

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 199: MARTIN LINDSTROM

Welcome to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, a podcast where we provide strategies and advice for how to move up the S curve of Learning in your professional and personal life, stepping back from who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be.

I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. Today, our guest is Martin Lindstrom, one of the world's leading brand strategists and New York Times best-selling author, seven times over. With his new book, Ministry of Common Sense, it will likely be eight. He has been named as one of the 20 most influential management thinkers in the world by Thinkers 50 and by Time magazine as one of the world's 100 most influential people. Martin Lindstrom is willing to do pretty much whatever it takes to understand a customer's point of view, their S curve, and once he does, he packs a parachute for his clients to jump to that curve. Customers are then happy and hundreds of millions of dollars of value are routinely created. It all began when he was 12 years old with Legos. For those of you paying close attention, you'll notice a few details that would indicate we had this conversation in early 2020 and you would be correct.

We thought about rerecording the episode, but Martin is so captivating and the time capsule elements so interesting what we were thinking and feeling, the experience that we were having just a few short months ago, we decided to go with it, as is. Martin, welcome to the podcast.

Martin Lindstrom: Well, thank you for that.

Whitney Johnson : Tell us where you grew up and you have a really fun story about Legos as a child. And I would love for you to share that story because everything that you've done since builds upon those Legos.

Martin Lindstrom: My story is very unusual because I was a huge fan of Lego. And when I tell you about being a fan, I was the fan. I actually built my own Lego bed and was sleeping in it every night for about a year. Now, Whitney, if you get these thoughts you want to build a Lego bed, I wouldn't recommend you to do it because you end up every morning having dots on your back, right? [inaudible] So this is my Lego bed. And at some stage when I'm 11 years of age, I get this crazy idea that I want to create my own Legoland. And I'm a serious kid. I decide to get sponsorships from around the world because I want to have a real Lego Land and not just a plastic, fantastic stuff. I

wanted real trees and and water and whatever in it. So I get a sponsorship from Sony and I work on this Legoland after school for about a year, and then I open the gates to this beautiful Lego Land in the backyard of my mom and dad's garden.

And the only problem is there's only two people showing up the first day paying a dollar each, my mom and my dad, which really is the lowest point of my career, I have to say. So I go into panic and I go down to a local print office, persuade them to put an ad in the paper, and two days later I have 131 showing up.

The only problem is that guests number 130 and guest number 131 are the lawyers from Lego suing me. They saying, "That's our brand." And I say, "No, that's my brand." Remember, I'm 12 years of age. "I bought all the boxes myself." So I'm getting into this, you know, unusual conversation at the age of 12. The owner hears about it and they invite me to, to work for Lego instead. So I get a job at Lego and I'm probably the youngest kid in history, working half time at Lego back then in the R&D department. What's fascinating is the reason why they did it, later on I asked him of course, "Why did you employ a young kid at that age?" And they basically said to me, "Because we had lost contact with our customers and you were the first person to really reflect how a Lego fan was living and using our product. And that gave us a direct pipeline into understanding how our audience were behaving." And that adds to the, just to build on this, this unusual story, if I may, but if I fast forward Lego over those 25 years again, lost contact with the customers and were actually near bankruptcy around 14 years ago. And, and again, you know, this was a little bit reversed now they knocked on my door and said, "Hey, guys, what can you do to change this?" And here's the story which is really fascinating.

Um, the Lego company had taken all these big data into account that analyzed all the data and concluded that their concept was just not, uh, it was not matching our reality today. No kid would have time and patience to build a castle taking six or seven hours. They were the instant gratification generation. So what Lego did was they changed the size of the Lego bricks 14 years ago to these gigantic building blocks so you could build a castle in half an hour or so. And that Christmas, sales went down nearly 31 percent, which really was a disaster for the company. So at that stage, they realized something was wrong and they went back to that story with my Lego Land and, and the story was very simple. They said, "We need to get into the homes of consumers again." So this is a true story of what happened. That, in fact, in one instance, the team went into a home of a German boy, a 14 year old boy, and the senior management was sitting in the, in the bedroom with this young kid. And during the conversation, one of the executives asked this kid, "What are you most proud of?" The kid pauses for a second and he pointed a shelf where there's an old worn-down pair of sneakers. And of course, the executives are completely perplexed. And they expected the kid to answer "Sony PlayStation" or "Nintendo." No, an old worn down pair of sneakers.

