

S1 00:11 Hello, and welcome to the Moxie Podcast Episode 7. This is the companion web show to the Moxie Sessions. Now, the Moxie Sessions is an internet economy discussion group that is held once a month in Auckland, New Zealand. Its purpose is to bring together a group of interesting technophiles from across the economy to talk about how New Zealand can take advantage of the internet to improve its economic performance. This Moxie podcast is proudly supported by Internet New Zealand, whose mission is to protect and promote the Internet for New Zealand, which I think we all like, and you can check them out at internetnz.net.nz. My name is Glenn Williams and I'm pushing the buttons on the show here in London.

S1 00:52 And today we are talking about New Zealand's scattered population. Yes, that is the topic. Now, it is said that New Zealand has the second largest population living overseas of any developed country. Do we send them to the right places? Can we in fact even determine where people go? And can all these Kiwi folk really link New Zealand to overseas markets? And do we take the best advantage of what our people actually learn overseas when they decide to come home? These are all the questions that we're going to be tuning through in this podcast in this session.

S1 01:24 Now this show is nothing without its guests, the speakers who gave their point of view at the Moxie session. First up, it's Brian Sweeney. Now he is the New York based Chairman of SweeneyVesty, which is a global corporate communications company that was founded in Wellington, and has since gone global. He's dedicated to the idea of New Zealand exporting its services, innovation, and creativity. Brian has produced books and film and photography and theater and music, and he very recently spoke at the TEDx event in Auckland, as well as the Moxie Session. Welcome to the show Brian.

S2 02:02 Thank you, Glenn. Good morning.

S1 01:59 It's lovely to have you here. Are you overseas, in Auckland, where are you at the moment?

S2 01:59 I'm in Auckland, which is home rather than overseas. Like a number of people listening, I have a bi-hemispheric life, whereby I live in New York and I also live in New Zealand, and I never left. If you're an exporter you have to be dedicated to frequent travel and often living in an overseas country in order to be immersed in the local market. So I have this somewhat glorious axis of NY-NZ.

S1 02:36 Absolutely, and a perfect guest to have on for this particular topic with a lot of experience of being outside and inside the country as you say. So I look forward to talking to you very soon. Sam Mickle is also with us. He is the global communication at Kea, that is the Kiwi Expats Association, and he is based at Kea HQ in Auckland. Sam has worked and lived in Los Angeles, Spain and Australia. He is a former TV producer, international PR and marketing exec, and Sam's focus at Kea is reinventing the global communications of Kea for the digital age. And Sam is on the phone in Auckland. Welcome to the show Sam.

S3 03:13 Thank you, Glenn. It's nice to be on the show and it's really nice to get some different and interesting perspectives on how New Zealand can take the best advantage of having so much of its workforce overseas.

S1 03:31 Exactly. And so good to have someone deep inside Kea, which is so crucial for bringing all these New Zealanders around the world together. Finally, we've got Tracey Lee. She is a brand strategist and planner-at-large. She is a recent return migrant to New Zealand, coming home after 12 years based in New York and Shanghai as a strategic planning director with global brand and communications experience. Basically, she is a very organized person. Tracey, welcome to the show from Turangi, there in Auckland. How are you?

S4 04:00 Brilliant. Thank you. Good morning from Turangi.  
S1 04:03 Yes, good to have you on and talking through this topic. First of all, Brian, back to you. Let us know what you spoke about at the Moxie sessions. Give us a really brief overview.

S2 04:16 Sure. I'm an inveterate storyteller. I edited my first newspaper when I was 12, my second one when I was 17, and my third one in my early 20s. And so I just have in my makeup a predilection to publish and to tell stories. Some years ago I was in a position of seeking to articulate a New Zealand story, and it totally fascinated me. I did a degree in New Zealand history and politics, and I had worked in the entertainment business, working with New Zealand artist often in pursuit of a authentic New Zealand voice. So this whole New Zealand story has engaged and intrigued me for some time.

S2 05:09 As part of that story telling process, one shifts language. And in the late 80s, as in previous decades in New Zealand, there was a lot of beating up going on about the brain drain, people who had sort of bugged off, and it struck as a really unproductive attitude and language to use towards many of our best and brightest people who quite legitimately had pursued a dream, or travel, or professional experience overseas.

