

## Business Beyond Borders Episode #15 - Skander Malcolm, Managing Director & CEO, OFX

Presenter: Cynthia Dearin

Guest: Skander Malcolm

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Cynthia Dearin: Ladies and gentlemen I am Cynthia Dearin, and this is the Business Beyond Borders podcast. I created this show to inspire and motivate entrepreneurs and business owners who want to expand their company internationally and make a bigger impact on the world.

My Guest today is Skander Malcolm, the managing director and CEO at OFX, which is a listed foreign exchange company that started in a garage in Sydney's northern beaches around 20 years ago by a guy called Matt Gilmour. Today, Skander heads up what has become a public company with an ambitious global agenda. Skander has more than 23 years of experience in financial services including payment technology platforms in both established and emerging markets. And he has held some senior roles in big corporates. As the President and CEO of GE Capital, Skander led a team of more than 4,500 employees to deliver sustainable growth and operational excellence. While he was at GE he also facilitated GE's largest ever volunteer donation OzHarvest and bolstered participation in employee volunteering by 40%. Skander also launched the UK's first and largest digital personal loan business, Hamilton Direct Bank, which grew to more than 3 billion pounds in its first five years.

Today, we are going to be talking about his journey and about his work at OFX.

Skander, welcome to the Business Beyond Borders Podcast

Skander Malcolm: Pleasure to be here.

Cynthia Dearin: So, we are going to talk today about OFX which you currently run, but let's start on how you spend your spare time. Because you can't be the CEO of a global company every single minute of the day, can you?

- Skander Malcolm: That is right, I think what makes being a CEO possible is that I have a wonderful family, so my wife Sarah and I got two kids, my daughter Alice is about to turn 13, and a son Felix. We kind of hang out and we just moved back to Australia a couple of years back, we are enjoying a lot of family time, doing all the things that families do.
- Cynthia Dearin: That is great. When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? Was running an international business always on the cards for you? Or was there some other dream that you had as a youngster?
- Skander Malcolm: I certainly never thought I would run an international business, I did not even know what international business was. Although, my father kind of did international business. I think when I was a kid I really wanted to play in the AFL, or the VFL as it was then. And then later on I wanted to be a fireman for some reason, I fancied the idea of driving around big fire trucks and climbing up tall buildings and all that good stuff. but I ended up running an international business.
- Cynthia Dearin: How did you get there? What did you do when you left school?
- Skander Malcolm: I took a year out between school and university and I kind of travelled and I did some time at a school in England as well. So I did six months there, I studied, and then I travelled for six months and I got a bit of a taste for what it was like to live overseas. I came back, did university here in Australia and then when I finished, which was 1989, I took off. I had a British passport so I lived in the UK for a couple of years and came back to Australia, but I ended up staying in the UK and the US for about 11 years.
- Cynthia Dearin: And were you working then? Or studying? Or doing some combination of both?
- Skander Malcolm: No, just working. I started off doing a very simple job, serving customers in a consumer finance company in a very unfashionable part of London and I just took to it and I loved it. It was kind of hard work. I learned a lot about serving customers, keeping it real, you know, literally the basics of finance and I did various roles for that company. Actually in the end for about 11 years I went to the US for a year, did a sort of general management program in the US which is just a ton of fun. Then back to the UK, I ended up running one of their businesses and then right when I was at the point of thinking, "Well I am going to stay overseas for probably my entire career", my now wife said let's go live in Australia. So, I left the UK and we came back to Australia.
- Cynthia Dearin: Have you been here ever since?
- Skander Malcolm: No. I did couple of years at Westpac which was good fun and then went down to Melbourne and joined GE and I was with GE until about the end of 2012, and I got a visit from the lady who was running human resources at the time, a lady by the name of Susan Peters, and she said "What do you want to do next?" and I said "Well we are mobile as a family, so if there is any overseas stints I would be interested" and she said

"Would you live and work in Istanbul?" And I thought "Gee whiz I don't know, I have to check with my wife."

Cynthia Dearin: Good answer!

Skander Malcolm: Luckily we were both keen to try that so we went and lived over there for three years and I had an amazing job. I was looking after GE Healthcare and I was running a region of about 84 different countries from Russia, Central Asia, Turkey, Middle East and Africa.

