

Hello and welcome to our Good Place Podcast  
that is run by good place innovators.

A team of researchers,  
educators and student fellows passionate  
about transforming communities with  
an extra sensitive eye for our place,  
local context and true community needs,  
our project focuses on the notion  
of entrepreneurial embeddedness,  
the emotional connection to our place.

And Co creation of value  
with our communities.

We hope to contribute to  
entrepreneurial learning.

Making the place based pedagogy  
a central point for the growth of  
future entrepreneurs and innovators.

My name is Ratka Newton.

I'm a senior teaching fellow in  
strategy and innovation at Lancaster  
University Management School.

I'm also an education service designer and  
elite of good place innovators project.

Funded by the Enterprise Educators UK.

In this podcast,  
we have inspired educators to incorporate.

Place based pedagogy to the curriculum.

We debated the notion of codesign with  
our communities in order to create

better entrepreneurial solutions,  
and today we welcome our local entrepreneur,  
Jane Dalton,  
who describes herself as a creative  
thinker with a strategic approach.

Jane set up her own independent agency  
groundswell innovation almost 15 years ago.

Jane is also a member of Lanka Celebs  
Innovation Board and she sits on the  
Deans Council of the Management School.

Jane, welcome it's great to have you with us.

Thank you very much.

Great to great to be invited  
to be a part of the discussion.

Jane,

you are such an inspirational  
entrepreneur and innovator as well.

And please can you share with us your  
personal definition of innovation?

Yeah, for me it's.

I suppose we talk about it as an  
agency about doing doing different  
things and you know developing  
new products and services but  
also doing things differently.

So it's about the how of innovation  
and all to the ends of creating.

So you know,

we're we're about putting cash in the bank from new ideas for a lot of clients, for example, but I think return on investment is something which is obviously defined by each client team that we work with and often has as much to do with social value as it does to do with pounds, shillings, and pence.

Oh wow, yeah, we always debate what what is innovation in?

It's just really great to to hear it from you and you've been in business since 2008 and I was sort of looking at.

You know how you sort of talk about the business and where you are located.

If you don't mind me quoting you say so.

What's 2008?

A good time to start a business indeed.

Is there ever a good time to innovate?

Or let's say we're a big believers in not waiting for the rain to stop?

After all,

we are based in the North of England, so is the Northwest stop meaningful for you and for your business?

Yeah, absolutely.

I mean, yeah,

the weather's not panning out  
in line with that.

Is it no rain today which is very nice.

It's not grim up north at all,  
but I'm deliberately based here  
with the business because, well,  
all sorts of reasons really.

But I think for me, having been down  
South a long time being, you know,  
lived in all sorts of different places.

I wanted to be back where?

I felt I had the the the quality  
of life that Lancashire gives,  
born and raised here.

But also once I started to reflect  
on what that meant to me and  
why I wanted to be back here.

So obviously it would be easier  
to be in the Home Counties.

For example it was to do with this  
kind of combination of creative  
elements of innovation that I got  
from being here and to do with  
elements of frugal innovation as well.

Which was,  
you know is very much in vogue at the moment.

But you know, to me in rural.

Lancashire that was about bits

of Baylor twine and what you  
could make with them.

Or it was about you know what you're  
going to put into the local art  
competition and the fates that were  
happening every summer and it just.

It was what people did make stuff  
all the time out of what you had  
available so that creativity was  
embedded in my upbringing very much.

So it just felt like a really great  
step forward to come back here and  
to be part of building on that that  
brilliant basis but also to be part of that.

Kind of, there's lots of  
different definitions of life,  
life success here in a way that perhaps  
there isn't in the South of England.

It's not just about the money  
so that really appealed to me.

Umm, and,

and we can't see your commitment  
to the region as well.

You know.

Also, in your volunteering position as  
an ambassador of Northern Power Women,  
and I just wonder,  
what does this mean and how does  
it contribute to what you do?

What?

What do you get out of it?

Ohh,

huge amounts when we're listening.

Into kind of the podcast series

that they run and the and the

talks that they run in person.

There's always inspiration from

the people who are talking,

but also when you're acting as a

mentor for the next generation.

