

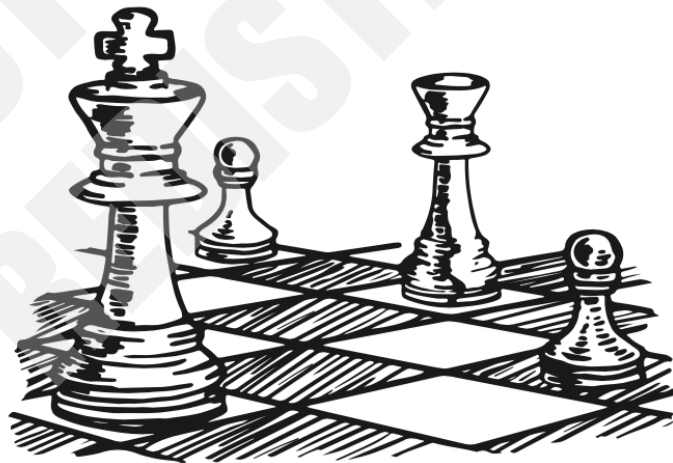
"Patrick is one of the most exciting thinkers I've had a chance to converse with."

—RAY DALIO, author of *Principles: Life and Work*



Your Next Five Moves

Master the Art of
Business Strategy



Patrick Bet-David

with Greg Dinkin

Who Do You Want to Be?

I believe that having questions is better than having answers because it leads to more learning. After all, isn't the point of learning to help you get what you want? Don't you have to start with what you want and figure out what you have to learn in order to get it?

—Ray Dalio, author of *Principles: Life and Work* and investor, on 2012 *Time* list of world's 100 most influential people

Michael Douglas, playing Gordon Gekko in the 1987 film *Wall Street*, says to Bud Fox, played by Charlie Sheen, “And I’m not talking a \$400,000-a-year working Wall Street stiff flying first class and being comfortable. I’m talking about liquid. Rich enough to have your own jet.”

Some people read that quote and say, “Making \$400,000 a year and being comfortable sounds like a dream come true.” Some say nothing at all and claim they have no interest in material things. Others pound their chest and scream to the heavens that they’re going to have their own jet. What matters to me is what *you* think, since all your choices will be dictated by where you want to go.

Whether it’s a high school student asking for direction or a CEO running a \$500 million company, when someone asks me a question,

I respond by saying, “It all depends on how honestly you can answer this question: Who do you want to be?”

In this chapter, I’ll guide you to answer that question with clarity. I’ll also show you how to go back to the blackboard of your life and set a new vision for yourself that will fire you up and set you in motion. I’ll show you why making a plan and committing to it will unleash all the energy and discipline you’ll ever need.

Answer Questions to Reveal Your Deepest Desire

Nothing matters unless you understand what makes you tick and who you want to be. Far too often, consultants and influencers assume that everyone wants the same thing. When I’m speaking to a CEO or a founder, I start by asking questions. Before making any recommendations, I gather as much info as I can about who the person wants to be and what he or she wants out of life.

I understand that not everyone knows who he or she wants to be. It’s normal not to have all the answers immediately. Remember that this question—and every move in this book—is a process. All the examples I give and stories I tell exist for *you*. They’re meant to get you to reflect and better understand yourself. If you don’t have a clear answer at this point in time, you’re in the majority. All I ask is that you keep an open mind and keep reading with the goal, in due time, of answering this question.

The purpose of this Move is to identify what matters to you the most and help put a strategy together that fits your level of commitment and vision. I may influence you to question certain decisions or ways you’ll go about fulfilling your vision, but it’s up to you to decide to stretch yourself and think bigger.

Who do you want to be?

As you continue to ask yourself this question, your answer will

determine your level of urgency. If you want to build a little mom-and-pop corner store, you don't have to treat business like war and you can be laid back in your approach. If you're looking to disrupt an industry, you'd better be armed with the right story, right team, right data, and right strategies. Really take the time to get clear about your story—exactly who you want to be—or you won't be able to soldier on when things get tough. And in business, things always get tough.

