

Accelerating Change, S1, E2: Entrepreneurship with Leanne Kemp

Paul Browning: Change is inevitable, but we've entered a period of change in human history where the rate of change is accelerating. What happens when the rate of change exceeds our capacity to adapt? Have we already reached, or perhaps past that point or in a language that we already use at some Paul's school, what is an education worth having in a world that is changing so quickly, welcome to Accelerating Change a conversation about the future. I'm Paul Browning Headmaster at St Paul's school. And today I'm speaking with Leanne Kemp, Queensland, Chief Entrepreneur. Welcome Leanne.

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Leanne Kemp: Good morning, everyone. How are you, Leanne? It's lovely

Paul

Browning: To actually speak to you this morning, but I'm really intrigued a little bit about your story. First of all, where did you grow up and where did you go to school and, and how did you get this role of Chief Entrepreneur in Queensland?

Leanne Kemp: So, um, I'm a Brisbane girl. I went to school at Sommerville House, which is right in the middle of the city here. And I was as Queensland, Chief Entrepreneur two years ago. In fact, the role is a 12 month role and I've been in the role for two years. The roles

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actually ended it finished in December. So we're in the contemplation and the really nervous moment right now to ask the question, who's the next chief. So maybe someone on this podcast line that's listening today, um, might be the next chief or potentially could be the next chief next decade. After you leave school back pedaling back

Paul Browning: A few steps though, when you left school, what did you do?

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Leanne Kemp: Um, I was actually a really good swimmer in school, so I never really thought about myself as being an entrepreneur. In fact, I remember my dad saying you'd make a great accountant, so I dutifully went off to uni and began studying commerce. And within the first year I thought, oh, this is a bit boring, to be honest. Um, I did a number of small jobs, like as most university students would do working in restaurants and cafes. And then I was really curious about technology and I began reading. In fact, it's a pledge to lifelong learning and it was about a year and a half after I left school that I started my very own company, uh, in technology and in fact in accounting software. Um, so then I guess there was some nexus between dad's advice and then of course the advice I chose to ignore and then where I am today.

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Leanne Kemp: So you'd describe yourself as an entrepreneur. I would say I'm a serial entrepreneur, but I describe myself as being unemployable. I've never had a real job inverted commas. I've always been really excited by solving problems. I think I was one of those annoying kids growing up, um, asking my mum and dad, but why, but why is it like that? And I also like are we there yet, and I guess the combination of asking why a lot and having, um, you know, the curiosity of mine to get there fast, uh, is also a really good way to be able to start to think about harnessing that energy and putting it into problem solving.

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Paul Browning: Do you think your education helped at all in terms of fostering your, your thinking and becoming an entrepreneur? Or is it the influence of your parents or, or what was it that

Accelerating Change, S1, E2: Entrepreneurship with Leanne Kemp

actually sparked that curiosity?

Leanne Kemp: There's always a great question in entrepreneurship. Are entrepreneurs born or made, and I guess the same questions asked of athletes, do you, can you make a really great Olympic athlete or,

Paul Browning: And the same for leaders as well? Are leaders born or, or can they learn the skills? So yeah. What do you think?

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Leanne Kemp: So there's a definite type of tolerance to risk, um, uh, curiosity, uh, around, um, and a pledge to learn new things. And I think entrepreneurs, innovators are different entrepreneurs to innovate something, to create a new scientific breakthrough or a new product is only really one building block to be an entrepreneur. You have to harness the commercial reality of that innovation. So entrepreneurs are good at building businesses as well as inventing. So you can be an inventor, uh, and we've had many inventors in the world, but they often don't a lot of day. And that's where entrepreneurship is the fuel.

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Paul Browning: So are you both, are you an inventor and an entrepreneur or do you lean more towards one?

Leanne Kemp: Oh, I am an inventor. I hold patents in my, in my name. I do invent and I haven't stopped. And, uh, I'm, I'm definitely an entrepreneur. I'm a great fan and I know how to start businesses, scale them and even exit them. So, uh, that pay day, that entrepreneurs always love to wait for. Uh, when you sell the business.

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Paul Browning: Entrepreneurial pathways, really quite challenging because as we probably read a lot of people fail, um, it doesn't go anywhere. I'm going to guess that you've probably failed a couple of times in some of the ideas that you had. Is that the case or are you always been a winner?

