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A pre-Tesla cautionary tale: What happens when innovation, disruption and a billion dollars collide?

New book reveals the true story of what totaled electric car startup Better Place

Jerusalem, Israel (August 1, 2017) -- When a billion-dollar electric car startup crashed and burned, global investors and average car buyers alike asked: What happened?

Business and technology journalist Brian Blum reveals the answer in his new book *TOTALED: The Billion-Dollar Crash of the Startup that Took on Big Auto, Big Oil, and the World*, to be published Sept. 5 by Blue Pepper Press.

The Tesla 3 has grabbed the spotlight as the first “affordable” all-electric vehicle, but Israel’s Better Place came first. The plan was to use Israel --- a country the size of New Jersey and dubbed “the Startup Nation” --- to prove electric cars could work everywhere. Instead of fast charge, Better Place addressed range anxiety by building a network of battery-swap stations --- operated by robots.

Better Place’s charismatic CEO Shai Agassi believed his company’s innovative technology could help stop climate change and free nations from the yoke of oil dependence. His magnetic television appearances, viral TED Talk and compelling boardroom presence had investors and business leaders worldwide jumping in to ride shotgun. Countries from Japan to Denmark to Australia signed on and the privately-held Better Place raised nearly a billion dollars.

Yet in a few years, it was all over --- the company, buffeted by internal strife, an international corporate spy scandal, the Great Recession and technology disruptions, went bankrupt.

The story of the “electric car unicorn that collapsed” is a cautionary tale; a timely case study filled with valuable lessons for entrepreneurs, investors and executives in businesses of all sizes --- as well as everyone chasing the electric car Holy Grail.

TOTALED has received rave advance reviews from people like David Pogue, the former New York Times tech writer, who says that “Brian Blum’s deeply researched account is like playing a car-wreck video in slow motion: You can watch every stroke of bad luck, bad timing, and bad blood reduce a once-thrilling idea to dust.”

Gina Smith, author of *iWoz*, the New York Times best-selling biography of Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, writes that *TOTALED* grants access to “a side of the startup world that few ever get to see --- much less survive.”

Ron Adner, author of *The Wide Lens: What Successful Innovators See that Others Miss*, describes *TOTALED* as “required reading for ambitious innovators.”

And Foreword Reviews writes that Better Place CEO Shai Agassi is “as compelling an antihero as found in any technology thriller. The book’s as-it-happens narrative makes for riveting reading.”

TOTALED will be available for pre-order at Amazon and other online booksellers. More information at www.brianblum.com

About the author

Business and technology journalist Brian Blum tells the stories of the world’s most fascinating entrepreneurs and the companies they create. A high-tech startup veteran, his work has appeared in the Jerusalem Post, Haaretz and Israel21c. He is a senior analyst for the Advanced Interactive Media Group and its “Classified Intelligence Report.” Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Blum lives in Jerusalem with his wife and three children.

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