

**Using an Open Professional Learning Community Platform,
BraveNewTalent is on a mission to Democratize Professional Learning**

Business Services

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Lucian Tarnowski
CEO

BIO: Lucian is on a mission to democratize professional education and maximize human potential with the BraveNewTalent team. Lucian has been honored as a Young Global Leader (YGL) by the World Economic Forum. He is also winner of the Global Enterprising Young Brit.

In his spare time Lucian runs Take Heart India, a no overheads charity that provides blind and handicapped students in rural India with the vocational employment skills that guaran-

tee them jobs for life. Lucian speaks to audiences around the world about the convergence of talent and technology and its impact on the future of the global workforce and education.

About BraveNewTalent

BraveNewTalent is an open professional learning community platform.

We bring people and organizations together to share insights, experiences and exchange ideas around professional topics. Whether you're a seasoned professional looking to enhance your skills, a recent graduate looking for mentorship or someone willing to share industry expertise and showcase ideas, our community is the place for you.

BraveNewTalent enables open access to professional development & education opportunities. We are a community of thought leaders, experts, knowledge seekers, and corporate mentors on a mission to maximize human potential across the globe.

**Interview conducted by:
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor
CEOCFO Magazine**

CEOCFO: Mr. Tarnowski, what is the concept at BraveNewTalent?

Mr. Tarnowski: BraveNewTalent is an enterprise social learning platform. We help companies share their learning and training content in order to create online communities so they can engage audiences both inside and outside of the company.

CEOCFO: Why?

Mr. Tarnowski: It depends on the organization, but there is a huge trend of content marketing that has com-

pletely changed how most consumer brands are engaging their customers. That is beginning to take place now in the talent marketplace as well, and more and more brands are understanding that leveraging content is the best way to actually influence people. As a talent brand, an organization may want to influence people for different reasons. One is because they might want to recruit them and have those people think of that organization at the front of their mind when they are thinking of their next career option. Another is just to be able to contribute to the way the ecosystem of the company operates - by sharing best practices, research, whitepapers, etc.

BraveNewTalent's mission is to democratize professional learning. We really believe that there is a major global problem that is increasing year on year, and that is the skills gap. There is a growing divide between what the formal education system in the world is producing and what industry demands. Where BraveNewTalent comes in is we try to help organizations directly bridge that gap, by enabling them to share learning content to develop people off their payroll in order to make better hiring decisions in the end.

CEOCFO: Do you approach organizations about being part of the group or do you reach out to individuals? What is the business strategy?

Mr. Tarnowski: We have two types of users. One is organizations themselves, which create communities using our products. The other is individual professionals, which we call members. Organizations and members engage with each other directly, but they also engage around topic

communities. We have thousands of professional topics on BraveNewTalent, and people form around these communities to share what they are learning. It gives organizations the opportunity to share their research, learning content, training content, etc. around the topics that matter to people. Organizations do not have to build the audience from scratch but we are helping them do it, so every new organization we bring in adds to the network effect that is the BraveNewTalent community. Ultimately, we would like to create a marketplace of human capital where organizations will be able to increase the efficiency of human capital. They will essentially be able to better apply their own people and people outside of the organization

CEOCFO: Who decides the topics?

Mr. Tarnowski: We started with a base and then it is user generated, so any member can tag anything they are learning with any topic. What we do is we see which topics are trending and we surface those up to the top and form communities around topics once they get a core group of people sharing content around them.

CEOCFO: What are a couple of the most basic concepts, and what might be one or two that are less common?

Mr. Tarnowski: A good example of one of our most popular topics is leadership. If you go into any book store, often the most popular best selling will be those business leadership books. What we have is a community of several thousand people sharing what they are learning together around leadership. What it creates is a great learning destination where unlike traditional learning, which is one-way with only you and the content, BraveNewTalent puts you into an environment where it is social learning. You are learning with other professionals who are interested in the same topic as you. Fellow community members can answer your questions, can critique your thoughts, etc. It really puts people into an envi-

ronment where they can learn collaboratively, and they can learn with feedback. We think this is very important to the future of learning. One would be leadership as an example, and others can be offshoots of leadership. For example, we have women in leadership. This is a community of largely women but also men as well who are interested in this topic. It is somewhat similar to Sheryl Sandberg's Lean In Community.

