

A Hollywood story: Peter Guber

Plot twists, perfect endings define Peter Guber's road to sports

By Bill King, Senior Writer

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Movie mogul Peter Guber, shown in his L.A. office, steps up to the plate.
Photo by: NEWS.COM

Peter Guber watched calmly from his seat on the floor at Staples Center as the Golden State Warriors took a switch to the Los Angeles Lakers on a Sunday night in November.

The Warriors were walking to their bench during a timeout, up 20 in the second quarter, when, from across the way, Lakers uberfan Jack Nicholson caught Guber's eye with a subtle wave.

"Your team?" Nicholson mouthed, pointing to the huddle to his left. Guber nodded, smiling. Nicholson raised his hands, miming a shot and follow through.

"Pretty good," he mouthed.

Now this was a bona fide Hollywood moment, right? Like when Tommy gets made in “Goodfellas.” Or when Rudy gets to dress for a game. Or, to use a film from Guber’s extensive credit list, when Michael Keaton matter-of-factly declares, “I’m Batman.”

Here was Guber, a movie titan who produced the first “Batman” and helped convince Nicholson to join the cast, watching from courtside as the team that he bought four years ago with venture capitalist Joe Lacob played like the class of the Western Conference, beating every last piece of glitter off the moribund but still adored Lakers.

To place this in perspective, consider that the Warriors were coming off a 26-56 season when Lacob and Guber purchased them for an NBA-record \$450 million in July 2010, while the Lakers were coming off their 16th NBA championship.

If ever there were a time to bury Caesar ...

And yet, driving the freeway home in his Tesla electric sedan, Guber passed up every chance to crow about the big night his team had in front of the Hollywood glitterati.

Instead, he told the story about a game in his first season as Warriors co-owner, when TV cameras caught him clenching his fists and biting his lip when a player missed a free throw late in the game. Within seconds, his phone vibrated with a text from Miami Heat President Pat Riley, an old friend who was watching at home.



After years of trying to break into sports, movie producer Peter Guber is now part of three ownership groups across the NBA, MLB and MLS.
Photo by: NEWS.COM

“Guber, you play 82 basketball games,” Riley texted. “You’re going to lose a lot. Get used to it.”

So now, the Lakers are losing a lot, as the Warriors did a few years ago. The fates have turned. Some day, they will turn again. Of this, Guber is certain.

After all, it wasn’t long ago that he was on the outside of sports ownership looking in, steaming up the store window as he made runs in groups that tried to buy the Lakers and Los Angeles Kings, the Miami Heat, the Oakland A’s and the Los Angeles Dodgers, all to no avail.

Now, he owns not only a sizable minority stake in the Warriors, but also a spot in the Guggenheim Baseball Management partnership that bought the Dodgers for \$2 billion in 2012. He also is chairman of the Los

Angeles Football Club, an expansion franchise slated to join MLS in 2017.

This is an astonishing trifecta Guber has pulled off, securing positions of influence within ownership of franchises in basketball, baseball and soccer without being the largest investor in any of them.

The groups that own teams can have more partners than a five-county square dance. But, typically, all but the majority partner are silent, especially when it comes to the day-to-day operation of the franchise. Minority partners get great seats, maybe a parking spot and the chance to say they own a piece of the team.

That's not Guber's thing.

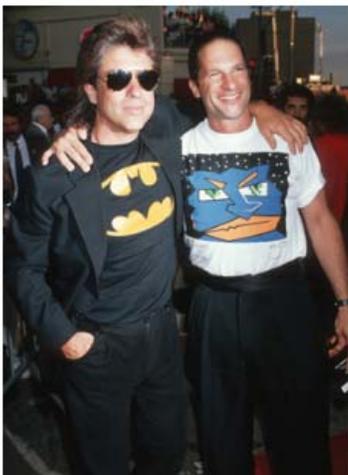
"He doesn't want to just say he's one of the owners, he wants to function as one of the owners," said Stan Kasten, president and CEO of the Dodgers. "This isn't vanity. He doesn't need that. Peter wants to be a part of the things that he can contribute to. And there was no question that he could contribute."

Kasten recalls vividly his first conversation with Guber about joining the group, which was headed by Magic Johnson. Johnson and Guber had been partners twice previously, starting with an involvement in Magic Johnson Theatres when Guber was executive chairman of the Loews movie house chain. Johnson then bought into the Dayton Dragons minor league baseball team with Guber.

