



Josh Linkner

To Josh Linkner, creativity and innovation are the lifeblood of all human progress, and as such, he's spent his career harnessing the spirit of creative disruption. The four-time successful tech entrepreneur, keynote speaker, and CEO delivers a clear call to action — it's better to innovate and disrupt your organization before your competition does. The riskiest move companies can make today is hugging the status quo — believing the future will be like the past is the fast road to obsolescence.

To get to know Josh, one can explore the six interconnected aspects of his work:

1. **Entrepreneur & CEO.** Josh was the founder and CEO of four successful technology companies over the last 24 years. Josh is Founder and former CEO of ePrize, the world's largest interactive promotion agency that provides digital marketing services for 74 of the top 100 brands. Prior to ePrize, he was founder/CEO of three other successful technology companies. Each of his four startups enjoyed successful exits with a combined value of over \$200 million. He's been involved in the launch and growth of over 100 businesses, raised over \$150 million of venture capital, employed thousands of people and fought through the dot-com crash, 9/11 and the 2008 financial meltdown. His extraordinary business accomplishments led him to be honored twice as the Ernst & Young "Entrepreneur of the Year" and as a President Barack Obama "Champion of Change" Award recipient.
2. **Author & Thought Leader.** Josh's first book, *Disciplined Dreaming- A Proven System to Drive Breakthrough Creativity* was a New York Times bestseller and named one of 2011's top ten business titles by Amazon.com. It is now available in 13 languages. His second book, *The Road to Reinvention- How to Drive Disruption and Accelerate Transformation*, was also named a NY Times Bestseller in its first week on bookshelves and was named the 2014 Best Leadership/Management Book by 800-CEO-READ. He is a regular columnist for *Forbes*, *The Detroit Free Press*, and *Inc.* magazine. His work has been featured consistently in the media, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Harvard Business Review*, *USA Today*, and *The New York Times*.
3. **Venture Capital Investor.** As Founding partner of Detroit Venture Partners, Josh remains at the cutting edge of technology and entrepreneurship. He oversees a \$60

million venture fund investing in tech startups with the goal of revitalizing his hometown of Detroit, Michigan.

4. **Keynote Speaker.** Consistently ranked one of the top speakers on innovation, creativity, and reinvention, Josh brings an artistic flair while delivering powerful, inspiring, and practical keynotes and workshops. His presentations are customized for every event, ensuring a highly relevant and valuable outcome. Through his talks, Josh has inspired over 100,000 people across four continents.
5. **Jazz Musician.** Beginning at age eight, Josh became a dedicated musician. He began performing professionally at age 13, and later attended the prestigious Berklee College of Music. Still a professional-level jazz guitarist, Josh often injects live musical performances into his keynote presentation in a unique and memorable fashion. He brings a jazz musician's commitment to creativity and improvisation to the business world, offering a distinctive perspective to growth and leadership.
6. **Detroiter.** Deeply passionate about his hometown, Josh is playing a key role in the much-publicized turnaround of Detroit, Michigan. A multi-generational Detroiter, he is working on the front lines to reinvent his troubled city.

Bottom line: Josh Linkner brings a unique and diverse set of experiences to any project, and helps organizations drive creativity, innovation, and performance.

Speech Topics

Hacking Innovation: The New Growth Model from the Sinister World of Hackers

With intense competitive pressures and mind-numbing speed, leaders seek fresh approaches for growth and innovation. As old methods become commoditized, new creative problem-solving techniques are needed more than ever. Drawing inspiration from the unlikely world of hackers, NY Times bestselling author and 5-time tech entrepreneur Josh Linkner has discovered a new and powerful model for leadership and organizational success. The underworld of cybercriminals contains some of the most creative people on the planet, despite their illicit motives. In this thrilling and provocative talk, Linkner takes the audience on a mind-opening journey, showing how hacking techniques can be deployed to drive legitimate business outcomes. Learning how hackers would solve your most pressing challenges using unorthodox approaches will give you a new framework for creative problem solving, growth, and innovation.

You'll learn:

- Specific tools and techniques from the Five Core Mindsets and Ten Primary Tactics of Hackers
- Fresh approaches to complex problem solving
- How a hacker would approach your work if he or she had your job
- Why unorthodox moves can lead to the best business outcomes
- How to protect yourself and your company from innovation hackers of all sizes and types

Harnessing Innovation: *Turning Raw Ideas Into Powerful Results*

As a four-time successful tech entrepreneur and investor in dozens of startups, Josh Linkner has seen thousands of companies loaded with creative buzz and big ideas. How is it that some harness their imagination to create game-changing drivers of growth and innovation while others miss the mark? The answer: The best companies have a systematic process to focus their team's creativity into practical outputs – something Linkner discovered by founding and building companies that sold collectively for over \$200 million. As a professional-level jazz guitarist, Linkner blends the improvisational qualities of a jazz ensemble with bleeding-edge business savvy to bring a completely fresh perspective on unleashing creativity in the organization. His inspiring presentation delivers practical tools that can be used immediately to increase creative output and deliver bottom-line results. You'll learn to:

- Use specific techniques to harness your most powerful ideas
- Apply creativity on a daily basis across all business activities and roles
- Break free from the three biggest blockers of creativity
- Apply best practices from the world's most innovative companies
- Avoid the five biggest creativity killers
- Master the three most powerful brainstorming techniques that you've never heard of
- Build a culture that celebrates fresh thinking and embraces new ideas

