



Episode 20: Disruptive inventions through adventurous thinking

Guest: Sally Dominguez is an innovation activator and mindset strategist who has pioneered the ADVENTUROUS THINKING methodology. She is a former judge on ABC TV's "New Inventors", co-host of upcoming Foxtel show "Aussie's Greatest Inventions That Changed the World" and author of the upcoming "EPIC Resilience". She and Kris Østergaard speak about how you can create the optimal conditions for disruptive inventions.

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Kris: So we are here on the Corporate Innovation Podcast today with Sally Dominguez. Now, Sally has six years of judging experience on ABC TV's New Inventors. She's been the Co-Host or is actually going to be the Co-Host of an upcoming Foxtel show called Aussie's Greatest Inventions That Changed the World. She's also co-host of The Next Billion Cars podcast. She has won a lot of design awards, for instance, she has designed the Rainwater Hawk Modular tank, which pioneered a new structure in flat board water tanks.

She's been named one of Advance Australia's 50 for the Future entrepreneurs in the USA, and she has pioneered the ADVENTUROUS THINKING methodology which we are going to deep dive into, as well as talking about her resilience methodology, which are two really, really interesting and important topics to discuss under the overarching topic that we'll talk about today, which is invention.

And as a matter of fact, this is also being run as workshops at Stanford and has been integrated into the Australian school curriculum. So first of all, Sally, and welcome you on the podcast.



Sally: Hey, Kris, how's it going?

1:59

Kris: Very good. Thank you. And thank you so much for taking the time to join us here today. Now we're talking about invention and how to create the optimal conditions for invention in a corporate setting, but also in general. And of course, there's also in these times a pre and post, right, because of the global pandemic and all of those things. But before we get into that, please share a little bit about yourself beyond the CV bullet points I just read out and your journey and what led you from A to B to C?

Sally: What's interesting, Kris, about my journey is that there isn't an A to B to C. And the reason that I came up with the ADVENTUROUS THINKING strategy is that, you know, I was asked by various teaching institutions and museums because I designed a couple of really inventive things. I was asked to describe my process, which would be that linear thing, except that I'm just one big swirl. So in thinking about, you know, if you're not a linear thinker and you're not a linear designer, you're not a linear inventor.

What are you if you're a swirl? That was when I started digging into what is the theory of multiple intelligences and what does it mean when you kind of dance around something from all these different angles simultaneously? So within that kind of swirl, my academic qualification is I'm an architect and I actually had my own practice for a long time, 12 years.

But during that time, I designed some products. And because I didn't really know what I was doing, I invented new processes in the plastic design of those products. So a new finish on the next high chair and a new genre, because at that time in 2003, I was told that nobody would want-- wait for this, nobody would want designer children's furniture. And look at the landscape now. No one would look at it. It's the default.

And similarly, when I designed the rainwater hawk tank, I was told by every expert in the field, you cannot, you literally cannot physically store water in a narrow, flat mold plastic tank. And so I invented a new structure, which was these through whole things. My journey has been essentially being told that I can't do things and ignoring it completely. And you know, I often wonder where did that kind of confidence come from? Because it's not that I think I'm better than anyone else.

It's just that when somebody says no, I immediately think, but why? So I think I think the common thread would be curiosity. And it's interesting when I talk to people now and I say, you know, what is the essence? What is the essence of what you do? I say, well, like my legacy that I want to leave behind is I can inspire optimism and creative confidence in other people.



And my key message to everybody is creativity is not about artistry. Creative thinking is about growth mentality and being open and being curious. And so many people discount anything with the word creative in it, because they think you have to be good at art. And I'm not talking about self-expression. You know what I'm talking about. I'm talking about like if you're going to look at what's the common thread here, you need to be curious and you have to have this open, creative thinking that constantly goes, why wouldn't I do that? In a nutshell, all the things I've done have come together, whether it's an extreme rally or an extreme drive across China or whatever, I've got to whatever I've invented.

5:27

Kris: Wonderful. And an invention in one way, shape or form has been a part of that journey, right? For sure. And inspiring hope. I mean, we can definitely use that right now. These are very difficult times for most people. And talk to us a little bit about, from your vantage point, what invention and innovation, well, maybe those are not exactly the same thing either. So maybe just, you know, to define for us here. When are we talking about invention from your standpoint? When are we talking about innovation?

Sally: Yeah, it's an interesting one. They cross paths so regularly. But they're very different. I mean, when I was judging inventions on TV, it was a very strict program. It wasn't like a commercial reality TV show. It was a government program that was super popular. And the reason it was popular was you saw these earnest people who had spent, in some cases, years developing the one thing. And what they had to have was an element of novelty and a working prototype. And this demonstrated an invention in the field.