S2 05:47 And so we sought to create a new language around the brain drain and so one of the things we did was did some back of envelope figures and came up with a headline grabbing statement that a million New Zealanders lived overseas and it was a fairly verifiable number. We re-framed the New Zealand population from four million to five and did simple things with language to try and re-frame this overseas population as a way of encouraging greater flows of creativity and community and, indeed, capital between New Zealand and its overseas population.

S2 06:32 And one of the really interesting things for me that came out of the Moxie Session was instead of looking at this group of people simply as a million people. There are a great many segments to it and the more that we drill in to who these people are, where they are, the better the quality of the conversation is that we will have with this quite fluid group. Some people haven't been back to New Zealand for 35 years, other people come back three or four times a year and do business here.

S2 07:03 And my final point, and this is to the internet aspect of this discussion, the internet has enabled so many different ways in which people can interact with the world and with New Zealand and so I think that we are entering quite a rich phase of this relationship with our overseas population.

S1 07:30 So it sounds like Brian has been integral in helping redefine the definition of what it is to be New Zealanders overseas, or this network around the world. Sam, you're within the organization that is dedicated to pulling all these New Zealanders together or keeping the threads alive. Give us a roundup of what you spoke about at the Moxie Session.

S3 07:52 Yes, correct. That's right. I started by talking about the origins and the history of Kea which are quite interesting. Kea came out of the back of the Knowledge Wave Conference which was in August 2001 and it was actually Stephen Tindall's idea. Stephen Tindall, Doctor George Barker and Professor David Teece, who's a San Francisco-based entrepreneur slash professor created Kea with some seed capital. And over about 10 years it grew to a membership of about 30,000. In 2012, we really decided to take Kea's focus online, and in just over a year, we've grown Kea's membership from 30,000 to upwards of 100,000, somewhere around 155,000 members. So to Brian's point, the internet and social media have created a perfect storm for KEA to really grow and to

provide value back to its members and back to New Zealand.

S1 08:50 So now with the internet and social media, it probably is, now is the time for Kea to be the best it can be, right?

S3 08:58 Yeah, it absolutely is. Technology is starting to make things a lot easier. Obviously social media is a massive part of that. But also, if you look at what's happening in the world and the need for New Zealand to become an international economy, Kea is perfectly placed to assist that with extending New Zealand's international connections. As I said, we run programs like the World Class New Zealand Network that deals with some of our most highly accomplished and successful people around the world. We have a direct line in to them. So I am really excited about Kea's future. I'm really am.

S1 09:30 Tracey, you're more dealing with or thinking about when these New Zealanders have done what they are doing overseas and want to come home—

S4 09:40 Done all their business.

S1 09:41 How to reintegrate them back into society, I guess. Tell us what you covered off.

S4 09:47 Well, I guess, less thinking about it as reintegrating us into society. It really is an extension of that whole idea of how do we harness this global network, and how do we make the most of the skills that those folk are learning. And, I did a study, a Masters at Massey, just looking at the return migration experience. But what's interesting is when you look at the numbers. We assume people come home, but in fact that talent flow is far from free flowing in the sense that 24,000 come home every year, but that represented a third of arrivals in [80's?], but just a third last year.

S4 10:19 And we are seeing people staying overseas longer, so what used to be two or three years overseas for an OE, it's now something— I like to call it an OR, overseas resident. So they are spending upwards of five years, which means necessarily they are more professionally focused so they are amassing more skills, larger networks, they are coming home with both families and funds.

S4 10:42 And I was really interested in the whole notion of people coming back very eager to contribute to New Zealand's success, to share those skills. But they are not necessarily plugged into those networks when they come back if they have been a long time away. And I can speak later about some of the practical and personal and professional challenges they face.

S4 10:59 But one of the most interesting things, in terms of harvesting those skills, is there seems to be a little bit of tension around or national disinterest in their fancy foreign ways that they spoke about. And yet we're very much still part of the global market in the sense that those networks don't disappear. And a lot of the market knowledge that we bring back — I worked in China — is very much knowledge from some where that we're eager to crack as a nation.

