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- S1 00:00 Hello and welcome to another episode of the Moxie podcast, the companion webshow to the Moxie Sessions, an Internet economy discussion group held once a month in Auckland, New Zealand. This is episode 49 recorded on the 28th of March 2017, and the Moxie Session it relates to was held in February of this year. I'm Andrew Patterson with you here in Auckland. I'll introduce our panel shortly, but first let me outline the topic we'll be considering in this session - how do we present New Zealand or Auckland internationally. how does it line up with our stories here at home, and how does any of this relate to endeavours in the tech economy? Well, joining me to discuss this, Dan Witters is a partner at SW & Partners based in New York and offering bespoke advisory services for New Zealand companies that want to do business in the US. Te Aroha Morehu from Ngati Whatua Orakei, your local ancient brand. And Martin Yeoman is Managing Partner for New Zealand at Assignment Group, a communications agency. He has a long history in the advertising industry. Welcome, kia ora, to you all. Perhaps we could start with you, Dan Witters. Obviously you left New Zealand in 1994 for France, then England, spent time in the USA on both coasts. How do you believe that the New Zealand or Auckland story lines up internationally?
- S2 01:39 Well, I've changed my opinion a little bit on this, as you know. Excuse me. I launched out into a rather opinionated view that it didn't matter at all and it was listening to Te Aroha that I re-thought things and I have subsequently re-thought them further. I think what's important about New Zealand and our stories is more an internal thing. I think it's more about how we see ourselves and then feel confident to project out. I think it may have little relevance in its form as a story or ideology to the people we deal with over there. I think it's more a matter of knowing who we are and where we come from that gives us some additional strength. As long as we're mindful of that - that the benefit of our stories is for us and it may have limited relevance for others - then we won't make the mistake of trying to force our stories and our background onto them.
- S1 02:38 Martin Yeoman, your thoughts?
- S3 02:41 Yeah. Look, probably a different view to Dan there. And I guess my involvement is really through the New Zealand story, which has a very grandiose name, but it does have a pretty clear role. And perhaps probably the best place to start is actually defining what it's not. And it's not about trying to define the New Zealand identity. That's a much bigger conversation than the scope of this project. Really, its purpose is to support our exporters and create content that presents New Zealand in a way that is hopeful to their cause. And, so, much of this is about growing our reputation beyond tourism. We have a brilliant reputation for tourism based on natural landscapes and beauty and our environment, but we really need to shine the light on those lesser known qualities of New Zealand, and that's about our people and our welcoming nature, kaitiaki of spirit, and our inventiveness.

