and I really got into film and video. And ar- around the time YouTube happened and the internet happened, I realized, okay, like, traditional filmmaking and film production wasn't the thing I wanted to spend my time and energy on. So [inaudible] more of like, a little bit of a geek in... on the video side of things, and so I dedicated more time to learning, uh, internet technology, and how video delivery would change on the web.

And so it was kind of this perfect, um, creation of these passions that I had prior to that. Plus I had, um, gone through an NBA process, so it's like, take my passion, take the, the thrill of starting a business and the knowledge that I got in the NBA process, and bring those things together. And so I was trying to think, "Is this... Is this just a phase of my life, or is this going to be my life going forward?" You know, "Will I run Brandlive forever?"

And then, obviously, when that changed, i- it, it, uh... it made it feel more like a phase. And so I'm trying to sort of stitch the different stories together, the different phases of my life, and figure out okay, if these phases and chunks are lasting, you know, north of five years to ten years, what I want this next phase to look like. What's the story? What's the... what's the thing that I'm dedicating myself to? And the one I know for sure is, is the family. You know, I've made some moves recently to really prioritize getting the family in a really good spot. And I feel great about that. But I don't know...

Jerry Colonna: Is that the move from, from Portland to Bend?

Fritz Brumder: Yeah. You know, we've sold our house in Portland, um, transitioned with work obviously, um, got the kids into a new school, kind of changed our daily routine

in a very significant way, which has been all for the positive. Um, and it has allowed for a lot of this kind of decompression time.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: Um. But there's f... there... Like I said, there's fear in the "what next". I don't want to go get a job, I want to start a company, and, and that... I don't know what that is yet, necessarily.

Jerry Colonna: How does that feel?

Fritz Brumder: Uh, scary, a little bit. Because you can't... you can't control everything, you know? You... I can put all this time and energy in, and then have it not turn out the way that I want it to, or the way you envision it to. And sometimes those things are out of your control, so I feel like I'm on a... spend all this time sort of educating and trying to figure out... plan and predict what the next thing might be, to put it in the best position possible. But also kind of release and let it be what it's going to be.

Jerry Colonna: So there's like a tension, and there's a conflict. Because what I'm sensing is that there's a cognitive awareness that things may not turn out to be the way you'd like them to be. Brandlive turned out okay, but not what you wanted it to be.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: And you survived. Yeah, you just paused, because, like... that was like a big thing to remind you. You survived that. (laughs) It was okay. But then, um, there's an awareness that you're okay with it not turning out the way you wanted it to be. And yet, there's a fear that it won't turn out to be the way you want it to be. And both sort of are in there.

Fritz Brumder: I feel like I'm, I'm okay, but I still don't feel like I fully processed the deepest, darkest moments of last summer, and the, the pain that I experienced in the transitions that the company went through. I don't know what kind of lasting effect [that's going to have on me.

Jerry Colonna: Well, let's relax the wish to know what the lasting effect is, and let's just focus on what it effect it might be having right now.

Fritz Brumder: Hm.

Jerry Colonna: One of the things that, uh, I noticed early on was, you talked about managing the board differently. You talked about having a different board relationship. And I don't know that this is true, but I have often seen entrepreneurs in your position almost make a "what not to do next time" list. You're smiling. Does that feel like s- something familiar? Like, "I'm not going to do that, and I'm not going to do that, and I'm going to have this capital structure."

Fritz Brumder: Yes. Yeah, and I- I think one of them goes back to just that... or those hard conversations.

Jerry Colonna: "I'm going to start having hard conversations early. I'm not going to put those off." Am I naming it right?

Fritz Brumder: Yes.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. Um, and I think that such an exercise is healthy. It's a good thing. And w... as with many things that we do to take care of ourself, there may in fact be a little bit of anxiety mitigation going on with that. Like, "Brandlive did not end up the way I wanted it to end up, so I'm going to do all these things instead to ensure that I don't have the pain that I had."

Fritz Brumder: But that doesn't really work, right? I mean, that's not going to...