S4 11:29 So, Bryan talked about changing the conversation about the diaspora and I think changing the conversation about the return. Instead of this gothic thing that we come back to in terms of the continuation of those skills circulating, we're acknowledging that these returning Kiwis choose New Zealand. Really good guys. We're coming back to help New Zealand succeed, but we, like other migrant groups, represent some intel and some skills that New Zealand needs. So the more we can create a smooth landing and give some guidance and resources so that they can really hit the ground running and get on with doing that—

S4 12:09 KEA do a great job of plugging us in when we're overseas, but we do need to think about how we plug them in when they get back because I

am really aware of the power of being able to harvest that learning. So getting those networks going when you get back. If you are coming back and you have been working in whatever, engineering, architecture, strategy, plugging you into the academic and professional networks so you can almost pass it on; here is the ten best practices I learnt while I was away, or here are the things you need to know about doing business in that market. So that we are really seizing the opportunity to kind of feed that back and fuel New Zealand.

- S1 12:52 I think it would be great if we keep and we pick up on this discussion about Kiwis coming back. It was at a Kea event here in London late last year that I went to where, I forget, one of the speakers there talked about the fear within work places or the resistance to Kiwis who have gone away and gotten experience in other places around the world and the resistance to those people being integrated back into the workplace in New Zealand. Is that something that any of you have experienced, because you've all worked overseas?
- S4 13:27 Well, I can speak from my study because I specifically probed about this. I think unfortunately it has been exacerbated in terms of the conversations of people that are away about it and I think there's equally some wonderful positive stories about. And I've had some wonderful experiences of people being [?] of that. But I think there is a very real kind of barrier.
- S1 13:54 Why is that? What is the barrier? What are managers or employers freaked out about?
- S4 14:00 No, well, here's the thing, this is not new to New Zealand. Repatriation anyway has some of these issues but I think ours is exacerbated by some of the [poor tour poppy?] things. There is an assumption on both side. There's a concern if you're coming back about whether that is going to be received well. But on the other side, there's a little of bit of, you think you're hot stuff or you think you're going to teach me a trick or two. Instead of this mutual openness to, there's some amazing things that are going on here that can inform the rest of the world and equally acknowledging that there's, just by the nature of working in different markets, you're going to have experiences of some of the markets that will be relevant and useful and can be put to work here. So I think it's just defusing some of the assumptions about either side and just acknowledging that we're all on the same team because we all are here because we want New Zealand to be a great place to live, work, to bring our children up and to grow in.
- S1 15:02 Let's talk about Kea and how it exists as a network. One of the points that was brought up at the Moxie Session was whether or not Kea is sufficiently visible in all other places. We definitely know its visible here in London, probably over there in New York as well. I guess, Brian, you'd be able to tell us about that.
- S2 15:20 Yes.
- S1 15:21 But are, in fact, New Zealanders spread so far around the world that the network does need to be everywhere or should it just be on those main cities?
- S3 15:30 Kea has got a really big presence in China. There's a really high percentage of expat Kiwis who are living in China that actually network with Kea. So we have a good presence there in an emerging economy. We are all around the world but, as you pointed out, it is difficult with resource to have a really focused presence everywhere. So online really enables us to be everywhere and anywhere and it's just going to be a matter of where Kea can focus its resources within countries in the future. Right now we have regional managers in China and in London and they look after their respective areas. Our global chairman, Phil