The Gravity-Defying Leader: *Innovative Approaches to Hyper-Growth Leadership*

With disruptive forces assaulting business from every direction, creativity has been labeled the single-most important business attribute. To succeed, leaders must be focused on creating a resilient culture where everyone's engaged; a torrent of innovative ideas needs to flow from every level of the organization. Top leaders then employ a secret weapon: a systematic approach to selecting and launching the ideas that will best drive growth and innovation. Josh Linkner weighs in with a fresh perspective on this critical leadership challenge. A highly successful serial entrepreneur and now a tech investor, Linkner shows leaders how to employ his simple but effective framework to ramp up the creativity and identify/launch ideas that will break through and defy gravity. This presentation will help leaders:

- Challenge assumptions and conventional wisdom
- Build courage to foster responsible risk taking
- Authentically express your own creativity and tap into the hidden creativity of your team members
- Develop "everyday creativity" to attack business problems of all sizes
- Deploy creativity beyond R&D to reimagine processes, drive efficiency, and improve operations
- Uncover fresh approaches for reinvention and growth

Entrepreneurial Fire: *Think And Act Like a Startup (Even If You're Not)*

Entrepreneurs look at the world differently. We celebrate them for their bold vision and courage – they drive game-changing innovation that creates enormous economic success

while making a profound impact on the world. What is it about the entrepreneurial mindset that helps these mavericks seize opportunity that others miss? A five-time successful tech entrepreneur, Linkner shows leaders and organizations how to embrace the creativity, grit, and vision of a startup and then channel this approach to drive growth, innovation, efficiency, and customer delight. Josh Linkner decodes the entrepreneurial DNA to help leaders of any size company in any industry or profession:

- Understand how an entrepreneur would attack their organization with the specific goal of dislodging it
- Reimagine their role through the lens of an entrepreneur
- Harness the ferocity of entrepreneurial thinking
- Embrace “startup speed” to increase velocity in your own organization
- Learn the five best approaches used by startups to create disruption
- Avoid the weaknesses that plague entrepreneurs by exposing the four biggest startup death traps

The Music of Business: Translating Improvisational Thinking from the Jazz Stage to the Business World

Be prepared to be amazed. Josh Linkner, a jazz guitarist since age 14, credits a musical background for giving him a different way of looking at business. In this stunning interactive presentation, a live jazz performance by Josh and his band is woven with stimulating dialogue. You’ll actually hear, through their music, fresh ways to unleash your organization’s creative mojo. In jazz, 99% of the notes are improvised; created in real-time. Yet it’s the structure of a jazz combo – not the inherent talent of individual musicians – that allows for such breathtaking creative expression. In today’s business landscape of dizzying speed, exponential complexity, and ruthless competition, we can no longer just play the notes on the written page. You will learn powerful lessons inspired by jazz musicians (a/k/a “real-time innovators”) to help you:

- Develop your own ability to improvise, no matter what job title you hold
- Establish team dynamics that foster creative thinking and risk taking
- Uncover fresh approaches to previously unchallenged assumptions
- Break free from traditional thinking and uncover vast new possibilities
- Learn 5 secret techniques used by jazz musicians to foster creativity, which can easily be adapted to your own organization
- Expand your ability to deal with ambiguity and recover from setbacks

A Streetfighter’s Guide to Reinvention: Lessons From the Front Lines of Detroit’s Rebirth

Detroit’s fight back from the brink is an inspiring tale of resilience told first-hand by Josh Linkner whose grit and passion are playing a critical role in the city’s revitalization. Linkner is a driving force in Detroit’s comeback; among his many honors – “Detroit Executive of the Year”, the region’s “CEO of the Year” and “Michiganian of the Year.” As the CEO of Detroit Venture Partners, he is helping the city he loves rise from the ashes and reconnect to its entrepreneurial and technological roots. Linkner’s heartfelt talk energizes audiences with the power of possibility. It’s also a cautionary tale of how Detroit, once a birthplace of innovation and a vibrant city, succumbed to the evil forces of protectionism,

blame, and bureaucracy. The lessons in this powerful comeback story – still in progress – help you:

- Understand the 4 most common reasons organizations decay
- Connect the dots between urban renewal and business reinvention, and learn how to apply the same approaches to your own organization
- Embrace the 5 unexpected lessons of underdogs and learn to fight out of seemingly impossible situations
- Gain inside perspective from the passionate leaders who are leading Detroit's courageous turnaround
- Uncover best practices from 'streetfighter' mentality – on scrappiness, determination, resilience and conquering adversity

Live Interactive Jazz

(This is an add-on program to any of the above topics)

Performing jazz guitar at a professional level for over 30 years, Josh often incorporates live music into his keynote presentations. Using live jazz music as a metaphor for innovation, this interactive session is both memorable and impactful. In addition to his own live musical performance, Josh will hire two local musicians (upright bass and drums) to accompany him. The up-charge covers the cost of musicians, equipment, coordination, and all related details.

Picture this... the musicians will be on stage when Josh is introduced. As he takes the stage, he grabs his guitar and jumps right into a brief, attention-getting live jazz work. Next, Josh will ask the musicians to have a seat in the audience while he delivers a high-impact business innovation talk. For the last 20 minutes of the time slot, Josh bring the musicians back on stage and helps the audience see their own business challenges through the lens of a jazz musician. The session's finale has the audience helping to compose a song in real-time. To help perform the new composition, Josh invites three audience members to jam with the band (he supplies percussion instruments and some costume flair). In addition to being highly entertaining, the audience gains a hands-on perspective on risk-taking, real-time innovation, collaboration, and improvisation. The experience is rich and engaging leaving audience members a memorable framework for driving results and crafting innovative solutions to real-world problems.

