

## **(Job 38038) Gamechangers 10.10.15**

### **Peter Little (PL)**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to Game Changers 2015. I'm Peter Little, Deputy Vice Chancellor at QUT and member of the Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame Governing Committee and it's my pleasure to invite you here to this special occasion. Before getting underway I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we're meeting tonight and pay our respects to their ancestors who came before them and to elders living today. The location of the State Library on Kurilpa Point was historically a significant meeting, gathering and sharing place for Aboriginal people and we tonight proudly continue that tradition.

I'd also acknowledge our special guest, Nathan Mayfield, co-founder and Chief Creative Officer of Hoodlum whom you'll hear very soon. Welcome Nathan, we're very delighted to have you here, it's a real privilege. Ray Weeks, Chair of the CEO Institute who will as always be conducting the interview, members of the Library Board of Queensland, members of the Library Foundation, the QUT Business School and members of the Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame Governing Committee.

Importantly I acknowledge the generous sponsors of the Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame and the Game Changer series, Channel Seven, wonderful media partners, Morgans, NAB and RACQ. We thank you for joining us for what will be a wonderful evening.

The Game Changer series is part of the activities of the Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame which is just entering its eighth year. The Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame was established as a partnership between the QUT Business School, the State Library of Queensland and the Queensland Library Foundation to build a collection of Queensland's business history. Our fear was that there was nowhere in Queensland where we were collecting the stories, recording the stories and building a memory forever so that people now could look back on the past, and people in the future could look back on the past and see the great achievers of Queensland's business history over the entire history of the State.

I think we've inducted some 52 leaders into the Hall of Fame and a long way to go, and of course, as quickly as we induct people others are emerging and of course in the old days businesses would last for 50 or 100 years and today we're seeing businesses arise out of start-up's and make a global impact and then get taken over or merged into something else. So this is a wonderful challenge for Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame, not only to gather the great stories from the past, but also these wonderful stories and we'll hear one of those tonight.

So the Game Changers is designed really to recognise some of these wonderful current entrepreneurs, people who are making a real impression on the economic life of Queensland, who are building the reputation of the State nationally and internationally and it's a real privilege to be able to be here and be part of the series with them. And

from these stories I can assure you that you will all, each and every one of us, take away lessons for our own professional journeys, but will also take away lessons that can guide our businesses and our workplaces. And I'm sure tonight you will find many inspiring elements.

So tonight we're very fortunate to hear from Nathan Mayfield, who with Tracey Robertson co-founded a multi-platform entertainment business here in Brisbane which has gone on to global success and win very prestigious international awards. For those who are watching this on live stream throughout the State please feel free to tweet in your questions using the #QBLHOF, and similarly those in the audience if you've got a burning question that you're scared that you might lose, feel free to tweet that as well or hold the question for the question time at the end.

On that note I welcome Ray to formally introduce Nathan and to conduct the interview. Thank you.

**Ray Weeks (RW)**

Thanks Peter and good evening everyone. I might just also mention our principal partner Crowe Horwath, I'd like to just recognise them. They've been with us as principal partners of the Queensland Business Leaders Hall of Fame for some time now and they're very important principal partners.

I think a number of you would know, this Game Changer series is all about bringing nationally and internationally recognised entrepreneurs and innovative business leaders here to tell their stories, to share their insights with you, to discuss how they build companies, inspire teams and drive remarkable growth achievements.

Now Nathan Mayfield is as Peter said the Chief Creative Officer and Executive Producer at Hoodlum. It's a company he founded in Brisbane in 1999 with Tracey Robertson. Now Hoodlum is an Emmy as Peter said, to an Emmy and a BAFTA award winning production company and with this experienced television division, and an expert digital team Hoodlum is uniquely positioned, this is what you'll hear tonight, to create multi-platform entertainment experiences for a global market.

Now Hoodlum has offices in Brisbane, Los Angeles and producing Secrets and Lies for ABC US, in development on a new feature for Disney and working with History Channel on a multi-platform experience for their global hit Vikings. It's produced digital content for the BBC series Spooks, one of my favourite series, and also the US series Lost. So Hoodlum has several projects in development in the US, the UK and Australia. Now we will explore tonight the multi-platform concept and Hoodlum was one of the first in the world to become a multi-platform film and television production company providing this complex interactive viewing experience and is now a global leader.

Producer is one of Nathan's titles, but most importantly he's an innovator, he's an entrepreneur at the international forefront of multi-platform projects. This 21<sup>st</sup> century amalgamation of traditional film making, internet, smartphones. So Nathan's from Harvey Bay and Tracey's from Springwood, Logan City, they've always had the belief that they could make things happen and they keep proving that over and over again and that's what you're going to hear tonight.

Please welcome a true game changer, Nathan Mayfield.

What Nathan just brought on stage is his virtual reality kit. Now he took me through it and I tell you what, it scared the hell out of me, but it's a great experience. Nathan, as mentioned you co-founded Hoodlum in 1999 with your business partner Tracey Robertson and I thought we could start by talking about how you went from the boy from Harvey Bay to co-founder of this internationally successful business.

