

Elaine interviews: Linden Cole, Business Consultant

Elaine So Linden, thank you very much for taking time out from your very busy schedule to talk to us here at Spotlight on Brittany.

Linden It's a pleasure.

Elaine Um. What are you currently occupied with?

Linden Well, I'm I'm occupied my writing, obviously. But I'm trying to balance that with my career as an academic, career as a teacher in Rennes School of Business, er been doing that now for 13, 14 years. I enjoy teaching. I enjoy interacting with the students there. Some of the students are more senior, more more mature. Er, some of the students quite young. Obviously, we have different interactions with them, but it's, it's fun, it's fun. And I get a lot of reward out I get a lot of personal reward out of dealing with the students.

Elaine So that's been about 13 years you've been doing that? Is it?

Linden Yeah

Elaine Yeah? Wow

Linden Since er 2011.

Elaine Okay, and do you teach, the teaching is in English?

Linden Teaching is in English. Um It's an international school. It's an international subject. It's not just French students. There are probably 60 or 70% of the students at Rennes School of Business are international.

Elaine Okay, of course, yes. Well, Rennes being very er the hub of Brittany, as it were.



Linden Yes. It it is.

Elaine So you're very busy there. And obviously you your writing now is beginning to take over quite a lot, I think, isn't it?

Linden Yes, it is. It's er, I have one book that's already finished that I'm looking to publish in the next week or so. Um. Another book which is almost on the blocks. It's been written, as it's being proofed as we speak. It's being tidied up as it were. I hope that I'm going to get that published by the end of September. I've been Paris recently with a group of, with a group of international students, teaching a group of international students. Er the man who runs the Paris campus for Rennes School of Business, he's asked me to perhaps er speak to some local entrepreneurs. Ah. It's given me an idea to have a, a book on entrepreneurship, twelve rules of entrepreneurship, and then, so I've got three or four books already in my mind

Elaine OK

Linden All ready to go.

Elaine So would you describe them? They are non fiction.

Linden They're non fictional books,

Elaine They're based on your life in theory.

Linden They're non fictional books

Elaine Right

Linden But they're dealt with in a very fictional way. In that I believe that that people are what business is all about, and it's about how you supply services and goods to people, how you interact with people, how people do business. And and the problem with academics and writing technical

books is they tend to be difficult to follow, difficult to read, and uninteresting. And they don't have anything, that actually, they don't have a story to take you through.

Elaine That was very tactful when you said uninteresting because boring is the word that sprung to my mind.

Linden Well, yes. And that's that, I'm not going to ment', it would be inappropriate for me, because um many of my colleagues are authors, as it were, of technical books.

Elaine Academic writers.

Linden Academic writers, um, and I have plenty of them on the shelves, um various shelves and various places around. But um to me, it's important that there's a people story to go along with the work that you're trying to get across, the ideas that you're trying to get across. Er so that the reader can relate to it. And yes, um when I started my business in many, many years, my first business many, many years ago, I had a guy come around er and give me some advice, not not academic, not theoretical advice. He gave me some practical advice that goes back from his experience, um and I'm kind of doing the same thing, but in a, in a in a fictional, non fictional, in a literary kind of way.

Elaine It's giving like an anecdote to go with

Linden Anecdote, anecdotes, er personal advice. And using, drawing on my own personal experience whilst I was a personal business advisor with Business Link in Rennes. Met loads and loads of people. Er and met loads and loads of situations and turning, turning small businesses around. And as a consultant, I was turning large businesses around. Well. It seems to me illogical that I can't actually give this kind of information out to people generally. So, and not just as a "we've got to do this and then do this and do this", but actually take people through stories that I've gone through. My experience, the experience I've gained, really

in helping companies to improve, helping companies to overcome the difficulties they've got, helping company. Helping helping the people in these companies come to terms with the, where they're going, and feeling a part of the process of change. People can relate to and people can be interested in the characters as they go through. And I'll be, I've started in the first book, there are four, there are four characters, or four main characters, and these then will follow through in the books as they come through. Bringing new people in, come back. You know, so. Some people will drop out of the theme, then drop in, come back in later on. So it's much more of um, it's much more Mr Coronation Street business advice as it were.

