

Closing the joy gap

Founders Maxim Gelmann and Caroline Hobkinson sit down with former Disney employee Sura Al-Naimi to talk about the gamification of sustainability and how companies can benefit from the Stroodled audit while living your best life & mindful of the planet.

Sura: What was the inspiration for its inception?

"I guess we can proudly say we're not pro hardcore eco warriors, like we're not Greta or David Attenborough. Nothing wrong with these guys but we want to buy stuff, experience life and have fun. I used to be a diver and like obviously I've seen that whole world changing, so my first product was a pasta straw. And then it was just like how easy and simple it can be. As you said, now, it's all doom and gloom, people are tired of it. They really suffer sustainability fatigue. Everyone feels that they are not big enough and that small changes won't matter. And I think this is then emphasized by the fact that only the big companies only talk about the big stuff."

"Because, if they talk about the small stuff, everyone's going to point out all the stuff they're doing wrong. There's lots of stereotypes, all negative undertones.

And that's why we partnered up, to change that and to bring some joy to the topic and some positivity. Yeah. But it started from a conversation because when I met Maxim, I really liked his energy. I liked the positivity and the idea that there is agency in the stuff we do. The pasta straws are emblematic of that, that feel good thing. It's like you could obviously argue why do you need to have this straw in the first place, but it's not about changing the way we drink, changing the habit, but slightly adapting it into a different world. As an anthropologist I really relate to this habit hacking.

By doing this, you become a broadcaster and adapter. By having these extraordinary experiences, you think I'm empowered, and I might then make other changes in my life. Because a lot of the communication is so negative and it feels like, oh, it doesn't make any difference anyway!

SUSTAINABLE | PAGE 7



And do I wash the yogurt cup or not? The jury is still out but if I'm already doing this, let's make that so much fun that it becomes a real love mark, drenched with joy. And then I want to showcase it, because I feel good about it, I want to post about it. I want to tell my neighbour about it, a viral domino effect. You become an incubator about sustainability without having to be the most radical version of, it, gluing yourself to the road, which is obviously, a wonderful way of expressing yourself, but I think a lot of us draw the line here. When it comes to the financial crisis, we realise it's not just a lifestyle choice. It's the cheaper choice, do I need to buy it in the first place or not? Often, we feel: We don't have time for this. Having worked with bigger companies, like Google, I was shocked by how the events are run.

Even when it comes to Google Earth Day, we produced countless goodie bags, with lots of not recyclable, nonbiodegradable items in there. The disconnect was so vast. So, I thought there's a huge market gap when it comes to events and companies. Obviously, you have ESG ratings, but it's more like: what is your mindset?

People hide behind those tangibles, like a carbon footprint, but no one bloody knows what a carbon footprint is! It's used as this excuse where you can pay someone else to offset it. We apply this bizarre Judeo-Christian worldview to it: I can be naughty, feel bad and guilty about it and can pay someone for the absolution of my sins.

But I think it doesn't really work in our modern times.

No one does God in that way. Oh, I've been naughty, now I must buy myself out of that. As if we are living in a medieval monastery. We need a new mindset for our modern time! We are told constantly that we're worth it! It's all about fun and it's very experiential. We live in an experience society and not a service society anymore. And when we make those experiences extraordinary, they stay with us, we want to talk about them, and they have a lot of value. And that's why brands have a lot to offer. Using the language and the motivations that we already have inherently as humans, like joy as an encapsulation.

We are starting with a bespoke audit to help us finetune and modulate our parameters. We are giving a star system over to people. We investigated certain parameters we called them our 5 Ps. The 5 P's to living your best sustainable lives.

People, Place, Product, Packaging, PR & Communication."



"In order to get the Stroodled ratings, we have to approve them. We are looking towards being an accredited trust mark, to reshape the perception of sustainability and more importantly, we shape the KPIs around that topic. We're trying to get away from the B Corps, I've overheard enough conversations where accountants are like, oh, let's put another bin here to get another five points. It's soulless tick boxing.

Maybe you are using orange peel to make marmalade, growing bees on the roof of your garden, putting on a scarf, encouraging your employees to wear a scarf, once a week and lower the temperature in your office by two degrees. The KPI needs to be how many people have you touched with your actions.

Back to Caroline's point earlier: you can still go get drunk but do it sustainably. We plant that touchpoint. Here in the UK, we have the hygiene rating, which hospitality businesses need to display. It's zero to five. Every business has that on their door. So, the idea is for it to be a Stroodled rating."

"But if you're doing this top heavy, like a lot of companies are doing people feel patronised. But use it well you are enabling your staff, shifting from an anthropological point of view, the mindset. It takes two weeks to change habitus. And then maybe let's have that in winter every Friday, you have a knit. A lunchtime knit together, a staff bonding moment. Everyone knits the scarf together and then every Friday the staff chooses to wear a lovely scarf and then you turn the thermostat down. Then it doesn't feel like a pretence to be green. They're greenwashing again. It must be permeating the whole company culture, that's what we are highlighting and looking at.

The whole company must fully immerse themselves in sustainability and then everyone believes in that. And then people are less disenfranchised and feel they are truly part of it. We looked at a lot at modern approaches to happiness and lifestyle. The idea of manifesting sustainability in your daily life. It's a joy factor, gamification. Everyone is talking about gamification and immersiveness, but I think when it comes to sustainability it's still very two dimensional.

That's why we developed our childlike approach of positive reinforcement. You want to read Shakespeare, you start with your ABCs and before you know it, you're reading Shakespeare. Baby steps, daily, every hour, every minute. So, you truly change your daily habits, and you have that true immersion daily.

Yeah. And it permeates your company culture, your structure, and anything you do."

Listen to the full podcast on Spotify.

Closing the Joy Gap: Conscious Consumerism & Sustainability with Maxim Gelmann and Caroline Hobkinson

