

Short feature on Brian Blum

Global business and technology journalist Brian Blum tells the stories of innovative entrepreneurs, high-stakes investors and life-changing companies. They're tales of money, power and complexity—but first and foremost, they're human stories.

“What makes business narratives intriguing are the same elements you find in every kind of story,” Blum says, citing the rising popularity of sophisticated documentaries and podcasts with multiple points of view such as “Serial” and “S-Town.”

“The technology itself is interesting, for sure,” Blum adds, “but it's really the people behind it who make these stories so fascinating.”

The business world is no different than any other human environment—filled with brilliant individuals who bring all their foibles, dreams and chutzpah to the table.

“All the dynamics are there,” Blum explains, “although in some ways, the stakes are even higher with technology—the huge amounts of money raised, the potential and passion of the entrepreneurs to truly change the world.”

Blum's latest book, **TOTALED**, tells the story of one such company—Israeli electric car startup Better Place, which, with its charismatic leader Shai Agassi, pulled in nearly \$1 billion from top investors, including HSBC, Morgan Stanley and VantagePoint Capital, before the company's spectacular fall.

“Shai Agassi believed Better Place could wean the world off oil and effectively halt climate change, while becoming the world's first trillion-dollar company,” Blum says.

How and why that didn't happen is the subject of **TOTALED**, researched and related in vivid detail by a longtime journalist who venture capitalist Jon Medved calls “a consummate insider who writes more like the author of detective thrillers than of business books.”

Ron Adner, who penned *The Wide Lens: What Successful Innovators See that Others Miss* describes **TOTALED** as “required reading for ambitious innovators.” New York Times contributor and author of *High Voltage* Jim Motavalli says **TOTALED** is “an amazing true story that reads like fiction.”

TOTALED grants access to “a side of the startup world that few ever get to see—much less survive,” adds Gina Smith, author of *iWoz*, the best-selling biography of Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak. Reading the book is “like playing a car-wreck

video in slow motion,” quips Yahoo Finance and former New York Times technology columnist David Pogue. “You can watch every stroke of bad luck, bad timing, and bad blood reduce a once-thrilling idea to dust.”

Brian Blum’s investigative and feature journalism has appeared in The Jerusalem Post, Haaretz, Israel21c and the AIM Group’s “Classified Intelligence Report,” but he’s also seen technology from the other side: His own Internet publishing startup raised \$3.2 million, in 1998, and he subsequently served as entrepreneur-in-residence for Jerusalem Global Ventures and as a vice president at telecommunications provider Comverse.

Originally from the San Francisco Bay area, Blum now lives in Jerusalem with his wife and three children.

With the release of **TOTALED**, Blum is now booking speaking engagements and making appearances—he was recently featured on “Israel Story,” a podcast fashioned after the U.S. radio program “This American Life.”

Along the way, he’s talking to investors and leaders, searching for a story equally compelling to **TOTALED**. “I’d love to dig into a company that similarly wanted to make the world a better place—maybe even one that turned out to be a big success,” Blum says.