

Barry Farber

TAKE 5 | BARRY FARBER IS DIFFICULT TO PIN DOWN. More than 25 years ago, he began working as a sales consultant for a long list of Fortune 500 companies, seeking to help employees at corporations such as BMW and American Express reach beyond their loftiest business goals. He has since authored 12 books, become a noted radio and television personality and even created the FoldzFlat brand of pens. The Livingston resident's new television show, "Breakthrough with Barry Farber," can be viewed on Comcast channel 36 and Verizon channel 33 in New Jersey.



1 | You've seemingly done a bit of everything. What do you consider yourself?

It's hard to say. Years ago, a PR firm came to me and asked what I do — I was working with entertainers and putting out products, corporate training — but what I really love is that moment when people break through. Companies will come to me with a challenge and I help them break through — that's what I do. And it doesn't have to be a huge breakthrough. It can be small. But that is the guiding force. In martial arts, they teach you how to fall. If you know how to fall, you can get back up. I became a fanatic about falling. I'd fall everywhere. On the floor, on rocks, all over the place. I wanted to perfect it. It's the greatest metaphor in the world. Falling isn't failing as long as you know how to get back up. Whenever you try to do something that hasn't been done, there are setbacks, obstacles that haven't come up. But I want to help people see the opportunity and move toward it.

2 | Has it been a challenge for you to operate in so many fields?

Yes and no. I'm working on manufacturing, licensing, building products, writing and, at one point, (was) working with Evel Knievel to get his name on a roller coaster — that was a dream of his. I was also on TV and helping

a company launch recycling efforts in the Meadowlands. If you have value inside your head on what you're working on, you can go far. Once you see something you believe in, the synergy that happens from that is tremendous. You can't be everything, but you can do some things really well. Here's an example: I met the comedian Jackie Mason at a deli. He said, "So, you're a salesman." I imitated his voice and said, "Yeah, just like you, some kind of comedian." He got a kick out of it and we had a coffee. We pitched a radio show for him and it went beyond that — he ended up getting a TV show.

3 | You seem to carry a great sense of enthusiasm through all of these projects. From where does that emanate?

When I was a kid in Maplewood in the early 1970s, I watched Evel Knievel. This guy was jumping over cars, so I would go out with my Schwinn Stingray and my father would help me build a ramp. I had my football helmet on and I'd ride down the sidewalk — my neighbors would watch and crack up — and I'd jump over garbage cans, go-karts, even people. I loved the challenge. I fell in love with it. I always wanted to dig a little deeper. The key thing is confidence, and that comes from the homework and preparation others don't do. You end up finding things you're so excited about, that when you get there, you can't help but share it with others.

4 | Is there a universal recipe for success?

Technology is an amazing tool — and provides many answers if you do your homework — but people respect when you interact in person. In those settings, you can really forge connections. For instance, I recently met an executive who was involved in saving dogs from being euthanized and finding them new homes. Knowing this, the first thing I talked about with him was our love of dogs and how I adopted a dog that was rescued during Hurricane Katrina. He stopped me and said, "No one ever meets me and talks about this." There is a saying: "No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care about their business." You have to shake it up and try things differently. It's about internal value also. If what you are doing has value to you, it will drive you forward. If what you're doing doesn't have value, that's when setbacks occur.

5 | Your new TV show focuses on "breaking through." Can you outline that concept?

You can be working on something and you hit a wall. It gets you down. You start to say, "Why did I even start this? What am I doing?" When I started my company in 1990, I used to interview customers on a tape recorder. I learned so much from those customer interviews, because this content was rich with real-world experiences. I became consumed with finding people who had that moment when they broke through to find success. I wanted to share that through as many mediums as possible. I really get a kick out of this stuff. It is so interesting to understand how athletes, entertainers, the brainiest people among us, journeyed to break through in their fields. How were they able to get to another level? As a media guy, I'm not Howard Stern or Johnny Carson, but this stuff is interesting.

— *Michael Fensom*

Next month: Opera singer Anthony Roth Costanzo