And innovation, on the other hand, can be an improvement even. It can be a radical new thing or it can be an improvement. And it generally becomes commercialized. It brings back benefits to you. And I think right now what's really interesting around invention and innovation. I mean, invention is something new, but it's not always useful. Like we had a ton of golf inventions that were very niche. They won't really change the world. And one of our criteria was, you know, how impactful could this be, which often cut out the golf inventions, frankly. You know, that was a particular criteria to kind of judge apples and oranges against each other.

But I think there's a really cool quote from a professor from M.I.T., which talks about digital transformation. But I think this actually addresses invention and more innovation. This idea of you can innovate by just improving what you know or you can fully disrupt, which is more like invention. And this quite says in terms of digital transformation, everybody's aiming to turn a caterpillar into a butterfly, transform. But most people are just coming up with a very fast caterpillar.



And I think when we look at incremental innovation, it's not invention. It's no longer delivering his growth. It has less relevance than it ever did. I mean, a better light bulb. That's fantastic, right? A better chair, a better material. That's all good. But if we're talking about a completely disrupted, turned upside down, fundamentally exponentially changing world of plastic, the caterpillar is not going to cut it. So I think this is where we need to re-emphasize invention. We've all talked about innovation, but innovation can be a tiny tweak or it can be a disruption. And I think when you talk about disruption, you're more in the field of invention and you're disrupting a field and coming out with something brand new. You're inventing whether it's patentable or not.

8:30

Kris: Yeah. So there are levels to innovation, if you like, right. Under many organizations, you know, they need the incremental stuff as well. But to your point, it will take you so far. And of course, there's a question, too, when we experience these huge societal transformations like the pandemic we're experiencing right now is certainly an example of, but also that we are, you know, climate change and looking at the need to reinvent a lot of our systems, then perhaps, you know, we need to look increasingly to a next level of how to really create something truly disruptive and sort of from that vantage point, what do you see as sort of the state of invention in the world today? And we can also talk about pre and post Corona, about, you know, what's the state of invention in the world today?

Sally: I think there's a really interesting divide right now between kind of developed countries throwing tons, I mean, Silicon Valley is an example, tons of money at inventions that may not be as impactful as everybody seems to think that they are right. And then you have some developing countries, India and Africa, particularly, who are doing incredible innovations in the field, might do stuff using frugal innovation.

And I think this big divide between people just chucking money at stuff, you know, there was a classic one a few years ago in Silicon Valley. It was called the Juice Zero. And it was supposed to be a juicer, it looked like an Apple computer. Beautiful. And it was a system because everybody said you need, you know, you need subscription systems.

So they would send you these packets of juice. And this thing would squeeze them. Except that after collecting 10 million or some crazy amount of funding, somebody realized you could literally take the packet and squeeze it in your hand and get the juice out. And this whole stupid thing was unnecessary. And, you know, there's a great book called Frugal Innovation by one of my favorite innovators, Navi Radjou. And he talks about creativity before capital. And I think right now in the world, we see this as such an important part of moving forward. Like, stop throwing money at it. Stop and think. How could I do this better with nothing? I mean, my whole career has been frugal innovation. I've always self-funded. I've never really had any cash. And it makes you think more creatively.



And I think perhaps, you know, maybe COVID-19 will revalue this, I don't know whether it's COVID or something else, but I mean, it's crazy to begin by throwing money in that in the direction of this new idea instead of testing it frugally and like, you know, making it fail fast.

And so I think I think we've become a little lazy, like so much about thinking with Google at our disposal and so much technology doing so much for us. Again, we need curiosity to come to the front and creative thinking before we throw the money out. So I think in the world right now, the most interesting stuff is coming from countries that don't have spare cash.

11:31

Kris: Yeah. And frugal done in the definition of frugal innovation is to look at how you can innovate with very limited resources right now. What do you have? And not the starting point of VC money and the traditional Silicon Valley method, right?

Sally: Yeah. I mean, I'm not saying there's not a place for funding because of course, at some point you will need to scale up right back. But I do think we rush to fund an idea. And if we stood back and gave people space to really think harder at it, you know, I think that the human brain is not being realized to its full potential.

And before we start augmenting it with technology and cyborging ourselves, let's stop and just explore what makes us unique in the way we can make these unexpected connections that are at the heart of invention and innovation is something we know, something we imagine. How do they come together to create something entirely new?

12:30

Kris: Yeah, and we'll get to that in a second. Talking about you, thinking around how to design properly for innovation is interesting. The notion of frugal innovation. And even before the Corona pandemic hit, we were beginning to see some shifts. Even in the Silicon Valley method, if that's a proper terminology in terms of looking towards more organizations, being able to actually make money rather than just have a hockey stick, a user growth, or having, you know, more critical questions as to the purpose you're mentioning, the juice in here is a wonderful example. I remember seeing it as 400 dollars or something and that was like really expensive juice.

