

Edwin:

Hello everyone and welcome to FMAA's second national podcast! My name is Edwin and I'm here with our guest Kristian here today and we're going to discuss a few things about Kristian's own experiences and any insights that he wants to provide to you as listeners - so welcome Kristian!

Kristian:

Thank you Edwin, and hello everyone.

Edwin:

So Kristian could you start by telling the listeners about your career journey so far - from university up until now.

Kristian:

Yeah I can start from the beginning. So I started University in 2010 and started doing a Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting and Finance. If you're asking why - I was good at accounting in school - I did year 12 accounting and in my head at the time that was the easiest and best way to get a job. I ended up doing Spanish as a breath, I ended up loving that and then doing a diploma in Spanish and then I also did part-time honours and accounting for two years while I was teaching full time for the University - so I taught in four different subjects - over a thousand students over that time and throughout University I joined the FMAA in my first semester. I was really keen in my first semester to get involved in everything and then stayed with the FMAA for four years. So I started as a non-exec committee member and then was 'Financial Services Sponsorship Director', then 'National Affairs Director'. A big part of that was merging the Monash finance Association and the FMAA Melbourne and the whole organisation. Then in the last year I was president and was involved in integrating Monash and Melbourne events together. During University I loved doing case comps. I also love to go to the social events and the social aspects of it. A big thing for me was doing exchange - so I travelled and before that I did a consulting subject in Singapore and travelled around Europe. I also went to the University of Southern California for exchange and then did two months in South America after that. So that's a little bit of my my University experience - since then it was my last year of Honours - if I reflect on Honours it was actually the most valuable learning thing that I got out of my entire University experience because it was small classes - sizes of less than ten people - we had dedicated academics - and it was the only time that I was actually really getting challenged to create my own opinion and critique theories, rather than just learning theories in a huge classroom and applying it - so I really valued that. I was in my last semester and got a rash that formed on my body, and back then still and to this day very day in control of kind of what's going on and to have this rash appear in my body was really confronting because it kept spreading but I felt okay and I kept going and so I took some time off and came back, finished my thesis, and completed Honours. I wanted to be an

entrepreneur for the freedom to work for myself. So, I started formulating the idea behind an organization called 'The Time Keeper'. After Honours I went on a holiday because of the rash and took some time away before I commit. I had an amazing holiday in Central America and then came back and was ready to get started working full-time on 'The Timekeeper', but I was hit with some kind of fatigue - so waking up every day and feeling like I just couldn't function properly. I look back and it was actually one of the best things to ever happen to me - at about that time I was applying for grad jobs as well and so I was lucky enough to secure a position at 'Strategy&' which was the old 'Booz & Company' that had merged with PwC. That first half of that year was just challenging with the fatigue and setting up the business and interviews - and what ended up happening was my ambition and 'type A' went to "What's going on here?" So I started to discover mindfulness and yoga. I went to the doctor, I got blood tests, I got a health coach, I changed my diet, I listened to podcasts, read resources, and all my ambition went there. I started to discover a whole new world of medicine - East versus West, psychology, sociology. I used myself as an experiment around diet mind-sets and my whole world opened up to a completely new way of being. There was a lot of transformation and change during that period - I became a facilitator, I volunteered for young people and the homeless and then was setting up 'The Timekeeper' at the same time. As I was changing a lot, people around my life - my friends, my family, close networks - were also experiencing me changing and so there's a lot of people who've moved out in my life and into my life. Managing relationships has been a challenge within that because the Kristian they once knew was very different. I had some team members come on - it's a social enterprise and the whole mission behind it has become a manifestation of that personal health journey, and what I really got from that was the preciousness of time. That rash, because I had no idea what was happening me, and that made me switch into something where I just had to reassess my whole life and what's important to me. So The Timekeeper is all about two things - which is time and mental health. So the mission of the company is to help young people live a life where they're healthy and happy and living a life in line with their values - what they care about under that model of time is precious. What I'm really passionate about within that is the mental health challenge and epidemic - one in four people will experience a condition in their lifetime. 800,000 people are dying globally every year - it's going to be the biggest global economic burden by 2020 says the World Health Organization. So that's been a big focus on building up that business - right now it sells watches related to time and to be an anchor and 100% of profits - we're all volunteers - goes to support community mental health initiatives. As well as sharing people's stories with time - the suffering in their past and the present and what they care about, and what they're inspired to create in the future. But that model is still a very young company, and I'm still figuring out the best way for it to achieve its mission - I'm not sure if the watches are the best way just yet, but we're looking at creating potentially some community programs within it as well. I then joined Strategy& in March 2017 and I've been there for a year - working on asx200 companies on their strategy and how they want to grow, they want to change their operating model or cut cost to help them fuel growth - lots of different problems within that. Here we are today!