**Nathan Mayfield (NM)**

It's nothing controversial actually. I studied film and television at school and I thought okay, apart from that I wanted to be an actor and then you realise that the actor doesn't have any power, and then I wanted to be a director and then you realise the director doesn't have any power, and then you quickly realise the only person that has power is the producer. And so that was sort of the trajectory. And then I met Tracey working on a soap opera on the Gold Coast and very quickly we bonded and started making short films on the weekends using all of the sets and all of the equipment from the show that we were working on.

So on the weekends we had the stuntmen and we had the cameramen and we had all of that stuff. And so we've always been trying to do that and when that show finished we bit the bullet and decided we've got to stop working for other people. So like all creative artists in Australia we went on the dole and we worked out of my spare room and we realised too very quickly just saying that you're a producer doesn't actually mean you are one and we needed a point of difference.

Brisbane was a hub of nothing, there was very little production happening here and so we stumbled on the internet and we had a great champion in a guy called, ahh, who was working at Channel Seven at the time, and David said to us have you checked out the internet at this thing called the web and went okay, this is in '99. I'll get there I promise, I won't drag on. But he gave us this idea that actually what our point of difference is, why don't we start making television that's on the web and on TV at the same time. So we just started telling people that, it sounded good, we had no idea what it meant and we then got funded from every weird little State Government department. So the only people that didn't fund us, and rightfully so, was the Screen Queensland, the PFTC, because we weren't traditional in that way. But we went to the Department of Innovation and Technology, we went to the Department of Employment, and they all gave us these little bits of money.

So we put together this show, we went and found a service provider, an internet service provider, we set up in his office and that was the moment that we went holy crap, there is something really amazing here. We were watching videos on a little screen like this, they were like jagged sort of really badly compressed videos and to be honest, it sounds so corny, and there's so much corny stuff that's going to come out tonight, but it felt you saw the future. You could see that that screen was going to get bigger and at that time it was how to video's and all of that stuff.

So we went to Apple and we said to Apple we're not going to product place, we're not going to promote your computers but we will deliver you an audience. And they very

quickly came on board and they decked out our entire office – we're still on the dole by the way – decked out our entire office with all those beautifully coloured computers. And then jumping forward, by the end of that process Apple in the US were going to do their first big developers conference and what I didn't know at the time – and actually even on the way there I was like I don't even know what I'm going to – is that they were launching the first iPod and when I turned up there I was the only person talking about content in a room full of maybe four or five thousand people.

My aunty bought me my first suit to go and I turned up there and I met Steve Jobs for about ten and a half minutes and I was the only person, very quickly realised I was the only person that talked about content in a different way that all the technology people were. If you ask technology people, and I see this happening again now, is that they all say that they make content but the reality is, when you say what sort of content they don't know. And Tracey and I were looking at this as a tool and saying I can see how we can use our film language and our story telling to use this and this is just a tool in the same way that radio play people somehow worked out that when there was vision that they had to use props and they had to use sets and they had to use that stuff. So it was an exciting sort of period of time.

Little did I know it was going to take 20 years to turn into a business. Every year from that year I just thought next year it's going to big and it wasn't, but it is now.

## **RW**

So this multi-platform concept, take us through a little bit more because you've described it as watching, playing and sharing. So take us just through a bit more of what it means.

## **NM**

So multi-platform is exactly that. Its multiple platforms and the way that we looked at that was that everybody else was trying to emulate television on the different screens. So at that stage you had online stuff. We knew that we had to emulate audience behaviour. Because we were working in soaps you had a real understanding of what you had to get to get somebody to come back the next week, the next night and so it meant that you had to have all those things like cliff-hangers. A cliff-hanger is like that moment at the end where it says oh my God, I've got to wait until next week to watch, you know finding ways like that and using it in film language. So when we looked at it it was about not trying to put television on these little tiny dial up screens but actually look at how people were using the device and that hasn't changed.

So when we look at the content we create we look at how does somebody use their phone? What is the best way to tell a story on that device that's this big? It means that you use more close-ups than you do if it's on a movie that can have beautiful wide shots and landscape shots. If a computer is interactive, like how do you compel somebody to do it, not just for a gimmick but how do you compel somebody to play through part of the video and then say actually I want more or I want to find that clue and explore and discover.

And so multi-platform is exactly the same thinking around stories but it's just looking at those different screens and those screens will continue to evolve and will find different ways like that thing.

**RW**

Exactly. How about we show you a video which will visually demonstrate the multi-platform concept, and also Hoodlum's multi-platform projects including Secrets and Lies. So what about we show it now.

[video playing]

It's great isn't it? So when you established Hoodlum about 20 years ago I mean multi-platform entertainment just didn't exist, so moving into the space has been high risk. Just take us through some of your views for the entrepreneurs in the room, your views on risk taking and explain your credo, you've got nothing to lose. It's been your credo hasn't it?

**NM**

It has.

**RW**

And also, you don't take no for an answer do you?