Cynthia Dearin: So, tell me about some of the challenges that came up for you as you were doing that role, because I know that you had lived in the UK. And you lived in the US and I am sure there were some challenges there but those are places that are much more similar to home than Istanbul and then running 84 countries. What was that like?

Skander Malcolm: It was a lot of fun. I mean certainly it was challenging because I was going from financial services, running GE Capital and then the new role was running a region for GE Healthcare, so I was switching industries and that was a real challenge because you are moving from marketing and risk management and you know financial services into deep science, health care, precision medicine. We did a bit of work around public private partnerships with healthcare, with countries, with nations and so that helped but shifting industries was the first challenge because you realize you have to go back to the first principles and I don't even have any kind of scientific background. The second one was the language, I did not speak Turkish or Arabic or Russian or any of the African languages, so trying to understand what people were talking about, culturally trying to relate to their context and sort of understand what their kind of key drivers were. That was the second one.

And then thirdly, just the people on the team were all completely new to me. They were all good executives, but they had completely different habits from people who were in financial services, very long cycle businesses, of business as a scientific. Those were the really big three: different cultural context and language, different industry and different people on the team.

Cynthia Dearin: So if there was a key lesson that you learned from that role and from dealing with that level of complexity, what was it and how did that set you up for came next, later on down the track with OFX?

Skander Malcolm: Well I learnt a very important lesson. Which is that, I thought that I was a good listener, but it is not until you strip away everything that you are familiar with and you really have to very actively listen to learn, that I learned that very actively listening is such a critical part of being an executive or running your own business. Really, paying attention to what customers are saying, paying attention to what day you can get a hold of, paying attention to all those nuances that you might take for granted if you have been in the same industry or the same country for a very long time.

When I say active listening, I really mean listening, paying attention and actually respecting the lessons that you've got to learn. I think that was really the number one lesson for me that has really helped as I have taken the OFX role, back in financial services but a new part of financial services, a very global business, new team, it is a public company so a lot of things for me to learn and that active listening has been a big part of succeeding, as it were.

Cynthia Dearin:

So let's talk a bit about OFX now. You are not the founder and primarily what I do on this show is that I often interview founders who started a business and then have taken it to another country or turned it into a global business because they are often the people who can speak best of that. But obviously once that company gets to a certain size, it becomes listed, it is frequently not the founder who is actually in the driver's seat anymore. And so you are really here today, one of the reasons I wanted you on the show is because you are now the person leading the charge on OFX global expansion, I would like to get you to speak on behalf of the founders, because OFX started as a very small company, as I understand, maybe in somebody's garage on the northern beaches of Sydney, more than 20 years ago and it has gone on to become very successful. So, can I get you on behalf of the founder to share that story with us? And tell me how did OFX get started and what was that all about?

Skander Malcolm:

Sure, the founder is a guy by the name of Matt Gilmore and completely coincidentally, Matt and I were at uni together so we are friends, and in fact when I was thinking of joining the company I was desperate to speak to him but of course Matt is still a shareholder in the company, so I couldn't which is very frustrating. I asked the chairman, "Look I know Matt, can I ring him up?" and he said, "No, we can't do that."

Matt had always had this very customer centric approach. He was in institutional foreign exchange for Banker's Trust and talking to Matt once I joined the company, about that was what behind OFX or OzForex as it was then, he said "Look just really simply, I was providing this amazing service for institutional clients on foreign exchange and you know at a very, very sharp price and then there were all small and mid-size businesses and consumers who just weren't getting the same service for the same price." And the idea came from "I wonder why we can't provide that, there is no one out there doing this for small businesses and consumers" and that is really what Matt's original inspiration was.

And to your point, it started in his garage in Dee Why and Matt started really with more of an information portal to help people understand the market and how it worked. Then he started getting licences in order to operate actual transactions and he brought in a partner, Gary Lord, and they really built the business together. They went international about 2003, started in New Zealand and then in the UK. We built out licences subsequently all across the United States. Hong Kong we got an office, we literally just opened an office in Singapore on April 1<sup>st</sup>. But the same philosophy and the inspiration was all around Matt's view that customers can get a better deal, and as he says very openly "The development of the World Wide Web and the internet really

accelerated the ability for us to do this all around the world.” But the fundamentals have remained, ‘Can you help customers get a better deal?’