Edwin:

Excellent - so you touched on the purpose of The Timekeeper which was really interesting - do you mind expanding upon the new initiatives or the new direction that you want to take The Timekeeper?

Kristian:

Where the company sits today is it hasn't generated as much revenue as I would like it to - and that's an element of myself working full-time in consulting, which is quite demanding. I only get one day a week on the weekend to work on the business. The second one is around the mission. The mission is to help people with their mental health - have preciousness of time - realize that. Live a life in line with their values and selling watches is great - it funds revenue into a tool that is an anchor that people can look out at every day and have tangible meaning behind that. They're also supporting helping young people get access to mental health services. But going a step further is the stories of 'time' - I believe that every person has a great story behind them and they really have something to contribute to the world through their story - so I'm wanting to focus more in there. And then there's the impact side - right now we donate our profits to other organizations to support their initiatives, but based on what I'm observing in the world is I think there is still a gap in what services and solutions are out there - in particular for young people in High School and young people at University. High School is super stressed - there's a social structure that says "I have to fit in and I can't be myself." "I've got to look good on social media - the rest of my life banks on this." Then at university it's like "My whole world - this is I need to figure out what I want to do it has to be now - I'm going to follow this person because that's what's good. I'm going to follow the crowd here, I want to make money, I want to provide for my family..." All these things come up, and then in that context there is just anxiety - there's depression. Male suicide rates are super high and even in entering the workforce, there's elements in particular in certain industries where mental health challenges are really high. So, speaking to mental-health service providers, a lot of the challenges that people come in with is not wanting to go to work on a Monday, not feeling like they're living their purpose, not feeling understood, not connected with people. So, with all the services going on - all the challenges and issues - I still believe there's something missing from the solution. Otherwise, this wouldn't be the biggest global economic burden by 2020. There's many different things I could draw on around the technology paradigm and how we interact with that, and there's a few other learnings I've been doing from personal development courses and spiritual journeys.

Edwin:

So a lot of our listeners are students who are busy studying, busy applying for internships or jobs. From your perspective, what advice would you provide them when they're dealing with all these different things in their life.

Kristian:

I'll caveat - when I hear advice from someone who I give, it's just based on my personal experience and circumstances. I don't actually like to give advice so much. But, if I was to reflect on my own journey I wouldn't change anything about it, but what I really feel that I got from being sick and what I see happened to people when a parent dies, or they get cancer or they have a near-death experience, is their entire perspective on life changes. What I think is as I was going through my six years at University, I was sick for up to three months of each year with sinus infections, I injured my back twice, I pulled my hamstring, I did both Achilles - because I was just pushing myself physically and mentally and feeling like I could really do it, but my body was giving me these signs. I wasn't listening - I just thought it was normal life to be sick that often. Everyone always asked why I was so sick all the time, "Want to catch up?" I would say no because I'm sick and being in bed a lot because I'm sick and I would take antibiotics and I thought that was the way of being. When in fact I have now been seeking 18 months, and my body was talking to me but I wasn't listening. So, my only advice would be is to not think the everything that is happening at your time at University is it - and to listen to yourself - your body signs things that you want but don't go after because of fear, or just listening observing self around do I actually want to do this? Or am I just following a crowd. So, I'm a really big advocate of meditation and mindfulness - whether that is meditating or it could be mindfulness through support - whatever it is - but a degree of mindfulness and awareness as a big thing. The second part for me is around something that I don't think is taught at High School and University - the technical stuff is taught - but it is emotional mastery and self-regulation and I think that's the next step - it's becoming aware, and then secondly being able to have awareness of others, but manage emotions and different things. So, if there was a bias it would be to explore all different aspects and facets of life.

Edwin:

Excellent. Another question that we have for you is that a lot of students are really interested in getting into that social-impact space within their own set of interests. So, as an entrepreneur yourself, would you provide any advice for these students who are looking to take that sort of pathway in their career or in their life.