- S3 03:37 So we're known for our landscape, and while that's usually valuable for tourism and primary industries, food, beverage, etc., we need a much more diverse story that will help other areas, tech being one example of that. So it's not about trying to define New Zealand's identity. It's simply a sort of comms tools to support our exporters. And I actually do think, when we talk to exporters, they need help, they need support, and they need someone to help push open the door and get them in. And, when they're there, they actually need kind of those tools to help them present their wares.
- S1 04:09 And, Te Aroha Morehu, obviously you're an influencer. You've managed to change Dan's view on all of this. So what's your perspective on this issue?
- S4 04:19 I think it's awesome to hear the process of going through a change of perspective, and I reckon it turns into-- part of the human condition is to look for that point of difference, eh. That thing that makes us feel significant and connected. And it's also about matters of the heart, and I reckon Martin has kind of touched on it in saying that-- the landscape, how do we make that a matter of our heart? And I kind of belong to a culture whose pedigree of care is kind of synonymous out there. I don't actually have to do any marketing on that. It's really interesting how all three of us are talking about these matters of the heart are probably the things that matter. So what we kind of do internally and that we get really hot on and that we do really, really well, is what is perceived out there. And I think that's what I'm hearing in Dan's message is that actually, it's excellence, eh, that kind of sells itself globally.
- S4 05:21 And I reckon we've kind of got this point of difference which is about our landscape, but there's this other flavour which I consider the Maori heritage of New Zealand, as part of that point of difference. And it's kind of how we can leverage that story, that narrative, a lot better. I mean, we've kind of had a treaty that was brought into the fray 170 years ago and it's actually still alive today. I mean, it might've got silent for a little while but it is back today. And I kind of look at that, and I look at us all as the future treaty citizens and that's a message to the world. That's a message not just for biculturalism. That's a message which is getting on and connecting to the things around you which matter. And I think we're talking about some of these invisible forces around us, and I come out of this culture which is still connected to a lot of that stuff, and I think it--
- S1 06:14 You mentioned the Treaty, and as I introduced you as a local ancient brand, and I wonder if perhaps we forget about the fact that New Zealand actually has a long history and Maori, of course, has a long history with this country, but we tend to date everything from the Treaty.
- S4 06:38 Yeah. I think the document is about just getting on [laughter]. I think if we can kind of prove that we can get on today, we've got this other document that we can fall on, and we can actually say, "Actually, there's a story, there's a narrative, that connects us to how we're getting on." And I think that's kind of the thing that New Zealand's done. It's actually acknowledged some of its privilege, and it's allowed an industry to be created to address some of the grievance. Now, that's a privilege I think that I have as a Maori, and I quite enjoy that there's a narrative like that out there in the universe. And when you kind of look across nations and you see people in Standing Rock having their issues, it's because of technology like the Internet that that's happened. And our Bastion Point issue was around when TV was just kind of coming around.
- S4 07:23 So technology is really responsible for taking down, I reckon, many of the impotence - or impediments, sorry - that kind of get in the way of our ego and the desire to just get on with it. And I think we're in this really nice place now where the Internet has

created this conscience, and we're watching Facebook nations rise, and we're watching Microsoft nations rise. The idea of a country has taken on a new perspective, and I kind of look at my ancient fabric and go, "How does that apply in the new world?" And some of that thinking is considered innovative, and what that really means is we've kind of lost touch with some of our own innovation and we think it's new. It's actually old.

- S1 08:12 Dan Witters, when we look at New Zealand in context-- anybody who's travelled overseas knows well that obviously as New Zealanders we like to play up the story - we're proud of our heritage and so forth - but I wonder how much resonance it really has outside of New Zealand.
- S2 08:35 Unfortunately, not as much as we'd like it to. I deal with smaller companies, and so I'm not necessarily seeing it from the point of view of large exporters. I tend to see it from the point of view of small companies and medium-sized companies trying to go out into a market, particularly the US, and to get some success. And it's always, or almost always, done on a limited financial budget, so it can be a diversion. It's a practical matter when you're a company trying to get established in the US market and we get meetings for you, you haven't got very long. You've got 30, 60 seconds to engage the American business people you're with. Our story, I think, is always something that requires some introduction. Our story is foreign. The indigenous people of the world, as far as I can see, those I encounter are envious of what our Maori people have achieved for themselves.
- S2 09:39 And so there's quite a bit of stuff that's a given for us, which is not understood overseas. And, in the area where I work, there just seems to be limited opportunity to push it to actually get it out, and will be to get it out successfully. I'm not entirely persuaded that it would be something that would be influential in a business term. The American business world-- and remember when you're in America doing business, you're doing business with the world. It's not a matter of you being in New Zealand there competing with other American companies. That's the market. You're competing with companies from all over the world, and business has isolated itself.
- S2 10:21 I think the thing that Te Aroha points to is that there was a time, and it's a much more ideal time, when you got to know someone before you got into a relationship with them, be it business or otherwise. And that's rapidly alluding us now, so my feeling is that I would love us to have more opportunity to tell our story, and perhaps technology allows that. But in the cut and thrust of business meetings and trying to get somewhere - it's mainly tech companies I work with - we're rushed, our story is secondary, and if anything, most of our concern is with how prepared we are.
- S1 11:06 Martin Yeoman, would you go along with those thoughts?
- S3 11:10 Thinking, and Dan's referencing America-- and, look, without doubt, you haven't got a lot of time, but you still need the story and actually the story becomes more important the smaller the window of opportunity and time that you've got to communicate it. I think if you look to the other side of the world to Asia, though - they're getting to know who are you, where are you from, and your values - that's incredibly important and that can take a long time.
- S3 11:40 So there's probably different approaches for different markets. I think the observations, from the research that we've been involved in - and [inaudible] interesting jumping from San Francisco to Vietnam - there's very much a perception of New Zealand has wonderful characteristics of quality and environment, and there's a sense of there's something else happening, there's a sense that there's ingenuity, there's a sense that there's innovation but no one really started to paint the picture.