Coming through the ideas are

brilliant and it's it's just great

to get that sort of grounding in

the realities of how people are

thinking at the moment and what

obstacles they see to innovation,

entrepreneurship,

all sorts of different things,

but that for us is really the

core of what we're doing is.

Is trying to get diversity and

real inclusion of a broad range

of ideas so the whole point of,

for example,

groundswell is the logo is a

pair of glasses because we're

wanting people to reframe,

you know and get new perspectives  
on old problems and you have to be  
looking from a different perspective.

So if we just talk to people  
like us all

the time, then we'd only get a very narrow  
perspective on what innovation should be.

So we have some heated  
debates at those sessions,  
but that's part of the process.

Me and that really underpins that stuff.

Open innovation as we talk  
about it in academia,

so this is what you do in practice,  
don't you? Yeah, and it's kind of I.

One of my colleagues describes  
it as sort of white noise.

You've got to be constantly listening out for  
what's happening around you and challenging  
your own assumptions really about.

Well, I think that,

and I think that's the right way to go,  
but am I missing something?

And what would this person think?

Or, you know this group?

So yeah, just.

Never quite being sure of  
yourself and of the right answer,

I think is a really good start

starting place for innovation.

It requires quite a lot  
of open mindedness and.

I suppose you know being able  
to be curious all the time.

Well, in fact I just yeah,

I just talked about that this week.

Actually, the whole concept of curiosity,  
one of the biggest blockers  
we see to innovation,  
is that a closed mentality,  
actually.

And we've been doing this 30 years and  
therefore we know the way to do it is ex.

And don't come and tell me about  
what other people are doing because  
that's not an SME in my position.

So it's not relevant.

You know all of these phrases that  
we've heard? Time and time again.

We it's a really good signal that it's  
not worth having that conversation.

Sometimes with some groups,  
but in other places you know when  
you people are asking questions  
and being part of that debate,  
then you know you're onto something  
and you know your company is also

a northern powerhouse partner  
with this sort of commitment  
to support the innovation and.

The former northern powerhouse minister,  
he sort of praised, you know, it.

Coming with his experience being  
a really strong creative partner,  
do you think we're innovative enough?

Then up over here? Up north?

Yeah, and I think we definitely are.

I think we're probably too humble.

With some of the ideas and we  
don't necessarily talk about them.

I'm not sure where as good as  
we could be on moving from idea  
to say value proposition,

something which is commercially viable  
that really takes advantage of all  
the opportunities in the marketplace  
to really think that through and  
there can be a rush to market.

For example with, well,  
we've got this thing and we just  
we're going to tell people about it,  
and that will be fine.

And we'll have this massive market.

And then when you start to say,  
well, it's brilliant that you've  
solved that engineering.

Problem or that scientific problem,  
but what's in it for me?

If I'm XYZ customer,  
group or community group,  
you know,  
depending on the context.

So I feel that innovation is  
a really brilliant way for  
us to attack the productivity gap,  
for example. And to really deliver  
on leveling up in a way that  
government funding cannot hope to do.

Particularly is that dwindle.

So you know this concept of scaling  
deep into a community with enterprise.  
It's something we've perhaps discussed.

Line rather than everybody  
seeking to be an entrepreneur who  
is building a Unicorn company.

If we can have a selection of  
companies who are yes working for  
profit but also for the public good,  
then we build ecosystems and  
we build sustainable economies.

That is something which I feel  
has real potential further north  
and that's what we talk about  
a lot in this podcast actually.

So we talk about this stuff notion  
of codesign with the communities  
or participatory design?

Including the communities in what  
we do as entrepreneurs and we're  
learning probably in entrepreneurship  
more from the the architects and  
the designers who've been doing it,  
probably longer than we have.

Oh design thinking, yeah, I mean,  
it's the best way forward, isn't it?

I mean,

you know some recent projects  
we've been working on to do with  
place based design and innovation.

It really is that sense of outcomes.

It's not traditionally, I think,  
stakeholder engagement has meant,  
well,

we're going to ask 5 questions about what?

Think colour to use or what particular  
potholes to come to fill in.

Yes, that has to be done,  
but that's nothing to do with  
place based innovation in my view.