And we've seen some of these spectacular implosions. Wework, for instance, and apparently a bunch of stuff that Softbank has been dabbling in. All of that sort of points towards, say, and I don't know if bubble is the right word again, but something is going on right now. Of course, with the pandemic, everybody is looking much more closely at their money. So probably we will see an even greater focus now on actually making a buck with whatever it is that you are you are coming



up with. Do you see, based on your experiences and the people you work with, that there's been a shift after the pandemic in terms of how organizations go about innovation and invention?

Sally: Yeah, I see some troubling shifts and I see massive potential for good shifts, so like when I'm able to communicate with companies, I'm stressing to them, one of the troubling shifts I see is that the kind of the knee jerk response to growth stopping, completely pausing operations for people is to hand it over to the accountants and the CFO who immediately starts cutting humans.

So laying people off. And I think, you know, that the lack of foresight in this, because moving forward, if a company wants consistent innovation, giving them consistent growth, they're actually going to have to mobilize and activate every single piece of human capital. And I truly believe that if you keep all your people on and you train them in a different type of thinking and you enable everyone from the admin staff to the accountants to the lawyers, to the marketing people, to think differently and to be given permission to innovate in their everyday stuff and to share it in a way that is valued and responded to.

You will see runaway growth. You will see your company blossom and flourish in this uncertain time. So I think this trend of cutting people and laying people off because you want to save a dollar right now, that is not going to result in growth. And so those companies, you know, it's a very old school mentality that is no longer relevant for the time.

But on the other hand, I think that there are some companies that are pausing their budgets, not cutting their people. And they are saying, like, how can we in this time when we're physically apart, how can we maintain connection? How can we enhance what we do? And there's a massive opportunity right now because we sent everybody home in every industry. We digitized everything in every industry basically overnight.

And so suddenly, we have this big snapshot of what digitized well, like what in terms of digitization, you know, what became remote, became online easily and what just didn't work, you know. And so we had this opportunity. Every company, every organization has the opportunity to look at digitization from the ground up instead of, you know, overlaying it to an organization from leadership and from outside consultants.

They could have every single one of their people give feedback, what's working, what's not. How do we, in fact, digitize every little piece of what we do? And then how do we revalue those things that don't digitize and make sure they are our touch points, which are generally the human connection bits, right? I mean, it's like everybody's zoomed out right now.

So we know that we can't go completely remote because people will literally go cross-eyed and never want to look at the screen again. So I think I think a great example of what's possible right now is wework because wework had a model that was a classic model that we're just seeing die right now. And that was, you know, expand the user base above all else, right. Expand the user



base above all else. And it will come. We'll build a platform which is classic platform play. We'll look for adjacent opportunities at all times, which is what I teach, what we both teach at singularity.

However, you know, they are bricks and mortar based. And so our thinking didn't change. And it didn't kind of go to the platform was in the fact that they took a place and they made it theirs and they made it permanent. And I was thinking about wework and I was thinking, you know, people still like me who freelancers do want to come together. They still want connection. They want to share a facility. If wework pivoted and went to, say, all the retail malls and shopping centers that are cleaning out right now with everybody going broke and said, we're going to pop up wework, so we're going to keep a certain post-box in a certain location. But within a zone we can pop up for six months at a time. We can bring people to your mall. We can bring people to your street so they could actually have a good symbiotic relationship with zones that need more people.

And suddenly this idea of real estate is costing us too much, it becomes a benefit for everybody if wework moves in and if these other people are there. So I think if they would have pivoted their thinking just slightly on the bricks and mortar side, it could morph into something super useful and very, very relevant and kind of more impactful, right? Because you're bringing people together on a larger scale. That's my, that's my thought for the day. What do you think about that, Kris?

18:42

Kris: Yeah. I think it's a free business model for the coworking chains out there. So I don't think they should be grateful for the input. So thanks for sharing that. Yeah, no, absolutely. I mean, it also points to the need to think fast and really evaluate the core of whatever you are and whatever value proposition is just propositions you have.

And in times of dramatic change when everything like now just literally stops. And you have to reconfigure almost everything. And that leads us, of course, to talk about adventurous thinking and the methodology you have developed here. And I think there's something interesting about innovation. You also alluding to at here is that it is sort of a pet peeve of mine. I've looked into research behind, you know, the later crises we've experienced in the world, although different, what always seems to happen is that in crisis, innovation suffers.