Cynthia Dearin: So, as the CEO now, what is your vision for making the company even more global than it already is?

Skander Malcolm: Well, there are three areas that I think we can help grow the company. The first one is, true to Matt's vision, I still think we can improve the client experience. Today, we have over 160,000 active clients, over a million clients who use us on a regular basis and we still think we can improve the service. Whether it is a better app, better website, simpler features, better price, there's lots of things we can do to continue to improve the client experience. We think, although we have tremendous advocacy from our clients and former clients, we can still make that better and frankly the competition, in our view, has really raised the bar on how to make things simple, better information and so we need to continue to innovate our own client experience.

The second one is really around partnerships and the big change in business today for small businesses, compared to when Matt started the company was, you can use partners like Amazon Web Services or Google or alliance partners like [inaudible 14:22], and they can really help you grow your business. Amazon in an online market place today, allows you to be immediately global. And that is really where we really want to continue to build our growth. Not just commercial partnerships, we are certainly are working with some big companies and governments indeed on how to provide services to bigger companies, for example, if you are a Google employee and you live in the UK, and you have Google stock, when you sell that stock and you want to take your US dollars and convert them back into pound sterling it's actually OFX that does that for all Google employees anywhere around the world. There are actually a couple of other large companies, we do it for Amazon believe it or not, we do it for PayPal so these large companies and partnerships. But also how do we, operationally and in the technology sense, partner up with companies to continue to grow.

I think the final thing is geographically, as you touched on earlier on, we still want to do more in different parts of the world. The two geographies where we believe that we can particularly accelerate our growth, one is North America, that is both the US and Canada. We have 47 licences across the US because you need state licences, as well as federal, we can operate in 50 states, we want to take those licences and do more particularly in the small and medium size businesses but also with consumers and really grow our North American business.

The other one is in Asia and we've got a really good business in Hong Kong. We have opened up an office in Singapore. Really there what we do very well is what we call the online sellers. So again, if you are a small business working with Amazon, Etsy, Rakuten we have a product which we call a global concierge camp which allows you to pay suppliers, receive funds at a much, much better rate than the incumbent

providers and customers love it. We are growing very, very fast and there is big growth in online selling in Asia, so those are the three areas where we are focused.

Cynthia Dearin: What kind of strategies are you using to target those markets that you are going into? I mean, are you selecting certain sectors or types of businesses? Are you using certain channels of marketing? What does that picture look like?

Skander Malcolm: Yes. We actually just spent about a year developing very deep insights on the consumer side of our business, to understand customer segments, what they prefer, and we have developed a kind of market map, if you'd like, of five segments that have different needs and we have selected the segments that we like and that we think we can serve. So we are very particular about targeting people who value, for example, a very competitive price, great service, as well as, trust; a trusted provider. Those are the three things.

So we are not really, for example, in the remittent space, you know high volume, small payments. Typically, our transactions are much larger transactions where the client really values being able to speak with someone on the phone, if anything goes wrong they can sort it out 24/7. That's what we do and it is pretty similar in all of those markets, it does vary a bit by geography but those are kind of the core things that we target on the consumer side.

Then on the small and medium size business, these are businesses who are generally exporters, across a whole range of industries actually, but what they tend to value again is that they want a very competitive price, the banks are typically around anywhere between 3, 4, 5% to exchange plus fee, whereas we are more like 1% or less.

Secondly, great service and again, because we have 24/7 service and our teams are actually in countries like Hong Kong, in San Francisco, Toronto, in London, in Sydney, they can resolve those queries for small businesses and medium size businesses there on the spot. And then the other area in our small and mid size business that I mentioned before are online sellers. So, those small businesses that are going online that are selling through those market places that product that we developed and that service that supports it, are really the core areas that we target.

Cynthia Dearin: So you really niche down to a few specific customer profiles or avatars, where I am assuming you've seen a blank space in the market and really targeted those, rather than for example, going head to head with a potential competitor who does remittances, for argument's sake.

Skander Malcolm: Well, it is really interesting because it sounds the way that I describe it like a nichey but it is actually, to give you an idea, there about 138 trillion dollars of money being moved around, there is about 200 billion dollars of revenue that throws off from that and then in those targets that I am talking about it is about 60 billion dollars of revenue that we are in there competing with and our revenue last year was about 110

million. So there is a lot of revenue there, but what I also say is that it is very crowded. In the last five years we have seen about seven thousand new entrants in five years.