It's just sort of ticking a box  
so I think where you can have a  
proper conversation with people.

It's as basic as where are they

on Maslow's hierarchy of needs?

Are we right at the bottom?

Do we need some community spaces?

Do we need green space?

Do we need some pride in a local area

so people picking up after themselves

with rubbish and things like that then?

You you get to understand where

the money should be going and

some of the simple quick wins.

Actually,

you know everybody does win in that

instance because there can be some

cheap ideas people can get involved

in and you start to see you know why

we call groundswell that groundswell

of support around particular ideas in

a place that then builds its own momentum.

And then it starts to go from there so

you can make a small amount of funding,

go quite a long way,

and so you know in the in your work,

in your stuff,

day-to-day work you probably

have quite a lot of examples of.

Some stuff good,

maybe even bad innovation,

but I'm curious about more that

stuff that responsible innovation  
that maybe you've worked on  
that really changed that place.

Can you share with us?

Maybe an example?

Yeah,

what I saw as a as a really great  
innovation from government actually  
was with the advent of towns,  
fund, pots of cash,  
so it's about 20 million per  
per section that are given to  
a particular place we worked on  
two of these. The crew and in Preston  
that there's been a real keen eye for.

OK well, how are you engaging  
with the local community?

That's part of the criteria for getting  
the money so you can't shy away from it.

You have to do the due diligence  
on exactly what that means,  
so but you know what I'll describe as  
wins for the Community might not sound.

You know we're not talking  
about inventing AI here.

We're talking about delivering  
what people really need.

So for example.

In crew,

one of the projects pitched was for an old building to be renovated so that they've got community space. But if you're thinking about trying to get a sense of belonging in a place that's hugely important for people because community centers don't have funding, you know it was during COVID we were working on that particular project. So you can imagine how little sense of community was was happening after the first wave of being very nice to each other, but it's also gone on things like green space provision. The people who are living in multi occupancy properties, for example where on Earth do they take their children outside you know where do they get some exercise? Have we got walkways around a city or a town that connect you usefully to places they want to go, which are safe spaces that people want to walk in? So there's some really practical things that can be implemented I think. Is real responsible innovation rather than we're going to put up a new

building and everybody's gonna be very excited about what we're using that for.

Well, yeah,  
that's great.

But if you don't have those base building blocks in place, that's going to be very useful.

And the other example in Preston, which we're really excited about, and we hope to be able to achieve, is that it's not so much the what will go up, but the how they're gonna do it.

So the rich cultural history of Preston is something we're starting to see come out with.

Like you know, the brilliant Wallace and Gromit sculpture by the the market.

It's fantastic, but we're going to build on that with, you know,

you can't have Lubiana Himid in based in Preston and not do something about a broader rich cultural heritage, so.

By simple things like light projections and surface design on the, you know the outside of buildings and flagstones, that kind of thing.

We're hoping to do something which reflects that history and tells some of those really beautiful stories around the place, so you know that's going to stand the test of time and it's going to tell the next generation about the real rich history they've got there.

That's something that I'm very proud to have as part of our legacy.

It's it's lovely,

just listening to it because many people imagine innovation and some big high tech.

Digital, you know something outstanding, something we can't imagine, but really talking about as a real thing, something that touches all of us all citizens well we make it unattainable if we make it the big project.

And my view has always been that innovation is not a separate department.

It's a mindset and it should be something that everybody has access to.

And it is given license to try at.

You know we we see a lot of people, particularly in.

SMEs, I think it's very difficult for

business owners to get their heads  
around what innovation looks like,  
so there's waste.

There's play, there's risk,  
and those are all the things that  
they've enabled themselves to do.

As owners of the business  
when they started up.

But they don't necessarily extend  
that license to their employees.

So part of what we do in terms of  
trying to build that creative culture,  
for example,

is to try and remove some of those blockers  
and try and have those conversations  
and try and get people to see that.

The things that they do in their downtime,  
whether that's baking a cake or  
knitting or crochet or house plants,  
it doesn't matter.

It's a a creative endeavour that they can.

It's a skill set, they just need  
to bring back into their workplace.

Do you know I went to Norway one year  
to conference and the attendees?