Clients such as Expedia are able to tag their content around the open topics that matter to them. Expedia has been participating in lots of different communities such as user experience, interface design, and what they are doing around responsive design. We have topics formed around that.

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CEOCFO: Do you find that many of your users have graduated from other communities or people that have not engaged very much and have now found a place where it is meaningful.

Mr. Tarnowski: I would say that it really depends. Learning communities are as old as the internet and a lot older. It all started with guilds and master craftsmen. Even in the enlight-

enment period you could see how these communities formed around different things. People have always learned in communities, and in fact I always argue that the school system is where it broke down. The idea of the factory farm education system that we currently have has broken our traditional model of learning, and all BraveNewTalent is doing is going back to the future and back to the original model of learning.

To answer your question, I think that most people have experienced online communities in some sense, and that might not be around their learning but it might be around their parenting communities, hobbies, or Facebook groups where they discuss certain loves for movies, etc. Communities are as old as the internet, and I would often argue that the internet started as a learning community of certain scientists and thought leaders wanting to share what they were doing and their research.

What BraveNewTalent has doing is creating scalable place where organizations can create large communities but make sure that they get the contextual relevance

for the people in those communities. We certainly hope that BraveNewTalent will be members best experience of learning collaboratively.

CEOCFO: What is your geographic reach? Are there certain areas where people are more involved than others?

Mr. Tarnowski: Most members have actually come out of where we have been most active as a company, which is the US and the UK. Our HQ is now in Silicon Valley in San Mateo, but we have an office in London as well. We have members from all over the world, BraveNewTalent's user acquisition level is B2B2C, so we basically sell to companies, they invite their members into the community, and that is how we scale our audience. What we find is that the global thousand companies we sell to have huge audiences that they an invite into these communities.

We are aiming to create a parallel model of education that does not rely on schools and universities and teachers, but rather enables the world's enterprise to be able to create their own model of learning and get all of the value out of that. One way I would explain it is that if you think of the global labor market as a marketplace, like every marketplace it has supply and demand. In the labor marketplace, the supply is people - individuals and professionals- and the demand is jobs and industry, companies. BraveNewTalent is trying to enable those with demand to shape their own supply, or enable companies to be able to train and develop people before they employ them in order to make better hiring decisions. That is extremely relevant to the US in terms of training for future jobs, but it is acutely relevant in the emerging markets where the education system is just broken and we think that companies can step in in a very scalable, cost-effective way to bridge that gap.

CEOCFO: What tells you that your goal is achievable?

Mr. Tarnowski: I would actually refer to my childhood. My dad was one of the early pioneers in vocation education, and since the 60s he experimented in how you can train people for employment. He has run a number of training programs largely in India but he traveled all over the world looking at vocation education solutions. I learned from a very young age from his decades of experience and he got me very interested through him. I traveled to now over 60 countries. I am not bragging, but it was an amazing experience often looking at the education systems and realizing the simple thing that the model education system was completely broken. It is a multi-trillion dollar broken business model, and what I realized was that we need to fundamentally change it.

We are empowering the world's learners to learn from each other and leverage the social web. What makes me believe this is possible is seeing what was possible on the ground with my father's model, and understanding that training somebody for six months

in a vocational skill provided them lifetime employment and opportunity, whereas years of formal education did not. What I saw was that by ensuring talent has the right skills to demand is a much smarter way to ensure future job security and make sure people have what is in need in the market.

The other thing I strongly feel is that we are at this point in history where I call it the digital enlightenment. It is a unique moment where technology is changing everything. It has changed how we consume things, how we listen to music, how we watch TV, how we date, etc. One of the things it still has not radically disrupted is how people think about what to do for work. When you think about the labor market in the world, the vast majority of the world's human capital is wasted. Something I have always said is that human capital is the world's most wasted resource. If you think how will technology increase the efficiency of the global labor market, that is where it has huge potential to leverage these learning communities so you create more of a meritocracy for this human capital.