Cynthia Dearin: Wow, across how many countries?

Skander Malcolm: That is globally. And basically what is driving that is more and more consumers and more and more businesses now are global. You are moving around the world a lot, your businesses, you are sourcing things from around the world, you are selling all around the world, so this cross-border piece is just get bigger and bigger.

Cynthia Dearin: And as you go into these new markets, I think you mentioned Hong Kong, Singapore...

Skander Malcolm: Yes.

Cynthia Dearin: Somewhere else?

Skander Malcolm: Well Singapore is the most recent one, Hong Kong and London before that and North America before that.

Cynthia Dearin: My question was, what did you find the most challenging about opening in those new markets?

Skander Malcolm: Look I think there are a couple of things, one is you've really got to understand what the consumers or small businesses value and who you are competing with in those markets. You can't do that from Sydney, you have to go there and understand those particular places. And so there is a bit of a challenge if you are not there, to actually go there and understand it.

I say the second thing is finding the right leadership. You know, finding for example the right leader in North America, you know when I arrived in the business we had a leader, but she was doing the role like part time. We wanted to get new leaders so it took us about 4 to 5 months, and a lot of interviews, to find the person that we felt was big enough to do that expansion. I mean, we are in the process of finding a new leader in London. That is so crucial because at the end of the day, they are the person on the ground, they are the ones that myself and the board are investing significant capital on behalf of the shareholders. So, I think one is understanding customers locally and the other is finding the right leader. Those are the two big ones.

Cynthia Dearin: How different have you found the customers are from place to place? I mean, are the expectations similar across the border or do they have particular preferences, you know between Hong Kong and London, San Francisco or wherever it's going to be?

Skander Malcolm: They are a bit different. The interesting one to me, the revelation to me has really been around in the US. I kind of figured they would be similar to Australians or British but actually hardly any Americans are sending money overseas as a proportion of all

Americans which is very different to Australians, where they all have some experience in it. And so they are actually used to paying quite high fees and they don't even realize, in many cases that other countries don't accept US Dollars. So even the idea of foreign exchange is a bit foreign to some of them and so you are having to do a lot more education on what foreign exchange is. They wouldn't have a clue, they would just assume that you could use US dollars in Malaysia or Europe or wherever. So explaining that you have to switch the money across, that there is a fee, what the price is, and higher dues. It is really quite different than say UK or Hong Kong or Australia. That is just one example.

The small businesses though in the US are increasingly very marketplace driven and they are probably leading the world in saying "Look I can trade anywhere in the world now and I just need to be with Amazon, Ebay or with Etsy or someone like that." And so they are developing their understanding, but the US banking system is nothing like as sophisticated as say even the Australian banking system or the UK banking system for providing those services. So, there is great opportunity for us.

Cynthia Dearin: What do you think it was, and this is a slightly different tack, but I mean just thinking back to the fact that OFX started in a garage in Dee Why on Sydney's northern beaches, what has been the X factor which has let this company turn into a listed global player in 20 years, because that is not something that your average garage start-up can do?

Skander Malcolm: True. Look I think there is a couple things, I think the first thing is throughout its history it hasn't always been great it has had this unwavering focus on the customer and when everything else goes wrong, if you are serving customers, really well, you've got a gain, you know you are going to be in some way, competitive.

We have made our share of mistakes over the course of 20 years but I think the customers have shown a lot of loyalty because they've received a great service. I think there has been a good level of ability to say "what is happening next?" as well. I mean OFX really was going this kind of fintech 15 years ago before fintech was a thing. And it tried things and it took risks and if you are starting up a company obviously you have to take a few risks but never risks that were going to sink the entire company.

I think the third thing is that it has learned from its mistakes. We did make mistakes. We rely very much on banking partners. We use the banking systems and at one point we lost the support of a major bank and it turned out we had a lot of exposure through that banking partner and to the credit of the team at the time, they said "Gee whiz, we never want to be in this position again." So we now have a banking panel with about 16 banks that support us, so that if one bank, you know for whatever reason, does not like us anymore we can take care of our clients, we will complete.