Early into chasing the Dodgers, Johnson suggested Kasten contact Guber.

"I called him and he said, 'Let me give you two minutes on who I am and what I'm about.' And then he did not take a breath for an hour," Kasten said, smiling widely as he recalled the first of many conversations to follow. "That's who Peter is. And I love every minute of it."

The president of the Warriors, Rick Welts, also has a vivid recollection of his first meeting with Guber. It was during a job interview at Lacob's house. Guber was mostly quiet at the start. But when he spoke, it was clear he'd given great thought to what they could do to improve the Warriors enterprise off the court.



Guber, at the 1989 premiere of "Batman" with co-producer Jon Peters (left), also produced such hits as "Rain Man" and "The Color Purple."

Photo by: GETTY IMAGES

Guber is passionate about what he calls the "emotional transportation" business: The power of a team, a film or a song to engage audiences by tapping into their feelings. Payroll and personnel are Lacob's thing. Guber thinks about production, be it in the arena or on TV; the sights and sounds of a game and how they translate from the first row to the last, and then on to the living room. He thinks about concessions, and how to improve the quality and variety. He thinks about how to make parking more convenient.

Welts got a sense that those were his interests during the interview. Then, in his first week on the job, he found six boxes of files that Guber had collected on those subjects, culled from a range of industries. Guber wasn't telling him what to do. But he wanted Welts to understand what resonated with him.

"His greatest skill may be in understanding what it means to be a partner," Welts said. "He is very respectful of the structure of any enterprise he gets involved with, but he is not along for the ride."

The Peter Guber Files

- ▶ Founder, chairman and CEO of Mandalay Entertainment
- ▶ Chairman of Mandalay Digital Group
- ▶ Chairman of Mandalay Sports Media
- ▶ Owner and chairman of Dick Clark Productions
- ▶ Co-owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers, Golden State Warriors and MLS Los Angeles Football Club
- ▶ Formerly chairman and CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment, president of Columbia Pictures, chairman and CEO of Polygram Entertainment, and co-owner and co-chairman of Casablanca Record and Filmworks
- ▶ Produced such movies as "The Color Purple," "Rain Man," "Batman," "Gorillas in the Mist" and "Midnight Express"
- ▶ Guber's films have earned more than \$3 billion and over 50 Academy Award nominations
- ▶ Full professor at UCLA, teaching at the Anderson School of Management and the School of Theater, Film and Television
- ▶ Author of three books, including "Tell to Win," a No. 1 New York Times best-seller in 2011

Lead Guber down the path to his purchase of the Warriors and he takes you on a detour that winds back almost 20 years.

For all his success in Hollywood, from “Rain Man” to “Batman” to “The Color Purple,” as chairman and CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment, president of Columbia Pictures and chairman of Casablanca Records and Filmworks, making movies and records and overseeing movie theaters worldwide, it took Guber five tries to get even a slice of a major league team.

He thought he had each of them, but then yes turned to no, again and again.

And again.
And again.



"Everything I've done successfully, I've failed at some point in my life," Guber explained a few hours before his team beat the Lakers, reliving deals both celebrated and ill-fated in the very place in which many of them came together, a converted guest house at his Bel Air estate. "I've failed miserably. Painfully. Cataclysmically. And publicly. People say, 'Awwww, man. You got these teams.' Well, let's see ..."

Guber went through the tortured tale of each of them, recalling hope, followed by expectation and eventually disappointment.

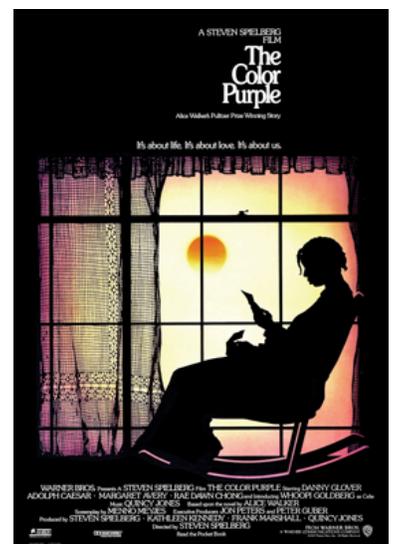
"The road is long, arduous and uncertain to own these babies," he said when he was done. "They're really, really challenging. You have to understand that the whole process is uncertain. And your success is based on how much uncertainty you can comfortably handle. If you can't handle it, you'll never get there.