Elaine OK

Linden So it's a much, it's much more of a, not a soap opera, but it's much more that that kind of way.

Elaine So at least in in writing about your experience and your business expertise, as it were, and giving advice, at least you're not having to follow a plot.

Linden No, I don't have to follow a plot. Thank, thank God for that. Thank God for that.

Elaine You remember, if you kill somebody off in chapter one, and then they appear again.

Linden Oh yes. However, it is possible that um that that there will be, there will be issues which are perhaps not the best, you know, sort of, so people do have difficulties, interpersonal difficulties. And there there are, there are consequences to being in business, and some of the consequences, or some of those relationships, some of the things could be about relationships, and sort of the pressure and the stresses that people are put under

Elaine Particularly, I think, with with the self employed. If people are self employed.

Linden Well, if you're self employed, or it's your own business, then

Elaine Yes

Linden You feel that the business is a part of you. You are the part of the business, um and you do what you have to do, and the business is a priority. It is your life

Elaine Um

Linden So

Elaine Difficult in these economic times too, isn't it? I think people are struggling quite a lot.

Linden Yes, difficulty. There's difficult economic times, but there are always difficulties, and there's always opportunity, and there's always, there's always good times and bad times. Um. But I've seen things. I've seen, you know, I've seen bad times and work through them. I've seen good times and enjoyed them, and I've enjoyed some of the bad times as well. So

Elaine Well you learn. They say, if you if you don't make a mistake, you're not learning anything.

Linden Absolutely, this world is full of mistakes.

Elaine You've done that when you climb too high up a step ladder.

Linden Yes, but one of the things I'd like to be able to do is I know why when I've made mistakes in business. Um obviously, I'm not going to turn around and use that those specific examples, but I'm going to use similar

examples to turn around and help people to identify that this is what you should make, this these are things maybe you shouldn't be doing.

Elaine Um

Linden Yeah.

Elaine So how do you manage to juggle then your teaching, um over in Rennes and up up to Paris you say soon, er with writing? Do you set aside some time part of the day to do your writing?

Linden Well with, there are, there are, there are good things and bad things about being busy. Um. And when you do a lot of teaching, of course, that gives you more. It it generates, it generates the cash flow, which allows you the, some time to have time to write. But fortunately, through the summer, I've got more time to write. And there are other personal projects that I'm dealing with as well which take up a certain amount of time, but I'm devoting as much time as I possibly can to getting the books done.

Elaine And you've got somewhere quiet, you can work?

Linden Oh yes.

Elaine I see, you've got a couple of hounds out there that need exercising, or

Linden Oh, Mac, Mac and Mac and Misty just er they're part of the family, and it's a pleasure to take them out, and it's good exercise as well, and to get out in the fresh air.

Elaine Profuse thoughts can come.

Linden Well, yes, it lets you think about you, as you're moving through. If you've got a problem that you're trying to work through, it's good time to actually think about it, reflect about it, without sort of sitting down at the desk and



thinking, what am I going to do now? What am I going to do in this situation?

Elaine So how many books do you think you will produce? Any thoughts on that?

Linden I think, so far, I've got the list for about 12 or 13.

Elaine And they're all linked in.

Linden They're all linked in

Elaine Right

Linden To various fashions. And as I say, people will come in, and people will move out and they'll come back later on.

Elaine Right

Linden And and it grows a network. And a networking, networking, anyway, is one of the lessons that come through about business. Many years ago, um I was part, I worked with a networking organisation. I was temporarily, not for very long mind you, before we moved here, er director of a networking organisation. And um the importance of networking cannot be understated. It's er hugely important. Because if I turn around and say "this is what I'm doing, do you know anybody that needs any work?" I've got somebody like you selling for me, sharing your and "Oh I can find you work". If somebody, it's not, it's not even the case of selling. You come across somebody that needs my, my expertise, well, then you will recommend me. And if I come across somebody that needs your expertise, and I will recommend you.