So I think taking risks, customer first, learning from your mistakes. It all sounds very obvious, we have had luck too, things that we have just been pretty lucky with, I think we coincided with a tremendous boom in the internet which made going global a lot

easier and I think secondly we've been lucky in that have had good people, really, for a very long time and that has helped us.

Cynthia Dearin: You mentioned that fintech was not a thing, 15 years ago. Given that fintech is now very much probably the thing, where do you see foreign exchange in a way that that works going over the next 20 years? Is it going to be more of the same? Or do think is it going to be some massive shift that is going to change everything again?

Skander Malcolm: Look, it is a fascinating question and we talk about it as a leadership team and as a board and we have done various scenarios that we think could happen. But the interesting conclusion that we get to is, if you believe those segmentation studies, what you are seeing is that there is sort of a segment that values service, reassurance, you know licenced, highly trusted providers. Then there is segment that is increasingly saying "Look, I couldn't care less who does this for me" and for small value transactions moving money, "it's digital, it should just happened and I don't care that much if I don't know the provider, I just want it done quickly, it has got to be purely digital." So, I think over time those companies with very large customer bases probably know that the famous ones, the Facebooks and the Googles, also potentially some of these Chinese players with very large customer bases who can move and exchange whole amounts very, very quickly, will end up dominating the small payments and remittance service sector.

And then probably there will be a group of people who are known for their high service delivery, high trust, who will probably take care of larger transactions. There will always be banks who can, in my mind, run the infrastructure and provide certainty.

We will see definitely, definitely more speed in the system. You know, today sometimes it can take three days, sometimes it is a day and I am sure that within a few years it will be everything within a day if not an hour, if not instantly. Customers will drive that preference for speed.

Certainty will also continue to be factor, you might be comfortable sending 200 dollars where you don't care too much who the provider is, but will you send 200 thousand dollars with someone you have never heard of?

Cynthia Dearin: No! Probably not.

Skander Malcolm: Right.

Cynthia Dearin: Ok. I want to ask you a question about the culture of OFX and I was curious to know what you think defines a great corporate culture for an international company. I also wondered how do you go about creating that? You know, as you move out of the garage and onto the global stage, what do you do? How do you create something and then keep it running consistently?

Skander Malcolm: I think culture first of all is a moving thing. I think there are certain things that remain as it were critical, that you will always try and foster and for us it has always been a learning culture. We have never known all the answers. We got into this in a way that we were literally inventing the fintech space, we were figuring out global as we went but we weren't afraid to try and we were quite prepared to learn from our mistakes so I think that is that we call it "always learning." You can stick that slogan on the wall, but to your question "How are you driving your executive and your teams to say 'When was the last time we learned something? When was the last time we really tried something a little different here?'" and you've sort of got to built that into your daily meetings. What are we learning? What is the new thing that helps us continue to evolve?

I will tell you the second thing is we have been OzForex, we have been OFX, we have been a private company, we have been a public company, we have had different leadership over the years, over the last 20 years but I think the thing that I have found, meeting people who have worked for the company for 20 years ago to today, is that there has always been respect for each other and it is not the brand or whether I am the CEO or someone else, it's each other. It is the promises that people keep, it is the promises that they make to each other, that we are going to get this done and I think OFX has really succeeded in that respect. There has always been a "Can do", "We do it for each other" mentality.

And I think finally as we have gone global, and although we have been doing it for some time, I'd say we are really becoming more of a global company now. Putting bigger leaders into these global roles, defining much bigger investments in our global businesses, we are actually working out how do we share ideas, how do you move fast in North America, but not let Sydney slow you down? How do you develop a European strategy that Sydney can get comfortable with? You know, how to be in Asia? And that is something that we are very much learning now. I wouldn't say we are going to crack the code, we just say "Look, it is about respect, and customers and figuring out and learning", but we are still figuring out how to be a great global company.

Cynthia Dearin: I am going to check back with you in a couple of year's time on that one.

Skander Malcolm: Sure.

Cynthia Dearin: Now Skander, being the chief in a listed business is a really big gig but I am also curious to know apart from the fact that you have a board to report to, and you know you have a listed company that cares whether you are there, what is it that gets you out of bed in the morning? I mean, what keeps you motivated to keep on showing up to do this big gig?