So generally speaking, organizations and governments, they cut down on spending, on innovation. And so that's one thing. And the lingo tends to be that a crisis is a great opportunity for innovation. And that is also correct. But that's just not what happens in most cases. But those who then do choose to carry the innovation torch, this is also where we see those phenomenal success stories that then, you know, are the case stories that we tell in the next crisis.



But it has always so far always been the few. And hopefully we can support in changing that right now. Because another key thing about innovation is that one, money, of course, is not unimportant. It has much more to do with mindset and design than it actually has to do with money. And I think maybe that's a kickstart for you to tell us what is adventurous thinking and the methodology you have developed.

Sally: Just to comment on that idea of chaos, what I think is really interesting is what it shows us when companies and governments always cut the budget in innovation. They it's a nice to have, they don't think it's an essential and resilience today requires more than survival.

Resilience today requires us to thrive because it's not just one event knocking us sideways. This is our future now. Our every day is going to be a series of knocking sideways because we're in an era of exponential change and massive disruption. So it's classic old school thinking to say, oh, innovation and creative thinking is the icing on the cake. And we can cut the icing off because people just need the cake right now, you know, and it's a classic. It's the same in education where most places in the world, but particularly the USA and China, probably Russia, but I don't know anything about Russia. Not Australia, Australia is good at this. Denmark is great at this. But most of these big, big countries that are old school based on industrial revolution teaching, they basically prioritize math, science.

And they say all art is nice to have, music and theater, It's nice to have but it is not essential. So we could cut that if we need to. Right at the point where things are moving too fast for knowledge to even be relevant if you want to survive and thrive, you actually have to be using your imagination and you have to have the creative confidence to try the unknown.

So this idea of cutting that stuff during a time of crisis is basically cutting people off at the knee and making them feel powerless right at the point that you need them to feel empowered. And I think that's why, socially, America in particular, is just in chaos because you have an entire population feeling incredibly powerless. They have no creative outlet. They have no creative confidence because they don't think it's relevant.

So to adventurous thinking, the whole idea of adventurous thinking, first and foremost, is that everybody has the ability to think creatively. Everyone has that capacity, and it's about helping them activate it in themselves. So the last thing I want to do is go in and be a guru and say, you must have me facilitating.

And that's always been my issue with design, classic design thinking. And any of those strategies where some organization guy says we'll send in a facilitator like that's cool for the first time, but you want it to stick and you want it to be such a useful and easy tool or set of tools that people can continue and use it so that it proliferates. So that was my aim with adventurous thinking.



I was working on my own. I was inventing on my own. And I thought, you know, I would love to brainstorm. I'd love to be like Proctor and Gamble and send three people into an Indian household for a month to question and observe. And, you know, who's got money for that. And more and more, I started thinking, you know, if I'm a frugal innovator, there must be other people like me who want to be able to get that empathy insight. But it is essentially reactive insight. How do I become a one person brainstormer? How do I become a proactive ideas and solutions person?

So I look to Howard Gardner, who was working at Project Zero Harvard University around multiple intelligences. This idea that rational thinking is one thing. Empathy is one thing. But there are all these other intelligences - kinetic, musical, like all these other ways of perceiving. And his whole thing was the more aspects that you type to look at something, the more understanding and meaning you will get. So, yeah, we want solutions, but we need to pause and have understanding and meaning. So I dug deep in design thinking, in my architectural background and disruptive thinking. And I constructed five lenses that also root themselves in sustainability and inclusion, which is what has to happen. And so I developed these lenses, negative space, which is looking for everything around the subject. Like, what is the context, you know? And that's a classic graphic tool that you could use to think that way too. Rethinking, which is the closest to classic design thinking. It's understanding your implicit bias and using certain tools to push ourselves outside that. There is rethinking, which is when you have something you know really well, it's not thinking outside the box, it's what else can I do with this box? Like, if I understand the core value, how can I manipulate that for greater impact. There is backwards thinking, which is all about sustainability and closing the loop and back casting to ensure that everything is balanced in its life.

And then there's parkour, which is crazy, disruptive thinking at its inverting best practice and forcing yourself to think like parkour is the one I use to activate people's adventurous thinking mindset because it forces you outside your area of knowledge and expertise. And the whole premise of these five lenses is that you have an expertise and a specialization that you're paid for, and that's great. But my five lenses are designed specifically to push you way outside your comfort zone into an area of bearable discomfort, to push you to think in that other part of your brain.

And then the idea is when you think in that area of possibility, that you have no knowledge of and you have your knowledge base here, they come together ultimately in unexpected connections to give you that kind of consistent, innovative thinking.

26:18

Kris: And so can you give us an example of a concrete or thought, whatever you are comfortable with, a process for an organization out there, people who are listening here who either work



directly with innovation, but indirectly, we sort of all do, right, and want to go through a process. How do they apply these lenses? What is the process to sort of move around, etc.? Processes tend to be linear, right?

