

**THE NEW  
TALENT  
PLAYBOOK**  
*Podcast*

**Action Kit**

**The Leadership Shift  
Behind Massive  
Growth - A True  
Story**

Featuring Damon Gersh

**Episode 2 - Season 6**

By Rob Levin, Creator of [Thenewtalentplaybookpodcast.com](https://thenewtalentplaybookpodcast.com)  
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During pivotal moments of crisis, like 9/11 and Superstorm Sandy, Damon Gersh's restoration company scaled from 150 people to over 1,600 virtually overnight, while maintaining composure, clear communication, and exceptional service. The secret wasn't luck or panic management; it was years of intentional preparation: building a team of leaders trusted to make critical decisions, establishing non-negotiable standards that attracted top talent, and creating systems that allowed the organization to operate independently of its founder.

## 1. Build Leaders, Not Just Employees

Damon's breakthrough was realizing that in order to scale, he needed to get out of the way. By delegating authority and trusting his team with real decision-making responsibility, he wasn't creating weakness; he was developing leadership muscles that would later save the business during crisis.

### Audit Your Decision-Making Model

For each decision below, mark who typically makes it:

You (O)

Your Team (T)  
Shared (S)

Type of Decision	Currently Made By	Should Be Made By
Hiring & firing		
Daily operational issues		
Project priorities		
Client relationship decisions		
Budget allocation for teams		
Process improvements		
Performance feedback		
Strategy adjustments		

Which decision in the table represents your biggest bottleneck? What would it take to delegate it this month?

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## 2. Set & Hold Non-Negotiable Standards

Integrity, capability, and professionalism are not negotiable; they are the embodiment of your organization. Damon's father taught him that in a service business, all you have is your reputation. This isn't about being harsh; it's about being clear: high performers want to work for the best company, and the standards themselves become a natural self-selecting filter. If you tolerate mediocrity, you'll get mediocre people and mediocre results.

### Define Your Non-Negotiables

Rate yourself (1 = Not at all, 5 = Absolutely) on these standards in your organization:

Standard	Rating (1-5)
We consistently hire for both skill AND cultural fit	
We address poor performance quickly and fairly	
We celebrate and recognize high standards publicly	
Leaders model the standards they expect	
Our reputation for quality precedes us in the market	

What standard scored lowest? What's one action you can take this month to strengthen it?

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### 3. Lead with Confidence & Vision

When crisis hits, everyone looks to the leader for tone. Damon admits: internally, he was scared. But he projected calm, confidence, and control, because he knew his team was taking their cue from him. This isn't fake bravado; it's the leader's job to hold the vision and the steadiness so the team can focus on execution. The paradox is that real confidence comes from preparation. Damon had spent years building leaders and systems. When 9/11 happened, that preparation allowed him to project genuine confidence, not hope, but grounded belief in the team's capability.

#### Assess Your Leadership Presence

Rate yourself (1 = Rarely, 5 = Consistently) on these leadership behaviors:

Leadership Behavior	Rating
I communicate vision and strategy clearly to the team	
I remain calm and composed under pressure	
I invest time in developing individual leaders	
I make decisions and stand behind them confidently	
I model the standards and behaviors I expect	

Which area needs development? What's one situation where you can practice leading with more confidence?

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## 4. Invest in People's Growth—Belief is the Currency

Damon's father spent 60+ years as an entrepreneur, and decades later, people would stop Damon on the street to say, 'Your dad believed in me. He sent me to design school, and I became one of the top decorators in the Hamptons because of him.' This is legacy. People sometimes don't see their own potential until someone invests in their development and believes in them. Caring for your team isn't soft; it's strategic. When you invest in people's growth, they invest in your organization's growth. It's a two-way street.

### Identify Your Development Investments

For each key team member, answer these questions:

Question	Your Answer
What is this person's next level of growth?	
What skill or education would unlock their potential?	
How can I invest in them this quarter?	

**Your Commitment:** Name one person on your team with unrealized potential. What's one investment (education, mentorship, new opportunity) you can make for them this month?

***“By delegating authority, by trusting people, giving them room to make mistakes, I developed a team of leaders and we were able to parse out a lot of that decision-making. A lot of times in life you look back in hindsight and all the things that you did just moving forward make sense in the rear view mirror.”***

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