Skander Malcolm: Again, it sounds very trite but honestly it's the people that I work with. I have really been amazed joining the company that I see people, we aren't a start-up, we are a scale-up, and I see a lot of people who have come up from the start-up phase of the company who have got incredible enthusiasm and who are so hungry to learn, you

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know, how it is to run a bigger company and how it is to run a global company. And so to your question, that stuff that I have done, and I honestly get a lot of energy sitting in a room full of people saying "How are we going to make Singapore an office that we can be proud of? Or "How are we going to develop a North American strategy?" And our product and tech teams, "How are we going to bring this global currency account to life in different ways?" and they're very much learning and developing. Honestly, I get a lot of energy from seeing people develop into those kind of leaders and often times, they haven't had any of the benefits that I have, you know a lot of the great corporate education and experience, they are just enthusiastic and for me it is about how do I help them be better that they thought they could be?

Cynthia Dearin:

I like that, I like that a lot. Now leadership role has a lot of highs, but it also has a lot of pretty tough bits in it and I always ask this question on people who come on the show because I think it can be very instructive for people also somewhere behind you on a path, but on the same journey. When you get into one of those rough patches, when a difficult situation blows up or when you have a very hard decision to make or you've been awake for the last couple of nights worrying about something that is going on with the business, what are the strategies for getting out of the space? Do you do a couple of laps around the block? Do you meditate? Do you have mentors that you go talk to? What are the set of tools that you have developed over time for fixing those situations?

Skander Malcolm:

Yeah it's a great question, and I think people come at it from different perspectives. I love to hear some of the others, but the things that I have done over the years, what you are describing is resilience, that ability to bounce back, deal with setbacks. I think the first thing is understanding that they are going to occur, like it is absolutely inevitable. Everyone in life is going to have good days and bad, and you're going to have good news and bad news and I don't care who you are. For me, it's about then saying there are certain things that in essence get me more frustrated than others, and if I feel that someone is been disloyal, if I feel someone is acting for their purposes not for the team, or when there is some kind of integrity breach, I really take that personally. It's a trigger for me, but what I have learned is sort of to step back and try and get a sense of perspective that is actually where candidly that experience in Istanbul really helped, because I was travelling to parts of Africa, and Russia, and central Asia where I saw people doing business in the Middle East in really appalling conditions. I mean very, very tough conditions and half of the stuff that people worry about here is such of a first world issue compared to what they are really dealing with. So, sometimes, you know, it's about stepping back and saying "Really, are you going to get upset about that?" And I know you're vested in that being a good outcome but the world is not going to end if the board don't get their paper in time or someone had left a company who I didn't want to leave the company and honestly I physically believe there is a link. So I run, and when I run it clears my mind. I have a times been stressed in a role I did just go for a walk and take a break, change the backdrop and clear your head. You really have to manage yourself as a leader and there's a price to pay for that, you can't be someone who is so up and sound all the time because everyone else feels "My goodness, how am I going to deal with Skander today?" You

have to try and be as even as you can. Sometimes that does mean removing yourself from the situation. And again, I go back to the very start of our conversation that for me my family is a tremendous support network, it keeps it very real, they see you at your best and your worst and they certainly don't think of you as their leader.

Cynthia Dearin: [Laughter] Dad, can I borrow the car?

Skander Malcolm: Exactly, that kind of helps as well.

Cynthia Dearin: Okay. Those are some great insights right there and that kind of segues on to what I wanted to ask you about, around books and I can see you have made a note around books, so I am also keen to find out what books, or some people don't really like to read so when I ask them about books they say "Well, I really don't read" So, I ask about people. But I'll ask you about books. What books have you found game-changing or inspirational for you on this journey and what are they and why do you recommend them?

Skander Malcolm: There are a few things. First of all, I happen to love literature. I grew up reading books, I got that from my parents. One book I read when I was about 18 that had a very profound effect even on my business career today was Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad and it's about someone who essentially, the metaphor is going up to the kind of origins of life. And he is kind of trying to find this rogue business person and that's what the show Apocalypse Now is based on, but read that book because it gives you a good sense about human nature and what you are going to grapple with in business and then sometimes in business you have to kind of confront.

Cynthia Dearin: That is the first time I have had that answer, so tell me what is the link between Heart of Darkness and the guy travelling up the Amazon in the boat, and business for you? Where is that connection?