Jerry Colonna: (laughs) Well, you... Now we're both smiling, right?

Fritz Brumder: (laughs)

Jerry Colonna: This is the problem with getting wise, my friend.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. Um, let's put it this way. Um, you could... you can and should, as you think about your next, um, position, think about the things that you would do differently. You can and you should. And you can and should ward off and, and, uh, make sure that you don't go through what you went through last time. But I would advise being careful of thinking that you still won't go through some difficulties. It's like... (coughs) You can learn how to be a really effective founder in relationship with boards, and you can push yourself to grow to learn how to have, um, uh, fierce, meaningful conversations. And those things are really important. But you cannot stop life from unfolding. In fact, if you think about it, you don't really want to stop life from unfolding, because there's only way to stop life from unfolding.

Fritz Brumder: True.

Jerry Colonna: You know.

Fritz Brumder: Right.

Jerry Colonna: Right? And so, what we want to build up is not knowledge to prevent us from having pain and difficulty, but the skills and awareness to know what to do when it inevitably happens.

Fritz Brumder: You know, that reminds me of an analogy I heard from you. And as a filmmaker, this resonated with me really well, that we know films are created 24 frames per second, but when we're trying to watch... if you try to watch that same movie frame by frame by frame, which is how your life is unfolding, it would be insanely painful. Only the trick is, in those painful processes, you want to take a step back, grab a bowl of popcorn and, and watch the whole movie unfolding. Go, "Wow, this is an incredible story."

Jerry Colonna: That's right.

Fritz Brumder: That was really helpful.

Jerry Colonna: Right. I remember... I studied film in college, and I remember, um, uh, thinking about our relationship to film, and the phrase "suspending disbelief" is often used. And meaning you suspend the awareness that you're actually just sitting in a movie theater watching the movie, so that you can actually enjoy the film.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: But the truth is, there's something powerful in staying conscious of the fact that you're a participant in the movie of your life. You're watching it unfold. And I'm glad you picked up on that metaphor. Um, pull up a chair. Pop some popcorn. Create some distance from what is h... unfolding on the screen and yourself. Stay connected so that you can have that emotional experience that you desperately want, but s... maintain a little bit of the distance to say, "It's just a movie. It's just a job. It's just another company. It's just another swoop down in the rollercoaster."

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Today we're talking and the market has dropped, you know, a nauseating amount.

Fritz Brumder: (laughs)

Jerry Colonna: Right, the Dow Jones is down, and your nerves are hitting in a stomach-churning [inaudible]. Unfortunately, I'm getting old enough to say is, "Been there, done that."

Fritz Brumder: (sighs) Right.

Jerry Colonna: Right. And I don't know that the market's going to come back. I think so. It always has. But, um, you know, the... seeing the frames per second, that's a metaphor I've used in the book. And, and in my book, I also talk about our experience of watching a rollercoaster. Of, of experiencing the rollercoaster of life, of experiencing the rollercoaster, the journey. And your start-up journey has been quite a rollercoaster. In fact, you could argue, the first leg of it was just

"zoop, zoop, zoop, zoop, zoop," really, really high. "Vroom," that stomach-churning drop, right?

And the point I make, if you remember, is, is, uh, to be able... the point of riding a rollercoaster, I wrote, is not to get good at riding rollercoasters. It's learning not to board the rollercoaster at all. It's, you know, Coney Island Cyclone is best appreciated from the ground.

Fritz Brumder: (laughs) Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: It's like, "Look at them, they're on the rollercoaster." Right? And I think, you know, as you... as you are sitting in the sort of in-between state, noting the importance of purpose in your life. Noting how valuable it is to have a sense of direction. Noting the groundlessness that comes from not having all that. And dare I inject something into it, notice how interesting it is to be at midlife when that is happening.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Because you can feel the pull of, "My children are getting older, and I don't want to mish- miss out. I want to spend the time with my wife that I hadn't spent. So I'm going to pick my family up and move to a place that is beautiful and a little bit slower, perhaps. So that I can create that environment." Notice all of those experiences and from that place, step into the experience of creating a new company. Um...