So, of course, they asked the kid, "Why?" And the kid says, "Well, because I'm the best skater in town. You see, if you're really, really good skater and you slide down the skateboard, you will create a certain wear and tear on the side of the sole. [inaudible] is my evidence that I'm number one skater in my town." And that was the moment where that team actually had a eureka moment. They realized that if a kid is willing to spend hundreds, if not thousands of hours of fine tuning the angle of a sole, why wouldn't the kid be able to and willing to spend hundreds, if not thousands of hours playing the Lego. So they went back to the drawing board again. And out of that, the size of the Lego bricks was changed. And they also created The Lego Movie, which became number two the US five years ago. And Lego today is not just number one brand in the world in the toy category, they are by far the number one brand, I mean seven times higher than number two. So we're talking about a profound change. And that change happened because of two reasons. One is the founder realized they were in a crisis. And the second thing is they got back to the consumer mindset. They had to start to reconnect with the consumer.

Whitney Johnson : Do you remember when you, the moment or sort of at what period of your life you're like, "This is what I'm going to do, like I'm going to understand that consumer." Tell us a little bit about how that happened and the work that you do today.

Martin Lindstrom: The story actually begins even earlier than when I was 12, and it begins when I'm around 8, where my mom, she has a range of clinics, you know, beauty clinics, where they're giving all sorts of beauty treatment. And I was as a kid, crawling in under the desk in the reception and just lying under there doing my homework. And I was listening to the conversations between my mom or her staff and the the patients. And what

was really fascinating was that they all would talk about how wonderful she was and the service and they loved everything. And then as soon as my mom would leave, they would tell the truth.

So I [inaudible] I would be lying there listening with my big ears, right?

So I said to my mom, at some point I wanted to do an experiment. And, and when I was around 8 or 9 years of age, we did a questionnaire with smileys on and we distributed that to all the client and then compare with what I was saying to my mom. But the thing on the questionnaire and actually what they would say when they leaving the room and would be lying under there listening and every time there would be a huge gap between what they were saying and filling out on the form. So it was really planted back in my mind that there is multiple different levels of truth here. Now, what happened after the Lego story around when I was 12 years of age, I started up my own advertising agency as well, and I got Lego as a client. And later on sold it to BBDO when I was 18 years of age which is even more crazy. But through that whole journey, I constantly had in mind that when you talk to consumers or people, they use the conscious part, and there is this not conscious part, and I always wanted to investigate that. So, as I grew older, I started to figure out, "How do I understand what we really are thinking?" And one of the things I did later on was to conduct the largest neuroscience study in the world. And we introduced a term called neuromarketing. And really the idea of understanding how we behave subconsciously. And it really comes back to my mom again. She was a huge smoker and really was smoking quite a lot.

And I thought with myself, back when I was in my late 20s, "How the heck do I make her quit smoking? How do I make smokers quit smoking?" And I did all sorts of different experiments with her. I sort of removed the ashtrays. I gave her a huge bonus, if shew would, quit smoking and nothing worked. So I said to myself, "I want to understand what's going on in smokers brain." And out of that, we raised nearly seven billion dollars and we conducted this huge neuro study using fMRI. I think we scanned more than 2,000 consumers across four continents. So it was a pretty big study. And what we learned out of it was fascinating. Because I learned for the first time ever that the health warnings on cigarette pack, in fact, has the reverse effect. In fact, when you look at them, they encourage you to smoke even more, not less. And, of course, is completely counterintuitive what I'm saying right now. But we realize that by looking into an area in the brain called the nucleus accumbens, which is a craving spot in our brain. And I realize that, in fact, the entire way the medical system is trying to make us quit smoking is the wrong way. So out of that, I wrote a book called Buy-ology, B-U-Y-ology. And really the conclusion of the book was we had to change the entire way of making people quit smoking. So I worked with governments in Australia and Canada and later [inaudible].

And we started to remove both the health warnings on cigarette packs, but actually make these packs completely blank. And I'm so proud to say that, that today people are smoking, I mean, profoundly less than they did in the past because of our craving study work. And I'm also, however, very sad to say that my mom passed away because of cancer, because of smoking. So it's a bit too late to the game. But it all came back to my experiences as a kid, 8 years of age under her reception desk, because that's where I realized that if I say something to you, it doesn't mean you're doing it and it actually almost in some cases means the opposite.

Whitney Johnson : I love how you tied that back. Now, here's the question, what did your mom do differently as a consequence of your doing that market research for her? Not around the smoking, but in her beauty parlor. What did she do differently? How did she respond?