**NM**

No. No for better or worse. I mean I tell you what there are days where you just wish you could just take it or just do it. But Tracey and I had, for whatever reason I do not know, but we still do this to this day is walk into a meeting and one of us will still say we've got nothing to lose and I think it means that you go into a meeting and it's all out. Like it's whatever the idea is, it means – there's two things that you have to be careful with though, because nothing to lose means it gives you the confidence to go in and this is coming from mistakes and scar stories of doing both of these. One being too cocky and one being too desperate, and both of those you never get work because one thinks you're an asshole and one thinks oh God, they need this so badly that they're hiding something.

And so going in and just going well we have nothing to lose, like we just have to give it as it is and go in and it's worked for us. And the taking no for an answer is again not in a cocky way but it's actually just saying three things, one I didn't articulate myself; two they didn't get it; or three the idea was crap. And looking at that and saying okay well when you go into these projects, or when you go into those sort of meetings, knowing that you've just given it your all and then you can move on. You still go home and think god we really want that job, but it's really out of your hands by that stage.

**RW**

But in pitching a project, just give us some of your learnings about how not to pitch a project, how to pitch a project.

**NM**

I wrote these down actually somewhere here. It is you have to love the work, you have to believe in the work, but I think the important thing in pitching – it's a given I think that we're story tellers, like that's just why we gravitated to this business in the first place, so I can tell a good story. But in a pitching situation it was always about convincing that person that we could be in business for years and that actually this was going to be sort of

fun most of the time and that we were going to deliver because you have 40 minutes, and you can prepare everything, you can have your PowerPoint that won't work, you'll have your video that won't work, you'll forget three pages of the entire script or the story. But as long as you've got them on the hook going that was entertaining then you've got the reason to come back again and again. So I think that's the only thing.

And also just not – I don't rehearse pitches. We work it all out, I'll be annoying and stressful in the lead up, I might write out my version and then throw it out and then just go in and just go I'm going to forget something but that's okay.

**RW**

So you don't role play? You don't do...

**NM**

No. Tracey tries to get me to role play every time but she's just annoying that way because you know, we just know each other too well but it's also much easier when you have another person in there because she is the stage mum who is sitting at the back of the room sort smile, you know like you know I've pitched to people where they've fallen asleep half way through a pitch and she's there going no it's okay because she can see I'm like breaking up or dying inside. But to have two people, you've always got a leverage there.

**RW**

So if you look at your history, it's really a statement on your agility, being nimble isn't it because being able to transform the place, move quickly from one business model to the next. Do you agree with that? How do you see it?

**NM**

Yep I talk about this all the time because I think we have to – and we haven't been this through every time, but – and I can talk about those mistakes too – but I think we're a speedboat and what you can see is the big studios and the big networks and they're like the big battleships. And they're cruising along and we can identify opportunities and we have to be able to zip around, zip around them, go behind them, do all of that sort of stuff. But I'm telling you, those battleships, they're turning, and like holey shit the world's changing, our models are changing and they've started to turn and they've got their guns aimed at us. And so when that happens they'll blow us out of the water so we have to be ready to move. But up until then we've got to be this little nimble company that can sort of adapt.

And I'll jump ahead and sort of talk about a couple of moments where I think we made a mistake is we had about 35/40 people and they were brilliant and I love them all and we making flash games and the business was booming and I could see that there was this thing called IOS coming and I wanted to but I loved all these people and I thought well they don't have the skill set and we missed that boat, like we missed the app boat. We could have killed it in that we had a really interesting set of skills and we're now down to about seven people because we weren't the speed boat when it came to that apps stuff and you see amazing success stories in Queensland of companies that built those apps. And I remember seeing it but just thinking well no I want to keep everybody here and that work

I could see was disappearing but what I should have done is actually said actually we've all got to reskill.

**RW**

Yep. So you've got flexibility now haven't you in your operating structure?

**NM**

Yeah.

**RW**

You can move quickly, you've got that capacity to change.

**NM**

Yeah. And the world's changed. So when we started 20 years ago we had to keep everybody in-house because there was a Hoodlum methodology, there was an approach. Whereas now every graduate has that methodology. They think that way. They think about how digital plays out.

You know when we went through film school you wanted to make a film. Graduates now, they just go oh well film, I could do a film but no-one watches Australian films so maybe I'll go and make a game or a web series and they'll get far more people turn up to those perhaps. So it's a different world.

**RW**

So what was your biggest breakthrough?

**NM**

As stupid as this sounds I don't think we've had it yet because – actually I lie, the US was a huge breakthrough because it just elevated the type of work, it elevated us as a brand, it gave us that confidence. So that was a huge breakthrough, but many years in the planning you know and the ambition was there. But I also look at if a breakthrough is at one particular point I'd have to say there's not one of those yet because there's a thousand champions. David at Channel Seven who introduced us to the web, Rick who's on our Board who came from the dotcom days and taught us, we went and met with him and said hey we want to make these cool things and he said well have you got a business plan and we said what's a business plan. And he's still on the Board now and we call him Mr Miyage out of Karate Kid because I'd take a business plan to him and he'd say no you haven't done the financials and then go away and come back and go away and come back. And of course the beautiful thing about Rick was that when I finally gave him the business plan that I thought was right he then took it and said no I'm going to do the next one. And he got us the investment and you know he's a champion. So hundreds of champions like that.