Fritz Brumder: Yeah, I think that, that's a great summary of, uh, what this experience is like. Or talking to somebody who maybe is entering into transition from their startup.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. I... You know, what I- I... What I will tell you is, uh... I'm going to respond to you more as an older brother than [inaudible] as a coach. Right? And, um, you know, as I described my journey, right, um, from venture capitalist and Flatiron Partners to JP Morgan, to a lot of I-... downtime. And this sort of in-between state, the waiting state, as, as, you know, um... We talked about before, that g-... sort of groundlessness, seeking purpose, seeking for the activity, but also enjoying not having the activity. This really interesting state. And then ginning up, and a new thing arose.

Now Reboot's five years old, we've gone through some transitions internally. We're in a different space. We're taking a, a, a look at the future and really defining our relationship in a different way. Over the weekend, I wrote a little note to the... to the team about entering that phase. Mindful of the importance of the work that we do and the lives that we touch. Mindful of all that, and seeing that as love. And saying, okay, as we go into... We're, we're, we're... We'll turn six this summer. So we're in the beginning of our next five-year development plan. We don't have any intention of this company being public or being purchased or anything like that. And so what gathers us

together, what binds us together is the love of the work, and that work n-... being love made manifest.

Fritz Brumder: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: We love helping entrepreneurs. And that love becomes the defining characteristic of what this mission is, what this vision is. This is what it's about. I say all this to... again, from a... from the stance of being some... a little further down the line. Fifteen years older than you, in fact. To be able to sort of look back and say, "It is possible, as you design your second act, to not only have a better, more functioning board of directors, but to have a company that fits you like a well-tailored suit of clothes." To have a, a CEO position that enables you to watch your kid's school play and maybe your son go to dance class, and your daughter go to baseball. And to hold your wife's hand as you walk down the street or up the driveway at the school. It is possible to have all those things if you allow yourself.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah. And that's amazing, and exciting. Tha- that... (laughs) That helps take some of the fear out of it.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. Yeah. See, one of the challenges that we have... You've done such good work in the circles, and you've clearly done work to understand how who you are has shaped your businesses...

Fritz Brumder: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: ...and the way... and the, the way you've approached work. But one are the opportunities that I think is available to, to all of us, is to really deeply answer the question, "How do I want to be?" As an adult, as a leader.

Fritz Brumder: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: How do I want to relate to work? That's the backend, if you will, of that notion of radical self-in- inquiry. Like, that's the, "For what reason do I do it? So that I can actually define and choose things. Because I'd like to."

Fritz Brumder: Well, I kind of arrived at that through this passion project. So I've been a sports coach for a long time. And we...

Jerry Colonna: What sport?

Fritz Brumder: Uh, ski racing was the main one that I reached the highest level in and have been sort of giving back as a more elite-level coach, and then now a youth and junior coach. Um, but I've always been kind of a sports guy. I like sports stuff. And the team...the feeling that you get from being a part of a team, and the experience that you get of being part of a team, is really cool and interesting to

me. And some of the best relationships that I have come from those kinds of experiences.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: Um, and it was similar in totally different sports for some people that we hired at Brandlive, and we had the kind of quintessential sports analogy. Like, our VP of sales would say, you know, "Let's play the final whistle," when we had 20% of the bookings that we needed in a month, and there's 24 hours left in the month, and somehow we get that last 80% in the end of the month.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: And so I wanted to dig deeper in that. Kind of... because I was curious about it, but also as a way to figure out, "Who am I and what do I want to stand for?" And so I started interviewing sports coaches that I knew, and interviewing other, um, CEOs and founders that I knew, and just trying to find the overlap between [inaudible] these interviews, and then also, um, reading a lot of books. And I read, um, Pete Carroll's book, which is called *A Win Forever*.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: Not a s-... you know, bestseller, necessarily, or anything like that, but it had a really good nugget in there about developing a personal philosophy. So that got me really thinking and mine happens to be in like a pyramid, kind of like the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. And what is the base thing that Fritz needs in order to have as my foundation? And then wh- what, what am I essentially driving for what's the top of the pyramid? And for me, it's a... the bottom of my pyramid is education. I spend a lot of time kind of researching and, uh, getting my head around specific topics and then use that to generate some curiosity. What, what is it of this research that is interesting to me? And then, uh, as kind of a filmmaker, creator, try to make something out of that. Make something physical, make something... software or a company, et cetera. And try and generate growth out of that experience.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: Uh, tha-... So I guess that would be another thing that...