Martin Lindstrom: Well, the first thing my parents did were that they... So I come from a very entrepreneurial family. My, my dad, my granddad was inventor of multiple things. But they said to me were that they didn't want to keep me pocket money for going out, eating candy or, or playing computer games, which were kind of not around back then. But they said, "We want to pay for your education." And that education in that case was one of the things I did was to develop a TV commercial for my mom. So around when I was 14 years of age, I developed a first national TV commercial [inaudible]. Television commercials really did not exist until in 1984. And so I was one of the first to develop a TV commercial for my little mom's company and it was costing an arm and a leg for her because, you know, to produce a TV commercial and later on to air is, is not a cheap exercise, but she said to me later on, "I knew probably there it wouldn't be a lot of value coming out of it, but that was my way to give you education money so you could start thinking the right way because no school would be able to provide that type of education to you." And she was right. It really helped me to think in communication in, in a way no other kid was

doing at that stage. And that's the reason why if you should believe in Malcolm Gladwell and 10,000 hours, well, I began counting by 10,000 hours at the age of 12 and really ran this advertising agency at that stage.

And yes, dear, I did a lot of mistakes back then, but I was thinking as a consumer. My mom's team, [inaudible] and one of the things I taught her when I was, I think, 13 or 14 was that she's not selling beauty, she's selling hope. And, uh, through that hope inside. I said to her, "Then, everything in your clinic has to be designed around hope to give people hope. And hope is eternity of life. It is to be beauty. But hope is also the hope of believing you will be more beautiful. And if you believe you would be more beautiful, it starts from the inside. And if it starts with inside, your goal is not just to give people treatment, it's also to give them emotional support, because that's also part of hope." So my mom, as a consequence of that insight, later on, hired a psychologist which was actually helping her patients to see the beauty in the inside. And what's really crazy, just to give you, uh, to complete this whole thing, guess what? Around twenty five years later, I bump into a lady called Tyra Banks, which you may be familiar with. She has..

Whitney Johnson : Oh yeah, absolutely.

Martin Lindstrom: ... And, uh, and Tyra is all about the inner beauty, so she and I connect almost like brothers and sisters and I become her mentor, because really what I'm saying to her is exactly what I learned from my mom 25 years earlier.

So it really is crazy when you think about it, right?

Whitney Johnson : So your mom trained you to become Tyra Banks mentor? There you go.

Martin Lindstrom: With dots on the back. I mean, [laughter] exactly.

Whitney Johnson : What's your process when someone hires you? And but before you answer that question, I want to know this:

Do people ever tell you "no," Martin? It seems to me that no one ever tells you "no."

Martin Lindstrom: They probably don't. Because I think, I think... They probably don't, because I think at the end of the day, what you and I are buying in our world is passion.

I mean, I'm redeveloping a house in Australia at the moment. And I met the most amazing stone creator, and he's probably the best, if not in the country, in the world, I would say. And you could say it's a pretty boring topic. But when you meet a person who is truly, truly passionate around this stuff, for me that does the trick. Then if a person say something to you, you probably will say "yes" because you don't want to disappoint that person with all the passion. I'm probably that person of being very passionate about what I do. I think the essence of what I do is to get closer to the consumers.

I spend a lot of time in consumer homes and that's really part of my work because I profoundly believe that companies have disconnected themselves far too much with the reality eye with the consumer. They believe you can see the world through a graph or statistics or a spreadsheet. But there's one problem with all this stuff, and that is that you can't translate empathy, the ability to put yourself almost in the shoes of another person and feel what the other person is feeling. And once you do that, you actually will discover much more than the rational bits and pieces. And that comes back to my learnings as a kid, that empathy cannot be nailed down with statistics or something like that. But once you feel empathy, that can change you a lot.

And I think that's the best example I can give you on this is many years ago, one of the largest food companies in the world asked me if I could help them turn around the organization. They had done this huge study, I think it was 16,000 respondents they had been interviewing through a quant, uh, to figure out what the feelings and impressions of their portfolio of brands were. And in the meantime, I connect with the CEO and I said to the CEO, "Hey, do you want to come with me and move into a consumer home?" And I don't need to tell you this is a pretty unusual request. And the guy didn't say "no." So he joins me and we go to China, of all places, to Shanghai, and we move into a home of a young lady. And this lady, her name is Jenny. She's, she's a fascinating lady. She was a newborn mother.

