

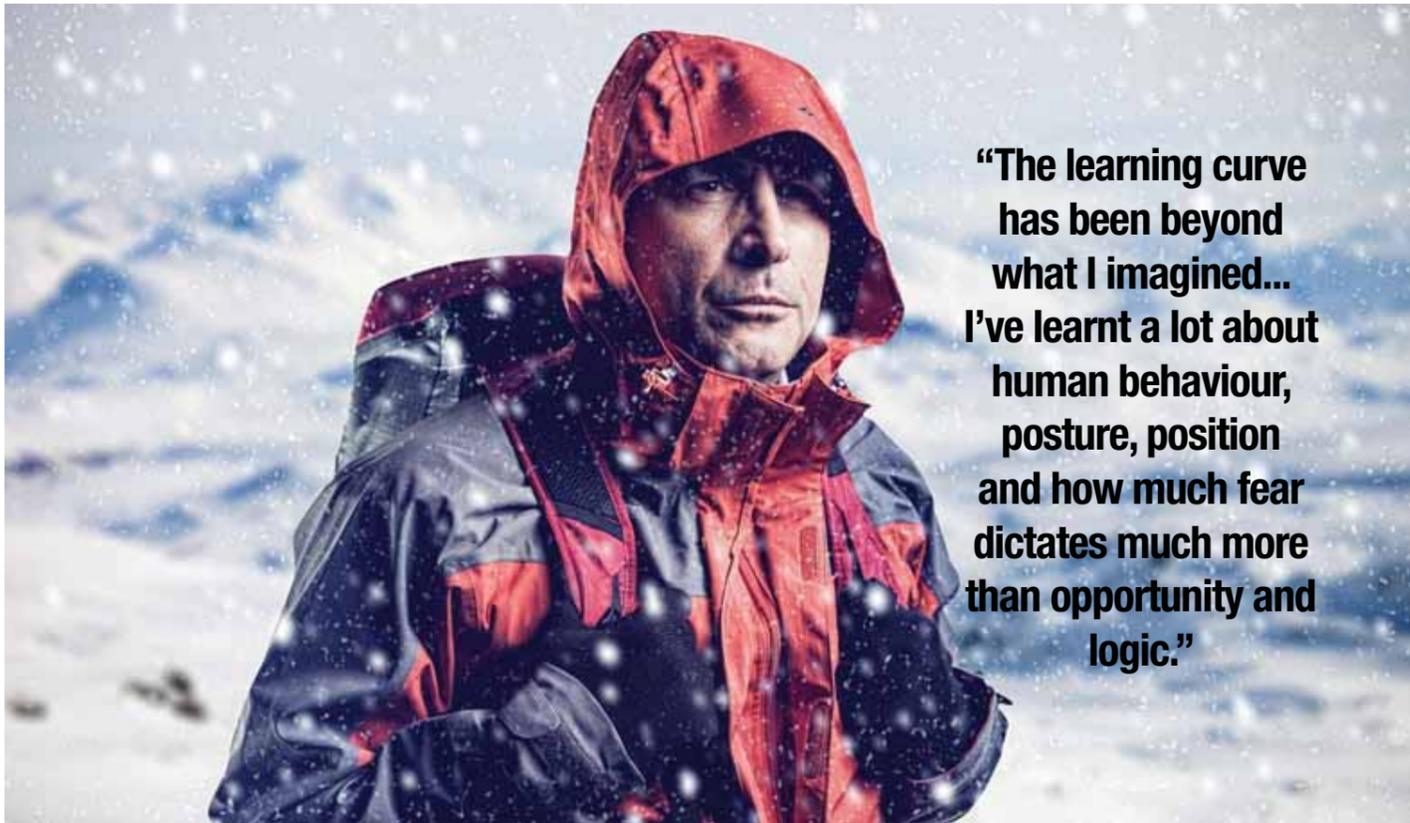


THE RACE TO THE FUTURE

THE MAN TAKING 117 ENTREPRENEURS TO ANTARCTICA

In May we introduced readers to the Unstoppables project which is bringing together over 100 Australian entrepreneurs for a 10-day think tank in one of the world's most amazing places, Antarctica. The idea is for Australia's greatest business minds to embrace disruption as they set sail on Australia Day with a game plan to get to the future first, invest in their collective wisdom to create at least 20 revolutionary companies, better business and/or processes, produce clean and purposeful profits and address issues of sustainability and environment.

M2 caught up with Unstoppables founder Julio De Laffitte to see how things are progressing and find out more about this business adventure of a lifetime.



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We’re coming into the home straight until the Unstoppables trip – how’s it all shaping up?