The Norwegians they were knitting  
in the conference and I was  
looking around thinking oh wow,  
and for them I think it's just the stuff.

A bit of a more normal way of working.

So they've.

Considerate,

quite accepting and for us

it's a bit shocking, isn't it?

But like you said,

you know these creative things

that we bring from our lives.

We are humans.

We bring the whole human into the workplace.

Yeah, I think there's a lot of talk

about authenticity in the workplace,

but do we really mean it,

you know,

and I think the you know travel

expands the mind.

You know all of those experiences

of seeing how other people do it.

If you've got,

then the confidence to start doing things

like that and pulling them back into

our culture and our business cultures.

I think that would be hugely.

Rewarding.

Is it more challenging?

I suppose for SME's you know for

smaller businesses where they don't

have these structures properly

in place they probably don't  
even have a marketing person.

They are all doing everything  
together and for them to think.

You know maybe out of the box.

Or more creatively, yeah,

I think it can feel like that,

but they're also more nimble,

so we talk about innovation.

Working better on ice so you've got your IQ,

which is your structures.

You've got your CQ.

You know creative due diligence and

then EQ bringing people with you.

Well,

it doesn't matter how simple you  
processes are, some kind of process.

Whether it's a suggestions

box on the front desk,

you know it doesn't have to be complicated,

we just run a PIN network kind of process

on exactly that basis of if you're a cafe,

or if you're supplying into an OEM,

you can do innovation.

You just have to fit it to

your construct of the business.

So yeah, I think the mental

challenge is the biggest thing.

Oh no, we couldn't possibly do

that because we're too small,  
but why would you start a business  
if you weren't an innovator?

Jane, I'm totally getting the  
name of your company now.

I feel so grounded.

Yeah, I see so very practical.

Well, you know in the last podcast  
with another local entrepreneur we  
spend some time sort of pondering what  
it would be like to do a job swap.

So your task, Jane,

if we were going to do this is  
to redesign our curriculum of our  
entrepreneurial program and reflect  
that sort of local agenda a little bit.

But the how would you go about it or what?

What would you bring to our students  
that maybe we don't have at the moment?

Well,

I'd make this book in front of  
me required reading.

So this is by Klaus Schwab and  
it's called stakeholder capitalism.

And I was shocked because this  
only came out last year.

But by the time I got to page,  
yeah where is it?

Page 14 something like that.

It talks about a manifesto that  
was delivered at Davos in 1970.

3 The stakeholder model requires  
businesses to think beyond their direct  
primary interests and to include  
the concerns of employees and their  
communities in their decision making.

Shock horror,  
the management has to serve society.

You know,  
these are not concepts that you would  
think of as 50 years old necessarily,  
but that would be the manifesto  
that I'd want to deliver to  
the students and say right.

What do you do with that?

How do you really serve a  
community and do something?

She's gonna have sustained economic value,  
but also community value.

Hmm,

well that's going on my reading list perfect  
and we we have to call deliver together.

So that's fantastic and hope yeah,  
you are right.

This this is the 70s,  
isn't it?

It's it's quite surprising.

And yet we talk about this  
responsible leadership as if it  
was something newly invented.

Absolutely right?

Yeah, history has a lot to teach us.

Well, Jay,  
thank you so much.

You are coming to the end of  
the podcast and there's just so  
much more we could speak about.

But I just wanted to ask you.

One more question, what is your place?

Where do you feel placed and happy?

Well I have to say Lancaster and  
and that as part of Lancashire.

That's why I'm on the innovation board here.

Why I'm passionate about doing  
as much as possible.

But you know,  
there's also a lot of talk about  
this kind of 20 minute city  
and 20 minute community.

Having everything on your doorstep.

Don't need to invent it here  
because it's already in

Lancaster, isn't it? Let's face it.

So I'm just busy enjoying the benefits of  
that and not telling anybody and being

really smug that I'm not living in the South.

Well, thank you so much Jane.

Thank you for your time.

It's been great having you with us.

Thank you for inspiring our

students to be creative,

open minded curious,

committed to their place of business.

And yeah, that's all for today.

Thank you for the debate and feel

free to drop us a message,

comment or recommendation of a resource,

initiative or idea for our project.

And until next time take care.