

# the dots

a podcast about connecting.

## Lisa Hickey Transcript

**Announcer:** [00:00:04] Welcome to The Dots, a podcast about connecting. The Dots is a series of conversations with artists, community leaders, entrepreneurs, and change makers who talk about how they connect the dots and bring things together for their communities, companies, and themselves for a better life. And now you're host, Digital Strategist, speaker and entrepreneur Kathleen Buczko.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:00:31] American author, advertising consultant, and social media maven Lisa Hickey is the CEO of Good Men Media Incorporated and the publisher of Good Men Magazine as part of The Good Men Project. Lisa, welcome to the dots. Thanks for joining us.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:00:47] Thanks for having me.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:00:49] So there's a lot of men in your listing there. Tell us a little bit about your journey from author to social media consultant, advertising consultant, and creation of the Good Men project.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:01:02] Sure. It's one of my favorite stories to tell. So, thanks for asking. So, my career had been mostly in, I'm going to call it, 'traditional advertising.' OK. So it was like, I was an art director. I was a copywriter. I was a creative director. Along the way, I wrote three books because I really like to write. And those books are on advertising the best ads in the business and how they were created and I love the creative process in general. And so I had worked in the Boston area in sort of all those types of jobs and eventually--Boston's kind of a small market for advertising--and I ran out of places to work at. So I opened up my own agency. And so I was the CEO of BET for several years and then we merged that agency to try and get bigger. That agency didn't really work out. So I found myself without a job for the first time in my career, on the day the world economy went downhill.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:02:16] Actually a very good planning.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:02:18] Exactly. I am known for that. And so I looked around and this was when social media was just coming to the forefront. So, to give you a sense of what it was, Facebook didn't even have a like button.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:02:35] It was just different time.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:02:37] It didn't have emojis.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:02:40] It was just a book.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:02:42] It was just a book where you could post little status updates and that was it. But still even then, I saw the potential. I saw the potential of what it could be. I mean, you know, me in a million or so other people--it wasn't like I was the only one that saw that. But I-- I thought, well why don't I take everything I've learned in advertising, everything I've learned about marketing and messaging and sales, and communication and creativity. And why don't I apply all that to social media? And, then you, know all, my problems will be solved! I'll become a social media expert and

I'll figure out this next wave of technology. And so that's exactly what I did. And I loved it. I grew my platform, I started-- I got on Twitter, I was doing these...

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:03:37] What year were you on Twitter?

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:03:39] So I was on Twitter--oh my goodness. Well, I don't remember exactly what year, but I remember that the person with the most followers at that time had 60,000 followers that was it. And then there was a race to a million between Ashton Kutcher and CNN. They were both racing to a million. And now of course people with you know 30, 40,, 50 million.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:04:05] Right? Exactly. It's like a whole new world.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:04:08] It's like a whole new world. But I got on Twitter and I was thinking about how to brand myself so I thought well I'm going to brand myself as a global conversationalist. And so in order to do that I connected with people from every country in the world. Like I literally went country by country by country all 234 of them and I connected with people from all over the world. And then I would have like a little Twitter radio show for lack of a better word. You know, I'd wake up in the morning and say, "Good morning, world!" You know what's happening in Southeast Asia or what's happening in Iceland; what's happening in Africa; what's happening in India; and so it was really cool like being this global conversationalist. It wasn't the easiest thing to monetize.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:04:59] Right.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:05:00] But it was it was a lot of fun and it helped me to see what what you do with this new technology.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:05:08] It had to be fascinating at that moment in time to be able to capture voices from other places.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:05:14] Exactly. It was fascinating. And so I...

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:05:19] What did you learn through that fascination?

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:05:22] So here's what I learned. I... somebody had tweeted to me a story from the Harvard Business School Review--a white paper--about global macro economics and it and so I read it even though that wasn't really my thing at the time. And it said what happens when an economic system falls very quickly because it's it's very insular. If you have an economic system that's very insular it can fall quickly and astronomically fast and then it said, "Just ask Iceland" because the country of Iceland had just gone bankrupt. Remember I was saying earlier that's just when the economy was going downhill? Iceland's bankruptcy was kind of a harbinger of that. So I thought "Wow!" You know, here I was and I was without a job and I got on social media and I started reaching out to everyone and finding all these new contacts and I was getting projects and for the first time in my life I was actually having to sell myself. I was getting these projects because people would say, "Hey, you should talk to Lisa because she knows a lot about social media." And so I said, well if I had an economic system that failed very quickly because I was very insular and I was reaching out to the rest of the world and things got better, the country of Iceland should do that. And I said, "I'm going to get the country of Iceland on Twitter." And so, that was my first big project in social media. I got the country of Iceland not only on Twitter and Facebook and YouTube and we created this amazing campaign called Iceland Inspires and the entire country got on social media and created art which they pushed out to the rest of the world. And then the goal was to bring tourism in. And so over the years they've managed to accomplish that goal too, to get out of bankruptcy according to The New York Times not too long ago.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:07:33] No, I know exactly. I was just thinking about that. It was just in the Times and it is for all intents and purposes as, geographically I set in Los Angeles; it's now the place to go for vacation and there's amazing trips and pictures online and in social media to be a part of Iceland. That's amazing.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:07:57] Exactly. Exactly. And the other thing that we found out in working on that project was that not only did people from outside of Iceland come into Iceland but all of the artists in Iceland--all of those photographers, biographers, poets, painters, craftspeople, knitters, whatever--they were able to get their art out to other people in the world in ways that they hadn't thought possible because they became part of the social media campaign. They learned how to use social media to get their art outwards. So it was this wonderful circle of... this is how social media works at its best.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:08:42] And how did that change the economics of art in Iceland?