Make Pain Your Fuel

I could sit here and tell you about the life that you may live one day. Talking about the cars, the jets, and the celebrities you meet all sounds wonderful, but first things first. You are going to have to endure more anguish than you can imagine to get there. Those who can tolerate pain the most—the ones with the most endurance—give themselves the highest chance of winning in business.

By the time we've been on our own for a few years, many of us have become cynical. It's an ugly thing, but I've seen it happen too often. We all have big dreams growing up, and we make a lot of plans for ourselves. Then life gets in the way, the plans don't happen the way we thought they would, and we lose faith in our ability to focus on who we want to be. You may not notice it, but it also hurts your ability to make your next moves.

We may even start to think, "Hey, what's the point in saying I'm going to do something big if I'm not going to follow through? Better to just aim low and play it safe."

The only thing separating us from greatness is a vision and a plan for achieving greatness. When you're fighting for a cause, a dream, something greater than yourself, you will find the enthusiasm, passion, and joy that make life a great adventure. The key is identifying your cause and knowing who you want to be.

In the summer of 1999, I was twenty years old and had left the army. My plan: to become the Middle Eastern Arnold Schwarzenegger. That June, I felt certain I would become the next Mr. Olympia, marry a Kennedy, become an actor, and eventually govern the state of California.

As the first step in my plan, I got a job at a local gym, hoping to be noticed as soon as possible. At the time, the biggest fitness chain in the area was Bally Total Fitness. With the help of my sister, I got an offer from a Bally in Culver City. It had to have been the smallest and most antiquated Bally location in the state of California.

Despite the less-than-ideal circumstances, I was promoted and transferred to the largest Bally gym, which happened to be in Hollywood. My plan was working! Because I kept getting better at selling memberships, I was making \$3,500 a month. Compared to what I had made in the army, it felt like millions.

One day, my supervisor, Robby, offered me an assistant manager position at the Bally in Chatsworth, thirty miles outside Hollywood. He wanted me to turn the club around; it had been hitting only 40 percent of its monthly goal.

I didn't want to go to Chatsworth. I wanted to be a weekend manager in Hollywood, a position that paid \$55,000 a year. Robby promised me that if I turned things around in Chatsworth, the job would be mine. The only other contender for it was a longtime employee named Edwin. As long as I outperformed him, I could bank on becoming the weekend manager in Hollywood.

Fast-forward ninety days. We were able to turn things around at the Chatsworth club, taking it from 40 percent of the monthly revenue goal to 115 percent. I was near the top of the leaderboard companywide, well ahead of Edwin. When I got a call from Robby to meet, I assumed that corporate must be pleased. My plans were coming together. I was going to meet the fitness legend Joe Weider, be spotted by a major Hollywood agent, get my acting career off the ground, and meet a Kennedy. I can vividly remember the anticipation I felt that afternoon before my meeting with Robby.

The moment I walked into Robby's office, I knew something was off. This wasn't the same guy who had promised me the position if I outperformed Edwin.

That's just paranoia, I reassured myself. Give him the benefit of the doubt and hear what he has to say.

"Patrick, I'm so proud of the performance you and your team put up the last ninety days," Robby said. "I want you to stay there for another six months and take the Chatsworth club to the next level."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "I made it very clear that I wanted the weekend manager position in Hollywood." That position, he said, had already been filled.

At that point, my blood was boiling. I couldn't believe a grown man could look me in the eye after going back on his word. I had been so focused on beating the goal that I hadn't put any thought into what I would do if it didn't work out.

Who'd gotten the position? You guessed it: Edwin. Why? Edwin had been with Bally for six years; I'd been there for only nine months. Never mind my accomplishments, kicking Edwin's tail on the national leaderboard. Never mind that, according to objective data, I had earned it.

In fairness to Robby, he wasn't being unethical. Because he had to follow marching orders from corporate, he was being political. In many ways it was a blessing to learn at a young age that corporations have agendas and that advancement is rarely based on merit alone. Robby could tell I was furious, and he asked me to step outside to cool off. I walked to the parking lot and tried to think. I imagined how these events were going to dictate the rest of my life. I played the movie in my mind, and I just couldn't accept how it would end if I accepted Robby's decision. I didn't realize it then, but I was already processing my next moves. The only challenge was that I was reacting to someone else's move rather than executing my own. I walked back into his office and asked him if the decision was final. He said it was.