It is shaping up way better than I originally expected. Even before departure excellent ideas are already being born. Imagine when we have all these guys and girls within a conference designed to get their minds together for the single purpose of bringing forward what is seeking to emerge. Maucir Nascimento, I call him a future creator, got together with Des Wood, a seasoned entrepreneur and investor, and together they are creating an amazing peer-to-peer money transfer platform, registered and fully mobile upward in Australia. Marcelo Bussacarini, an incredible opportunity analyst, brought the project to my attention and I immediately knew I could help with the international distribution. Can you imagine when I show this to two other fellow passengers Jeff Downs from Redback Conferencing and Mauricio Pucci from Information Planet? This is when this concept of collaboration gets explored and taken to the next level because naturally these guys would not meet and yet here we already have a multi-million-dollar idea with people, money, know-how and the ability to take it to market.

We could have sold the boat twice over and yet we still have 19 berths available. I love the paradox because there are people applying to come and we are giving ourselves full permission to say no. The “no” has nothing to do with being a big shot, having money or not; it has to do with that gut feeling of entrepreneurial spirit that we want to reawake in Australia.

Unstoppables for us is a movement where people that can create the future will meet those that can mentor and invest in it and in them. Those with great managerial and leadership skills can work with the creator and the investor to drive it all the way. It’s not about a bunch of people that are already multi-millionaires (even though we have quite a few of those); it’s about the guys that want to be sharper entrepreneurs and play the game in full and bring forward what is seeking to emerge.

How has the response been?

The polarisation process is beautiful. Some people will say, “I’m in, I love it. I’m in.” up front and pull out their credit card and it is done. I personally love that mostly because I too make most of

my decisions very fast. Some people go, “What? What the heck? What’s going on... Why?” Now that the media in general has got hold of this and all the Unstoppables events around Australia, which were a total success, there are those that are saying, “Man, I’ve got to be a part of this; I’ve got to be on this boat.” And I guess that goes hand in hand with the entrepreneurial view of the world... I cannot miss that boat! No pun intended.

From the beginning we had the “Who is on the boat?” questions asked again and again. I guess some people were often looking for a celebrity, “Who’s the celebrity? Is Richard Branson coming?” Hey, we all know that Richard has done very well, and yet I do believe with all my heart that in Australia right now there are some other great entrepreneurs emerging. Andrew Noble from Noble Accounting, Priscila Duarte from Unstoppables, Carlos Ferri from the Zapala group, Noeline Pitt from YFPM, Thaio Tomazetti from 2Stay and Brad Bilbie from Folio; what all these guys have in common, and so many others, is that they are sharp. They are strategic and they all come with a deep desire to be successful and to give their money real purpose in real humanitarian efforts.

I stood by my guns and I did not go out to get celebrities for the sake of getting celebrities, I went to get people that came out of nowhere and made it or are making it, and we want to get in and help them to do so. Another guy who’s coming is John Elliott from Elliott Insurance. He’s a 32-year-old from Western Australia and what I love about John is his uncanny ability to be present and then you read an article about him saying that he’s going to take Bitcoin as payment for insurance. That is a revolutionary moment. Why? Because the moment he starts to take Bitcoin, one may say, “How are you going to spend it? How are you going to pay tax on it... do you pay tax on it? And... how does that work with crowd funds?” It really redefines the structure of all things because you and I may wake up tomorrow morning and we decide to create “choco” dollars. So you and I might make a website and we shoot choco dollars to people as full payment for services or goods. So let’s say I forward you 200 choco dollars for this interview and you go, “cool” and you take the choco dollars. But then Bob your friend also uses choco dollars and so you start to trade. Are choco dollars illegal? Unstable, yes, but illegal? Not really! So for the entrepreneurs out there the question is: Could there be a currency

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created tomorrow morning specifically for IT people? Think about it. What would you call it? Choco or chips?

John Elliott is not just another guy who said: “I want my business internet-based” – he actually did it. And now he’s mixing new technology with a great culture and a brand. He’s a go-getter and the fact that he is taking Bitcoin as payment for insurance already tells you he’s redefining the future of insurance and maybe financial planning. I would keep an eye on that guy.

Imagine what would happen if John Elliott, Judy Reynolds and Geoff Gourley got together. Imagine what happens as they hang out in Antarctica for a few days. Between those three, they can create a platform, have you invest, get a return and save the planet! One could say It’s just three people hanging out in Antarctica. What we’re going to be doing is looking at creating a minimum of 20 companies on that boat!