- Veal, he is in New York. We have a network in Australia. We have a network in a lot of countries but, right now, it is mainly online aside from the focused events that we hold in the UK and in China.
- S1 16:30 What does Kea provide New Zealanders that they can't get from integrating into the community that they are living in overseas? Is Kea an acknowledgement that, say Londoners, because they know each other – they grew up together, they went to school together, they work together – that they already have some kind of advantage? What is the benefit of Kea?
- S3 17:01 Well, it's easier that they're overseas and you're obviously overseas now. What you notice is that, yeah, sure, you can go and you can meet other people, or you can meet new [inaudible] through your own network. What Kea really does is it provides a vehicle which shows a common interest, which is New Zealand and an interest in New Zealand succeeding in the future, that you can meet people under the pretext of. So obviously there is LinkedIn at the moment which is an incredibly efficient mechanism to just meet people by. But if you are overseas in Los Angeles, like I was, or in New York like Brian is, or in London, or Shanghai, what you can do is reach out through Kea to connect with people and to meet them. And because you are both a member of Kea, you are both interested in New Zealand and its future success, there's a much better chance that you're going to find something in common with the person that you meet. You will be able to work towards common objectives than if you just meet them on the street. But, I think at the moment, this is why we are going through this process of listening to our members to try to design better ways for them to connect with each other using New Zealand as a [inaudible] interest.
- S3 18:14 The other point is that Kea has a huge membership of the people that actually aren't New Zealanders, they are friends of New Zealand. They've studied here, they've done business with New Zealand, they've always wanted to live here one day. That's a pretty big portion of our membership too, it's not just Kiwis in the diaspora.
- S2 18:34 I think that that last point that Sam raised is a very interesting and compelling one, the friends of New Zealand. And I'm fascinated with what one might describe as hybrid New Zealanders. These are people who may have been born to a New Zealand father, an American mother and they were born in America. And I've had conversations with people and they say, well, I'm not quite sure what I am. And I say, well, you're definitely a New Zealander. Come on.  
So I think in the re-framing of the population from four million to five, that's probably five and a half now. There's probably another half million people out there who do have an emotional and an involved relationship with New Zealand and some of those categories that Sam mentioned, they've been a student here, they have got some family relationship. I think that there's a very passionate relationship with New Zealand that a lot of this people have. And I think Kea's a very good conduit for encouraging some way for people to have a relationship with New Zealand.
- S1 19:44 Brian, do you think that New Zealanders have a responsibility while overseas to be thinking about New Zealander, to be thinking about home, to be thinking about adding something to the country even while they're overseas? Is it a responsibility for all New Zealanders?
- S2 20:00 Well, you can't legislate that. It is. I think that yes, people do have a responsibility. New Zealand has got a wealthy state, free education, free school, dental. What I'm saying is that if you've grown up in New Zealand, the country has put a lot into you. And we absolutely respect and acknowledge people's God-given right to travel, explore the world.

I think that's an important part of being a New Zealander as well, looking over that horizon. When we look at our horizon line we see possibility and I think that it's within us to go and explore that. And I would like to think that people innately feel a connection with New Zealand that they want to fulfill in some way.

S2 20:53 And one of the things that I do in conversations with people is ask them, what's your New Zealand project. This is beyond, look I own a beach house which I go to once a year. [laughter] Do you sponsor something? Are you investing in something in New Zealand? Are you initiating a project in your hometown? There's lots and lots and lots of ways in which one can be involved in some sort of development or ongoing stimulus back in New Zealand. And I think that it makes the process of being a New Zealander living overseas more fulfilling to know that you've got a active connection. And I think that there are many ways in which people can do that. The most important thing is that they do something, have a project, start with one, then have two.

S1 21:55 Yes, and it almost sounds like New Zealand is a project in itself for people outside of New Zealand to think about and what part they can play.

S2 22:06 Absolutely. And I think that they can have a degree of influence because they have a more, I guess, independent view and that they can have an effect. There's great work going on in New Zealand in a lot of ways. Because New Zealand is an island you sometimes get an island effect and so this connection with the world is very, very important for us to feel in New Zealand that we are connected with the global economy.

S1 22:41 It almost seems like even with all that excitement of hopping on a plane and heading overseas and all the adventures that are in the future for anyone leaving New Zealand that they also get given an information sheet on the way out to say, hey, we see that you're leaving, can you just get online and check out this website?

S2 22:59 I think the point that I made in that regards is that, I work in communications professionally, as does Tracey and Sam, and I think that I'm a big fan of telling people what you want them to communicate and being clear. And so we have got a couple of tremendous touch points in our relationship with travelers and that is with a border control, as it were. We just let people come and go. And I am not suggesting that we impose a view but there are ways of imbuing the New Zealand story and interesting information and key messages about New Zealand to those people who are travelling over seas. And I think that people do appreciate being given guidance on how to have a conversation with someone in Paris about New Zealand or in Buenos Aires. What are the key messages? And otherwise conversations do tend to flap around and people do welcome being given some guidance.

