

Kristina Dryza
Co-Founder: KR LT Studio



the innovator's interview

December 2007

The Innovator's Interview highlights unique innovations from a wide range of industries, and is an opportunity for futurethink and some of today's most innovative entrepreneurs to share insights and ideas.

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Kristina Dryza

the background

Kristina Dryza has been a trend forecaster for companies such as British Sky Broadcasting, BP, Vodafone, and Virgin Group. Having traveled the world interviewing experts and innovators, she has gained valuable insight into emerging social, cultural, and consumer trends.

Kristina still does this. But now, as co-founder of KR LT Studio – a conceptual design agency based in Vilnius, Lithuania – she translates these trends into new products, services, and experiences. Put simply (and boldly), she wants to design the future.



Company: KR LT Studio

Web URL: www.krltstudio.com

Founders: Kristina Dryza and Renata Gaidiene

Address: Didžioji 10-1 Vilnius LT-01128 Lithuania

Innovation: The studio creates spaces and objects of modern day living. It releases a range of designs annually, which reflect attitudes and emotions that have particularly intrigued or inspired the founders that year. The collections span a variety of mediums – fashion, graphics, and interiors – and are chiefly concerned with translating a singular idea or concept into a tangible physical form or experience.

The yearly collections are creative expressions of attitudes or emotions that have particularly intrigued or inspired the founders. These collections cover fashion, graphics, interiors and other means of creative execution, and are organized by year and mood.



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future**think** had the opportunity to sit down with Kristina Dryza, trend forecaster and co-founder of KR LT Studio, to learn about how she turns trends into new products, services and experiences, and how she thinks about innovation..

What took you to Lithuania? What keeps you there?

I don't actually live in any one place. I float around the world. I'm Lithuanian, but was born and raised in Adelaide, Australia, and had been living in London since 2000. Then last October I put my life into storage to allow myself to be in whatever country I felt I needed to be in – whether for work or personal reasons – and have since been 'living' in Asia, Australia, Europe, and the US. Having studied anthropology at university, I learned how important it is to participate in the cultural events going on around the world, and not merely just observe them. I feel for my career that it's important to *be of the world*, so I don't limit myself to living in just one place.

What were you doing before KR LT Studio? What made you start this business?

I was a trend forecaster for companies like British Sky Broadcasting, BP, Vodafone, and Virgin Group. I traveled the world interviewing experts and innovators in their field to gain an insight into emerging social, cultural, and consumer trends. I still do this, but now interpret and translate these trends into new products, services, and experiences. Rather than just tell people about the future, I want to design it. Peter Drucker states the sentiment perfectly: "The best way to predict the future is to create it yourself."

What's your favorite part of your job?

I love meeting likeminded, curious people and having these breathtaking conversations about the imagined future. Understanding the drive behind people's passions is also fascinating. When you're offered another way of looking at the world, it's such a precious gift. There's also that wonderful 'aha' moment in trends research when all your disparate sources of information – your weak signals – synthesize into a resounding strong signal which gives you a purpose and direction to follow.

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What's been your defining moment as a founder of KR LT Studio?

My defining moment has been to finally understand that the process of creation is much more important than the output. The most important – and only – thing you can do is put an idea, a point of view, out there. And also, to enjoy as you are creating. Revel in the creative process, rather than fight it. All of us inherently know: it's about the journey, not the destination. But when you truly live and enjoy the process of the journey by being in the moment . . . well, it's simply joyous.

You do a lot of travel. What's a creative place that might surprise us?

Luang Prabang in Laos. The sheer grace of the physical landscape, and the sweet nature of the Laotian people still keep burning impressions on me months after my visit. But again, creativity is to be found in all forms of travel – the walk from bedroom to bathroom for example.

Is there such a thing as a bad idea?

No, it's just a transition phase. A 'bad' idea is just a place you need to be as a way to take you to the next level or concept. Who's to say what's good or what's bad anyway? We have all had things that appear to be the worst thing that has happened to us in our lives that eventually became the best thing to happen to us, and vice versa. Each thing in its own moment can be good or bad depending upon how, and from where, we're looking at the problem. The only 'bad' thing, as such, is a bad attitude.

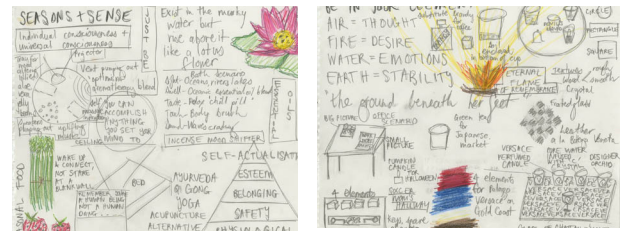
Where do the best ideas come from? Where do you go to get inspired?

