BIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

When I Stop Talking, You'll Know I'm Dead

by Jerry Weintraub

A Hollywood deal-maker's life in stories: a year of daily calls to land Elvis, the art of packaging, and relationships as the only real currency.

BEST POINTS FROM THE BOOK

01 **Persistence beats everything: call again tomorrow, and the day after that.**

At 26, broke and unknown, Weintraub called Colonel Tom Parker every day for a year about taking Elvis on tour - until Parker finally answered: 'You still want to take my boy on the road?'

02 **It's not the gem people buy. It's the story behind it.**

His father turned a worthless sapphire into the legendary 'Star of Ardaban' with a name, armed guards, and press. The trick to selling, Jerry learned, is packaging.

03 **Be the person who can get what money can't buy.**

Weintraub built his name on personal service - the tickets, tables, and doctors nobody else could deliver. Favors done first became the network that opened every door.

04 **Nothing is as important as relationships. It trumps politics, party, and everything else.**

He believed in strength in numbers and 'flying in a pack' - from Elvis and Sinatra to presidents, his friendships were kept for decades and outlasted every deal.

05 **When you have a partner, you have a partner.**

Colonel Parker's rule, adopted for life. Sinatra shook his hand on it: 'I'm never going to disappoint you, and you're never going to disappoint me.' Neither did - loyalty and straight talk were his real capital.

06 **Tell the truth, listen when others speak, sell with joy, and never fear looking silly.**

Weintraub's own closing summary of his method. Caught misusing the company phone line by Lew Wasserman, he told the truth - and gained a mentor. His gift was listening, not talking.

07 **Act like you're in charge and you'll grow into the suit.**

Perception is reality: people judge on first sight, so make the surfaces shine. He walked into rooms he had no paper qualifications for and belonged by acting like it.

08 **Don't fight the middlemen. Cut them out and rebuild the deal.**

He turned concert promoting from local fiefdoms into a national business - booking arenas directly and splitting profits with artists as partners, so everyone made more.

09 **If you find something you love, keep doing it.**

His studio, Weintraub Entertainment Group, lost $30 million and nearly ruined him by pulling him away from making movies. Steve Ross's verdict: 'Companies always go away. It's talent that counts.'

10 **As soon as you feel comfortable, it's time to start over.**

He rebuilt his career roughly every ten years without meaning to - and at the top of the management business, he quit, because a comfortable perch is precisely the one to walk away from.

11 **Success is a life full of calls you want to return.**

His definition of making it: freedom is calling back whomever you want, when you want - and filling your days with people and projects you'd choose again.

THE BOOK, IN SHORT

Jerry Weintraub - Brooklyn-born, Bronx-raised, the son of a gem salesman - talked his way into becoming one of Hollywood's great deal-makers: promoter and manager for Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, and John Denver, then producer of Nashville, Oh, God!, The Karate Kid, and the Ocean's Eleven films. This memoir, written with Rich Cohen, tells that rise as a string of 'useful stories,' each with a lesson attached.

The founding story: at twenty-six, unknown and broke, Weintraub decided he would take Elvis Presley on tour. He called Colonel Tom Parker every day for a year until Parker picked up and asked, 'You still want to take my boy on the road?' That persistence became the spine of his career - and he went on to reinvent the concert business itself, cutting out local middlemen and partnering directly with artists and arenas.

Around it sit his other tools, most of them learned early. Packaging: his father sold a worthless sapphire as the 'Star of Ardaban,' teaching him that people buy the story, not the stone. Personal service: be the guy who can get what money can't buy, and favors become a lifelong network. Partnership: tell the truth, keep your word, and never disappoint the people who trust you.

The book is light on theory and heavy on scenes - poker games, power rooms, presidents, and stars - and it is honest about the crashes too, including the studio gamble that cost him $30 million. His own summary of the method is the last word: tell the truth, listen when others speak, sell with joy, and never fear failure or looking silly. 'When I believe in something,' he wrote, 'it's going to get done.'

DO THIS WEEK

This week, pick one door that closed on you - a client, a job, a partner - and restart the daily call you stopped making, the way Weintraub called Colonel Parker for a year. Then do one favor for someone in your network that money can't easily buy, no strings attached.

By Jerry Weintraub (with Rich Cohen), foreword by George Clooney, first published 2010.
Read it if you sell, pitch, or network for a living and want the fun version of the playbook.