The guy that wrote the check for us for our first show, for Austar you know who didn't really know and that was for a show called Fat Cow Motel and he wrote us a cheque and then we had a great time with him. We delivered it and I asked him afterwards why did you give it to us, you didn't know who we were and he said I knew you could deliver and you were fun. The beautiful things about that show which we made in 2001, it was a multi-platform series, the phones were the size of a brick, is we've just sold it to ABC in

the US, they're going to remake it. What's that, 14 years later? And I gave it to them a year ago with a bunch of other stuff based on the success of the US and sort of slipped in underneath and the fun part was that didn't hear anything and then we got a phone call out of nowhere saying oh my god, this is the most innovative thing we've ever seen. And I thought this is 2001. But we love it, it's still our favourite show.

**RW**

So Hoodlum's established offices in Sydney, LA, kept its base in Brisbane, you've built an international base from Brisbane. Why is that? What's it about Brisbane that's kept you here and enabled you to achieve such success?

**NM**

We would be bust if we weren't in Brisbane.

**RW**

Tell us about that.

**NM**

We live off the smell of an oily rag anyway, we're always under that sort of cash flow pressure of doing it, we had great access to people, we could afford the rent and there was something else which is that we were under the radar. When we sort of – and this is not anti-Melbourne or Sydney but when you've got those sort of groups and everyone – there was a lot more talk going on that action in those places. Nobody I knew was in TV or film except Tracey and we just were under the radar and very quickly, and this is again thanks to the government support stuff here, we're off the dole by now, is that they are – lost my train of thought – but basically being under the radar meant that we weren't looking to Sydney or Melbourne for our work, we just went well bugger it, we'll just go the US and we went to the US and the UK and we picked up our work there. And what happens, and you hear this story a lot, is we got that work first and then we started to get attention here. So because there was some parochial about these little guys out of Brissie.

I remember going to a network, every network meeting of this particular network, the guy would start with did you bring me some Bundaberg Rum? Like that was his thought and I just thought, you know what, I'll show you. And we've done business with them since so I don't care.

**RW**

That's great. Is there anything else about your strategic thinking that really underpins a decision to stay here? Anything else to go on what you said?

**NM**

Well it's sort of grown up around us now you know. I think if there isn't a thing called the hub of multi-platform but we attract that business now and we can actually be here. Strategically its lifestyle too you know and I think you know Tracey's living in the US to sort of set up that business, I go back and forth but ultimately this is where we're going to be, we see a great infrastructure here and we're a big fish in a small pond in some ways too. The access to creative talent, it always is attracted to wherever it's cheap to live because you're an artist first before you can find ways to make money out of your art and

so you get innovative thinking because you're not having to do three jobs to pay the rent. And I think that's the interesting stuff that walks in the front door.

**RW**

Now we keep talking about Tracey of course and this has been such a successful partnership.

**NM**

Yep.

**RW**

We understand how the partnership formed but tell us something about the temperament, the character of each of you that makes this partnership work so well? What are the respective strengths that each of you bring to this partnership?

**NM**

Well Tracey – I fall in love with everything, Tracey is a terrier and a closer and you need one of those in a business. I can get them in on the hook, I can make sure that we deliver something of quality. With her you know she throws grenades as I say all the time you know. We can be developing an amazing sort of story or whatever and be extremely collaborative and in passing she'll say well I hope it's good. And you're sort of you know. But you sleep over night and you realise, you'll go back and you re-write something or you re-work it and we do that to each other without realising it. But I think the reason that partnership works 20 years in is that very early in the piece we had the battles of the egos. We were a partnership first before we set up this thing called Hoodlum. And when we were a partnership we used to have fights and there was always an escape, like well if this doesn't work I'm going to go and work for someone else. And then we created this thing called Hoodlum, then we were working for that. So all those fights, all the malice went out, all the ego went out and now we're just working for this thing and it completely changed our view. Twenty years in we're best friends, our families are intertwined, everything is there, it's part of the, you know.

**RW**

But you've still got very clear distinct roles haven't you?

**NM**

Very yeah. And shared views, like we don't have polar opposites, we love the same things. The only time that we – you know we still fight, you know we still fight, the only time those fights are scary is when we're both scared because usually in one of the partnership somebody has the answer. It's when we both didn't have the answer that's when its fear you know, and you've just got to get through it or not talk for 24 hours. Or drink.

**RW**

Or drink yeah. You mentioned that role that Screen Queensland didn't play with the funding. But they've played a very important role haven't they?

**NM**

Huge.

**RW**

Screen Queensland in the projects of little. I mean how important has Screen Queensland been to you?

**NM**

Massive, massively important and just when you go overseas and you start working overseas you realise how lucky, not just Queensland is, but Australia is with the amount of government support we have in the film sector. Yes we can talk about how we want that increased and absolutely of course we do but the reality is those champions in there and I don't hold a grudge to – when we went into PFTC in those early days and said this is what we're doing, it made us walk out and say okay well they don't understand it or we haven't articulated or we haven't actually thought about it from their point of view. Like they are just thinking TV and film and we're coming in with interactive and they don't actually know what that means. So in some ways it was actually about demonstrating those models, keeping the communication open with them and going and educating them along the way. Now they are our biggest champions. That doesn't mean that it's easy.