My intuition drives me; this feeling that there's something deeper going on here, something more to explore. And usually, whatever I'm feeling, others also are. To get inspired, I browse galleries, channel surf cable television, eavesdrop on others' conversations – the list goes on. In particular, I read a mixture of magazines which I have no personal interest in and that aren't targeted to me. Within the disinterest are words and phrases of interest that start calling to me. Inspiration to me is all about application. .

How do you define innovation?

I don't believe in new ideas, just new combinations. These new combinations come from combining general knowledge with specific knowledge. General knowledge meaning an interest in the way the wider world functions, from stock markets to mummification to important dates on the social calendar; and specific knowledge meaning details of the problem you're trying to solve. Like a kaleidoscope, the more of each type of knowledge you have, the greater choice of combinations become available to you. This is why context is so important. How does detail play out amongst the wider world stage? Only when things are contextually relevant do they make sense, and what I am, first and foremost, is a sense maker.

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On a scale of 1-10 – 1 being low, 10 being high – what is your appetite for risk?

Well in theory I'd like to say 10, but in practice I'd say 7. You can't innovate by standing still. The very idea of moving implies risk. And moving in a forward direction leads to growth. Risk to me is held within all those small fears you overcome on a daily basis – starting a conversation with a stranger, admitting vulnerability, asking for help, being okay with being lost, etc.

What do you think makes an individual “good” at innovation?

To innovate you need an ability to visualize a future that doesn't yet exist. But most importantly, you need conviction of your beliefs. By the very fact that others can't see your imagined future, you need to visualize it so strongly, and with as much detail as possible, so others can also see and believe it. You have to have lived the idea first in your mind before you can make it a reality.

Do you collaborate with external partners to help generate and build ideas?

Yes, but I also think you yourself need to be the right mix of being super connected and hyper networked, and also have the ability to rebel against all these inspirations in a hermit-like state to truly innovate. I believe in the third mind i.e. the knowledge of one person and the wisdom of another creating a third mind of knowledge, that goes beyond the separate participants to form a collective knowledge that is greater than its individual components.

What advice do you have for other entrepreneurs trying to move an innovative idea forward?

To move an innovative idea on, you have to have the belief that your idea is for the greater good, and that it will give something to the world even if that greater good can't be seen by the wider majority. Once you connect to that goal, the details we all face in realizing an idea – like the annoying non-urgent, non-important emails disguised as the complete opposite – become much easier to stomach. By connecting to the deepest simplicity of your idea, the non-essential tasks slowly begin to fade from view.

What are the barriers to innovation for a larger organization?

Innovation in large organizations is usually kept in silos – either a department or a handful of individuals. This is due to the lack of motivation, responsibility, and reward felt by most staff members in regards to this topic. It should be everyone's responsibility in a large corporation to innovate. That means an organization giving employees the time, energy, and space to experiment. But more than this, large organizations have to hire curious people.

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What do you think is your greatest strength as an innovator?

I think my greatest strength is being able to connect dots that aren't yet connected. My abstract thinking gives me the ability to link multifarious concepts and to see how they are all related. I think I'm very fortunate to be able to understand both the whole and its various parts.

And your greatest weakness?

My greatest weakness is probably my inability to prioritize my thinking time, because I find all information interesting and relevant. I get 'all over the shop' because connections to all manner of other things start to form and the task at hand becomes part of a greater web.

If someone gave you \$100 Million to run with and grow your business, where would you take KR LT Studio?

I want to inspire and encourage others to build the futures they see, so I would use the money to set up a venture capital fund to support others in their entrepreneurial efforts... with me as an advisor of course!

Where do you see yourself in 2020?

I see myself designing items that style the way people live. Kristina Dryza is a brand – it's a way of living, a way of looking at the world. It's a definable point of view. I want to bring this point of view to a gallery show I curate, an innovation workshop I run, a newspaper column I write, a garden I landscape, a retail space I envision, a problem solving class I teach, a music video I direct, or a product I design.

By 2020 I want to have my own hotel and have designed every element in it – from the bar stools to the alarm clocks to the brunch menu – as I want these items to elevate basic life experiences to help people live better, and deeper. I want to have designed transformative items and experiences that help people celebrate life.

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Want to tell us your innovation story?

Contact Josh Kutticherry at jkutticherry@getfuturethink.com,
and tell us why your business is innovative and what other
organizations can learn from your experiences as an innovator.



What do you need
to better innovate?