Technology, Business & Profit In An Interconnected Humanity

Dr. Michael Laitman Interview Series

With Steve Rubel, Senior Vice-President in Edelman Communications, the World's Largest PR firm

Host: Hello and welcome to this episode of our series, which creates dialogues between innovative thinkers. As always, I'm joined by Dr. Michael Laitman, Professor of Ontology and Kabbalah, who has his Doctorate in Philosophy. He's the founder and director of the Bnei Baruch Kabbalah Institute.

I'm very lucky today to be joined by Steve Rubel, who's a Senior Vice-President in Edelman Communications, which is the world's largest PR firm. His blog, Micro Persuasion, which launched in 2004 before any of us really knew what a blog was, is now viewed by 50,000 readers daily, in *excess* of 50,000 readers daily - and it goes on and on, by the way. His other title besides Senior Vice President is Director for Insights at Edelman, and hopefully he's going to share some of those insights with us.

Steve Rubel: I'll try.

Host: No pressure.

Host: Obviously through Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, people are becoming increasingly connected to each other through these social networks. How do you explain the growth of this phenomenon and the way it's caught on so much, especially in the last year or two?

Steve Rubel: Well, I think there are a few things. First, we had a number of people who got broadband access to the Internet, which we take for granted now. It just exploded in the last… from 2002 to 2006, 2007. We forget just how difficult it was for us to get online and do what we wanted to do.

Host: Sure. I remember. Trying to reconnect and reconnect.

Steve Rubel: Reconnect and reconnect, and the slow speed, and so forth. I got broadband in 1999, so I'm not really the right person to ask.

Host: Do you think it's broadband, or do you think it's something deeper than that?

Steve Rubel: Well, that's one thing. That was one big factor, was the fact that everybody finally got wired and began using the Internet in just ways that we were not using it before as a society - that's one. Two is I think that the cost of building these businesses came down dramatically, so when you wanted to launch a website or do something that was significant to build a presence, it was just so costly to do so in the late '90s or the early part of this decade, and then that cost of storage and the cost of bandwidth came down. That's just some kind of the underlying technology that came in place.

In terms of the human element, I think that people just became a lot more comfortable with what they could do online and became much more comfortable expressing themselves, and you had this generation that grew up with nothing but the Internet, become of age. All that kind of led to it. The technology fueled the innovation; the consumer habits and the consumer patterns kind of fueled the use; and it kind of was a perfect storm that all evolved at once. And then obviously, the tools enabled more things and more things.

Host: Do you find that people are seeking other ways to communicate with each other?

Steve Rubel: Well, I think now they are; although, I think at the time it was just…. I mean as a society, we're always social, so we're always looking to figure out how we connect with others. I just think what we saw happen here was just an evolution of how we are as human beings.

Host: Dr. Laitman, what do you think about his statement that it is an evolutionary kind of progression?

Michael Laitman: Well, I think that in our technology, we kind of create a projection of our internal world, basically of our egos, which are growing from generation to generation. And it brought us to a state where we're so connected, so dependent on each other that we *had* to develop technology to help us connect on the outside. We are also beginning to feel that we're internally connected in this reciprocal kind of connection. We see how our thoughts around…

Host: So is this an extension of the internal connection?

Michael Laitman: Yes, of course. I think externally we kind of complement what we cannot do within. Let's put it this way. If internally we could connect in thoughts, in our desires, we would understand each other, even without words, without the airwaves between us in this ordinary communication; from heart to heart or from mind to mind, we would communicate. So would

we need the Internet? - Of course not. But because we need to increase our connection, but we can't with our corporeal kind of mundane tools or worldly tools, we develop the Internet and it helps us connect despite the distance and time differences and language barriers, etc. Today, I can communicate with him through instruments that can even translate what I'm saying or transcend distances, and so back and forth.

Steve Rubel: Oh, yeah, I think the global nature of this is what's impressive, is that we are. When you're talking about the kind of people being able to kind of communicate as if they understood each other internally, that's like brothers and sisters and married couples, to some degree, they do that already. They are able to look at each other and understand how each other thinks and can express each other. So I think now what we're seeing is kind of all that move into a global stage.

Host: Dr. Laitman, do you think that this is going to help people get connected more?

Michael Laitman: As I was saying before, I think people need to go through these stages and kind of filter out this huge tool, and today we're kind of drowning in an ocean of information online. There are so many things there. It's like a little kid. You give it a little toy; it goes frantic not knowing what to do with it until he gradually settles down, and eventually just tosses it away.