"Failure has been a handmaiden in my journey all along."

Guber sat on a sofa near the center of the room, framed by success spanning parts of five decades.

A movie poster from the French release of “The Color Purple” — “La Couleur Pourpre” — hung over a fireplace. One from “Midnight Express” was to its left, above a bar. Behind the bar were the neon logos of the Warriors and Dodgers.

Down the length of one wall was a library, with two eye-level shelves devoted to glass cases holding dozens of plaques, medals and statues. Across the way, a collection of baseballs autographed by every Cy Young winner, plus one by Cy Young.





Guber broke into the major league ownership ranks with Joe Lacob and the Warriors in 2010.
Photo by: GETTY IMAGES

There was an antique, art deco billiard table on which he plays occasionally; not particularly well, he says, and almost always by himself. And a screening room that seats about two dozen, equipped to show the latest films in 3-D.

Next to the fireplace stood one of the Batman suits that Keaton wore, which for years has been the most popular conversation piece among his many visitors. When he got the MLS team in October, he draped a purple LAFC scarf over its shoulders, an apropos commingling of two sides of his professional life.

Here, Guber has carefully, craftily, created a space that tells the story of his career. Many refer to the converted guest house as his home office. But, truth be told, he rarely works here, at least not in the traditional sense. That happens at the Wilshire Boulevard offices of Mandalay Entertainment, where he dutifully reports each morning of the work week when he's in town.

This is a place that's designed to be seen and shared, with lots of space to gather and mingle, plus a spacious patio with a spectacular vista overlooking the city lights, as well as a private path that's a golf cart ride away from Wolfgang Puck's restaurant at the famed Hotel Bel-Air. It is at his home, but not in his home, allowing he and wife Tara to entertain without infringing upon their family life.



Guber (left) talks with Lacob (right) and Warriors President Rick Welts before a playoff game.
Photo by: GETTY IMAGES

Those who know Guber well say that no one is more prepared than he is for a meeting, that he leaves little to chance, least of all the way that others perceive him.

It is likely that's what he was thinking when he brought Kasten and his future partners from the Dodgers to his estate a couple of years ago. He'd told Kasten what he could add to an ownership group that had all the money it needed. Still, some stories are better seen than heard. Five minutes in Guber's man cave tells you that his is a story of Hollywood triumph.

And yet, scanning the room, its architect sees not only totems of success, but spectres of failure.

That chair by the bookcase? That's where Billy Beane was sitting when Guber and Save Mart Supermarkets chain owner Bob Piccinini negotiated a deal to buy the Oakland A's in July of 2001. To make sure Beane stayed on after the sale, they were giving him a small stake in the team. Beane eventually got that stake, but not from Guber, whose group got a thanks but no thanks from baseball, which said it would prefer to contract the A's than see them sold.

That other chair, to the right? That's where Frank McCourt sat when Guber and Lacob spoke with him about joining a group to buy the Dodgers in the fall of 2003. McCourt was a Bostonian with no ties to Southern California. Guber was Hollywood royalty, but with Boston roots. It seemed a logical pairing. McCourt eventually got the team, but without Guber and Lacob as investors.

"The whole deal was done, but at the very end, it came apart," Guber said. "There are no guarantees."

That has been clear to Guber since the very first time he chased a team, in what he still calls "the most major of major league opportunities that there ever could have existed for a guy in Los Angeles."

It was 1993, and Guber was the CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment. The media world was changing rapidly. Film studios were aligning with television networks to gain electronic distribution. But because of FCC regulations limiting foreign ownership, Sony found itself largely boxed out.

Guber was driving down Santa Monica Boulevard one afternoon, still smarting from a blocked attempt to buy NBC, when he noticed a large billboard atop a restaurant.



Guber's relationship with Magic Johnson helped him become part of the Dodgers' ownership.

Photo by: NEWS.COM

“Prime Ticket”

Guber knew the cable network well. Serving about 4 million subscribers, it had rights deals with most of the Southern California sports teams, including the Lakers and Kings. Cable networks didn't face the same restrictions from the FCC. If Sony could buy Prime Ticket, Guber thought, that might give it the leverage to break into the broader cable world.