And, and she had this baby when she was four months old. We are sitting there looking at her and observing her, during the day to understand how a woman lives a life in China. Now, after this whole incident, we not only discovering a profound impact, a profound insight for the company was later on added to turn around the whole company. But we're going back to headquarters and during the meeting they had a board meeting about a week later, I'm sitting as an observer and the board is asking the CEO, "So this study with the tens of thousands of people, what have we learned out of this? What's our situation?" And the CEO literally says, "Listen, I want to discard that entire study because it's completely disconnected from reality. Is that I want to tell you about my experience Jenny in Shanghai." And out of that, uh, I realized that empathy when you want to change or transform organizations is essential because empathy is what I feel it myself, then I'm much more passionate about it and when I'm more passionate around it, I can create a movement internally and that can change an organization. You cannot create a movement based on the fact that 6.2 percent is saying that at 5.9 percent is saying something else. It's just not emotional and we are emotional creatures. I think the whole COVID-19 is a very good example of that. So as a consequence of all this stuff, I started to spend a lot of time in consumer homes. And today I'm proud to say that I spend time at least 2,500 different consumer homes. In many cases, staying with these people all night.

And this is across at least 80 countries at this date. And what I do is to move in with consumers, with my team. We take our clients with us, and then we go back into the real world, into the companies, and we basically take all this insight that we learned and redesign the entire organization and its culture and its brand and its product innovation around what the true needs are. And that quite often has a profound impact on the organization because certainly they are living the minds of consumers rather than their own corporate mindset.

Whitney Johnson : The people hire you then to help them innovate, to help them grow.

Martin Lindstrom: Yeah.

Whitney Johnson : And your process is by empathy and understanding the consumer. Is that accurate?

Martin Lindstrom: Is very accurate. And but you're also hitting the nail here without really expressing it directly, because as you do this stuff, what happens is that you hit a brick wall... Let me tell you about a brick wall. So, so many years ago, the former CEO, former former CEO of McDonald's, Charlie Bell, reached out to us and he said, "Hey, would you like to reinvent the Happy Meal?"

And I'm saying, "Yeah, I would love to do that as long as I can make it healthy." And Charlie's a good man, he said "Absolutely." So we go back to our research and I create an objective that was pretty unusual. I basically say, "We would like to create a happy meal containing broccoli and we want to make a six year old eat broccoli. And if we succeed doing that, we've succeeded making a Happy Meal healthy."

So McDonald's [inaudible]. We start to do all our creative work and come up with this crazy idea where the broccoli is the bushes in the forest and the tomato is the plot and the cucumber is the murder weapon. And we create these narratives around the different characters which happen to be fruit and vegetables. And we roll it out in Germany as a pilot and it has a huge impact. People love it, the parents love it, the franchisees love it and the kids love it. Fantastic. So I go to the US to Chicago, where, back then the headquarters was outside Chicago. And I showed this amazing solution, at least in my mind. And they say to me, "It's interesting." That the first time I learned the word interesting. It is when you have a pause between each of the different letters, you know, it's a problem. And I go back to Europe, I say, "Hey, they think it is interesting. It's fantastic. We are successful." Now, what happens is nothing. For two years is complete silence. And after two years, McDonald's comes out with this grand new Happy Meal, which is basically the Happy Meal we know today plus an apple. That's when I realized, "My God, it may be I can come up with great ideas, but actually there's a piece missing in this puzzle."

So we are hiring, again, some psychologists and to oversee all our business meetings and our innovation processes. And I realized as something in an organization which is called, an immune system. An immune system is really a defense mechanism for change. It really is happening everywhere in an organization. It's not because people don't want to change, but people are afraid of the unknown. And because of that, people constantly are trying to avoid change in every degree you can imagine. So one of the things I've start to spend a lot of time on is to understand how do you break down an immune system and reestablish a new immune system around the core principles of

how a consumer or customer is thinking. And it's really, really hard because if a company has grown up to become hundred thousands of staff, then certainly they are more busy creating compliance and processes and procedures and rules and regulations and conduct and all this stuff around them, red tape, which is really restricting them from doing things. So at the end of the day, we spend a lot of time today on transforming organizations, the immune system, and create cultures with a living the mindset of a consumer.

And once we succeed doing that, then that's typically where a company suddenly starts to thrive in a huge way. It's fascinating to see, see, see how, in fact, by teaching the immune system and changing a whole organization.