At that point, I looked him in the eye and told him I quit. Initially, he thought I was kidding, but I was confident about my decision. What's the point of working somewhere that doesn't give you a clear direction on what you need to do to advance in the company? Why put myself through the misery? It was at that moment I realized I could not live another day with my destiny in someone else's control.

I wasn't thinking like a winner at that point in my career. Given my inability to think more than one or two moves ahead, I was still an amateur. As a result, I was petrified. Driving home, I felt as though I'd made the worst decision of my life. My coworkers started calling me to ask what the hell I'd been thinking. My family couldn't believe it, either.

By the time I got into bed that night, most of the emotion had worn off, and I was left wondering what I was going to do next. Later in my career, I learned how to process while in the heat of the moment. Thankfully, that night I was able to calm down just enough to think about my next moves. When I think back on it now, I realize that it was a defining moment in my life.

I had to look inward and get clear about who I wanted to be—and where I wanted to go. The list I made looked something like this:

1. I want to make the name Bet-David mean something, so much so that my parents will be proud of the decision they made to leave Iran.
2. I want to work with people who keep their commitments—especially leaders with whom I work and who impact my career path.
3. I want a clear formula for how to get to the top based purely on my results. I can't stand surprises or the moving of goalposts.
4. I want to build a team that has bought into the same vision I have to see how far we can go collectively. This includes running mates whom I can trust 100 percent.

5. I want to make enough money that I'm no longer controlled by other people's politics and agendas.
6. I want to get my hands on every single strategy book out there to see the game from a broader point of view so I can learn how to minimize corporate bullying.

Once I was clear about who I wanted to be, I could see my next moves. The first step was finding a sales job with merit-based pay and clear expectations. Twenty years later, I can tell you that clarity comes from making decisions that are aligned with your core beliefs and values.

Use Your Haters and Doubters to Drive You

I shared that story about being denied the promotion because I want you to tap into your own pain. It's those moments of feeling powerless, angry, or sad that clue you in to your deepest drive. Don't underestimate the power of shame to motivate you. When Elon Musk left South Africa for Canada at age seventeen, his father had nothing but disdain for his eldest son. In Neil Strauss's November 2017 *Rolling Stone* profile, he quoted Musk's description of his dad's send-off: "He said rather contentiously that I'd be back in three months, that I'm never going to make it, that I'm never going to make anything of myself. He called me an idiot all the time. That's the tip of the iceberg, by the way."

Barbara Corcoran, the real estate mogul whom you may have seen on *Shark Tank*, was one of ten children growing up in a blue-collar New Jersey town. In 1973, she was twenty-three and working as a waitress in a diner. While there, she met a man who lent her a thousand dollars to start a real estate company. They fell in love and were set to live happily ever after. Had the script played out, my guess is that Corcoran would have built a decent real estate business. But in

1978, the man dumped her and married Corcoran's assistant. To rub salt into the wound, he said to her, "You'll never succeed without me."

In a November 2016 interview with *Inc.* magazine, Corcoran said that she had turned fury into her best friend. "The minute a man talked down to me, I was my best self," she said. "I was going to get from that person what I wanted, come hell or high water. . . . He was not going to dismiss me. I would not tolerate it. I would say quietly to myself, 'F@#& you.'"

That type of rejection, that type of shame, can be one hell of a motivator. I want you to think back to the teachers, coaches, bosses, parents, or relatives who have put you down over the years. This doesn't mean you have to carry their negativity around with you. Instead, you can use it as rocket fuel. Corcoran channeled her rejection into resolve. As a result, she built the most successful residential real estate firm in New York and sold it for \$66 million. Then she wrote a best-selling book and became a TV star on *Shark Tank*.

As an investor in entrepreneurs, Corcoran actually looks for people who are fueled by pain. She sees growing up poor as an asset. She said, "A bad childhood? Yes! I love it like an insurance policy. An abusive father? Fabulous! Never had a father? Better! My most successful entrepreneurs didn't all have miserable childhoods, but somebody said they couldn't, and they are still pissed."