Unfortunately, buying Prime Ticket wouldn't be a simple exercise. For one thing, Lakers owner Jerry Buss was a shareholder. Buss also owned the Forum, where the Kings were a tenant. Guber decided that in order to make a deal for the network work, he'd also have to buy the teams and the building.

“So we went after it all,” Guber said, “full heart and soul.”

It required creativity and patience. Kings owner Bruce McNall was a willing seller. But Buss wanted to control the Lakers on through to his last breath. The Forum was badly outdated, so Guber had to explore building a new one. He even met with Hollywood Park owner Marje Everett about building a parking structure the two neighbors might share.

Against all odds, the pieces seemed to be coming together. Sony would get the Kings, the building and, most importantly, the RSN. The company also would buy into the Lakers, though Buss would retain control for as long as he lived.

“We were going to form Sony Sports, and that would have been my vehicle,” Guber said. “I was just dreaming and dreaming about it. And about 12 seconds before it was to close, Bruce McNall called me and said, ‘I can't do the deal this way.’ The whole deal fell apart, just like that.”

McNall was the subject of a federal grand jury investigation into his banking practices. He later would serve almost six years in prison for bank and wire fraud.

It was a painful exercise for Guber. But it changed his life path. He'd never considered sports ownership. He was in on the Lakers and Kings only because he wanted the cable channel. But, having come so close, he found the thought of owning a team appealing.

“It wasn't that I didn't like doing what I was doing,” Guber said. “But I'd been there and done that. If I was going to live 1,000 years, would that be all I wanted to do? No.”

Not long before he left Sony Pictures in 1994 to form his own company, Mandalay Entertainment — initially with funding from Sony — Guber was approached by Los Angeles investment banker Gary Winnick about making a run at another team, the Miami Heat.

Guber wasn't crazy about pursuing an East Coast franchise, but he wanted into sports badly enough to bite. Today, Guber remembers turning to Winnick during one of many five-hour flights to Miami and asking whether they couldn't just settle for Lakers floor seats. Winnick told him to hang in, they'd get the team.

Of course, they didn't. Winnick and Guber came to terms with the owners they were negotiating with, managing partner Lewis Schaffel and front-man Billy Cunningham, but a dispute within ownership tabled the deal. Carnival Cruise Lines founder Ted Arison, who was the money behind the Heat all along, bought out his partners and took control.

Guber was 0-for-2.

On his next trip to the plate he would shorten his swing. While filming parts of one of Mandalay's first films at Angel Stadium, Guber began talking to Disney Sports President Tony Tavares about the operation of the Angels' Class A affiliate in Palm Springs. Guber had some ideas on how to improve the fan experience at stadiums and arenas, based on things he learned in the theater business. Tavares suggested he might be able to buy in to a minor league team.

“I started to dabble with it,” Guber said, “But I got more and more involved, and then I was in.”



From left: Los Angeles Football Club president and co-owner Tom Penn, Guber, MLS Commissioner Don Garber, and managing partner and co-owner Henry Nguyen announce the new team.
Photo by: GETTY IMAGES

In 1996, Guber and longtime associate Paul Schaeffer launched Mandalay Sports Enterprises with minor league team owner Hank Stickney, acquiring half of each of three teams Stickney owned, two in baseball and one in hockey. Mandalay eventually would own and/or operate as many as eight minor league franchises, finding opportunities where a team could appreciate through a new ballpark or better management. In the last few years, it has sold all but two of the teams, both of which are on the block.

“I made a lot of money in the movie business,” Guber said. “A lot of money. But I wasn’t looking to be the richest man — forget in the world, I wasn’t interested in being the richest man on this street. It didn’t matter to me. What mattered to me is that every day I’d be learning and growing and finding ways to make things work better. That allowed me then to explore a new environment: the sports environment.”

Even as he was building his minor league business, Guber continued to take shots at his larger goal. He thought he had the A’s in 2001, in a 50-50 split with Piccinini. “Done, finished, over and out,” Guber said. “Completely signed and executed.”

Done, until it wasn’t.

The Dodgers deal that would have made him a minority partner of McCourt wasn’t as fully baked, but he was optimistic about that one, too.