Skander Malcolm: Sometimes you are going on a quest, you're going to build a business for example, and you think you know the purpose of this is to build my business into a 10 million dollar business, 100 million dollar business, a global business, whatever it is. And along that journey you are actually figuring out stuff about yourself. I think particularly for small business and medium size business, you're actually learning that the journey is just as important as any kind of financial goal, and that when you look inside yourself. It's kind of like "What actually matters?" You know? Where does your energy, your authenticity, really come from? You know, by the end. You talk to most people who at the end of that journey say "I don't remember the year that I beat my business plan, I remember when this person I worked with developed themselves into a wonderful leader." That is something they remember, and in a sense that is what that book is about, it's kind of that journey. It is what really matters and not finding Kurtz at the end of that, it's actually the Belgian Congo. That book is a little bit about philosophy.

Much more practically, two books that I have thought in business in the last 10 years that I find fascinating. One is the Lean Startup by Eric Ries. I was lucky enough when I was at GE to meet Eric. He is a small business start-up guy, who really fundamentally came up with a whole lot of different techniques that help small businesses realize how to get things done quickly and to pivot if they needed to pivot. GE actually adopted a lot of those principals, if you could believe that, the largest company in the world said "We need to be more like start-ups" and meeting Eric and hearing his philosophy about testing things, moving quickly, being clear about what your assumptions are so that you are learning against assumptions. I just thought it was fascinating. Teams, how to get teams working together. So that was a very seminal book for me.

And the last one is a more recent book called the Content Trap by Bharat Anand and it's all about in a digital world how, companies fall into traps potentially or taking advantage of communities to build very successful businesses. I am only halfway through that book but I'm finding it absolutely fascinating. It is about how digital operates, which companies have exploited communities in a very successful way, versus those who have not made those connections. I am learning a lot from that book.

Cynthia Dearin: Those are some great tips. We will put the titles and the links of those books into the show notes for the episode for people so they don't have to rewind to find them. So Skander, looking ahead, what is next for OFX? Where to from here?

Skander Malcolm: The people who run the company, the board, the people in the company are very excited because we have had a pretty tough couple of years, and we are turning this business around. We are going to announce our results in about a week's time so by the time this comes out they may already be out. We are very positive on what we have been able to do, but we are even more excited about this opportunity to be more global, to continue to reinvent this client experience. I think that they are so many more things that we can learn about and do for small and mid size businesses for consumers all around the world. And you know, we think we can be a lot more global. It's just, this business is built for being global. There are not many Australian companies that have gone global, there are not many fintech that have really succeeded globally so we just want to be that company. We want to be that great Aussie success story and, you know, it's just so much fun, there is just so much to do.

Cynthia Dearin: What about for you? What is next for Skander? Is there some other dream that you have that you're going to pursue at some point in the future that doesn't have anything to do with foreign exchange?

Skander Malcolm: Oh for sure at some point, but certainly not in the next couple of years. I am loving what I do, the team, the fact that it's global gives me a ton of energy, and then you know at some point obviously there will be other things that interest me, but for now it's, I could not be more excited and energized getting on with trying to help people

and be greater than the place that we are at.

Cynthia Dearin: That's fantastic. So, do you have some final thoughts for the people listening to this episode, maybe in the micro and medium business space thinking "I have this company and I think what we do is really great but, can I really turn this into an international company or into a global company?" What do you say to people who are questioning themselves like that?

Skander Malcolm: Well I think be realistic because it isn't easy. But at the same time it is where the world is moving. You know, your ability to be global. You can start quite low-risk these days by being on an online marketplace, and they can take the logistics risk away, we can help you with the foreign currency risk, you can get companies who can help you with tax. You don't have to master all that stuff right off the bat. And maybe you start to develop yourself and then you have to look at a few markets and then you have to find some things that you think you can do well and you find some people. I just think to be honest, it's probably not going to be optional in probably 10 years. If you are not global, there is going to be some other company operating here in Australia that is global, that is going to try and get to your customers, so it is probably a skill. As I say to my team you know when I grew up, there weren't that many global companies. Today in your career you probably almost certainly are going to have to develop your global skills. So you might as well embrace it and try.

Cynthia Dearin: I have to say I am on the same page with you, on that one. Skander it has been such a pleasure talking to you today. I really look forward to seeing where OFX goes next and thank you for being on the show.

Skander Malcolm: Thanks, Cynthia.