Sally: Yeah. This is so non-linear. This is well, this is circular. Essentially, it normally takes like a full two days to teach all the tools in each of the lenses. But I can help. I'll give you an example of the most extreme ones straight away. So we use parkour. So what I tend to say to people is when they're understanding the difference between thinking and your expertise and thinking as an adventurous thinker. So you tell me. I say think of an elephant. What do you think of?

Kris: Pink elephant.

Sally: Ok. What else do you think of?

Kris: I think of the trunk and blowing water.

Sally: Interesting. So generally when you say think of an elephant. People think what they know about the elephant. I mean, our classic response to anything is what do we know? What do we know that's useful. Here it is, right. Not a criticism. Just a thing. That's what we do. So an inventor is thinking, we want to think of the possibility of elephants. So instead of going, here's what we know. We start asking questions. What would an elephant be if it was a machine? What might kill an elephant? That'd be interesting. What would an elephant be? If it was like one tenth that size but had all those characteristics, like what could it do? So you know what is an elephant in a different culture?

So if we start by asking questions about what we don't know, we throw ourselves into this other type of thinking. And so I use that as an example normally. And then we hit some parkour. Parkour is about achieving the same result with a completely different system of doing. So what's interesting about it, in terms of me having a small amount of time to help people understand a different type of thinking is this can throw people immediately. I know that by inverting best practice, they will not come up with an answer.

Because if you come up in knots, you're not thinking big enough. So let's do parkour. Hit me with something that you do often that you do quite well. Because the other thing about parkour is it doesn't need to be a problem. So what is something you do every day that you know you're pretty happy with, that you've got a system to do quite well? Maybe this podcast?

Kris: Yes, I was. I was maybe gonna suggest you, you know, speaking engagements. I do that quite a lot. It tends to go, you know, decently well.



Sally: So shall we parkour how do you get a speaking engagement or how do you conduct a speaking engagement, which one do you want?

Kris: How do we conduct?

Sally: Right. Great. Okay. So we want to conduct a speaking engagement, which means that I'm gonna say you want to connect with the crowd. What are the three key ways that you currently do that, your best way of connecting with the crowd in a speaking engagement? What do you do? Three things.

Kris: I look people in the eyes. I speak with them and to them directly. I try to make them laugh.

Sally: Make them laugh. Anything else with that crowd, like you do research or anything before you go in or...?

Kris: Sure. I would do my research. Which kind of people are in the room, which kinds of jobs they have, which kind of industry they are.

Sally: Research the people, research the audience. OK. So the way you currently go about best practice in connecting with the crowd and delivering a keynote is you research your audience. You plan to make them laugh. And you look them in the eyes. You address them directly. So parkour, we are still going to have this incredibly effective connection with the crowd. You're not going to look them in the eye. You're not going to address them directly. You're not going to know who's in the audience. And you're not going to make them laugh.

So now think about, you're still going to deliver this incredibly effective thing. I mean, is it in the dark? It might be. Like, what is going to happen then? So see how your immediate thought is, I don't bloody know. Usually, right?

Kris: My immediate thought was that I would be giving the entire talk with my back to the audience.

Sally: Right. And you don't even know who's there. So how do you construct a talk if you're not going to know who's there? What's going to come out of you?

Kris: Right. Whatever I'm interested in.

Sally: Maybe your fundamental truth is going to come out of you, like what is it that if it doesn't matter who the audience is and you can't connect? What are you saying?

Kris: What I think is important, right?



Sally: So thinking about what potential that has for you.

Kris: Yeah, well so that has the potential of thinking out loud here, of addressing new topics in new ways and experimenting to a larger extent and going beyond the obvious, if you like.

Sally: Yeah. I mean, the other thought is if the entire audience was in the dark, people wouldn't be looking at their phones. They literally couldn't see and their senses would be heightened.

Kris: If they couldn't see?

Sally: If they couldn't see what's happening. It's kind of interesting. You're not making people laugh. What are you doing? So this is how parkour works. You're still gonna deliver this amazing thing that you may now come up with a completely disruptive system of delivering that. And so I find in this point right now when we are disrupted in every aspect of our life - business, social, people have to rethink. We know that we're gonna come through COVID-19 and into a new era that is hybrid systems, part digital, part human. What are we going to deliver? It's such a great time to be using this parkour tool of inverting what we normally do to deliver something that we know we want to deliver, but in an entirely new system.

33:20

Kris: So I see how parkour thinking is a great kickstarter for situations like now, so all of this pandemic, our entire country, region, the world is shutting down. We have to look at whatever it is that we are doing our value propositions and say, do they actually work now? And to a large extent, they do not. So what the hell do we do?