And that's the other thing I think is important about any of this government funding, you can't take the piss. You can't think okay I'm resting on my laurels now and they'll give me something. Like surely I'll just bring in the trophies and they'll – you can't do that, you've got to really believe that this is going to work. And that's to say 20 years later we've got a bunch of mistakes lined up where things didn't work. But I could have said that Fat Cow Motel didn't work, it didn't get a pick up series, it sat there on the shelf, it was used for PhD students for 10 years on multi-platform stuff. And now we've sold it again, so who knows you know, you need people who are going to give you that ability to experiment and that's it really.

**RW**

When I was a Director of Pacific Film and Television Commission, it's amazing how many film makers would said it was like just drive the ute up to the back door, throw the money in and just leave me alone, let me get on with it.

**NM**

Yeah.

**RW**

When you start to try and link them into the commercial, get that commercial linkage with projects, it was almost like talking another language.

**NM**

It's crazy and I hate that that still happens now in writers and directors and producers have a sense of – if they have that sense of entitlement. I write a script therefore you should fund it. David at Channel Seven, he was the one that taught me about audiences because I went and pitched him a great idea, I told all my friends, they thought it was a great idea. I went and pitched to him and he went – and I take out the swearing – but basically he said that if you think that every idea that you and your friends think is a great idea then you're mistaken. He said you know I love SBS, I do this this this and this and I'm the programmer for Channel Seven. You have to step out of what you like and look

at what an audience wants and then I think films, television, interactive. You've got to think okay I've got a good story, how is this going to relate to an audience. It's consumer in the commercial business, but we call it audience in our side.

**RW**

Any other mistakes you've made along the way?

**NM**

Okay, there's 16 pages of this. Oh the main one was – and I think we'll still make this mistake because it's hard not to – but scaling up. Like when you're on a win and things are booming and you start hiring people and you get a better office and all of that sort of stuff. It's like the mining boom, it's not going to last and I think the thing that we constantly are learning is how to sort of adapt and when you scale up, or you can see something coming, how do you start preparing for it now without killing the work that you're doing.

I've always enjoyed and been excited by the fact that I feel like Hoodlum's always been at the head of the curve, but you don't make money at the head of the curve. You make the mistakes, you make the experiments so then you want to be there but you also want to be on the top because that's where the money. But at that point you've just got to be really careful. And I think the other big mistake we made, again this sounds cockier than what I mean but is all the dumb questions, like we had these great people in the building, we'd have game programmers who we'd make a game and Tracey and I would go and try and play it and there weren't any instructions. We'd say well, where's the instructions and they go well if you put instructions on this this won't be cool. Well okay, we're not cool, I think we made that game, I think 30 people played it. And then it just reminds you, actually the best stuff is when you don't make people feel stupid.

And so its trusting what everybody in the audience knows is if you watch something and you're like huh then listen to that and go back and go okay well, unless that's the absolute intention you're missing the boat.

**RW**

That's good. Any questions from the audience? Any questions you'd like to raise? If you had to give – just while you think about a question you might want just raise – if you had to give advice to would be entrepreneurs in this field what would you give? What would be the key pieces of advice you'd give?

**NM**

It's a real – it's such a hard question because one you don't think that you're an entrepreneur, like you don't actually go to work saying we're entrepreneurs today and we're going to change the world or whatever. I think it is – you have to listen to the people around you, you do have to just trust, stick with it, you know stick with whatever the idea is and flesh it out. At some point it will fall over but it's formed your opinion. I think you surround yourself with smarter people and I've heard that on these sort of panels before a lot. You want to find yourself – you hire people that teach you and again I've probably heard that on an entrepreneurs 101 course or something but it's true, you're finding people – because that keeps it exciting. And the only other part to that you just have to remember life's too short and so you have to find, you kill those projects, or those

relationships that you might be doing for all the wrong reasons because you can see the flags come up and 20 years down you're just like I could go bust by not taking this but it's going keep you [00:38:37.1].

**RW**

One question we got from Twitter is how does the trend of binge watching television, you know through mobs like Netflix and so on change or challenge your industry?

**NM**

You've got to think that binge watching, it wasn't an idea that somebody had where they said hey let's just bundle it all together and let's put it out to market and see if people like it. It's the other way around. Box sets have been around for years, decades, VHS even yeah and binge watching is just a behaviour like audiences have evolved to. It started in piracy and now places like Netflix and sort of online channels sort of embrace that and attached a billing model to it. And so I love it, I think it's a great – I mean we all do it. It's all about this new evolution of view on demand and saying well – and the evolution has been that there's less fear around it. Like networks or producers want you to come back week after week but the reality is just because you give it to everybody right now you will get the person that will watch the entire season of Breaking Bad in one go. Me. But then you get the next season and you know it's not going away and you know you're not going to miss it because it's sitting there so tonight I might just watch one, tomorrow night I might watch two episodes, next week I might watch another, you know like. It's just modifying the behaviour for how we want it and if you don't it's at your own peril.