I'm not making light of your pain. Believe me, I experienced enough shame as a child to last a lifetime. It hurt then, and it still hurts now. Put-downs, insults, and abuse can be either your excuse or your fuel. And it's damn powerful fuel.

Michael Jordan's late father said, "If you want to get best out of Michael Jordan, you tell him he can't do something." Five years after he retired from the NBA, when Jordan gave his Hall of Fame induction speech, guess what he talked about most? All of his haters and doubters. He still hadn't gotten over those who had put him down. Leroy Smith Jr. was the guy who had taken his roster spot when Jordan had gotten cut from the high school team. To show you just

how much Jordan used pain as fuel, he went so far as to invite Leroy to the ceremony. Jordan said, “When he made the team and I didn’t, I wanted to prove not just to Leroy Smith, not just to myself, but to the coach that picked Leroy over me, I wanted to make sure you understood: you made a mistake, dude.”

Musk, Corcoran, and Jordan all used pain as fuel. You can do the same. Think back to your toughest moments when you declared, “Never again!” Recalling those experiences will be your fuel.

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I still feel as though I have enough haters in my life to fill Madison Square Garden. When I was twenty-six, I was invited to my alma mater, Glendale High School, to give a speech. I ran into a guidance counselor, Dotty, who asked, “Why are you here, Patrick? To see the motivational speaker?” She went on to tell me that she had always felt sorry for my parents. Here I was, twenty-six years old, being invited back to my high school to tell my success story, and Dotty was showering me with pity, reminding me that a decade earlier, she had felt sorry for my parents because I had been such a lost kid with no motivation or direction.

Dotty ended up escorting me to the auditorium, where six hundred students were waiting to hear from the motivational speaker, when suddenly the vice principal got up and started to introduce me as the speaker. The look on her face was priceless.

I didn’t say a word back to Dotty. Instead, I just filed her away as another hater who keeps popping up in my life. And those people keep driving me. As a matter of fact, I have a list of statements that people have made to me over the years. Most people read positive affirmations to produce confidence in themselves, but I have a completely different set of “affirmations” by people who doubted me or tried to put me down. Reading and rereading the list creates a level of fire inside me that all the money in the world can’t match.

Maybe the most important hater in my life was a stranger. When I was twenty-three, my dad had his thirteenth heart attack. I rushed to Los Angeles County Medical Center, a public hospital. The people there were treating him like dirt. I completely lost it—lashing out, throwing things. “You don’t mess with my dad! You crossed the line!” I was so out of control that security had to escort me out of the hospital. During my tantrum, a guy said to me, “Hey, listen. If you had *money*, you could get better insurance and get better doctors to take care of your dad. But you didn’t pay for this. Taxpayers are paying for this. This is called public health insurance.”

After they threw me out of the hospital, I sat in my Ford Focus, and the tears poured out of me. The anger was replaced by shame. The guy was right. My dad was getting lousy care because I didn’t have the money to provide him with better care. And I didn’t have the money because I spent more time in nightclubs than I did in front of customers. I was at a low point in my life. The woman whom I’d thought I was going to marry had just dumped me. I had \$49,000 in credit card debt. For thirty minutes, I cried like a baby.

After all that crying, all the self-pity and shame, I finally got it. That night, the old Patrick died.

Everything about me changed. I used that pain to remember every slight I had heard in my life: “1.8 GPA. Loser. Hanging out with gangsters. Poor Patrick, he’s got no shot. Divorced parents. Mom’s on welfare. Had to join the army because he had no other choice. Never going to be anybody.”

I swore that my dad would never again work at the ninety-nine-cent store on the corner of Eucalyptus and Manchester in Inglewood, where he was regularly held up at gunpoint. He was never going to get lousy health care for the rest of his life. Neither he nor I was ever going to feel ashamed again.

I said to myself, “*Bet-David*. The world’s going to know this last name. I know the pain we went through. I know the challenges we went through as a family when we came to America from Iran. I