S4 24:04 And just picking up on that on that return, as well, so that when you've arrived it's like, welcome home and here's how we can tap you into making the most of that.

S2 24:16 I think that Tracey's study's been really valuable in tapping some of the candid experiences that people have had. And so that people returning have got a frank view of the process, the highs and the lows, of coming back and what they might do to have this transition to be really constructive because there are, we all know stories of people who come back and said, well, I'm out of here, after six months. [laughter]

S4 24:52 Yeah.

S1 24:53 Just the shock of, well, lack of what? Is it something that is missing for some people?  
[crosstalk]

S4 25:02 Yeah, part of that is— When I was doing the study I was six months in of my own return. And I think actually just an acknowledgement we when you're going somewhere new that it takes a good year to kind of really graft. And I think just a candid acknowledgement that actually return, like in a big move, is a big life change. You're going to have to, it's almost like the different stages that you go through, and just being aware of them. I think probably just being able to—

S1 25:30 Anger, depression. [laughter] What is it?

S4 25:33 No, but here's the thing, you're not post-holiday blues. I came back from 13 years away. So you're leaving some of your friends that I've had for longer than — I'd only lived in Auckland for two years before I left — so I'd returned here having left friendships that I had had for like 13 years. So I liken it to retirement perhaps, in the sense that's it's something that you've look forward to for a long time but you hadn't, until you step into, you hadn't really fully thought through how much that was going to change, in terms of there's things— like I'm in Turangi after Shanghai, 22 million people. So there's those things. But it's more. Professionally, most of my working life was in New York so my style is quite abruptly direct action oriented. [laughter] It's not very Pacific. So there's adjustments that happen that you just hadn't really thought through.

S4 26:33 My husband was doing a project in the same office as me last week and he was like, you know you're the loudest person in the office. And I was like, I think you mean full of energy [laughter] and vivacious. But there's these little cultural shifts that, while seemingly small, that added up, it takes a while to find a new rhythm. I did give up coffee for six months because it was clear that I needed to find a slower rhythm [laughter] after China.

S4 27:05 So it's being able to diffuse some of the— If people come back and two months in and they're, Oh my God, I'm not feeling it. For me to hear from someone who'd been through it saying, you know what, Honey, it's going to be two years probably. You're going to want to allow, just embrace, join things, find some other like-minded folk that have come back, find some folk that you can talk to about overseas and find some employers that are interested in— I'm now working on a lot of projects that are markets that are trying to crack China or the States, because it's the most useful way to try and to channel the knowledge that I have most of.

S4 27:47 So it's just about the fact that at the moment, more often than not, 24,000 people are figuring it out the hard way, and some of those will necessarily crash and burn. I was really interested. I got people to do tips, five things you wished someone to told you [chuckles] that might have made it easier. And it's really just about the fact that it shouldn't be something that you have to figure out like a little bird flying for the first time. That it's a well worn path. And the more you can actually make that a runway so that people can really launch and do some exciting and innovative and interesting and wonderful things here and make coming back here a fresh thing.

S1 28:24 And those people that we're talking about, are we capturing all the possible types of New Zealanders that are out there in the world? Does an organization like Kea, are they able to capture not just the executives, not just the technophiles, not just the connected people, but all kinds of people? There's this big massive multi-population in Australia as well. Are they part of this conversation?

S3 28:50 Yeah, they certainly are. Kea is a partner of Te Puni Koriri, the Maori [inaudible] within New Zealand, and we do a lot of work connecting Maori businesses and Maori entrepreneurs on-shore with contacts off-shore. But I think the most practical way I can say that we do this at

the moment is through Facebook. That's our first port of call for a lot of people in Australia who aren't working in Sydney in highly skilled, tertiary level employment. And I see it all the time on Facebook, we have a huge amount of members that have come in from Perth and Northern Queensland and that's their first introduction to Kea. I think it's a really positive one and we can lead that through to being a full Kea [inaudible] or the [inaudible]. I have full confidence in that once we design it a really nice way.