Sally: We don't naturally think this way. We don't naturally push ourselves into bearable discomfort. We need the tools. Once we have the tools, and we're placed there by these tools to force us into this other area of bearable discomfort, we can do it. We have to develop that habit of pushing ourselves there and nurturing our curiosity because everything in big business right now is designed to quash curiosity.

And every algorithm online is designed to serve as more of what we know, more of what we like, and kind of keep us sedated mentally in many ways. Like everybody, they don't even ask themselves anything, they go straight to Google and then they go to page one, they Google in the same language they're speaking.

They you know, they allow this curation and this funneling to happen. And we're in an era where there is massive mistrust. The meltdown of trust is perhaps the hallmark of this year. And at the same time, so many people are just allowing Google to feed them an answer, which is



questionable much of the time. It's paid for. It's curated, it's funneled, you know, what the hell people. We need to inspire people to trust themselves and their creative thinking. And parkour, I think for me, just bust people into that within about 15 minutes. It helps them understand their own potential really quickly.

Kris: Yeah. And so I love the notion of bearable discomfort. And I'm sure most get the discomfort part. But how do you make it bearable?

Sally: Well, it's bearable when you do it enough. When you have the confidence in yourself that not knowing is okay, that not knowing is cool because, you know, you have this whole section of creative thinking that will come up with stuff. And with that comes, you know, a robust disregard for failure because, yeah, sure. You're going to envisage a whole lot of stuff that may not work.

But the idea is we think of that and we try it instead of just like, you know, the first little voice in your head, nah. That won't work. Can I give a speech? I'm nothing to a dark room of people that I don't know. Nah, that won't work. Well, that's our expertise. It's never been known to work. And if we develop the habit of gently putting that to one side and going, well, that's our expert, Brian, we'll come back to you in about half an hour. Let's give five minutes of intense thinking to how we make that work. That makes it bearable. Confidence, your own confidence makes it bearable.

36:13

Kris: And I guess that also leads us to talk about resilience, which is one thing. And we can get back to other elements under adventurous thinking here and I also learned a new word while preparing for today, which is multifarious, a multifarious person, which is a creature of particular interest. What is a multifarean?

Sally: Well, multifarean. I coined that term, but it's all about multifarious perspectives. So again, that idea of multiple perspectives, giving yourself not just your expert perspective, but really pushing yourself into these other points of view to make sure that your understanding and your meaning is as good as it can be. And I actually kind of, like my summary of what that is, is from a Dr. Seuss quote, which I've always loved. I love Dr. Seuss.

He's a genius, creative thinker. Right. And he says, I'll look out for trouble in front and back sections by rolling my eyeballs in different directions. And so I think of a multifarean as somebody who is constantly rolling their eyeballs and their mindballs in different directions to just get a better feeling for what it is they're looking at. They're walking around, they're prodding and they're poking. And that is the way my long history of innovating, but also judging other innovators and judging inventors is that most of them have this constantly swirling, thinking, multifarious point of view, where they're looking from all these different angles to understand something better.



37:46

Kris: And how do you become a multifarean?

Sally: Again, it's a growth mindset. It's about being open, understanding that you don't know. Your knowledge is not that important. Like what you know, what you can find out by being curious just adds these layers to what you can come up with on your own, what you can imagine. And so if you stop putting such an emphasis on, well, I know this, so I'm good at it and I don't know that, so I'm bad at it.

If you stop and you go, it doesn't matter. My knowledge is going to help bring this to fruition. But what I don't know is fascinating and massive. And what I want to do is probe around more and more stuff and layer it instead of specialize. You want to be a generalist. You want to just find out random stuff, because the more random stuff you find out, the more likely it is that you'll continue to make unexpected connections, something you know, something you just learned. And you will continually innovate because that's what innovation is. It's continual thinking and circling and going. I didn't know that. That's insane. How would that work with this?

Kris: Yeah, so it's the notion of also looking towards domains that are not your domain of expertise.

Sally: Which is curiosity.

Kris: Which is curiosity and getting to know stuff that you would normally not know about or necessarily be interested in.

Sally: Like, I have a couple of websites I went to every now and then that pushed me information every day and they are usually product design and development websites. So there'll be materials, ones for me, my kids, stuff on robots, a lot of composite material stuff. You know, I'm a terrible science thinker. I'm not a material science. I'm not an engineer.

This stuff fascinates me because I read it. I don't understand it. But that gives me a perspective that is super valuable. Like, for instance, I went into an organization that makes extremely precise lasers generally for self-driving cars and things like that, extremely precise. A couple of years ago. And I went and they said, we want to think more creatively, blah, blah, blah. I said, okay, well, give me an example of, you know, I was trying to tell them how valuable it is to bring in an outsider who hasn't researched what they do.