“I took my shots, but I brought a discreet analytical view to every deal I looked at,” Guber said. “That’s how I do it. It isn’t like I’m a dog in heat. I’m very thoughtful about it. I’m thoughtful about who else is in the ownership group. How I can participate in it? I look at what’s the spirit of the group. Are they able to take the vicissitudes of slow success. Slow failure. Slow burn. High burn. Are they able to deal with it when there are some bumps in the road, because that’s the nature of any business.

“So I considered all that. And then you have to have a little luck.”

Big-league deals part of 'opportunity flow'

In his No. 1 New York Times best-seller "Tell to Win," Peter Guber writes about the power of storytelling as a tool to persuade and motivate. So let's step aside for a second and let him do that.

When you ask Guber about deal flow, and how a fleet of profitable minor league baseball franchises and then the Golden State Warriors purchase helped him convert rejection into invitation, he revs like Raymond Babbitt getting ready to watch "People's Court."

"It's opportunity flow, really," Guber said, eager to explain. "At first, in everything — sports or movies — you have to fight to be part of the conversation. You have to be either the richest guy in the world that buys 20th Century Fox, like Marvin Davis did. Came to the movie business from the oil business. Or, if you're a mere mortal like me, you have to fight to get in the conversation. And forget being relevant. Just to get in the conversation. You're not a first, second or third stop. You're not even a flat-tire stop. You're just not necessary to make it cook."

"So what you have to do is decide you're not really in the catching business. You're in the fishing business. If you think you're in the catching business, you're going to be very hungry for a long, long time. You gotta be willing to fish. A person like me, who doesn't have \$5 billion, has to fish with a 10-pound line trying to catch a hundred-pound fish. It takes talent. You have to know how to tie the fly, to read the water, and you gotta be really careful about reeling it in. Now, once you've done that once or twice, you go from fishing to catching. Someone says, I've seen you reel that thing in. I'm putting together a team to try to acquire this other thing, and I see that you've got some talent. And so, you get asked to be at the dance. Not No. 1 on the dance card. But at the dance. Now, you do that once or twice and do it successfully, and you're involved in the success — now you've got something."

"The process of success is so uncertain and so unpredictable that when somebody does it once — a movie, a television show, a song — you think they got it. You do it twice, they just want to rub necks with you. You do it three times, you become the Holy Grail. Well, I've done it a few times now. 'You're the biggest idiot in the world for owning these minor league teams.' Well, maybe not. 'You're stupid to build a ballpark in Dayton.' I don't think so. 'How could you buy the Warriors, a moribund franchise?' Boom."

"Now what happens is, you're in the deal flow. Now, when people are putting together teams to buy things — leagues, commissioners, people in the marketplace — you're one of the usual suspects they call. The bankers know you. They love you because you've had success. Now, you're attractive. People feel you're an important part of the equation and you have proof of it. It's not I'd like to do it and I've got money. Money is a commodity. An important commodity, but a commodity. This is different."

"I've been asked 50 times about the football team [in Los Angeles]. I've got no interest in the football team. But now I'm one of a number of people on the usual suspect list. We're doing this, let's see if he'll be interested. For years, you're banging the doors. Pleeeeeease, let me in. You go from that to where I am now, where they all want you. There's no rhyme or reason to it. But it is true. That's just how it is." — *Bill King*

Of course, we wouldn't be sharing Guber's story on these pages if all his sports deals went the way of "Clue" and "The Legend of Billie Jean."

It was his failure to get the Dodgers that, serendipitously, got him into the partnership that landed the Warriors.

Guber became interested in the Warriors when he was approached by a friend, Larry Baer, president of the San Francisco Giants. Baer wanted to put together a group to buy the NBA team but wasn't sure owner Chris Cohan would sell. Guber said he'd be in if Baer could convince Cohan. The two started talking.

"Larry worked on it and worked on it and worked on it," Guber said. "He did a good job. In fact, he did such a good job that Cohan decided a lot of people might want the team and put it up for auction."

Once there were other bidders, most notably billionaire Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison, Baer decided to step aside. But Guber remained hungry. Sports broker Randy Vataha suggested he pair again with Lacob, whom he'd met while trying to get in on the Dodgers with McCourt. Though their backgrounds and interests are vastly different — or perhaps because they are so different — the two clicked.