Whitney Johnson : Ok, so here's what we're going to do, tell us one story and then we're going to go to your book.

Martin Lindstrom: One story is some years ago, a supermarket chain in the US reached out to us. They were, I wouldn't say, near bankruptcy, but they certainly was near selling the whole thing because it was in the red all the time. And I'll never forget it because the Bryan, which is the owner of the company, he reached out to me and said, "We want to create a new brand and a new logo." What he didn't know was that basically four years later, we still hadn't created a new logo, but we fixed the whole organization in the meantime. What we did was to take these store managers who might be working in the stores, in some cases up to 26 years, stacking cans of soup on the shelf. And we basically took them into consumer homes to see and experience how the consumer were living. And it was a huge shock for them. And out of that, we then created these workshops where everyone was, was ideating together and we then created this crazy, crazy new concept because I basically said, "This comes back to our work with neuroscience." I said to them, "If we need to change the way you shop, we need to create a wake-up call, not just externally so the consumers are seeing this retail store differently, but also so the employees are seeing differently." So in neuroscience there's term called a somatic marker. It's invented by a guy called António Damascus. And really, it's defined as something so dramatic, you never forget it.

And I think a good example would be 9/11. It's so traumatic. You won't forget where you were. You won't forget who you were together with. You won't forget even who you called. I think COVID-19 would probably be in the same category. And I said to them, "Without comparison, we need to create a positive somatic marker." So what we did was we did the investigation, we tried to find out what is making the supermarket chain differently and what one thing that stood out just a little bit, a tiny bit was chickens. In fact, a little bit tastier these chickens than any other supermarket chain in the US. So we said, let's own the chicken. So we created something unusual. We created, we created a chicken chandelier. Listen to this, a chicken chandelier. It is a chandelier looking like a chandelier, but it's just designed based on chickens, animated chickens. And then we decide the chicken dance where the staff literally whenever we had a fresh chicken coming out of the oven that will congregate under the chicken chandelier and music will be played in the whole store and they'll start to dance. And of course this idea was created in partnership with the employees, half of the people walked out of the room and thought that was the most crazy thing they ever heard in their life. Anyway, as you know, I'm persistent, so we pushed through this idea, [inaudible] and we started to open one supermarket chain after store after another, which you can to this hanging in the ceiling and people dancing.

And what was really fascinating about this was that as you walk into a supermarket now where people dancing it, it creates a feeling you never tried it before. And suddenly people kind of woke up and said, "My God, this is different." Because this is what I learned and, Whitney, this is so important. We learn that around 85 percent of a transformation of a supermarket and of most organizations is not due to the hardware, is not due to the shelf or the design or the front elevation or anything like that is due to the software, that's the people. So if we could motivate people by dancing, we created an ambiance, we created a feeling, we created culture. And that's certainly almost blinding everyone to see, "My God, this is different." But also the chicken chandelier was sending a clear signal to the staff that they were now having permission to change their behavior so that they could be different than in the good old ways of stacking cans of soup on the shelf. And those two factors basically meant that those doubled their revenue, not only debt and their sales has come up. I mean, at this stage, more than 400 percent. And it's not just because of the chicken chandelier, it is because of the change of mindset being close to the customer, seeing the world through their lens. And also that you're changing the culture in this case through a somatic marker, through a chicken chandelier.

What state are these, these supermarkets?

And they are North and in South Carolina expanding right now quite a lot. And the chain is, is what makes it highly unusual is that you they are selling entertainment now.

So they actually have opened now a range of different nightclubs and bars and DJ stations in the supermarket. So kid you not, at 10:00 PM where you're hanging around something called the Beer Den where you will have fresh beer, which in some cases are brewed in the supermarkets, their own brewery, and all from the local nearby breweries, people will be driving around with their shopping trolleys and they will have special holders with beers in it so that you can drink beer by shopping and a lot of men really enjoy that. But then at 10 o'clock, you will notice there will be a local DJ. There'll be local bands playing music just next to the, the aisle of milk and yogurt. The latest and greatest idea now their introducing is these people going around with a digital device, allowing them to take food orders from the customers and they basically break down their favorite dish to ingredients, walk around and shut the whole thing for the, for the customer and then give them the shopping bags while they're having a beer or hanging around dancing next to the to the aisles of milk and, and candy or whatever it is. So this is certainly, it's become more than just a supermarket. This is where you are entertained. And it really comes back to the principles of that if you want to compete against the Amazons or the Wal-Mart of the world, you can't do it on price and volume. You have to do it on experiences and emotions. Which is straight back to my neuroscience work because we know today that 85 percent of everything we do every day is irrational. And that's where we want to be entertained. That's where we want to hang out with all the people. That's what we want to feel a sense of belonging. That's exactly what we created in the food supermarket.