I think the next trick will be how we commercialise that. How do we still make this relevant for brands because if we don't have brands and if we don't have people watching ads, which none of us do, that's that next wave that's coming, it's catching up when they're not getting their money's worth you know.

**RW**

So this is an exercise in understanding behaviour too. The suite of platforms that you make available to viewers, is it a recognition that most viewers want to be doing something else while we're watching TV, like fiddling with the smart phone, the iPad, the laptop, whatever.

**NM**

Yep and it used to be when you pitched an online and a TV show the programmer would say but I don't want them to go onto the iPad half way through my show and we would sort of say to them well they're doing it anyway like so why wouldn't you actually capitalise on the fact that they've got two screens already plus the television. You can keep the conversation going by actually allowing them to make a choice. Now Secrets and Lies Australia, we did something really interesting with that and it was a world first here as well is at different points, I don't know how many people knew this, but you would have your tablet and you would watch the show and if you were on the Secrets and Lies site at certain points it was in sync with the show. So on the TV show you would watch the daughter sort of surreptitiously taking a phone call out the back and your tablet would come to life and it will be a close up and you would hear her conversation. And so it was about rewarding an audience to make them feel smarter. Like if they could leave there going – and easy with who dun it's you know, it was like oh my god, I know a little

bit more than maybe the other person, somebody else. And so always making sure that that's valuable.

If it's a spin-off or an afterthought it's a failure you know. If it's a marketing gimmick it's a failure, it's sort of got to start from the onset.

**RW**

It's got to be an integral part of the story.

**NM**

Yep.

**RW**

Questions? Peter?

**Question**

Nathan, Australian businesses don't have the greatest record of success in taking their businesses overseas or globally. So just share with us what sort of a mindset that it takes you know to be based in Brisbane and to think globally.

**NM**

It's funny because I just immediately went to – there was something that said we could set up a business and still get to the dole office on a Wednesday morning to put our dole form in, in the same way that when PFTC paid for us to go to our first market in Cannes it was a two star hotel. It was just being smart around what was needed, like where we could go. And I think Brisbane is interesting because we are under the radar you know, we always were looking overseas rather than south. So when I think about how we've been able to launch that into the US I think we've been very frugal and strategic, I don't think it's – I say it's you know we're Hoodlum by name but not by nature, like it has to be a sort of smart strategic move.

But also you just have to do it. You know you have to actually just jump on plane and go and have the 50 million meetings that you walk out of thinking oh my god, we've hit the big time, you know like they said yes, the studio said yes and then by the time you land in Brisbane it's gone, it's evaporated you know.

**Question**

So you've got this big show coming up, Secrets and Lies US.

**NM**

Yep.

**Question**

Let's say that's successful, what do you see for your business is say five and 10 years time? What's possible?

**NM**

More production. I think the US business will just continue to pick up. But the beautiful things about working in the US and overseas is very quickly realising how important the

Australian business is because in Australia we're very privileged in that we own our IP. You sell those rights to people to sort of raise the finance, the US is a different model. You work for a studio, the studio owns it, they pay you a fee and I think we are leagues ahead of some of our competitors because actually we can continue to develop and nurture stories here that we can own which gives us leverage when we go into those markets.

**RW**

And other questions? Yes right here, thanks.

**Question**

Hi, I actually had two questions. You can answer them quickly if you like. First one was I saw you brought on the virtual reality glasses, I was curious where you see the future of digital and multi-platform content going? And my other question was for young Australians or sort of businesses in your area of Brisbane what advice do you have for them pitching to you as companies, or can you let us know sort of how Secrets and Lies got picked up and how that relationship kind of formed?

**NM**

Wow that was about four questions. I don't have that good a memory. The future of digital and multi-platform, we'll just see the word digital drop off and we'll see the word multi-platform drop off. It will just become entertainment again and we won't have to go and sell it as this new fandangled thing. You've already got it, like if you've got a business now and you're thinking that way you're already ahead of me because you're already thinking, you grow up with a tablet and TV and binge viewing and all of those sort of things. So you're already starting to emulate how your audience is going to react to this.

I think it's fascinating, we were talking about this earlier too, is when we went through film school you wanted to make a feature film. Now when people walk in our door, especially graduates and sort of new businesses, none of them want to make a feature film. Yeah that would be good but they want to make a web series because that web series got 16 million views.

You know we've just finished a project in the US that was a low budget and it will get 10 million views in its first webisode because of the YouTube stars that are connected to that. My role is to make sure that they come back tomorrow because the story's compelling enough and I think that is the really excited world, that will start to get better. It's not monetised properly yet but that's going to change.

Was there any others?

**RW**

Any other [00:47:16.3] onto that? You alright?

**Question**

Yeah.

**RW**

That's covered.

**Question**

Oh sorry, just in regards to [00:47:21.5]...

**NM**

Oh the pitching of Secrets and Lies, that's been years in the making but you've just like got to get on the plane and you've got to have the 10 meetings and 20 meetings and 30 meetings and sort of make those marks. I think the easiest thing – I don't know if this is right – but you've got to find that point of difference and that's an easier take into the US than trying to pitch something on paper over there because then you are just like everybody else in Hollywood.