There's weak signals. So, for us, we see that as the opportunity. And we're not talking about big broadcast media or anything. It's actually just us New Zealanders being more aware of our story, being more aware of our examples, and through word of mouth, through social, through technology, digital media, just starting to feed those out there. And I think that can only be a good thing for helping to change the perceptions of New Zealand as a place that is capable of producing some of the best tech in the world.

- S1 12:47 Te Aroha, I wondered about your involvement in these sorts of issues to this point, and obviously the Maori perspective within the story. How involved are you in helping businesses in this area?
- S4 13:08 Well, I think you just have to understand that we've just reset with settlement only four years ago, and I think there's a view that that's the silver bullet for 170 years of the hangover. And it's not, it's not a silver bullet at all because when you look at that post-settlement, it's actually imposed on us. But we've done pretty well. We've turned a 100 million dollar asset into a billion, so if you want to ask if we're business people, we absolutely are. But the prerogative for us is guardianship. While industry, while business, is trying to grow at all costs, it's forgetting to give back. And I think the whole kaitiakitanga, the guardianship or sustainability framework, has been forgotten. It's in part of my make-up because I treat a mountain like a human and I treat an ocean like a human, and that's not to be spooky to anybody. We've been doing this since ancient times, and the reason why is because personification is the most sustainable framework of them all.
- S4 14:10 Now, the question is, how do we motivate society to take this up again? Because we're so pursuant to science and so pursuant to facts and so pursuant to all these things, that we're forgetting that there's a layer of who we are as a human - this wairua, this spiritual side - which doesn't-- it's not compatible with that, and it's not compatible with straight lines. And so I'm just saying right now, with the current state of affairs when I look out the window to my city, is that it's not getting any healthier. We're not leaving any kind of legacy for the descendants, the invisible ones, that are here to come. So what are we saying? We're saying let's stick up a brick wall, let's jump in a fast car and design that car to be as fast as possible, and let's head towards that brick wall. I think there's something wrong with that narrative. And I come from a society where if it's not sustainable, it's not strategic. And the evidence is exactly what society is going through today--
- S1 15:10 Fair to say that--
- S4 15:12 --and this power around ignoring this fact, but when will we do anything about it? Do we have to wait for the water to be coming through our doorstep? I think by then it's going to be too late.
- S3 15:24 I think Te Aroha makes a brilliant point there. And the spirit of kaitiaki, kaitiakitanga, an ancient Maori tradition that is absolutely right for the times today, and companies and countries will talk about sustainability, will talk about environmental policies, but to have a value that is within the DNA of Maori culture, increasingly within wider New Zealand culture, that's something that really is special in the world and it's something that is hugely distinctive and hugely valuable, and you could build the whole New Zealand story around that principle. And I think as we look at countries out to the world, they're ready looking for leadership, and kaitiakitanga being care of people and place, looking after land, the environment for future generations, that's something that's so distinct and so precious and really we need to share more with the world. So it is something we can really take a world leadership view on.

