

Interview: Professor Lucija Mulej Mlakar, Director, Budnjani d.o.o.
Kevin Jackson, Director of Ideas and Innovation, The Experience is the Marketing

We are ready to create a better world!

By: **Tonja Blatnik**, TST Digital Editor / Communication Hub Host

There is no doubt we are facing a new wave for the economy, business and leadership. In order to shed some light on the future trends, get some fresh insights and provide clarity, we challenged two great minds – Kevin Jackson and Professor Lucija Mulej Mlakar. The concept of this interview is to offer readers two perspectives – a business-marketing point of view and a more holistic leadership angle.

Kevin Jackson is at the forefront of experiential marketing, an expert in sales, a leader in branding and a sought-after keynote speaker. He has been a significant player with respected marketing services groups including Interpublic, Grey and Saatchi, and has worked on campaigns for brands such as Budweiser, British Airways, Coors, McDonalds and Coca-Cola. As the Director of Ideas and Innovation at The Experience is the Marketing, Kevin recently gave a lecture in Ljubljana at the invitation of the British-Slovenian Chamber of Commerce, presenting his rare understanding of every conceivable touchpoint between a brand and its most valuable audiences.

Professor Mlakar is an anthropologist, sociologist, writer and lecturer, and innovator of human capital; her passion is vivid and full of insights for the 21st century economy. Her moto is "Perceive. Awaken", and she combines hard-core science with subtle spiritual and subconscious concepts of new science, actually of a new paradigm. For companies she provides added value as an observer, co-creator and chief spiritual officer, taking care to ensure the right synergy and harmony, which is not possible without discontinuities. She is the author of seven books and numerous articles, claiming that a new paradigm confesses "objectivity" as a design of classical mechanics and opens to an existential ability to see beyond. We face this in every way, most profoundly through the digitalisation of professional and daily life. We are losing solid ground and the future leaders will have to have strong personalities. "Because personalities are the future advocates of stability; the world, in general, has lost its simplicity," she observes.

Q Both of you have a mission to help your clients achieve their growth potential. How do you turn dreamers into achievers?

Lucija: I believe that true transformational knowledge, alive and meaningful, thus helpful, creates a sphere of mutual trust. Of course, our clients test us which is good because trust needs to be earned. Dreamers lack self-esteem and action; achievers lack creativity and spontaneous touch, and this is where I play a role. I combine subtle with solid, invisible with obvious, spirit with matter, and I call it business anthropology from within.

Kevin: Great question, there are so many different levels of answer to this question, where do we start from? Where are we trying to get too? Simply put its this, read any biography of any sportsperson who has become world class, they all say the same thing, talent gets you so far, but hard work, dedication and focus gets you to the top. The same is true in business. Business leaders need to inspire their colleagues - leadership is about inspiration, management is about control. We need to set one simple objective with a deadline. Everyone in the organisation should be involved and understand what their individual and collective role is, and then it needs to be fun, engaging and everyone needs to be able to tell their story, their fit in the overall narrative. It's simple to say but difficult to do because it means change, and change has complexity woven in.

Q Kevin, as an advocate of the experience economy, could you summarise how the marketing industry is changing? What is an absolute must in terms of knowledge for companies?

The industry has changed and is changing because great marketing is no longer about just saying things to people, it's about doing things for people. Successful brands understand the importance of engagement, creating meaningful and rewarding experiences, whether online or in the real world. The absolute must is to treat people as people, whether they are consumers, corporate clients, partners or employees. Entertain them, educate them, connect them with each other and above all, listen to them. Make them part of the story.

Q Lucija, as an advocate of multiple intelligences, could you summarise what kind of practices and business models bring greater added value for all stakeholders?

Certainly openness to the new and unusual. Business is great but it generates clusters of customs that are no longer serving the ever-changing reality. The air that we breathe is full

of ideas and potential, but we must reinvent the methodology for our leaders to see this potential. If they just cope with multiversity in every area of business and their personal life, there is no space left for fresh and simple. My concept is Budnjani 4Q, (Iq, Eq, Sq, Pq), the connectivity of intelligences and the methodology inherent to the development of human potential is transposing the classical approach.

Q What is your view about the development of artificial intelligence which is profoundly changing business and society?

Lucija: Medicine is, from my point of view, already AI with all the miraculous solutions where special machines and well-defined materials are used to serve the genetic imperfections of humankind. We are part nature and also nurture. We already substitute our biological defects with culture and technology. AI is the logical successor of old science; the world is changing very quickly and our capacity to follow the currents and pitfalls of growth are very limited. We need AI. Alongside ethics and strong personalities, AI is great and not dangerous in this respect.

Kevin: Hmmmm, yes! AI is the new electricity, try and imagine a time before electricity and look at what it has done for everything. AI is the same, it will be in everything. It is going to change all of our lives for the better. It is going to move us in fantastic ways, it is a resource to be used.

Q What will the future bring in terms of business and leadership? What trends do you predict in the next five years?

Kevin: The next five years are going to be as exciting as the last five. Where are we going? As Sir Issac Newton said, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. We are moving to more human skills and thoughts. Where now is the reaction to 2007 and the financial crisis, the thought was that people made mistakes but we can believe in data and algorithms. Hence the growth of social media and the fascination with Big Data.

We are shifting to more human skills, like insight. Don't take my word for it, look at the World Economic Forum's prediction of the top skills for the next five years. Creativity, complex problem solving, collaboration and people management.

Lucija: Certainly change will be in the rise of ethics and interdisciplinary approaches in all spheres of our lives, since the unexpected side effects of science and society are every day's agenda and nightmare all over the world. And my Budnjani 4Q is one possible answer.



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Q What do you believe in with every cell of your body?

Lucija: That we live in a great era and that just now we are ready to create a better world. We need to start building bridges instead of walls, and we have to start with ourselves. We need to evolve from being outcasts to being involved. We need to wake up!

Kevin: I believe in S. O. F. O. Stand Out or F**k Off. We spend all of our time trying to fit in, to adjust to those around us, it is the worst thing ever. If you don't stand out, how will anyone know you. If you don't stand out, how will you get your promotion, your pay rise, that new

client everybody is after? One of the crowd means you are not doing a great job for you, your family or your company. There are loads of similar people, loads of similar companies, don't be judged as one of them, be one of one! ◀

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