Elaine Absolutely

Linden And it's as simple as that, really.



Elaine Yes

Linden It's basic common sense. But unfortunately, in life, sense is not that common.

Elaine Sound like Horatio there! So your future plans really are sort of mapped out. Er. really, with with

Linden Absolutely

Elaine All of this writing

Linden Absolutely

Elaine Yes

Linden Absolutely

Elaine No time for retirement.

Linden Well, what is retirement? I don't know I've I was talking to a, I was talking to a French gentleman some months ago, and he turned round and said, I've done my 40 years. I can retire. How long? How long have you been working? I said, 55 years.

Elaine Right

Linden Aarrh. He's sort of. No, I have no intention of retiring. It, it's, too much fun. It's too interesting. It's too engrossing to just want to give it up and roll over. I've got too much. I've got too much to do, too many things that interest me.

Elaine Absolutely. Well, I wish you Linden, the very best of luck.

Linden Thank you.

Elaine With er with your writing and and with the teaching as well. With the two, juggling the two. And no. For heaven's sake. Who wants to sit down with a rug over their knees and a cat on your lap? You know, when there's so much you can be doing.

Linden Certainly not. I have a guitar. I make my own wine as well. So

Elaine There you go.

Linden Um, I've got loads of things that interest me. And if, and if, if this line of books, I hope is going to be successful, it's, you know, it's, I think, hope it's going to be popular by, people are going to buy it um and then I've got. But I've got other things I can do as well. So I cannot see the time when I'm going to have enough time to to just sit down.

Elaine So for for

Linden And throw a rug over my knee.

Elaine Well exactly. People interested in business consultancy and business development, then they'd be the ones to,

Linden Yeah, um it's, it's advice, and if anybody, if anybody um wants any, if they want to contact me, if they want to say anything, if they want any advice, or if they want if, for example, people from AIKB know of or have got a son or somebody who wants to start a business here in France or in the UK, speak to me, contact me, telephone me. You know, a telephone call costs nothing.

Elaine Absolutely

Linden And it's it's a, it's a, it's a great opportunity for me. It's interesting for me, how I can give the benefit of my advice, which can be taken or not according to what they think is right for them. Um I'm not turning around to say, you've got to do it this way or that way, the other way. But if I can

give people advice that's going to guide them towards being much more successful, then that's fine. Um, and if they want to take it, that's fine. If they don't want to, that's fine.

Elaine OK

Linden You know um.

Elaine Well people do, don't they? They'll pick up a little bit of advice here or there.

Linden Yes

Elaine Maybe pull it together, which suits suits their particular situation.

Linden Yes, my experience may suit somebody. It may not. Er but it gives them the choice that they otherwise wouldn't have. And if they say, I don't, I wouldn't do it this way, but I could do something this way instead, it maybe have started, starts their thinking to do things in a different way. So it's, you know, and I've, I've, as I said, I've got these, I've got these books. Um. And if they you know can help people to get greater value, if if they can help people, and if they can help people who are unemployed find work. And we say nowadays we have more, we have a greater need for students to have master's degrees to get good jobs. When we were when we were young, if you got a degree, you got a good job. But now you've got to have a master's degree. Makes it more difficult. Artificial Intelligence is going to be taking the quality out of life. Um. You know. Companies that companies are closing and starting and closing and moving on to the internet, etc. It's creating change. It's creating pressure. So if I can you know work is more than just earning a living. Work is about finding value in life, and if I can help people to find greater value in what they do, then that's going to be great. That's what it's about. You know.

Elaine Very best of luck.



Linden Thank you very much.

Elaine And um also, good luck to our readers who were very good benefit from er what you've written about.

Linden Well, I hope so. I hope so. Um. But anyway, thank you very much for the opportunity, and I'll look forward perhaps to hearing from one or two of your listeners. Thank you.