**RW**

So what's the next big thing for Hoodlum in terms of maintaining that differentiation?

**NM**

I think – well it's this thing, is that you want me to get...?

**RW**

Yeah, yeah.

**NM**

So I've got family and friend in the front row here who are all bored with me talking about this and I've shown them all. Virtual reality is the first thing that I've seen in 10 years, 20 years that I feel like is exciting. In the same way that when we went to that ISP and the nerdy guy was showing us a video that was 2cm by 4cm, and you could just see the technology was in the way. You knew that that was going to get better. When I first looked at virtual reality which is about two and a half years ago, it was a bunch of nerds in a games company and they had a massive helmet on and it had this massive umbilical cord plugged into a computer and you're just like yeah, this is not going to do anything.

And then you put the helmet on and you can say you looked at it and it was blocked figures, looks like Minecraft actually but it was block figures and you're like okay, this makes sense. Then in the last couple of years you start to see the evolution of these dorky looking goggles here which is Samsung have got VR gear and...

**RW**

You guys have tried this right?

**NM**

Yeah. And it's a Samsung phone that plugs into a pair of goggles, you put it on and it looks as nerdy as hell right and if you show people that stuff they just go this will never happen, I'll never walk around – and then I put them on Ray this afternoon and it transforms the way you view entertainment and content because what this is is an immersive experience that at the moment I'm looking at it and it's a landscape of New York.

**RW**

We're flying into New York right? That's just amazing. I was standing next to the stage here and it was flying into New York, you look around you and you're just looking straight down. It's brilliant.

**NM**

Yeah. And I look at this because I go back and I look at what happened when went over to do that with Apple and the question we said when they said we're making these big fat pipes, they're this new technology called Broadband and I said but what are you putting on them. And it was crickets, there was absolutely silence. Like um content? No-one had thought about what that actually meant and when I look at this and I talk to Samsung and I talk to these guys and I say that's great, I can look at New York but then after three minutes you gave the headset back to me and said that's fantastic. So it's got the spectacle, it doesn't have the utility yet.

**RW**

That's it.

**NM**

And I think that's why this is exciting. And this is an experiment, this is where we're about to make our next 50,000 mistakes on it but I think it's just something you know.

**RW**

A great platform yeah.

**NM**

Yeah.

**RW**

Yes right here, question there.

**Question**

Two questions. Firstly...

**RW**

You're allowed one.

**Question**

Well no, the second one is – what's your process Nathan for creating all this content? That's the serious question. The other question is where did you get your shoes?

**NM**

The second questions a secret. The first one, which I've forgotten now because you talked about the shoes, but the creative process, it's a really interesting question. I don't actually know. I think there is – it has to just be – I hear so many different stories, it could be a drama, it could be a comedy, it could be any of that stuff. It just has to sort of resonate with you and it means that somebody could come and pitch an idea to us that we'll pass on and then – and I celebrate this for them because that's their entrepreneurial spirit is that they will turn around, well stuff you, we'll go and find someone else and they will make it and it might be a success with them. But it's that thing again of that

first connection of saying okay do I want to be on this journey with this person? If not, good luck, I'll cheer you from the wings. But I guess it's always looking at the sustainability of the idea.

If we're talking about stories there's – actually there's got to be kernel of something. All of those ideas that we've had success with, *Strange Calls*, *Secrets and Lies* being the two big ones, came in in quite a rough and raw form and we have a great team, Tracey and myself and there's a guy called Lee McGrath who used to be my boss on that soap opera in the Gold Coast, the three of us can look at that and sort of peel away and find the gold in there and then bring that structure to it and work with the right people. It's collaborative. The flag for me is when somebody, one wants to say that they want to be a producer with us, two never say to me oh I've got a great idea but I don't want to tell it to you because I think you might steal it because that means you have no idea about how hard it is to get something off the ground, and I think if you want to keep that idea and all your ideas are sacred, find a different artistic expression because film and television and digital is about working with some great innovators. The programmer is as creative as our financial controller is because you will need of those pieces for it to actually be realised on a screen.

**RW**

Anything else in the – I've just got a better question here that I want to ask. What's the biggest I wish I'd thought of that moment?

**NM**

Oh that's good.

**RW**

It's a good question.

**NM**

I think – I don't actually have the right answer for that but I think it's what I was saying is that there were several missed opportunities when iOS came out because we could see the value in what you could do with that platform and we didn't jump on it because we knew that it was going to be an expensive gamble and I remember very specifically finding stuff on iPhone. This is honestly when iPhones had maybe one or two thousand apps, now it's up to maybe a hundred million, and I remember looking at this interactive graphic novel that we'd been trying to do and I saw one and I bought it off the website and I think I paid \$8.99 for it and I played it and it was the worst interactive thing I'd ever done.

And so if I think of missed opportunities I think well we had the skills there, we just didn't take the leap. It would have changed the path that maybe we wouldn't be here either, I don't know. I'm sure I'll come back to that one.

**RW**

Good. Look we've just about run out of time. Is there any final question anyone wants to raise?