Jerry Colonna: What's at the top of the pyramid for you?

Fritz Brumder: The top of the pyramid is growth. So f-... kind of... One of the things in sports that I always did... in ski racing it's based on p-... a point system, and once you get to a certain point level, you usually only move forward.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: And so, the idea is that kind of you work, you work, you work, you reach a new level, and then you make that your new normal. And then that [inaudible] your next base, and then you work, you work, you work, and then you get to the n-next new [inaudible]. So it's kind of a... similar with companies. If everything is going well, right, you go from zero to a million, and then a million to two, and then two to four, and you just keep getting better and better and better. And that process is really fun and interesting for me.

Jerry Colonna: Hm. I think I see that you're in that process right now. With your whole life.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: And, and the question remains, what... What shall I do to earn money to... as part of that process? What shall I do, um, to, to bring forth work in the world? And I think that, um... you know, my, my last piece of advice, and we'll, we'll start to wrap with this is, you know... I think if you go in to th- the exploration, mindful of the full pyramid, mindful of all of this, um, and you'll be the tailor of that bespoke suit. You'll be the one who sort of creates that. And as a result, your model for your children or a relationship to work that is very different than what most have. And you get to model work as a means of actualization, not as an obligation. As the fulfillment of... David White would call it a... the dreadful obligation.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Well, Fritz, I'm excited, and, and really grateful that you shared with us the... where you are in this journey. It, uh... I can feel how much work you've done and I can feel that you're in that tension place of trying to figure out the next phase. And, um, as I often say to people, don't forget that, you know... that you're alone. Don't forget that you're not alone in these days. Um, others have come before you. Others will come behind you. And others are going through it right now. And, uh, um, as you've experienced, there's a power in being able to take a walk virtually and literally with a peer, and say "This is what I'm going through."

Fritz Brumder: Yeah. Reboot i-... I feel like has been really helpful for that. It was amazing to me how many times we [inaudible] in circles, and someone would bring up an issue, and it, it sounds oh, so familiar.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah.

Fritz Brumder: 90% of the time.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah.

Fritz Brumder: It's just comforting. It takes away that, uh, loneliness that you have as a founder and CEO that everyone talks about.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. Loneliness as founder and CEO. And I would argue the more I'm out there in the world talking about these issues, the more I realize that there's a loneliness that comes from simply being human. Um, and the ways that we are organized, and it's not necessary. It's not endemic to the species of you all. It's just the way we tend to operate.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah. Yeah, I feel that with you, when you said the...You have the ability to have all those things, to be, I think you said, the tailor of your own suit.

Jerry Colonna: Hm.

Fritz Brumder: That, I think, has helped in minimize a little bit the fear. Because the fear is just the, like, natural human tendency, to fear the unknown or fear the uncertain or fear the things that I can't control, because I couldn't control it in the past.

Jerry Colonna: Yeah. And, and in the fear of the unknown and the uncertain and the future, um, we are often blinded to the agency and the possibilities that we have to shape that future, to make those choices.

Fritz Brumder: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: And that, you know, um, I'm, I'm infamous now for likening the process of leadership to the process of growing into adulthood. To being a fully actualized, from Maslow's perspective, the fully actualized human. But that is, in fact, the opportunity. And a necessary component of that is we're realizing the agency that you, in fact, have. To be the tailor of your own suit.

Fritz Brumder: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: Well, thank you, Fritz. It's really been a delight, uh, connecting with you and getting to know you.

Fritz Brumder: It's been fun.

Jerry Colonna: Bye now.

Fritz Brumder: All right.