We're going to see how this happens. But I have no doubt that the Internet, there's a limit to its growth. And besides, as our friend here said, it can't grow because human hours are limited; there's a limit to how much you can put into it every evening. And also because people will grow used to it and our needs are changing all the time - that's the most important thing. Today we're still excited about this new toy, but there will be a time when we will be searching for things that we have to resolve, that we have to find answers to, and life will kind of speak for itself. We'll be using this tool as a tool, not as something that is good for anything.

Our desires change constantly, so I think the future Internet will be more, perhaps even more limited, more kind of constrained, not using a thousand things that are now produced and produced kind of. But we can see that. I think there's already a kind of filtering going on right now; that's what I think. Especially that if global problems are occurring and this becomes the difficulty in people's lives and their main concern - and it's certain to happen - then because we're headed toward much tougher blows than we've experienced, and even those are not over yet, so people will first and foremost pay attention to that. And here, I think that this will be kind of the most in-demand area for those online.

Steve Rubel: But as those global problems come around and they face them and they struggle with them, I think that their will, if they feel that the Internet provides quick answers to that, or at least solace, or at least, I mean, the amazing thing that I'm amazed about is that if I have a question at 3:00 in the morning, I can get an answer, okay. I just know I can put something up on Twitter, and I can get an answer most likely or at least directed in a short amount of time. So won't that just become even more central to what we do?

In terms of the tools and things, there's always going to be something new that comes around that's different than what it was. I mean the stuff I'm talking about now is very different than I was talking about six months ago or a year ago. So I also think that people now growing up don't know what the world was like before the Internet. I mean I do, you do, but they're

different now, and I think that we have to take…. And I think also the impact of mobile devices is just beginning.

Host: We're going to talk about mobile devices. Dr. Laitman, where is all this taking us?

Michael Laitman: To throwing away all the phones, very simple. Because in the end, say after we have so many cars, where are we driving with our cars? - Into traffic jams. Where are we going to get with our phones or with computers? Into jams, too. It's all going to jam because something more internal is missing. Technology is evolving only to bring us to a certain goal, a goal that exists in nature, and the goal is for us to rise above corporeality, to be connected in thoughts and desires to one mechanism, to one system. And if you get to that, then there's no need for communicating through these devices, and I'm hoping…

Host: Then Steve's out of a job.

Michael Laitman: No, no, no. They'll be enough. But in the end, of course, humanity will come to a state where the connection will be without any boundaries. Now we're looking for that connection. We're trying to create a wireless connection, boundless connection, timeless connection, language-less connection. Wherever I am, wherever I go, I want to know where everyone is. But at the end of the day, with all these things, we just want to express something very simple: "I want all of us to be connected in our minds and in our hearts."

We have to come to the need for it. Every time we advance, we need to come to a point where we've moved forward, and it's worthless. Now move forward again, and again it's worthless, step by step by step.

Host: Are these necessary steps on the road to correction?

Michael Laitman: Yes, until we decide that no technology is going to help us but only the internal technology where we connect heart to heart.

Host: Let's say we get to that point.

Michael Laitman: And then you'll have transference of information truly without any boundaries; it will be an infinite broadband, only then. Before that, you'll always be in some kind of jam.

Host: So, really where we're moving (and assuming the world corrects the right way, as you would say), is to develop new senses that will allow us to connect to everybody at all times on a whole other wavelength.

Michael Laitman: Yes, yes. I think that it will be much faster than we think because if we needed to get to it through technological development, then they would be playing with us for a long time, they would bring us more and more kinds of gadgets and toys: "Play with this, play with that." But the problem is, it's as if they're luring us to see: "Look, there are more games." But our problem is not that. Our problem is that our troubles, the blows of life, being unhappy; life is becoming too tough and too pressing, and that's pushing us from behind, poking us, and so now we have to resolve the problem of existence.

All of these things, from the perspective of technology and from the perspective of the blows, from both sides, are so that in the end, we will be positioned in it at a point where we will have

to decide we have to be connected to one another in our hearts. I'm hoping it will come in our time.

Steve Rubel: Do you see a return to old values, a return to old ways of doing things? Do you think there'll be a backlash because people will say…?

Michael Laitman: Sure. It's not back; it's forward.

