

Kindness will Prevail: An interview with Lucy Knill , Managing Director at Anthropy

Ahead of Anthropy 23, taking place at Eden Project from the 1st to the 3rd of November, Paul Ferretti spoke to Lucy Knill, Anthropy's Managing Director, about human kindness, innovation, and a better future for Britain.

Temps de lecture : minute

20 October 2023

Can you tell our readers more about Anthropy's mission?

Anthropy exists to inspire a better Britain. It is a unique type of leadership summit, held at the *Eden Project in Cornwall*. It is designed to invest in a future for Britain that is more positive, more sustainable, more equitable and because of these things, more successful. Anthropy takes over the entirety of the project site. During the course of three days, we have more than 180 sessions, which are led by more than 500 speakers. Every hour of every day, we have about 15 different stages live, each one with a different conversation on a different topic.

An agenda has come together through a few different ways:

- From our 50+ sponsors and partners.
- From our founder and our team.
- From a shared application process and a judging process.

All of the sessions are layering up to answer one of the four Anthropy

critical questions:

- What is the quality of life we want for Britain for the next 30 years?
- What are the qualities of our built environment and our natural environment?
- What are the qualities of a good and responsible economy?
- What are our global perspectives, what our shared values and our role in the rest of the world?

All of the sessions are relevant to one or more of these questions.

We are looking to inspire leaders to change the practices in their organisations in order to drive collaborations, i.e. leaders working together to share on how to solve problems, getting people out of the silos they might usually be in and getting collaborations going. We are also looking to drive impact, because of the action of these leaders and of course the people that they, in turn, influence.

Do you work with any political parties or political personalities to reach your goal?

Anthropy is completely apolitical, so we don't work with one party or another. However, all parties are welcome to come to Anthropy.

We want the people not only to speak, but also to listen.

Anthropy is gathering intel, insights and encourages responsible business leaders to learn from one another. We then aim to write that up and take it in front of decision makers in the government and the House of Lords, spreading it as far as we possibly can. Unlike political parties who are working in 4 to 5 years circles, Anthropy is about the longer term future of this country, the next generation, the next 30 years.

How was born the idea for Anthropy?

The idea was the brainchild of *John O'Brien*. John is the managing partner of a group of PR and marketing agencies. He's also a best-selling author, a serial campaigner, and has spent 10 years in the army.

Over the last 30 years, he's spent 17 of them in various roles working for the Prince of Wales, now King Charles III. He was managing director of some of His charitable interests and has built one of the UK's first ethical and sustainable purpose agencies. During COVID-19, John became concerned about the state of our nation, and he started wondering:

"What is the UK equivalent of Davos? Where is the leadership gathering that brings together the intelligence to focus on the longer term vision and the direction of this country?"

He began to think that we should connect people together to think about our shared challenges: What do we want the future vision of this country to be, and how are we going to get there?

Can you tell me more about "Dynamic Stewardship"

After last year's Anthropy gathering, one of the things that came out was a real desire from leaders to mobilise change. Using intelligence from Anthropy 22, and working with various other 'Anthropists', we created a framework which is based on the components of individual and collective action, and the pathway for mobilising that action. At the centre of that, sits the Anthropy charter. This charter is a set of principles where

'Anthropists' believe that leaders should lead and live following such ideas.

But what do we mean by that?

Leaders of today have a responsibility to the future. Built environment, natural environment, culture, heritage, laws, traditions, all of these things are under the stewardship of the leaders of today, but on a caretaking basis. Successful leaders don't simply perpetuate the status quo, they identify new thinking, innovation, they think about the next gen, the long term. But for the future generation, not for their individual benefit.

Leave your ego at the door, leave your silo at the door, come together and embrace human kindness, meaningful collaboration, and unite.

Are capitalism and anthropism compatible?

Anthropy is about taking responsibility, taking action for the improvement of society, but also our economy. Anthropy doesn't align with any political system. With Anthropy, there is an opportunity for business leaders, but also non-profit organisations, communities, governments and so on. We need a massive bracing of purpose and sustainability.

Being intergrown to the DNA of business, that is where the opportunity exists in our society.

Mary Portas, for example, was one of the speakers at the last edition of Anthropy. She gave a very passionate speech at the Labour Party conference. Net zero, she said, has the potential to create up to 725,000 jobs in the UK, with 77% of voters saying that businesses should have a legal responsibility to the people and the planet.

Business leaders have the power and the influence to be anthropic. Responsible businesses are businesses people want to work for,

especially in the young generation, where values are sometimes more important than the salary. Consumers would rather buy from responsible organisations as well. Businesses and entrepreneurs can therefore be a force for good.

Is there anyone who inspires you?

The first person that comes to mind is *Sir Tim Smit*. He is the co-founder behind *The Eden Project*, where Anthropy takes place.

He had a vision in the 1990's, and he succeeded in turning a clay pit, where nothing could grow, into the world's largest indoor rainforest. He had to raise £80M to do so, convincing everybody who previously thought he was completely mad. The architecture of these biomes is incredible, and it teaches the dependence of the human race on forests, on plants, on trees. Today, Eden Project has added £1B to the Cornish economy and employs 400 to 500 people around the year.

Tim's ability to galvanise people, to make them care, is extraordinary. When he started on this mission, climate wasn't as mainstream of a topic of conversation as it is today, but he made everyone understand the importance of his project.

Lucy Knill is Managing Director at *Anthropy UK*.

Register here to take part in Anthropy UK 2023, taking place from the 1st to the 3rd of November, at The Eden Project.

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