Most considered Ellison to be the favorite, so much so that one Northern California newspaper's headline on the day of the sale was not that Lacob and Guber had bought the Warriors, but that Ellison had lost out on them.

Asked what it was that made the difference, Guber paused to think.

"It's a great question, but I'm afraid I don't have the answer," he said. "I used to say this about the movie business. If I absolutely knew which one the hit was, I'd just make hits. But I make flops, too. It's the same with everything. You have a reasonable degree of skill getting all the pieces organized. You have a reasonable degree of tempo in getting to the end. And then that last piece, you have to get lucky."

"What makes one work instead of another? It can be any number of things. Who knows why. But I know this. Unless you're on the short list of one, two or three, you never get it. The trick

is, you gotta be credible to be on the short list. And that's what, when you've done one or two, that's what it does. You're on the short list."

While he can't be sure, he figures his ownership of the Warriors helped him get into the Dodgers group. The fact that he'd had success in previous deals with Johnson didn't hurt.

Two other groups had approached him months earlier, but he'd turned both down, saying he was too busy. He didn't want to turn down Johnson.

On the soccer deal, it was Guber who was out looking for investors. A few years ago, when AEG was on the block, Guber inquired about buying the LA Galaxy. Phil Anschutz decided not to sell. But once MLS Commissioner Don Garber knew Guber might be interested in a team in Southern California, he stayed in touch. Garber put him in contact with a prospective partner, but it went nowhere. A few weeks later, Garber called again.

"I have another guy I want you to meet," Garber told him. "He's in Beijing."

Henry Nguyen is a Vietnamese-American, raised outside Washington, D.C., who returned to the country of his birth after graduating from Harvard and Northwestern, hitting it big in Asia's emerging tech market. They met in San Francisco, hit it off and, Guber said, "talked incessantly" about the potential for a second MLS franchise in Los Angeles over the next few weeks.

Guber decided to join the group, then went to work adding a gaggle of investors. Welts is in, as are Johnson, IMG content chief Mark Shapiro, Dodgers CMO Lon Rosen, motivational speaker Tony Robbins and women's soccer icon Mia Hamm, among others, with still more to come.

"I wanted to bring in not just financial capital but intellectual and experiential capital and relationship capital," Guber said. "I think those three elements are what makes the cauldron so rich. You have people that have run teams. Done ticketing in teams. Managed teams. Been athletes themselves. Been involved in venues. Run big attraction companies. Soccer players. Women. All different ethnicities. A mixture of people that kind of mirrors Los Angeles. And every one of them bringing something to the mix."

As an example, Guber points to Shapiro, whom he has come to know over the years, first when he was at ESPN and then through stops running Six Flags and Dick Clark Productions.

"Now, you tell me the relationships he has," Guber said. "He brings more than just the money to it. Money is a commodity. It's fungible. Those resources are not. They're unique."

It is revealing that Guber sees such value in a minority partner such as Shapiro.

He brings more than just the money to it.

He could be describing himself.

He meditates. That's how Guber starts each day, usually for 20 minutes, but sometimes for 12, not always in the same place, but always where it's quiet.

Then he makes a list.

He chooses three goals that he wants to attack. Then he identifies tasks that he can work on that day that will move him forward on each goal. He writes them down in order of priority and goes to work.

Sitting in his Mandalay office on a typical Monday afternoon, Guber, who at 72 works frenetically enough to challenge those 30 years his junior, reviewed the day's list.

He wanted to line up meetings for Warriors executives with two "major real estate people" in Los Angeles who would offer advice on land use for the team's San Francisco arena project. He wanted to review scenes that would be used to market a soon-to-be-released Mandalay film. And he wanted to wrap up preparations for a

PETER'S PRINCIPLES

"I wouldn't bay at the gods of technology. State-of-the-art technology has to be in service of state-of-the-heart technology. It should be used to allow smart people to use information properly. It isn't painting by the numbers. There's nuance to it all. It doesn't take intuition and instinct out of it. If it all gets collected in the food chain and people in the system don't use it and accept it and understand the value of it, then it's just a blizzard of information."