So instead of looking into the company and trying to understand their lasers, I didn't. And I rolled in blind and I said, what's your biggest problem right now? They said the biggest problem is waste in production. We had this crazy amount of waste because our lasers are so precise and



our testing is so precise. And I went, huh? Well, what's the waste like? What can I do? But like, basically I can do a lot. And I said, surely your waste would be a toymaker's dream. Isn't your laser like, so precise and amazing that even the duds are way better than anything in any toy? And they went, Oh. And the guy came back to me. The main engineer zucked off and came back an hour later and he said, you have just saved us about three million dollars.

We had never thought that our waste would be useful for another vertical. I say this, not knowing is a beautiful thing and making sure that this works for inclusion. Like people always say, oh, well, there's not enough people of color or there's not enough women or there's not enough whatever skilled in what we do. You need to understand that, including people who are not skilled in what you do, but a great creative thinkers will actually enhance your innovation capability.

41:11

Kris: And it points to the notion of convergence. Which I think is one of the big themes of the times that we're living in. So we, of course, speak a lot about that. Technology is converging. You can apply A.I. to medicine, etc and develop stuff. Industries are also converging and all of a sudden, they are coming from different spaces and the fabric of what makes an organization is also converging.

There was a point when we talked about whether you're a tech company now, it's ridiculous. Everybody's a tech company. Then there was everybody who needed to become a media company. Now we're all media, et cetera, et cetera. So to your point about whatever expertise you have and inviting those people in who have different expertise is because you literally need them all in a world that is developing in the way that our world is, right.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, it's the crushing of specialization. It is multifarious thinking. It's kind of back to startup thinking. When you have a startup, I've had a couple of companies, you're doing everything. You know, you are the push me, pull me. You've got to make it happen here. You gotta make it happen there. And then, you know, you get bigger, you get more structured. But actually, when we talk at Singularity about platform thinking and massive purpose, we're no longer kind of segmented by what we do. We're united by what we want to achieve.

And if you look at that, you start looking at partners from all sorts of industries to come together under this purpose of, you know, what we ultimately want to achieve, it's very cool. Like, I think our ability to strategize. I'm working with a bunch of companies right now where I'm saying forget your normal strategy, forget your legacy hierarchy. Let's come up with your purpose. What is it?

And let's look all around who else has this purpose and who now becomes our partners and our ecosystem. And now, where is our strategy? Because we can find so many opportunities for



growth once we understand all these other people who come in underneath this type of stagnant, you know.

I think the future, if people start actually thinking about impact and purpose is really exciting. And I feel like COVID has had a lot of people think really hard about, you know, what do I really need? Do I really need all this stuff or are my values actually pretty simple? You know, and that's true resilience. That's the idea that survival is something we would shelter in place, we wait for the storm to, we wait it out. That doesn't work anymore.

And that's why I developed the epic resilience strategy: survival is not enough. We need to thrive. We need to flourish because this relentless change is our new normal, and sheltering in place just will not cut it. It's not cutting it right now with COVID, people are going crazy. They hate it. They need connection. So if we can't shelter in place in the face of this change, then we have to grab it, seize it and be the change. Which means that we need creative thinking.

44:21

Kris: Yeah, and so and resilience is connected also to the notion of bearable discomfort, right. To navigate in the world whatever sort of throws at you. So I know you have a book coming up on the notion of epic resilience. So walk us through what exactly lies underneath the notion of creating epic resilience?

Sally: It's kind of interesting. So I developed this strategy because I was teaching adventurous thinking around the world and I was saying, you know, we need to exist in unbearable discomfort. And I quickly realized that. So what happens, Kris, is, you know, you try this. It's difficult, but it's also exhilarating. It's exhilarating. So when I ran my two day workshops at Stanford, you know, people are exhausted on day one. They're exhausted. But they love it,

So it's physically and mentally exhausting to constantly be dealing with change. It's not. Yeah, if you're wheeling away on the back foot. That's also exhausting. But if you're plunging forward, it's exhausting. So you need to be the best you can be, the strongest you can be, physically, mentally. So as I realized that actually, I'm asking people to do something that's so out of the ordinary for them. And they're so used to comfortable thinking that if they continually do this, they're exhausted. I thought, I need to back off and I need to think hard about what is the foundation for thinking this way.

What is the foundation that keeps us solid and keeps us kind of stoic? And what's the right word that I'm thinking of? I'll come up with it. It's stamina, it gives us stamina. So we have the stamina to continually think in this new way. And I thought it's resilience, but it's a different type of resilience. So I developed this strategy that basically starts with an individual, but it actually



spreads to family, community. And ultimately, which is my real interest, my interest in individuals is keeping everybody optimistic in a time of uncertainty, giving them power.

