

The Feast: Full on Good Entrepreneurship for the Long Now

by Petz Scholtus, Barcelona, Spain on 10. 2.09



TED Conference has got competition! Yesterday we attended [the Feast Conference](#) in New York, where we laughed, we cried, we became passionate about changing the world, we met amazing people and we learnt a thing or two about good decision making and playing poker! It was definitely one of the most inspiring and "full on good" events we have been to. If you don't believe me, check out [the tweets of the Feast](#), an initiative by [All Day Buffet](#). The 12 cross-disciplinary speakers that shared their experience of how to address social innovation and new ways to make the world a better place really left us inspired to go out and do good. The keywords of the day were passion, creativity, community, empathy, curiosity, *good, clean & fair*, menstruation and entrepreneurship. Read on if you are curious enough, or watch [the Feast presentations via Stream57](#).

Through an open exchange of ideas across industries and society, the Feast aims to result in lasting, sustainable, meaningful change. The secret theme of the conference the organisers kept hidden until the end was "**The Long Now**". They adopted this from [the Long Now Foundation](#), and it stands for the "counterpoint to today's "faster/cheaper" mind set and promote "slower/better" thinking". So really, think about what the world will look like in 5, 100 or 10,000 years from now. Not an easy thought but good practice to get going on making the world a better place. Here some examples of people who are doing just that.

Elizabeth Scharpf captured her audience straight away by making everyone say the words "menstruation" and "period" out loud. And then she launched straight into the fact that half of the world menstruates, a big problem for women in developing countries where sanitary supplies are often not affordable. The most embarrassing thing about it, not blood stains, but the fact that most people don't know that this is a serious problem. The consequences: a lot of girls and women miss school or work every month, robbing them of their freedom, education and income. [SHE: sustainable health enterprises](#) estimates that a lack of affordable sanitary pads reduces GDP by \$115 million per year in Rwanda alone, and, came up with a solution. Yesterday Scharpf told us her amazing story of how she got to set up a franchise scheme to create sustainable business in developing countries that provide cheap, locally made, fully biodegradable sanitary pads.

Josh Viertel shared his story of how he was once told to stop apologising about a bus being late to get to a conference by an African who said: "No problem Mr Viertel, you have the watch; I have the time". Now Josh Viertel is the president of [Slow Food USA](#) and urged us to do more than to "vote with our fork". One action he suggested in order to reduce food miles is to "swap recipes, not food". He explained that the Danish export vast quantities of sugar cookies to the US, and at the same time, the US export roughly the same quantity of sugar cookies to Denmark; they could indeed simply swap recipes. His challenge to the entrepreneurs of today: Produce good, clean and fair food.

Professional poker player **Annie Duke** shared some of her tricks with us to help us make good decisions under difficult circumstances; just what the world needs right now, as well as us in our professional and private lives. **Kenna's** talk was about curiosity killing the cat, creativity and determination in order to get things done. His thing to do is climb Mount Kilimanjaro to raise awareness of the clean drinking water crisis, and you can help by sending clean water via [Summit on the Summit](#). **Uffe Elbæk** of The KaosPilots used the power of story telling to advise us be ready for world changing change, even when we are not, because it might just happen, and to listen to the weak signals (such as the voices of ordinary people in crisis zones) in order to act on them. In an emotional speech, **Bob Mckinnon** told us about the power of empathy and gave everyone four actions for the day: Put yourself into someone else's shoes, make uncommon connections, shift to the overcoming and let your actions speak.

To start measuring the social impact is what economist **Matthew Bishop** asked for in his presentation on Philantrocipitalism, and how giving can save the world. **Jay Parkinson** re-imagined health care and believes in social networks for illnesses and connecting doctor and patient online like at [Hello Health](#). **Rod Arnold** shared his life-altering experience of how he got to start [Charity:Water](#), and showed the sexy project and good design they created since, together with **Becky Straw** who also loves water. For **William Drenttel**, it is the power of design that can change the world. He warns all designers that they are in the "consequence business", not the "artifact business".

If you think it is impossible to change the world without the internet, think again! **Ken Banks** creates positive social and environmental change in the developing world using mobile technology. His examples of how [FrontlineSMS](#) works, a field communication system designed to empower grassroots non-profit organisations, were very inspiring.

Last but not least and with definitely the biggest applause despite the fact that he spoke "between us and Happy Hour", was athletic director **Brian Bordainick**. He shared his touching story about how at 22 he took over a non-existent sports program in New Orleans which he managed to re-establish in spite of having insufficient funds and no athletic facilities. Currently, Brian is working on [9th Ward Field of Dreams](#), a community project to build a \$1.85 million state of the art football field and track. Brian's message: "Don't take your environment for granted. Your environment, no matter how good or how bad, eventually becomes normal to you." Brian convinced every one that making the world a better place is possible, and moderator Cindy Gallop warned us that those good intentions would last 3 days, and requested us to take action now, whilst good intentions are fresh.

Cindy Gallop, founder of [IfWeRanTheWorld](#) did a brilliant job at hosting the Feast, kudos to her, and of course, Jerri and Michael and their team from All Day Buffet! As Cindy Gallop said: "Not a dud speaker at the Feast- rare for any conference".