**Question**

In keeping with the trend I actually have a two-part question for you as well.

**NM**

Binge questioning it's called.

**Question**

Given that you describe yourself as being ahead of the curve and you work a lot with clients in the US and the UK how well do you think Australian brands, TV shows and films use immersive content and entertainment currently?

**NM**

Not much. I mean obviously if that's a direction you want to take it comes down to you find a champion and you hope that they one don't leave, don't get sacked or get transferred because it's not a business yet, like the money isn't there. So it's actually somebody who is going to come on the journey with you, sort of say I don't really exactly know what you mean but I believe that you're going to give me something exceptional or interesting. So the good point is there's a big difference, and if we talk about learnings, understanding the difference between a desire and a need because when – this is being quite honest now – when you're Hoodlum and you go into a room and you can show a great reel like that and it looks fun and exciting and innovative you'd rarely go out of a meeting where you'd feel good. Like everyone is saying wow, we want to do that. If there's no need behind that it never turns into a business and took 15 years to work out. That just because someone loves what you're doing doesn't mean that there's a job behind it and it doesn't mean that you stop doing it or you walk in cynical, it just means you've got to find your champion, somebody who is going to be on that journey with you and then at least it's up to you. If you deliver something that's poor then that's your own fault but at least you've got in the front door. Does that answer it?

**Question**

Yes. The second part to that is what do you think is sort of the minimum standard that people need to do in terms of immersive or interactive content? Like what would you recommend TV project or a film project actually considered, because I think in the comms world we have like almost check boxes that we go yep, we need to do some vignettes and we need to do this and we need to do that. But what would you say in terms of immersive content is the minimum standard?

**NM**

Oh great question, and really long answer. But the non-sexy bit is what you have is time. Once you start making a TV show you're spending money like nobody's business until you run out of money, until you're finished and then there's no money. So everything before then is planning and its ugly and it's Excel document spreadsheets and it's behavioural stuff. Like we know there's social media stuff which is totally unsexy, like when should we post a message, what time of the day. We know when, what should that message say. So Biggest Losers a great example, they had a social media piece which was all about basically – and I know this is going out to the ether – but basically was like hey let's go and look at the fat people. You know like that's what it was. Like it will be a photo and it will be someone shoving food in their face and they'd get thousands of views.

We transfer that, we turn that into stop being a spectacle and start being meaningful about saying look at the relationship between this mother and daughter and why is she wanting to do what she's doing. Ten times, like it just exploded overnight and I think if you are in comms it's about like how do you transfer something into being not a spectacle but meaningful and as soon as it feels like it's gimmick get rid of it, as soon as it feels like it's going to cost a bomb get rid of it you know. That's the shortest.

**RW**

Can I ask you please, thank Nathan Mayfield.

**NM**

Thank you.

**PL**

Ladies and gentlemen we've been privileged to see a great Queensland entrepreneur here tonight, or one half of the partnership and I mean it's truly remarkable to see somebody who has been able to combine creativity and business and make a global success of that based in Brisbane and I have a view which I regularly express here about entrepreneurs and again tonight we saw this critical element that our truly best entrepreneurs are those who see things that others don't, or they see them well before others and we've seen that tonight.

I mean an incredible story to think that you created something in 2001 that's been picked up as a remarkable piece production 14 or 15 years later. And there were many examples of your ability to see things that others don't and I think that's an encouragement to all people who see things in their space, whatever that space may be, to have the courage you know to pursue what you see so that you're not lamenting and you had to rack your brains to find something that you'd passed over. But of course there will always be those occasions.

I thought it was also remarkable that you combined, apart from your creativity selling or salesmanship and closing. I mean it's pretty basic but you know what it's really what makes businesses work. And I think also the courage and persistence to just relentlessly pursue you know from the dole, through years of the dole and drawing on government support to being now a business that still enjoys public support, but is truly independent and globally successful. And for that we thank you for being a great example to other entrepreneurs in Queensland and Nathan can I say that you and Tracey are true Queensland game changers and would you thank Nathan once again.

Would you also thank Ray once again for another wonderful interview? He puts people so at ease and the conversation just flowed beautifully, so thanks very much Ray.

I'd like to thank you all for coming and of course I'd like to thank once again our sponsors, principal partner Crowe Horwath, as well as Channel Seven, NAB, Morgans and RACQ. I'd like to invite you to our next Game Changer conversation on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November where we will be speaking to Marcus Blackmore, Chairman of Blackmores Limited which you probably don't know is another great Queensland success story, started in Rockhampton and now one of Australia's really truly remarkable success

stories in 2015, exporting brilliantly to China and doing very well nationally. So that will be a wonderful story as well.

Would you now please – oh I should say, the transcript and webcast will be on the SLQ, State Library of Queensland website in about a week's time. If you'd like to witness the conversation again or share it with your friends or your work colleagues it will be available in a week. In the meantime would you please join us on the terrace for some refreshments courtesy of Clovelly Estate, a five star Queensland winery in keeping with all things Queensland.

Thank you once again for coming and we look forward to seeing you on the next occasion.

Thank you.

[end of recording]