

## First Friday Five: Jessica Klodnicki

### **What does the workplace of the future look like to you?**

Businesses had to respond and quickly pivot this past year by empowering a more flexible, nimble, and remote workforce. To build upon this creative approach, the future of the workplace will be a balance of planning and agility along with creativity and discipline. Although it doesn't sound like they go together, that's the healthy tension that truly works. Develop solid plans...but be open to adapting them when it's needed.

### **What changes will leaders need to make to be successful in this environment?**

The flexibility benefit of working from home impacts the established ways of communicating and collaborating. There are fewer "hallway conversations," which means informal collaboration now requires more discipline. For leaders, this means articulating a clear vision and strategy, translating that into a clear, strong plan and creating an operating rhythm. Setting the stage and remaining disciplined is key – and the new, remote nature of work heightens the need to be intentional and increase communication. For your team to be successful, this means setting and communicating clear goals for accountability, augmenting with virtual tools to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness, and then trusting in your team. I can't emphasize enough how important a robust operating rhythm is to thriving in the remote work environment.

Skullcandy, like many other companies, will most likely move forward with a hybrid work model. As a result, we will continue to build and find the right work tools and platforms, while also making sure all future in-office, in-person interactions are meaningful.

### **What impacts will the workplace of the future have on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)?**

First, digital and virtual creates great access for everyone. At Skullcandy, we have engaged in some DEI training that has inspired us on many fronts. They impressed upon us the value of a remote work option and how this opens up so much more opportunity for under-represented groups. For example, many people who have disabilities have skills that we would benefit from, but before, physically getting into an office was difficult. This shift to remote work breaks down that barrier.

Second, this change opens diverse recruiting up in a big way. You could say that our region – Utah – has a somewhat homogenous population, potentially making DEI recruiting more difficult. Going virtual has removed that pipeline barrier and opens businesses up to more of a diverse talent pool, which is valuable. But once you have recruited a diverse workforce, the job does not stop there. You then must work hard to retain and include that workforce. Retention and inclusion are bigger challenges now when we are not physically together in one space. Being creative with your solutions to ensure inclusion is key.

The realities of a more digital-centric world create external DEIB opportunities for consumers and employees alike. For example, there are real-world examples where opportunities were expanded by digital and virtual events. SXSW was digital last year – making it more accessible than ever. Our own internal sales meeting doubled in size because more people were able to participate virtually.

The pandemic has forced people to get on board with virtual tools and platforms. Now that they are immersed, we plan to continue the momentum internally and with our customers.

## **What priority shifts have you, or are you making to ensure operational excellence in the workplace of the future?**

We touched on this briefly, but it bears more discussion. More scheduled flexibility demands more formal accountability, communication, and a more defined operating rhythm. Don't get me wrong, we had a good structure before. But as the workplace gets more dispersed, the only way to make sure you achieve your goals is to put structure around them and progress toward them. Communication and transparency are more important now due to the remote environment.

The other priority shift is a greater focus on digital community. We have to augment digital and in-person interactions both in the workplace and for our consumer. There is an increased need for content creation in the digital space and, at the same time, a greater focus on what we call our "digital health." Finally, we continue to leverage the agility of our in-house creative and marketing teams to test and learn on new platforms.

## **What is the one question you wish people would ask you, but don't?**

### **What would your answer be?**

I have been an athlete for many years, participating in triathlons, marathons, golf, skiing, mountain biking and most recently, I've become a certified yoga instructor. I rarely get asked how my participation in those sports has shaped my work life.

Training for any sport requires perseverance, focus, and hard work. Discovering a new sport, at any age, involves the willingness to learn, to be humble, and to get back up after a fall...literally and figuratively. All of these are highly versatile skills that continue to shape my life and leadership style.

My athletic training has evolved over the years. Early on I was focused on my individual effort as a competitor. Later, that evolved into becoming involved in more of a team effort. I launched a women's mountain bike group called Girls Rock that was especially welcoming to new and first-time riders. It became clear, very quickly, that the most rewarding aspect was bringing others into the sport and watching their enthusiasm and commitment thrive. This holds true with the teams I have led over the years and continue to lead; watching others grow and learn is by far the greatest reward as a leader.

# Jessica Klodnicki



Jessica Klodnicki has had a diverse career spanning a variety of industries from consumer products to outdoor/lifestyle brands. She is currently the Chief Marketing Officer at Skullcandy, the original lifestyle audio brand at the intersection of music and action sports based in Park City, UT.

Jessica was recently named to the 2021 Forbes CMO Next list for her work at Skullcandy including her team's content to commerce efforts and mission driven programming.

Prior to Skullcandy, Jessica was General Manager a portfolio of outdoor brands for Vista Outdoor including CamelBak, Bell Helmets, Camp Chef outdoor cooking and more. She got her start in the outdoor industry with Mizuno USA leading marketing across their sports portfolio of golf, running and team sports. Her interest was first peaked in the sports industry when she interned for the U.S. Olympic Bobsled team.

For the first half of her career, she led product and marketing across a variety of consumer products categories including everything from beauty goods to fine writing (working in Paris, France) and electronic office products working for Kids II and Newell Brands.

She currently serves as Vice Chair on the board of directors of Protect Our Winters, an organization whose mission is to turn passionate outdoors people into effective climate advocates. She also serves on the Board of Directors for IMBA (the International Mountain Bicycling Association) and for the Park City Chamber and Visitor's Bureau. She has previously served on the board of directors of other non-profit organizations -- Vice Chairman of People for Bikes and board member of Camber Outdoors (an organization focused on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the outdoors).

Jessica graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Communications from the University of West Florida and MBA from Emory University. In her free time, you'll find her mountain biking, skiing and doing yoga.