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:08:48] You know, I am not quite sure I know that that was something, you know, when I did the follow-up to the campaign. I know that that was something that they said was just such an unexpected result for the people who are running the program and the artists themselves in Iceland they just-- so I don't have any real numbers but they felt as if they expanded their marketing reach there. The people seeing their art; the people understanding what I was known for. So anecdotal evidence said that it just kind of transformed a lot of--the way that a lot of the artists in Iceland thought about their own art and where it could reach out to.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:09:34] [Sponsorship] Speaking of people who get it done, this broadcast is brought to you by Chapelure Media. Digital media, analytics, strategy, marketing, creative products, training. They do all that. Visit [chapeluremedia.com](http://chapeluremedia.com) to find out more. [End Sponsorship]

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:09:49] So you've transformed the country created social media platforms. How did you find your voice and all of that?

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:10:00] So what happened was, it was so interesting because what happened right after that project with Iceland was that I was also simultaneously helping people who had been in advertising like me and you know maybe lost a job due to numerous layoffs and changes in the advertising business and wanted to build their own platform to try and get work, to train, network, and to get projects. And so one of those people and I met with him at Starbucks and I told them everything I knew about social media, or everything I could fit into an hour about how to build the platform. He said well you know a lot about social media you should meet this guy Tom Matlack. He's writing a book. And so I met with Tom Matlock the next day and had lunch with him and he was telling me about this book of essays that he had written and he said the word essays and my heart fell, because I was thinking oh you know I wanted to be a bestseller. I have never heard of a bestseller of essays but I'll go with it. And then he said it's stories about men and the defining moment in these men's lives. And he said what he noticed was he would go out and he would ask them to tell their stories all different types of men to tell their stories and he would ask them to tell them about a defining moment in their lives. And he said the most interesting thing was I would ask that question and men would tell me the story about the day they woke up looked in the mirror and said, "I thought I knew what it meant to be a man. I thought I knew what it meant to be good. And I realized they didn't know either."

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:11:51] And then he handed me the manuscript and the book ultimately had 31 stories and I think there were about 15 stories in there, then. And he handed me the manuscript and said, "You know my own story is in there; you can read that. It's the stuff guys don't normally talk

about." And at that point they said, "Wow! That is what I want to do." I want to take that idea-- that idea that men wanted to talk about what it meant to be a man and what it meant to be good, which was something I didn't know that men ever even thought about.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:12:28] No. Exactly.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:12:30] And I want them to tell me the stories that they don't usually talk about. That's what I want to do. Like it was a moment of such clarity. And so I said to Tom I don't know if I can sell a million copies of your book but I can sell a million people on that idea. I'm sure of it. That's one of the most amazing ideas I've heard in a really long time. And so he said OK well let's start with the book. But the fortuitous thing was that Tom was an ex-venture capitalist. And so when he had this idea that he obviously thought was really profound and really important and this idea of sparking an international conversation about what it meant to be a good man in the 21st century, like, no one else was doing that. And so when I came along and said that's the most amazing idea I've ever heard of I can help you do that. And he said, "Well, what else have you done?" I just got the country of Iceland and social media.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:13:39] And he said, "Great. Write me a proposal; sounds good." And so literally I went back to my car. I want to say I wrote the proposal in my car but it probably wasn't quite that fast. It felt like that fast! It felt like I wrote it in the car, emailed it to him and he signed it and said, "That's great. Let's get going." But you know we worked we first worked on promoting the book in all the traditional ways, we you know made a blog, we got on social media, we had a Facebook page, we did a series of events. Then we created some videos, and then we set out to say, "Well okay, how can we make this idea even bigger? How can we make this idea of having a conversation about the changing roles of men and 21st century--something no one else is talking about--how can we make that even bigger?" And we finally settled on this idea of this online magazine and have now grown it to...we had about three million people a month coming to the Web site and talking about the changing roles of men in the 21st century. Every single day. And it's really... it's still one of the coolest things I've ever done.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:14:56] And how has that redefined what's motivating you at this point. How does telling those stories and building that platform keep you motivated?