- S1 16:29 Yes, I was going to make that point, too, that kaitiaki seems to be very consistent with a world view that is moving much more towards issues like guardianship and protection, as well. Dan, I wondered if you were able to share some examples of businesses that you think have perhaps been exemplars in this space, particularly those that have been able to successfully incorporate the New Zealand story into their values, into their value proposition, and perhaps their overall positioning?
- S2 17:15 I don't know that there are any that have consistently been able to do that, but there have been a number that have got traction. and I think it was an interesting point Matthew made about Asia being a different culture, where it is important, very important, to a variety of Asian cultures to get to know you before they're remotely interested in doing business with you. In the American and European market, one of the few countries that have really got rapid traction there-- there's company called Pango Productions, and predominantly a Maori-owned company, and they have just seemingly won over the people we've dealt with. They've been the exception to all my rules that I school people up - when I go into a meeting, we've got no time to waste, we've got to be prepared, we've got to be this and that - and Pango have been unschoolable, and it's been a delight to watch the principles there simply win over with sheer charm.
- S2 18:21 I'm from the [inaudible] region of New Zealand by birth and upbringing, and so I see it as a peculiarly [inaudible] approach, but perhaps it's far more general than that. That's worked really well. And I've seen instances in Asia, companies like Consumer Think and [inaudible], Christchurch companies, where we've been able to get a hearing. We've actually been able to talk to who we are and how it was we came to have world-beating technology. And that can be an interesting take, because when we've walked into some of these countries in Asia, there's been a skepticism as, could this possibly have come out of New Zealand? Why hasn't this come out of China, why hasn't it come out of Russia, the US, Germany? How could this very clever technology come out of New Zealand? And so there is, then, some engagement with who are you New Zealand, and how have you done this? So there are instances of it, and we should be mindful of those. It's just that, in the day-to-day grind that we go through in the capitalist market, those stories perhaps make up 5 to 10 percent of most of a rather gruelling experience.
- S1 19:41 And, Martin Yeomon, I wondered what's next for the New Zealand story from your perspective?
- S3 19:48 Sorry. Just, firstly, I think the point Dan made, I think that's brilliant, and I think the more distinctive we can be and the more we can find ourselves and our own voice and our own identity and our own stories and our own principles and values when you're competing on the world stage. And I think we've got to be brave and we've got to push those, and I think we've got to stand out. So I thought that was just a wonderful summary. To your question, where next? Look, I think the story in the first piece of work was 1.0, if you like, and that was really about starting to build our own confidence in telling a story. The next stage will be bigger and bolder. I think it will lean more towards tech, more towards innovation, and it will have deeper, richer layers of content. And I hope that we can keep uncovering amazing brilliant New Zealand companies that are doing incredible things on the world stage - New Zealanders and individuals and education institutions back home - that we can really highlight and start to move the perception of New Zealand as being solely a place for tourism to a place of tourism plus food plus wine plus tech plus innovation plus education, and really stand out amongst the world.

S1 21:10

And, Te Aroha Morehu, final word to you.

S4 21:15

I think it's really cool that we are talking about tourism, because it has kind of just taken over dairy, and that's a storytelling industry. And I think there's a whole bunch of platinum, a whole bunch of content, which is going to rise out of this and it's going to be Maori content. And it'll be interesting how that kind of gets inserted into the education framework, rather than learning about kings and queens from other nations, so. Look, this is a great story. It's about the conscience. It's about the rising of that conscience. I think looking at post-settlement for Maori is an opportunity for New Zealand, because what you're doing is you're going to activate a space which has been taking from New Zealand. It's got an inter-generational dependence on a benefit that never had a strategy to take them off it. So look at post-settlement as that potential opportunity, and think of what that means for an economy that can be bright and loving. I mean, I believe a better Maori is a better universe, and the time is coming, and we've got some evidence of the kind of practice that can come out of post-settlement, designed by ourselves, which will boost the economy. So it's a really great [inaudible] to have for that. Thank you.

S1 22:25

Te Aroha, thank you for that. Speaking to Te Aroha Morehu, Dan Witters and Martin Yeoman. I'm Andrew Patterson. Thanks for joining us for this Moxie podcast. We hope you can join us again in the future.