Steve Rubel: It's forward, but it'll be a return to kind of an old way of doing things in some ways. Do you think because there's too much technology, there are too many toys? Is that accurate?

Michael Laitman: No, no, not at all. I'm not kind of trying to abolish technology; I'm in favor of it.

Steve Rubel: No, I'm not saying you are trying to abolish it. I'm saying….

Michael Laitman: I'm just saying people will feel a need to be more connected into one system, and *to feel* that mechanism of one system because without it, we won't be able to do business. Without it, we won't be able to exist as a human society.

Steve Rubel: But what I'm saying, what I'm asking is, do you think that people will say, "Okay, enough. There's too much already. There's too much technology in my life." And it just becomes like a…?

Michael Laitman: No, no, no. People will say before we take the next step, "Okay, so let's go to the next step of technology," but how does it help me today to be connected to you when you are in Beijing and I'm here? Say you're in China and I'm here in New York. What does that give us if our businesses are failing? What does it give me, the Internet, if the banks can't communicate with each other, if industry is not working?

The connections are good if they're passing on things that we need. So I think that people will feel that just to exist, we have to be connected as a single organism, as a single mechanism—all the people because we are within nature in harmony. But we're creating an opposite form of the balanced form. We want to use each other. And at this point they will feel that they have to create a reciprocal positive connection, one of love and bonding, and then technology will answer to *that* demand - the new technology.

Steve Rubel: So I'm not sure if, I mean, the *motivations* may change, our way of operating may change over time because technology creates expectations. My colleague in Germany likes to talk about what he calls, "the baby monitor principle." Which is: He thinks about how baby monitors have changed babies now, and there's an expectation that if they yell, "Mommy, Daddy," you're going to come running, and that's just changed the way; it's changed parenting, and the baby monitor had a very big impact on babies over time. The Internet does that in some ways, too.

So, I don't know. I think that ultimately it all comes down to: There is a higher plane and people have a motivation for using these technologies to further whatever that goal is. Right now it might be around kind of seeking out each other to solve problems. Other times we get self-centered, and we start to think about what's the next thing we're going to buy. So, I'm just

wondering if that's more societal driven and technology is just kind of under that, as opposed to technology being on top of that. I mean, I'm not sure if I understand you correctly.

Michael Laitman: Well, look. It will be a technology that will be kind of more connected to larger communities, allowing everyone to connect, allowing everyone to pass on information to one another, but without any boundaries through millions and billions of people connected, a technology that will be like a projection, a reflection, of our internal connection.

There will be no advertising or anything like that because people's profit will be in the opposite way: in serving others, and business, too, will be not-for-profit. I'm sure that those insights and purposes that are for those who do business today online will change because every factory, every company will work in a way that they only sustain themselves and nothing more than that. Today the ego is driving you to use the Internet and other things, but then, when you discover that the ego doesn't play a part, but is only destroying human relations….

Steve Rubel: But businesses are now tackling big problems in society.

Michael Laitman: Business will be the opposite.

Steve Rubel: Yeah, but they're looking to tackle big problems now. Look at what General Electric is doing around Ecomagination in trying to really change the way we think about the environment, or how companies are trying to help improve the way we think about our health care and the responsibilities we have. So, businesses, and we see this through our own data that businesses recognize that they need to be trusted more; they have to be seen as working with government and other members of society towards big problems, and using the Internet is part of that. So I don't necessarily believe that businesses are going to become non-profits. I think businesses are, we, as a society, have too much to lose if that happens.

Michael Laitman: If we're talking about an integral system whose every part is connected, then they have to be in balance between them. And "not-for-profit" means I succeed and you succeed, but we're all maintaining the balance. And here, it means I'm not profiting more, I'm not getting more than I need, like cells in a body.

Steve Rubel: Okay.

Michael Laitman: They are in balance. Every cell cares about the whole system. So, in this way we're going to have to work.

Steve Rubel: But there's capitalism, too, and so I think that there's just too much at stake for that to…

Michael Laitman: Capitalism is basically over now; it's basically over.

Steve Rubel: Capitalism is over now?

Michael Laitman: Of course, of course. There's selfishness in the form that exists now. Of course it'll be over.

Steve Rubel: Greed may be frowned upon as a motivation now compared to the Gordon Gekko days of Wall Street.