CEOCFO: When you are speaking with a company, whom are you typically speaking with to introduce the concept, and is there a moment when they understand it?

Mr. Tarnowski: There is often not an "aha" moment and we have to come back. We sell to individuals and not companies, and we are selling an innovative product. On the whole, it is individuals who are embracing change within an organization that want to improve how the organization shares learning and knowledge content. That is who we always try to find. We tend to talk a lot to people within the HR department, sometimes talent acquisition, and sometimes learning and development. We have spoken to numerous CEOs about how they can turn their employees into part time teachers without changing their behavior. Those CEOs get it but they are not buyers of BraveNewTalent. It is always the individual or champion that we have to go to, and quite often the social media teams get involved as well as the communication team. We are experimenting in terms of

who is the best individual at the company to go to.

CEOCFO: How is business?

Mr. Tarnowski: Education is a multi-trillion dollar marketplace, so there is a fantastic business here and I think BraveNewTalent is binary where if we pull this off the way we want it would be very difficult not to be a multi-billion dollar company. It is probably going to be a winner takes all opportunity here for who created the network effect within the global labor market. It is still our early days in business, but it is fantastic that we got in the Hot 100. We are early in our revenue, we are series A funded, and we are going into our Series B next year. From a customer point of view, we are beginning to sign up some pretty major brands, but revenue still remains early although it is now expanding. This quarter should be very good and the next quarter even better.

CEOCFO: Would you tell us a little bit about Take Heart India?

Mr. Tarnowski: My dad actually started Take Heart and it is the vocation education work that I was referring to. My dad was a bit of an explorer; he was born back in 1929 and lived through the war in Poland. He was setting up a business for overland travel to India in the 50's before the hippie trail, and was funding this by writing the first rough guide books to fund this. He got polio in Bali and then spent two years in the hospital and the rest of his life in a wheelchair. He got very interested in how you could get more disabled people into work because he found that people would often lose their dignity with disability and lose that kind of self respect. Often, they would lose the ability to work and my dad felt strongly that employment, work, and contribution is critical to someone's dignity. He did a 100,000 mile over land expedition in his wheelchair, which was basically the world's largest assessment of physically handicapped people. He looked at vocational education solutions all around the world, wrote a book on it, wrote for the Reader's Digest, and filmed for the BBC. It was there in India in 1964 that he met a very prominent Indian social worker

who was the prodigy of Gandhi, Baba Amte and they really hit it off. My dad was a huge fan of his approach that Work builds Charity destroys – Give them a chance not Charity.

My fathers vocational training programs that were hugely successful in India, and that was through Take Heart, which funded all of it. The proceeds of my father's book went into Take Heart, and that was very much my childhood. I went there most years from the age of 9. I took over when I was 18 and created UK's first student-run charity through it that was focused on vocation education. We carried on doing all of the vocational training programs that my dad was doing such as training mechanics, shoe makers, electricians, tailors, and things like that. We raised enough money for an IT school that trained blind and physically handicapped students. That was

my first experience in the world of education, and it was an amazing experience because we find that with six months of IT training and making a blind student IT literate, we could increase their earnings expectations somewhere between 5 and 10x what they would be able to get before. That was pretty dramatic both for the individual's prospects, but also as a way to change the perception of disability in India, which is no small feat. It is often through money that you can change perceptions. At Take Heart now we do not employ a single person so I just run it on the side and it is very grassroots. We focus on holistic vocation education and making sure we cover the whole individual thinking about how we can make sure we give them the confidence to achieve that potential. It was running that at a university that led me to want to create a much more scalable solution, which

also led me to creating BraveNewTalent.

CEOCFO: Why should people in the business and investment community pay attention to BraveNewTalent?

Mr. Tarnowski: You should pay attention to BraveNewTalent because the world has already changed from capitalism to talentism, where the number one resource in the world has moved from being financial capital to human capital. I believe BraveNewTalent is the best solution and best approach we have to maximize human capital and get the most out of the world's talent.

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