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:15:10] So, like any good entrepreneur, I wake up every day and I feel as if I am changing the world for the better. Every single day. And that is really all the motivation I need. But one of the things that was interesting was that, as we started building with the Good Man Project and having this conversation about men and having conversations about goodness and having men tell the stories they don't usually talk about other people... We realized that the conversation we were having was really the conversation about everything that the way men think about being a man and goodness is what is impacting politics. It impacts sports. It impacts parenting. It impacts relationships. It impacts business. It impacts the environment. I mean it is unbelievable that intersectionality of all of the important issues of our day and time and how you can look at them through this framework of men and goodness and say, "Oh, well if we can only get men to open up and ask for help when they're having emotional issues, we might not have the mental health crisis that were having. We might be able to look at how mass shootings occur. We can look at building better relationships between men and women. We can change the way workplace dynamics look." I mean it's it's, it's really amazing. And if that's not enough to get someone up in the morning and get motivated I don't know what is.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:17:07] So you have the seminal platform for understanding where social change can start.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:17:15] Exactly. That's exactly it. That's exactly it.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:17:20] And I'm going to postulate. I don't think it's just limited to men although it's the Good Men Project, I don't see that just being limited to men because as you said men are bosses and men are husbands and they are fathers and they are community members.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:17:38] Exactly. And what we found is that, you know we try to keep the core brand very true to men because that's what we're about. So 80 percent of our writers and editors are men and then and you know we have other contributors who are certainly women. But then the audience itself is very close to 50/50. Because women want to understand what's going on in the changing roles as much as men do. And we we pride ourselves on really being as inclusive and diverse as possible so that we're understanding men from all aspects and we totally see that, you know, it's not like men are more important than women. It's just that understanding the way that men's roles have always worked in conjunction with the way women's roles have always worked is something that hadn't been explored, hadn't been talked about, hadn't really been understood in the way that we're looking at it now.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:18:48] Lisa, is your understanding based on geography? Having done such an amazing job with Iceland. Is that understanding... Are there global universal facts and then are there things that vary from place to place?

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:19:06] So there are certainly global similarities and much more than you would think. You know issues of being a good dad are really very, very, very universal and work that we're doing in the mental health field is almost exactly parallel to work that people in Australia are doing. So we we often combine forces down there because they have a very high suicide rate that they're trying to bring down and it has been because they believe the same dynamic of men being socialized not to open up to keep their emotions in check, to not talk about the things that are bothering, to put on a brave face to man up. And all of that.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:20:15] Yeah. All the cliches.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:20:18] Exactly. So those cliches are actually very, very universal. You know, they really travel around the world in an amazing way.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:20:29] [Sponsorship] Support is incredibly important. Are you looking for a great web host? We love Bluehost. They have 24/7 support. They're trained in-house U.S. based experts are available to help 24/7. The robust help center includes guides, video tutorials, and more. Their Money Back Guarantee gets you a refund within 30 days of signing up if you don't just love them and WordPress is made easy. Blue host is recommended number one in web hosting by WordPress.org. Every account features one click WordPress installation. It couldn't be easier. Also, they have over \$150 in advertising offers from Google, Bing and other leading sites to help grow your business. It's all included. Head to our Web site [thedotspodcast.com](http://thedotspodcast.com) and click on the nearest Bluehost box to get Bluehost as your web host. Just the support you need. [End Sponsorship]

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:21:23] When I was young there was an advertising icon called the Marlboro Man.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:21:28] Yes.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:21:29] And when you said that it really travels around the world I mean that was... you probably know better than I, but that was an advertising icon that truly traveled the world and defined in many cases at least a couple of generations of men.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:21:50] Exactly.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:21:52] What are men today using to define themselves? Is this... is the Good Men Project creating that cultural voice to help define them?

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:22:06] So we are...the way we look at it is that we're actually trying to open up that definition. We're trying to expand the definition of what it means to be a man. We're not trying to create it. So we don't want to ever say this is how a man should be or this is what a good man... you know this is what the goodness is. We want to have the conversation about how can...how can men be what ever it is they want to be and they see is authentic and they see as good, and how can they help develop their own inner moral compass so they're confident in their decisions and they're confident that those decisions are because of what they want to do and not what society is so telling them they should do just because they're a man.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:23:07] Tell me about how you, Lisa Hickey, going from being fascinated with the creative process in advertising maintain your authenticity as an individual?