Leanne Kemp: No, no, I'm an epic loser. I just learned to act fast. And when I fail or when I lose as a negative, I see it as a reflective moment to learn what I could do differently or the lessons out of how or why it failed. So I don't repeat the same problem. Uh, and so I think now that you've got to perfect the out of being a loser to be a really great entrepreneur.

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Paul Browning: I heard a really lovely expression. The other day from Muhammad Ali were continually getting knocked down, but, uh, he's coming. It was no, no, no, I don't keep knocked down. I'm continually getting back up. And that was a really good way. I think of looking at failures, you know, you learn from it and you get getting back up each time and it's how you, you return to the field or the game to actually keep going and persevering. So I really, that really resonated with me. Can you tell us a story, Leanne of a failure and what did you learn from?

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Leanne Kemp: Well, there are so many failures, whether it be technology that doesn't work, whether the business isn't able to raise capital, um, you know, staff that you would bring into the company that, uh, it just simply doesn't work out, um, failures in product when you're

Accelerating Change, S1, E2: Entrepreneurship with Leanne Kemp

[00:06:00] trying to sell it to the customer and for all intensive promise of what it potentially could do, the customer then is disappointed, disappointed. So, um, that's why I'm saying I fail every day because I think there is many points upon which things fail, but it's the choice to be able to get back up again and rethink the lessons that were delivered in that failure process. A lot of people think about failure as being cataclysmic. You know, that time when you go broken, there's nothing left to do and there's not left whatsoever, but you often find that, um, if you embrace failure on a daily, on a daily process, then that's a step towards avoiding those big, massive disasters.

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Paul
Browning: Yeah. Some of the things you are actually saying to me, it really resonated with me as well. I would call myself as an ideas person. I love thinking creatively and coming up with new ideas, but, but I'm in permanent paid employment. So the risk for me about those ideas, perhaps not as great as an entrepreneur who who's living a really depends on whether this product or all businesses are actually going to get going. Uh, and I've had plenty of failures in my life, but I like throwing an idea out and then other people grabbing hold of it and seeing where it actually runs and building on it. So that whole notion of collaborating in a team entrepreneurs, you know, I was talking to a guy at MIT yesterday or the day before about it. And he said, it's not an individual pursuit. It's actually a team pursuit. And collaboration is really important. Do you think that's the case, Leanna you your collaborator or you're an individual, or how do you see being an entrepreneur is a team sport?

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Leanne
Kemp: There's no doubt about that, but you speak about being within the safe path, having of a, of a, of an employment regime, but you're an intrapreneur. So intrapreneur doesn't have to exist in the externalities of the world. It can sit with inside of organizations or within society, even government, we have intrapreneurs those that are really curious about changing the way things work now or solving or solving for problems. But it's a team sport. It's impossible to have all of the skillsets to be all things to all people. And that's why companies that are large organizations, effectively teams, and they build teams within teams.

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Paul
Browning: But then that's interesting too, because you said before, some of your failures have occurred because of people on your team. Yeah. The team perhaps not dealing or working together or different interests, or, and I've heard that before as well with companies that they've, they've got their business going and then people come in with different interests as well. So building a center team and getting the right people on the team, I would suggest as a really important facet to what you actually do.

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Leanne
Kemp: Attracting people with a similar mindset, but different skillsets is the critical decisions that you bring together. Um, and even if you get people with different skill sets and a similar mindset and their passion by solving the problem, it's always about the timing, is the problem ready to solve? Is the technology mature to underpin the solution is the knowledge that you hold within the team sufficient enough to be able to not only solve the challenge of the problem in front of you, but build the commercial model around it. So, um, yeah, it's, uh, definitely a very deep and interesting topic. Many academics of course spend a lot of time researching and entrepreneurs put it into practice.