Whitney Johnson : Love it. I think that encapsulates everything you've talked about. Which brings us to an almost feels like an afterthought, I mean, you've written seven New York Times best sellers. Just tell us quickly about your latest book, *The Minister of Common Sense*, and what are one or two takeaways from that book that people should know and therefore go by and read this particular book?

Martin Lindstrom: Well, the *Minister of Common Sense* is really a book about all the stupidities going on inside a company, and that is all the bureaucracy, the red tapes, the stupidities going on left, right and center. And this is what's holding people back from changing because they have this what I call invisible stretch-jacket was basically sucking the oxygen out of the room because there's so many rules and regulations and, and all this stuff going on. So the book is really a, first of all, a fun read. And, and it's a book which is exploring how stupid we have become in corporate America today, dealing with everyday issues. The fact of reading 350 emails or sitting 350 emails a day on average. Which is if you just set aside one minute per email, that's the same as nearly six hours and we spend time in meetings and all of that stuff has made us incredible or productive. So the book looks into all the stupidities going on in organizations and then really one by one is helping the reader to remove those stupidities so that you can get some fresh air and really start to smile again. And I'm doing that through humor. I'm really taking the most crazy examples and making them, you know, more prominent. I'll give you one example. One company wanted to save money, so they have this very expensive consulting company coming in analyzing how to save money.

And one of the executives there, uh, concludes from the consulting company that people drink too much coffee. In fact, why don't we cut it down? So, to cut it down so when you press the button, you get a little bit more than half a cup of coffee rather than a full cup. And what happens immediately a day after is that people realize, "I have, I have I have about half cup in my, you know, filled with coffee, so I have to press twice. And yes, it may be it fills itself with coffee a little bit too much. So I had to pour out a little bit extra coffee, doesn't matter. At least I got a full cups. I don't have to walk back again very, very soon. So what happens is that literally the coffee consumption is going up 30 percent and they wanted to save money. The stupidity, lack of common sense is going the opposite way, and what's happening is in every aspect of a company right now, there's these rules, regulations, compliance coming in, play their games, and we end up in one big, messy situation where really there is no common sense anymore. So this book is designed around reinstalling common sense.

Whitney Johnson : We're in the middle of COVID-19. How do you think this current pandemic will help potentially restore some of the common sense?

Martin Lindstrom: I want to say that we live in a world right now which is going through a constant set of changes. And I think we never see the change as big as what we're experiencing now.

What's so fascinating is that in the end of the day, we as humans are driven by habits and routines. And basically all the habits we have right now are thrown out of the window and replaced by a new set of habits. And through that transformation and we have to find a way of standing. And that's very, very difficult. And because there's so many things which have to be changed at the same time. An, an experiment done some time ago, shows that when people in an experiment was asked to resist eating a cookie versus a very healthy vegetable and those two different groups, the first group was sitting in front of this cookie. But while they're sitting, looking at the cookie, they had to do a very difficult test. In fact, a test almost impossible to solve. And the other group they had this vegetable, I think, was broccoli. And again, they had to do the same test. What it showed the experiment was that when the test was incredibly difficult to do, people were much more likely to eat the cookie because they just couldn't handle the idea of resisting several things at the same time and because it was just too much demand on the brains. And what's happening in our society right now is that we are asked to change multiple things in our lives. The way we work is changing. Our relationship with our loved ones is changing. The way we interact with our friends is changing and we're washing our hands differently.

We can't even shake people's hands anymore because it restrains so much power on our brain, because we basically are asking ourselves to change habits which we're born and raised with instead of us going into a mode where we see the world or the glass half-empty, try to, as difficult as it is, to see it half-full and do it by saying to yourself, "What I'm experiencing right now and probably will never happen again to this degree and this will be a story for my grandchildren." But also say, at the same time, "What can I learn and how can I change as a person right now? Because this is a profound wake-up call." So use the pause you have right now not to go into panic and hang around in the social space and to, to just spoon feed you with more content from a screen. Instead, pause and use that pause to put things into another perspective, because you never had that pause before and you probably will never get that pause again.