Kristian:

I'll be taking a bit of credit first from Simon Sinek - he always says "Start with Why" - the big things start with why. For me that "Why" takes that introspection, meditative view and the reason I say that is starting a business or wanting to go down this path this career - to do it properly it takes time. It's not just a quick one-year, two-year thing - it takes time. There may be this real drive to do something and then when you're two years down the track it's like cool - if you don't have the "Why" it's like what's the true north governing you and guiding you on that path. So, I think that would be the first thing. I'll give you some context behind that - this is my view which is almost like a Buddhist view - which is there's suffering in the world and the Buddha says "I teach one thing and one thing only - suffering and the end of suffering." When I first saw that I was like "What are you talking about? In a positive

psychology state – suffering? You just made that up.” Then I read it again and I was like wow okay I get it - there is a lot of suffering in the world. But then I realized he said one thing and one thing only - suffering and the end of suffering - it's actually one thing. We're all suffering as human beings and his thing was to teach us about that and then also ending that. And that kind of comes to emotional mastery bit. So, on people going on their journeys and I'll share just one or two stories with you is some of those stories I facilitated where people are really on their purpose has come from their suffering. I'll give you an example - a young man, he didn't find his place at school, he was being bullied, he didn't feel like he had friends or a place to go - he focused really on his studies and he did well there - but he felt alone. The time he felt out was when he could go to the skate park and hang out with the people who just loved him for who he was and he skated and he felt wild and free. Now what did he do is he went around the world to impoverished places and started to build skate parks around the world for those third-world communities. Why? because what a skate park meant to him was a home - so he was literally going around the world not just building skate parks, but homes for people. That to me was a person on purpose but it came from him suffering, and all those years of him suffering and experiencing that he didn't want anyone else to go through that. I could go on with many other examples and those are just some of the stories of time that I facilitated through The Timekeeper - that's why every person has a great story, and so I look at purpose of a lot of what we can do is to use money - we've got a big thing about money as we go out and chase money we're going to get the next idea, but actually look at well how can we actually solve some of the world's most important problems and if you are that money that's fine as well there's nothing wrong with that – the money will come to you within that as well. But to be on purpose is not about the money, it's about having a connection to what the mission and the cause of what you want to do is - and that will also change over time. So I knew a man that wanted to quit smoking so we set up an organization to kind of advocate for anti-smoking and then he'd quit smoking and after five years it wasn't so relevant to him anymore so he wanted to find another purpose. I've met another man who's about to have a child and so he changed his purpose to selling children's books as a social enterprise and using those funds to support children without an education that's because he's about to become a father. So again, it's all about the different kind of times of life that are in.

Edwin:

We're just going to change it up a bit and throw in something that's very relevant for these students listening and that's with your work at Strategy&. How has that work there and the people that you've met really shaped or facilitated your vision of The Timekeeper.

Kristian:

I will answer that in a bit of an indirect way – I spent some time in the education sector being a teacher in full-time teacher there. I spent some time in the 'start-up space' when I was first getting support there. The social space so not-for-profit social enterprise space there, and then I would say that as I'm spending time in what's called the corporate space now and again I draw a circle and the knowledge of life for me is like if I did accounting in school I'm going out a little bit this way, I did honours a little bit this way, PhD a little bit this way - and all I

would know is that. But then there's the whole circle of life - so it's about for me learning about how all the different things work. So, coming to Strategy& has enabled me to understand this is big business, and big business kind of rules the world in a way is to understand how this works in one organization but then actually see how other organizations work. The strategy, how they're structured, what the people focus on within the organizations - understanding the silo effect, how people communicate, cultures working within teams here - so lots of different aspects. Then there's kind of more of the technical skills of how to break a problem down how to do a hypothesis driven approach - how to collect data, how to analyse those aspects as well. How that would tie in is if I wanted to create a big business one day there's a lot of valuable lessons to be learned.

Edwin:

So, we'll just finish off with one last question tying it back to the students. So obviously, you did a lot of your time in university - what is one thing that you think students should get out of their University experience

Kristian:

I would say that it's one of the most formative times of somebody's life to be in their early 20s and it's not the be-all and end-all. Utilise that time to not just focus on studies – they are super important in grades - but just like VCE, it's a stepping stone to the next part of the journey - so actually utilise that time to build an individual's character. So not just learning stuff but who do you actually want to be for the world, for your family, for your friends. So utilise your time to learn all the different aspects you can - whether that's joining sporting programs, volunteering, doing travel, student societies - mixing that with your academics is the best time to do that and that'll really set you up for the rest of your life.

Edwin:

That's pretty great. I think that wraps up the podcast - thank you so much Kristian for spending some time with us Today. And for the listeners, we'll be having a podcast every month so stay tuned for the next one. But until then, thank you very much.

Kristian:

Awesome, thank you!