Michael Laitman: No, but just imagine. You're a man of systems, right? Just imagine that the whole of humanity is one system and we're all connected and we're all dependent on each other like cogwheels.

Steve Rubel: Right. Right. Well, that's true.

Michael Laitman: So, if I start a business, a new business, what should I be thinking about? How to profit off of everyone; how to extract out of everyone else? That will not be balancing the system. How do I start a business that will benefit the whole system? Because otherwise I won't be revolving in the machine.

Steve Rubel: I think we agree with that. I just think that you could do that and make money because if you do that right, I mean it just…

Michael Laitman: What does it mean to make money? Profiting more than you need with the right participation in the system.

Steve Rubel: You are talking about putting more in than you get out? Is that what you're saying?

Michael Laitman: No, no, no.

Steve Rubel: You are putting more into society, I mean.

Michael Laitman: No, it's not about giving or receiving more: Being in balance.

Steve Rubel: In balance, okay. I think that's what we're saying; I think we're kind of coming full circle here. I think that businesses are saying that they want to strike a balance, but they also want to make money.

Michael Laitman: So that's imbalance; it is imbalance already.

Steve Rubel: As long as their shareholders….

Michael Laitman: We need to take an example.

Steve Rubel: As long as there are shareholders….

Michael Laitman: Now, I'll tell you. The simplest example is our bodies, our own bodies. Look at all its parts. Tell me, does the heart work for itself or for the body?

Steve Rubel: Right.

Michael Laitman: The lungs, the liver, every part works for the *whole* system only, and takes for itself - not money or as much as it can - only what it needs to survive.

Steve Rubel: Yes, of course.

Michael Laitman: Only what it needs to survive, that's it. But through this reciprocity, each of them is in a living system. It's the same for us. And after this crisis, if we want to resolve it, we're going to have to think about how we can be in a reciprocal system, the whole of humanity, and how we can connect like cogwheels, and everyone only with not-for-profit intentions. The profit is that we all live. That's a profit.

Steve Rubel: You're saying the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts. But I mean, what I don't understand….

Michael Laitman: Nature will just force us.

Steve Rubel: Right.

Michael Laitman: Nature will just force us. Nature improves us. Nature is now elevating us to a new degree. That's the global village that's now surfacing.

Steve Rubel: Okay, but….

Michael Laitman: And we have no choice.

Steve Rubel: I don't quite….

Michael Laitman: Now I'm asking you this.

Steve Rubel: I see eye-to-eye with you around the whole notion that we have to work together towards fulfilling, and the whole notion of the heart and the parts working together towards some greater whole. On the other hand now, you may be….

Michael Laitman: No other hand.

Steve Rubel: But let me go back to your metaphor. You might be…. Okay, in my case, I'm not physically inclined, okay. I can't hit a baseball like Alex Rodriguez can, okay, but I can do other types of things with my mind that allow me to do what I do and do well. So I have strengths in some areas, weaknesses in other areas.

Michael Laitman: True.

Steve Rubel: And the world is a better place for that. And the world is a better place because A-Rod is able to hit a baseball, some days. Why shouldn't we profit off our strengths?

Michael Laitman: Your profit will be that you will be successful in your participation with everyone. In that, you will feel an even higher profit.

Steve Rubel: That's a spiritual connection. I understand that.

Michael Laitman: But it is an internal fulfillment and much more fulfilling than what you have now.

Steve Rubel: But there's always going to be somebody like Bernie Madoff. There's just always going to be that kind of person; that's just society.

Michael Laitman: No, there won't be because nature will not allow it to happen. With our egos, we're rising to a level that's totally connected, and such people, in the end, will appear like cancer cells. Because if such things happen in our bodies where a part wants to take for itself more, it becomes cancer, a cancerous cell. It's consuming the body. And then we will feel these Madoffs in our society in the same way.

Steve Rubel: I'm talking about areas I'm not an expert in, so I should probably stick to talking about technology because that's what I know about.

Host: On that note….

Michael Laitman: But then, what I'm interested in is what kind of new technology you'll have to develop in order to serve this new method.

Steve Rubel: Because if I was an expert in all that, I'd have twelve thousand videos and all the people watching my stuff too, but I'm not.

Host: Gentleman, on that note, I want to thank both of you for coming in for a very lively conversation where I think we all learned a little, or at least opened up our minds to some new ideas. Once again, thank you Steve Rubel, Dr. Laitman. Thank you.