Whitney Johnson : I love that. OK, Martin, I have two more questions. Can I go visit a consumer home with you?

Martin Lindstrom: Absolutely. You invited, so I'll bring you out next time I'm in the US and you will join me and see how crazy the world is.

Whitney Johnson : That was totally spur of the moment and it sounds super fun. See, I just disrupted myself.

Martin Lindstrom: Exactly [laughter].

Whitney Johnson : Martin, do you have a bucket list, something you want to do over the next couple of years or maybe a client you'd like to work with? Anything like that?

Martin Lindstrom: I'm going to give you two quick answers, because the first answer is that I always had the philosophy that if I'm walking on the street and there's a car bumping into me and I fly in the air and supposedly you see the whole life of yours backwards, I would like to in the last second by saying I did everything I wanted to do. Now, I actually said that to myself about six years ago and it was very fulfilling. It, it's like a burden sort of dropped from my shoulder. And I realized, "My God, I actually, I actually can now go on and be independent of a bucket list because I did the bucket list." So what I would like to do today is probably very different from what most people want to do. And first of all, I fundamentally believe that we all have three bank accounts. Yes, we have one bank account with our money, but we also have two bank accounts to other bank accounts. One is what we can help others, and one is what we learn. And these are the two bank accounts I want to increase now. I want to, first of all, learn. So I'm actually spending quite a lot of time learning sitting on a school bench, which is really highly unusual because I think you and I, in general, are more designed to train other people and to give other people advice, right? You know what I mean? I mean, Whitney, honestly, when was the last time you were sitting on a school bench and really learning a sitting there for a day or two? For me a long time ago, right?

Whitney Johnson : Yeah.

Martin Lindstrom: So I want to do that. And the second thing I want to do is that I want to give back and I want to give back by probably opening up a school in somewhere in the world in probably a third world country where I

want to teach kids about the importance and the power of perception, because we do live in a world today where perception has become reality. Our world is driven by perception. And I think a lot of kids, when they grow up, do not understand that concept. And what I would like to teach people is about how we actually behave because of our perception and how that can become a reality, because that's too really, really important for you to master.

So I think my bucket list is probably not to go to the North Pole or swim in the Antarctic's or whatever it is. It really is to give back.

Whitney Johnson : Oh, Martin, that's lovely. Thank you for sharing that.

So, Martin, where can people find you?

Martin Lindstrom: They can find me online at martinlindstrom.com. l-i-n-d-s-t-r-o-m.com

And listen, I'm, I'm online as everyone is. In terms of a Twitter, LinkedIn where I'm sending out a newsletter every week, talking about what's happening in our world and what the consequences of this for your business or yourself in case you're going through transformation. So basically every social channel, you could find me out there.

Whitney Johnson : Martin Lindstrom, thank you so much for spending this time with us today. It's been a lot of fun.

Martin Lindstrom: Thank you, back. Definitely.

I love that Martin story essentially began with Legos. These building blocks that help children in the world over imagine something different, something new. This helped Martin imagine and build his future. They helped reveal his passion. I love that he understands the power of play and the power of playing where no one else is playing, starting an advertising agency at 12 years old, then later facilitating one of the largest neuroscience studies ever done. And in the process, he introduces the world to neuromarketing, which makes me think of mirror neurons. Martin is perpetually traversing new S curves, perpetually disrupting himself, perpetually willing to play where others are not. And when I listen to him and talk to him because he believes so much more is possible than most and because of mirroring, I feel, I felt like more things were possible. Think about it. I asked him to go on a customer visit spontaneously. That's my biggest takeaway from this episode. Spend more time with people who make you feel like more is possible and less time with those who don't. It's just common sense.

If you've been pushed to a new S curve, which we all were in 2020 and would like to make sense of what happened and think through what you can leverage going forward, go to our website, whitneyjohnson.com/insights for a downloadable PDF. And if you enjoyed today's episode, we have a special treat. We have 5 signed copies of Martin's latest book, Ministry of Common Sense, to give away to 5 of you. To be eligible for a signed copy, follow me @johnsonwhitney on Instagram and share what you appreciated most from today's episode.

Thank you again to Martin Lindstrom for being our guest. Best wishes to you on your book launch.

Thank you to our team, Emily Cottrell, Whitney Jobe, Steve Ludwig, Melissa Rutty and Nancy Wilson.

I'm Whitney Johnson and this is Disrupt Yourself Disrupt.