"I've always felt that authenticity is so important. I want to make sure my feet, tongue, heart and wallet are all going in the same direction. Because then your authenticity shines through. If I want to do something, I put my money into it. I put my time into it. I put my reputation into it. I put my effort into it. I put my friends into it. I look at it and think of it as a palette that allows people to look at what my offering is with a sense of alignment. I feel the best movies are made that way and the best businesses are run that way."

"I'd go to these stadiums and arenas a lot of times early on in my business. They'd bring the food up from the back. You never saw it cooked. You don't know if they cooked it or some animal just released it from themselves. To get food, you were turned away from the whole process of the game. And it's the same food for 40 or 60 or 80 games. Bad idea. I thought to myself, this is no way to run a food business. So I kept fighting the process."

"The biggest risk in the world of location-based entertainment today is taking no risks. You have to take risks. But I love it. I love looking at all kinds of activities because I think they're just the same business dressed up differently. There's nuance to each one. But the idea is engagement. People want to be engaged and feel alive and like they're participating. And that their time has been well spent."

"The way people see the world usually grows out of their past. I was always in location-based entertainment that was engaging audiences; in a sense, connecting artists with audiences, whoever the artists were, wherever the audiences were."

"I don't call them customers. I call them audiences. Customers, you're aiming at their wallet. Audiences, you're aiming at their heart. So I look at them as audiences, because I'm in the engagement business. I'm in the emotional transportation business. I have to move them emotionally. If I do that, sponsors want to be with us, fans want to return, they play forward the story of their experience, and that ignites passion."

"When I buy something, I think about what the problem is here in the asset. Because I don't get a chance to get Google. I get Gaggle and have to turn it into Google. So what's the problem here? What's the promise that I can be a part of? And what's the process to do it? It's really simple. Not simple to do. But simple to understand."

"There would be nothing worse than having a partner you don't like. It'd be like 'Gone Girl' for sports."

"When you have a very important person you have to hire, cast a wider net. If you audition 10 people, you'll learn at least 10 things you didn't know. You may want to hire the first person. And you can still hire him. But after you audition all 10."

"Fans love things that have nothing to do with the game. One day, we should have the no-game game. You're given a bobblehead. We have the kiss cam on and the dance cam on. You're served food. We give away a prize. And we send them home. It could work."

"You have to stay in the cauldron and fail if you want success. Steve Ballmer failed at getting a basketball team for a long time and he had \$23 billion. And he failed to get the Seattle thing done. What that teaches you is that the process for getting a team is really uncertain. You go through a whole lot of drama to get these assets. So you better damned well know what you're going to do with it if you get it."

"My favorite movie that I did wasn't necessarily the best movie or the most successful movie. ... We made a movie that defied all odds: 'Gorillas in the Mist.'" - - Compiled by Bill King

sports management course he co-teaches at UCLA with Dan Guerrero, the school's athletic director.

That was the list. Then the day happened. He met with Larry Freedman, the president of Mandalay Baseball, about a few hires. He spent a half-hour discussing a proposed TV show. There was financing to discuss on a movie deal. And an old friend to call for help smoothing a legal hurdle on a project his sports media company was shooting the next day.

He checked all his boxes and doused the last fire with barely enough time to make it over to UCLA for the start of his class. Guber is a full professor at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, where he has been on faculty for more than 30 years. In different cycles, he teaches a film course, a tech course, a B-school leadership course and the sports management course.

The course with Guerrero follows a similar format each week. They start by discussing a handful of issue-driven topics, some of them driven by the students' responses to weekly assignments. The second half of the class is devoted to a guest speaker.

On that Monday, it was Shapiro, who kept the room engaged with his own career story and his candid take on issues raised by Guber, Guerrero and the group. Earlier in the month, students heard from Live Nation President and CEO Michael Rapino and NBA Commissioner Adam Silver.

As class wrapped up, Guber ducked into the hall for a quick chat with Shapiro, the details of which he politely declined to reveal.

Then he was in a hurry again, this time to make it home, where he and his wife were hosting an early evening screening of "Fed Up," a documentary that blames the food industry for tactics that have led to increased childhood obesity. Guber's company has no stake in the film, but he and Tara were so taken by its quality and message, they invited its director to screen the movie for select Hollywood "influencers" at their home.

As servers circulated vegetarian hors d'oeuvres, many of the guests gravitated to the display cases and scanned the walls, absorbing Guber's story.

It seems he's always telling one. Even when he's not.