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Accelerating Change, S1, E2: Entrepreneurship with Leanne Kemp

Paul Browning: I am, my passion is leadership and I would say great leaders build great teams around them and exactly what you said, finding people with different skill sets, but also people with different perspectives as well, because it just helps you make a better decision, uh, helps you grow the particular product or idea. And, and it becomes a reality. My gifting is not making something become a reality. My gifting is coming up with the idea. Uh, and a lot of people tend to shoot that down, moving, moving to the future, Leanne, Al Gore, it paints a really scary picture about where the world is heading. And we're seeing that come to pass now. And COVID last year really accelerated a lot of that change. Uh, what's happening on the horizon, largely impacted by artificial intelligence and the advances in technology can be quite frightening. But then the other hand, it can be quite exciting. What's, what's your view or you've, you've got a pessimist view or an optimistic view about the future and where we're heading.

Leanne Kemp: I'm completely optimistic about the view because, uh, and, and the future of the world, because I'm building it the way that I want to see it, which is the reason why, um, many people talk about jobs of the future. I'm not concerned about what the jobs of the future are because I'm creating my own destiny in being an entrepreneur. And that's really the entrepreneurial spirit. When we think about looking at things from a perspective, not just only the glass half full, but many entrepreneurs actually only ever have a drop of water in the bottom of the glass. And many people say, oh, well, you're a bit optimistic about the future. And it's less about how much water you have in the glass. And it's more about the fact that entrepreneurs know where to find the water. And so there's a really interesting set of, uh, thinking that goes around that because we're purposed by being able to consistently and continuously and deliberately advance and make those changes that, you know, that are, that are needed, uh, whether it be in climate and environment, whether it even be in the money system or how we, of course now in a COVID environment, think about our health, uh, on a day-to-day basis.

Paul Browning: So what opportunities do you see coming in the future, big things on the horizon that might influence your thinking and us as, as people and, and the workforce of the future, what do you see coming and what opportunities do you see there?

Leanne Kemp: So many, so many opportunities, uh, stem programs have existed in education, but I always say let's bring it at the front of it and call it STEM with entrepreneurship at the front of stem programs, with science technology and mass. Um, of course the big, the big topics of technology is robotics and artificial intelligence, blockchain. These technologies alone have exponential, and they're really powerful, but what's happening is they're converging together. And so the next generation of the internet is being built right today. As I'm speaking to you entirely new companies will be formed where the privacy of data will be held in each of our own hands. And we won't have to be thinking about, you know, submitting data into social networks and, you know, undeniably the personal, the consumer becomes the product because that data about you as being sold off to advertisers, all of these really large topics of the last decade and now being action with entrepreneurs across the entire of the world in the changes.

Leanne: And it's not just happening in Silicon valley, it's happening right here in Brisbane. And

Accelerating Change, S1, E2: Entrepreneurship with Leanne Kemp

Kemp: even in places like Cannes and Townsville and Bundaberg there's innovation hubs around the entirety of Queensland, all working with various forms of new science, medical breakthroughs, even material science, you know, we can make leather attic, cactus, we can make leather out of mushrooms now. So we imagine a world where we're growing cows, not just to slaughter for meat, because we can print proteins. Um, [00:13:00] it's really going to be an incredible, an incredible world to live. In. One thing COVID showed us is when we take humans out of the center of the conversation, or we take humans away from the center of dense cities, animals come back, we saw that in the middle of COVID in some of these incredible cities in the world in India. And so we think, how do we bring back a better balance with biodiversity? It's so much pretty exciting to be alive.

[00:13:30] Paul Browning: So you're an optimist, and it sounds like the future is in the hands of entrepreneurs, uh, which from what you're saying is really, really exciting. But if I'm not an entrepreneur, uh, I can become overwhelmed with what's happening in the change around me and perhaps not keep up with that change. And it became be quite daunting and frightening. And so really, I guess the question is around education, isn't it, the next generation of people who are coming through our systems, and again, to take your role as Queensland's Chief Entrepreneur for the next decade, uh, comments about education, you, you just made a comment about e-stim. Now I'm not a particularly a fan of stem or steam myself, because I think it's more about embedding in every curriculum area, the notion of teaching kids or helping them to think innovatively, to think creatively, to think like an entrepreneur. And I think we can do that in even the subject area and math and science is certainly really important. But your thoughts about education, uh, as well, like we tend to, I think in Australia really standardize, uh, our education system because [00:14:00] we're frightened that, uh, those standards aren't particularly great and, and our kids aren't, uh, achieving as well as they might do. Uh, and so we tend to squeeze out that whole notion of creativity and those entrepreneurial capacities. What do you think needs to happen to our education system? [00:14:30]