Where was Realestate.com, Salesforce, Seek in the year 2000? How much are these companies worth now? They are a multi-billion dollar business pool.

Maybe they were the anomalies 10 years ago, but now they’re becoming the trend. But the greatest majority of people cannot get into the trend; they don’t know how to cause these things to happen.

That’s what Unstoppables is all about: it’s the gathering of people that not only know how, they will do so.

Knowing what you know now about this audacious idea to send a boat full of entrepreneurs to Antarctica, would you still go through with it?

I believe I have done the equivalent of two or three MBAs in one year. Disruption is not a concept, it is a living force. The woman who drives this project for us, her name is Priscila Duarte. Priscila came last year and her business acumen was already at an A-level and yet her business acumen has now amplified three, four times over now just by the pure reality of intensively dealing with cutting-edge people.

Would I go through with it again? Absolutely. The learning curve has been beyond what I imagined. I’ve learnt a lot! I’ve learnt a lot about human behavior, posture and position and how much fear dictates much more than opportunity and logic. The ability to trust in order to leverage is a phenomenal pleasure of business done well. I’ve made some amazing friends too.

Would I do it differently? All that I’ve learnt now would allow me to do it differently, but back then I did not know what I do know now. I’d definitely engage with people differently. It was only after months and months that people started to see the success of the events and the businesses emerging and happening and connections with mutual incredible value and that we started launching things. Then they had respect for the idea and the desire to come on board to engage with each other.

There’s a high calibre of people and they come from a range of different industries, are you seeing common things that connect them?

“I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up!” is a very unifying and common statement I have heard from many Unstoppables as we interview them. So, in other words, these guys have a real sense of adventure and curiosity. A real sense of, “Look at that! I’m going to go investigate, I can make this happen and when I grow up I’ll get a real job!” And then they have a huge business where lots of other people have real jobs. They are still figuring out what they are going to be when they grow up.

A deep desire to see things completed and an incredible ability to bounce back is another thing. Entrepreneurs and business leaders

get whacked in the head and they come back. I see that across the board. I know of people getting cancer and saying, “I’m not interested in getting cancer so I’m going to go take care of this and bounce back.” People just being 100 percent committed to what the play is.

Another interesting factor is a real sense that no one is saying, “I know it all now.” They’re saying, “There’s a lot I don’t know, there’s a lot to learn, things are changing and with change comes opportunity. I’m not complete yet.” A real sense of humbleness, even though we’re talking about people that are achieving at the highest levels. They still have a sense to say, “I haven’t achieved yet, I’m still getting there.”

They do have an ego, and it would be weird to say a bunch of entrepreneurs don’t have an ego because they do. But they can actually toe the line and go, “I’m going to shut up now because I want to learn.”

What is the investment? How much do people have to pay and do if they do want to go?

Antarctica is far away and it is expensive. So this is a real investment of time and money where every participant should bring on board a reasonable understanding of their challenges and aspirations, and be willing to play so that their challenges get addressed and their opportunities amplified. The costs are between \$18,000 and \$25,000 depending on the room. The trip is tax deductible due to the business nature of it. We believe that the return on investment will be significant and that just the PR alone should be substantial.

You’ve said Australians are wired for success. Are you confident the businesses and ventures will prosper in the economy as it is?

Oh absolutely. Australia is the best country in the world because this is a democracy, because money is cheap, because the laws apply – low corruption and more respect from an economic and cultural perspective. This is an incredible country.

It’s when people are trying to defend themselves from the future, living in survival and are uncertain about tomorrow that things don’t move and new companies don’t start up.

Unstoppables’ highest goal is to bring to the front of mind that frame of reference where people really look at what’s available to them in terms of what we have here in Australia and bring with it encouragement, mentors and money opportunities. Unstoppables is a grouping of amazing people going to amazing places to cause amazing results. So Unstoppables is bringing back to Australia the spirit of entrepreneurship, helping people to commit to their futures now. And it’s also about getting a voice to ask governments at federal, state and local levels, to please take away the red tape. Please take away legislation that doesn’t work. It’s out of control. It seems that we have to pay more and more taxes to fund systems that are more and more autocratic.

So you ask: will the companies coming from this be successful? Imagine being on a boat for 10 days with 100 people with full permission to succeed, an agreement to help each other and facilitators that are causing it to happen. I think absolutely everyone on that boat is going to live 10 years in 10 days. The return on investment on this trip to Antarctica, I personally believe, is going to be 10 to 20 times when you look at the experience, the friendships and the commitment to being Unstoppables. 

If you’re a serious entrepreneur and want to go to Antarctica apply at www.unstoppables.com.au