S2 29:51

Yes, I think that one recognizes too, particularly in Australia, there's a large number of New Zealanders who have got on there with no intention of returning because they have sought the Australian lifestyle and employment opportunities. They find Australia to be really conducive the type of life that they would like to lead. So, not everyone is a returning Kiwi, but every one of them does want to feel a relationship with New Zealand in some way. I think that many New Zealanders go to Australia and they assimilate. And they have people coming up to you after a meeting and whispering into your ear that, hey, I grew up in [inaudible].

S2 30:38

So, I think that the way in which we stage these conversations, the segmentation of people's motivations about having left in the first place, important to take into account, there are definitely people who have left New Zealand slamming the door, because they have been unhappy with society or the way that the country has been going and given up on it. And I think that one needs to look at the motivations of millennials who are maybe going for good or going on a big trip to the world and having no determined view as to what their future relationship with New Zealand is. And so I think that the conversation needs to accommodate all these different type of emotional states and to gently encourage people to be involved in one of a number of ways in having a relationship with New Zealand.

S1 31:45

And just finally, New Zealand has been in the news recently with this Fonterra business and then brand New Zealand, that hundred percent pure thing has come into question again. Is that a good opportunity to somehow use that as a vehicle to say to the New Zealanders overseas, okay, you've seen this piece of news, here's how you can be involved in the conversation back at home? And is politics something that should be discussed in a network like Kea? Does it all work together?

S4 32:16

That's a [laughter]

S1 32:18

I know it's a big question.

S3 32:20

That is a big question. Obviously key parts of [inaudible] mandate to comment on, but certainly, for the future, if the Kea network continues to grow, and there is a story for expat New Zealanders and things in New Zealand to carry, then Kea could be a great way to carry that story.

S4 32:43

Well, remembering too that a lot of us— I voted the entire time I was away. If you're back here for a year you can, and I actually—

S1 32:50

But, that should be encouraged. Friends and family at home should be telling their people overseas to do it.

S4 32:56

Yeah, in the olden days when you used to have to go to the Consulate but now of course you can fax in your vote. But I go, one million out of our population off-shore, ultimately, there are certain things that affect us when coming back, like pension portability and all number of things, paying back student's loans. There's other examples of countries having a diaspora vote even. So I think it's something, as you move forward, it will be really interesting. And as our population is aging here that vote things like raising the pension age, which are not going to be popular at home, with the younger New Zealand populace overseas that are looking to making sure that they're making long-

term decisions about the future of the country, not just some tax breaks for the next few years. It will be a really quite interesting and powerful thing to [inaudible] soon.

S2 33:58 democracy is a wonderful thing in that it is up to the citizens of that community to take action and it is incumbent upon us as citizens, on an issue of national importance such as we've seen in the last week, to take an active interest and contribution to both the debate and the conversation going forward with ideas, with feedback and we need to be expressive about our aspirations for what this brand is and, as Tracey particularly will know, in market in terms, authenticity is incredibly important. And the moment consumers smell some weakness there it immediately weakens your brand and sets you up for a fall.

S1 34:55 Thank you so much to Brian Sweeney for being part of this show. Brian, where can people—

S2 35:01 Thank you.

S1 35:01 —check out your stuff online and keep up with your business?

S2 35:05 At nzedge.com.

S1 35:08 nzedge.com. And Sam, from Kea—

S3 35:12 Yes, you can get us on Twitter at keanewzealand, on Facebook keanewzealandglobalnetwork, or we would love you to check out our latest storytelling platform stories.keanewzealand.com.

S1 35:24 And Tracey, what about you?

S4 35:26 Yes, I am calling it very much an alpha site at the moment, but you can reach me at welcomehomekiwis.com if anyone would like to learn more.

S1 35:33 Wonderful stuff. It's been so much fun talking to you guys. And that's what I love doing about this show, talking to really interesting people about these topics. And don't forget, you can check out the websites. If you've managed to come across this somewhere else, perhaps on iTunes, here is the website to go and check out. It's themoxiesessions.co.nz. And thanks very much to the support of Internet New Zealand and you can find them at internetnz.net.nz. That has been the Moxie podcast episode 7. We'll catch you next time.