Leanne Kemp: The way we deliver education today, uh, has when I finished school in, you know, in the eighties and for me there weren't, uh, entrepreneurial programs that were available. Universities weren't studying entrepreneurship in their business programs. As a, as a girl, I wasn't able to, um, easily pick up a coding course, but of course the world's changed with Google and online universities, the ability to have even open source technologies, you're able to do this, learning yourself, um, in your own home, and you're able to do it in micro-credentials in bite sized chunks. Um, certainly education definitely has to embed what I call an innovation logic, and we need to be able to embed that not just only in education in schools, but also education with inside of the [00:15:00] workplace, uh, large corporations and government need to think about not just managerial logic, but also innovation logic. [00:15:30]

Leanne Kemp: Uh, and I think we're well on our way because let's face it. The challenges of the world today are solved through innovative thinking and ways upon which we can bring science and technology together to help underpin change. And so no longer is it about the industrial muscle of the human, uh, you know, bringing together in a factory line and, and, and making things with hammers and nails, that's certainly still a part of the future, [00:16:00]

Accelerating Change, S1, E2: Entrepreneurship with Leanne Kemp

- [00:16:30] but really the leverage that comes from using your brain and being connected to the human spirit is really where the education system should have it at the forefront of, of every single curriculum, maths and science, even art, bring it all closer together to this innovation logic, uh, with E at the front entrepreneurship, because it gives you the ability to solve problems. That's what entrepreneurs do. And if we happen to build a business around it, it just means we've been successful as entrepreneurs.
- Paul Browning: [00:17:00] And I agree, there's certainly been lots of change in terms of education more broadly, but if I come back down to Drillbit and down to school education, I'd suggest that there are some really great programs that are having happening in schools and educators across the country are doing wonderful work in this space as well. But, but it's the school as a whole in Australia. I don't, I'm frightened. It's not going to keep up with the changes that are happening and, and actually adequately prepare young people for that future to solve those problems when we're not adapting quickly, uh, governments, as I said, are really trying to control what we actually do in our schools and focus on those academic results like Napa Lana, and the measures that we can, we can actually easily measure, uh, you value what you can measure and et cetera, et cetera, uh, school education, the comments about school education, the, and do you, do you see that as well? [00:17:30] Do you think somebody build a house for example, or the state schools or other schools around the country are able to keep up with the changes that we're seeing and adequately prepare young people? Well, I would
- Leanne Kemp: [00:18:00] Hope that, um, we are trying to keep up because the education of teachers is just as important as the education of students and public schools in my sit under government regime. And I know in the department of innovation, we work closely with the education department, bringing entrepreneurship programs, closer to curriculum based activities, and certainly that's well underway in Queensland and has been for some time available to both public schools, as well as private schools. Um, private school education of course, has different funding mechanisms and also different alignment into corporate sponsors. And so we are seeing, you know, uh, Amazon and Google paying a lot more attention, even Facebook paying a lot more attention in how they can bring, um, education funding to the forefront or programs or sponsored programs to drive forward these types of innovation. So I would say it's as much on the schools to think in an innovation mindset as it is the responsibility of government as it is actually as the teachers, if we stood teachers in a classroom and ask them to build a business in their own mind, muscle strength, do you think that they would be able to, um, practice what they preach? [00:18:30]
- Leanne Kemp: [00:19:00] And so I think, um, that's of, so a very important part of the pathway moving forward, I've really enjoyed this podcast series. I think it's critically important to everyone listening to keep tuning in because there's so much rich content that gets delivered in these conversations that can be picked out, not only just for the students that are listening, but for teachers and even governments. Um, so I'm pretty excited about the discussion that we have.
- Paul Browning: Well, that was Leanne Kemp, Queensland's Chief Entrepreneur, and what a great conversation listening to her about entrepreneurial-ism her journey and her advice about the future. She's certainly really optimistic and excited about what's to come

Accelerating Change, S1, E2: Entrepreneurship with Leanne Kemp

[00:19:30] thank you for tuning into accelerating change. I'm really looking forward to speaking to our next guest a really quite impressive person that I'm sure you'll gain a lot from too.