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:23:21] Wow that's a great question and I think anyone's ever actually asked me about it before.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:23:26] I try.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:23:29] So, I think that the creativity is always what comes through. And I am always trying to connect dots that other people don't see. Sometimes attracts other people crazy because I'm connecting too many dots. But that to me is really what I do best and it's what I love doing. And I... that's why this is such a natural fit for me because I love seeing these... the way that all of these social issues intersect with all of these stories about men that intersect with all of the news that's going on in the world... all of that cultural highlights like, that is what I do. So. So. And that's honestly what creativity is; it is bringing together... it's juxtaposing things in a way that people hadn't seen before so that they can get a new perspective. That's what art is. And my belief is that art creates empathy because you're showing something in a life that the other person hasn't seen in that way before but yet they're making an emotional connection to that art. And so, you know, it's to me that's the really great thing about what we're doing, what the potential for social change is. It's like how do you create art that creates empathy that creates connection and solve some of these really, really difficult problems in the world as you're doing that.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:25:33] That's an amazing transformation because when you think about the traditional Mad Man advertising world of where you started to today creating a platform that is truly redefining the role of men in the new century, you are the winner of the 'connect the dots' award.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:26:03] [Laughing] Thank you. I tried very hard to get that award!

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:26:06] Thank you. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk to award it to you. So, Lisa tell me what's next.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:26:17] So what's next is kind of interesting. What we have found... so I've really been studying the evolution of media as well, so if you think about kind of how media has evolved... so just bear with me for one quick minute of history... but you know if you think about the written word books that then expanded into newspapers and magazines, but at first it was all printed material that you read. So it became part of your identity you are well-read. You know that was saying, it was a phrase that was used "that man is well read." You know that has value. And

then it became, as other media came in: radio, TV you know auditory, visual, multimedia and really became something that was consumed. And so there was no surprise that the rise of consumerism happened at the same time people were more avidly consuming media. And then as you got into social media, media really became something that you shared so the sharing economy came into the vernacular for example. And so if you look at what's next, well I think there's two trends and that's what we're trying to capitalize and that is media become something you actively participate in and media become something you act upon. And so you know if you look at what we're trying to do with social change that 'act upon' is kind of natural fit with trying to change the world in all these different ways and solve these really big social problems. And so getting people to be able to take action is part of what's next. But then there's this idea of media that you actively participate in. And so we're calling ourselves a 'participatory media company' and that used to mean, you know OK you get a blog, you write, you create content but now what we're doing is we're having actual phone calls. Right now, it's twice a day; we're probably going to expand to a lot more. But each phone call is around one of these topics that we have. So we have a phone call to stop racism. Another one to stop sexism. Another one about the disposability of men. Another one about politics. And so people can join in on these phone calls and actively participate in the conversation. And it's almost like... it's almost like if you look at like Facebook and how people are commenting on you know different articles and that's great and that creates discussion but that discussion isn't in real time and you can't question people and you can't get them to clarify things. So in some ways these calls the next evolution of Facebook but in some ways they're also the next evolution of things like television. So people get on these calls and there are the different characters that come back again and again just like on a TV show. So you get to know the people on the calls every week you get to meet different characters and you get to become a character yourself. You're someone that other people come to the calls for because you're talking about these topics in some interesting way. You're offering insight, and that experience for people has been profound, like so many people have said, "Oh you know I didn't think I'd like a conference call. I hate conference calls.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:30:01] Right. Exactly.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:30:02] Then they get on one of these and they're like, "Oh I'm the person people are coming back to hear! This is amazing. I can have insight, too." and hearing people's stories firsthand, like in the moment as you're talking about the cultural events that are happening out there in the world that people are sharing their point of view in their stories, it's--you get that same emotional resonance that you do when you watch a really good TV show and you walk away and you're thinking about the characters they're thinking about the plot. So these calls are... these calls are like that. And so that's kind of the 'what's next' is how can we do evolve this media company into a type of media that nobody else is doing as well as a conversation that no one else is having.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:30:57] Well I think you are having the conversation that no one really is having. I think you are breaking barriers that need to be broken. And I'm so happy that you spent some time with us, Lisa, today to share your thoughts and to give us the opportunity to connect the dots. So thank you.

**Lisa Hickey:** [00:31:19] Great. Thank you. It was my pleasure being here. Thank you for inviting me.

**Kathleen Buczko:** [00:31:23] [Sponsorship] This podcast is brought to you by Chapelure Media: digital media, analytics, strategy, marketing, creative products, training. They do all that. With these services, they always add a serious dose of measurement. Visit [chapeluremedia.com](http://chapeluremedia.com) to find out more.

**Announcer:** [00:31:48] The Dots is produced by Chapelure Media at the Network Studios. Follow

The Dots Podcast on Facebook, Twitter, and on our website at [thedotspodcast.com](http://thedotspodcast.com) Please subscribe and review on iTunes, Stitcher, Google Play or wherever you tune into your favorite shows.