But at a business level, there's also work to make sure everyone is included and feels like they belong and they're heard. So the whole epic strategy, epic stands for emotional, physical, intellectual and creative resilience and it's quadrants. And the idea is that you balance. So emotional will be your values, your boundaries and connection. And the physical is not just that you're physically strong, you're strong as you can be. You're as fit, you get as much sleep as you need, you get as much nutrition as you can see. You optimize everything you physically can, you optimize everything you can emotionally to be very self-aware. Intellectually, we work again on igniting curiosity and maintaining it with constant learning.

On creative. It's about taking that learning and manipulating it, putting your own stamp on it and idea sharing, which is, again, connection and outreach. So if you look at, you know, basic human motivation, it's about feeling competent, authentic and connected. This is developing at a personal level. And once you have this balance, it's very much like when the plane's going down, you know, put your mask on first before you help others. So we balance each person. We give them creative confidence and strength. And then we spread it. It has a ripple effect.

Then you spread that to people around you and everybody I've put through this program as my guinea pigs has loved it, has felt much more confident and powerful. And it's kind of spread like other people want to know what's going on. Why do you in a period of time where everybody is fearful and retreating and we see polarization in society. Why are you looking so good? Why are you feeling so good? And why do you share these ideas? Like how can we get a bit of that? So the idea of epic resilience was originally, I need to build a foundation where people can constantly think creatively and have that confidence. And so that's that's the idea of resilience. But epic is, basically understanding that creative thinking is nothing to do with art. Nothing to do with artistry. It's to do with being open to growth and curiosity and then idea sharing.

48:29

Kris: And in your experience here on in the final minutes of our conversation, listeners out there who resonate with what you are talking about, which I imagine almost anyone would resonate with. How do they translate that into their culture and create that foundation to really be able to amplify their invention and innovation?

Sally: I think the hardest thing that, as an Australia, like we talk about culture as an Australian in the USA, I will say that when I first moved here, I found the idea of kind of self awareness and self development, even the word boundary, laughable.



I was pretty cynical. Like nah, bloody Americans, always woo woo woo with the halls of awareness and therapy. I was wrong. It's actually really important. And so I think the first thing to do is, is check yourself. Understand that this idea of self care and self awareness is the crux of you being useful to others and you being out to maintain your pointy edge and maintain your creative abilities.

You actually do have to stop and consider really basic things like am I making sure everybody is very aware of my values and what I will and will not accept? Am I? Because once we look at that. Am I physically fit? I'm not talking about go for long run. I'm talking about strength. Like especially women my age. I'm 50 like I'm the strongest I've ever been. I box every day. I feel amazing. And when you feel amazing, you will lift everybody around you up.

And it's not talking to them about your bloody diet or any of that rubbish. It's literally you will put out an energy that people need. And that's why creative confidence and physical and mental optimization. So I think once people are aware of that and stop whatever you're doing and think about, am I sorted in these quadrants, especially emotional and physical? Am I the best I can be right now? Because that is basic resilience. And then the epic part is when we can actually flourish and start affecting others. And having impact.

50:44

Kris: And a lot of our listeners are also in executive positions of various sorts, meaning they have responsibilities for a bunch of other people. What is your advice to them in order to create epic resilience in their employees?

Sally: We all as leaders have to be so aware of how powerless most of the people around us feel. Most of the people that we're managing, most of our stakeholders are, let's say, shit scared right now because they don't understand. And most people hate change. We're not equipped for it.

We haven't been taught to value this kind of creative thinking. And therefore, we are reliant on rational thinking and knowledge in a period of time where change is moving too fast for knowledge to keep up. Humans are linear thinkers. Things are changing exponentially. So, so many people are scared. So above all else, as a leader, you need to understand that. And you need to assure these people that you can help them develop the type of thinking that will not be scared in the face of change.

You need to communicate to them that it's not just you will take care of them. You'll take care of them and you will help them take care of themselves. So think, the most important thing at this very point in time is to make sure that every single person feels included and is not feeling powerless and left behind. Then help them become part of the solution and let them know you want to hear from them. You want them to be part of growth and innovation. You're not cutting



them out, not handing it down. You're going to bring them up from the bottom. You're going to lead from behind. I think right now that is the most important message.

Kris: Absolutely. That is great advice. Thank you for sharing that. And just the final thing and important thing is if people want to know more about the stuff that you're up to, where should we send them?

Sally: I've got a website, sallydominguez.com. I'll have an epic resilience dot com website up as soon as the book launches. And the book should launch at the end of September on Amazon and around the place. And it will be translated into Spanish pretty quickly, too, because I've got a lot of latin American people who want it. So, yes, sallydominguez.com. I really should update that website. Now I will.