

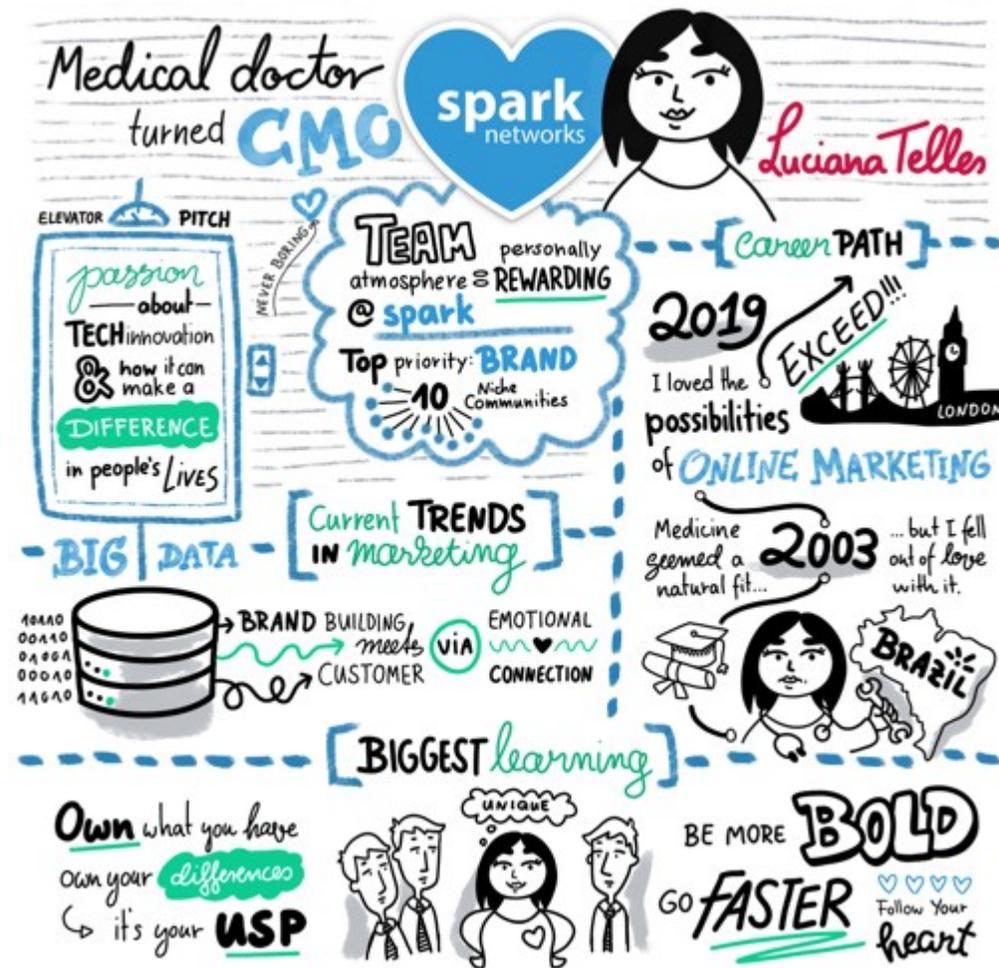


Q&A with our CMO, Luciana Telles

May 13, 2019

Medical doctor-turned-CMO, Luciana Telles, joined us at Spark Networks in January this year. We spoke to her about mission-driven pathways, Online Marketing, and leveraging individual traits on the road to success.

Give me your elevator pitch!



I don't have an elevator pitch as such. What I would say is my career path didn't make sense looking forward, it's only when I looked back that I saw that my decisions were connected. I'm passionate about tech innovation and how it can make a difference in people's lives.

What were your impressions of Spark?

People here make you feel welcome and at-ease. There's a very strong team atmosphere here. We spend most of our lives at work, so it needs to be in an environment that's personally rewarding. I would say that's one of the biggest advantages of working here.

You started off your career as a medical doctor, what prompted the move to Sales & Online

Marketing?

From an early age I was driven to make a meaningful impact, so it was a natural fit to study medicine. Half way through my studies I fell out of love with it – in Brazil, where I'm from, you only get access to medical treatment if you can afford it. I felt that medicine was just an industry; that being a doctor was like being a mechanic. I was very disappointed.

I ended up finishing the degree, but didn't know whether to go on and specialize, so I took time out to give me perspective. I went to London in 2003 and joined a tour operator selling holiday packages. At that time they only did sales offline, so I convinced the CEO to try online. Within a year, online sales revenue exceeded that of offline. I loved the possibilities of online marketing, I loved the innovation. I realized this is where I could drive change.

What does the marketing landscape look like at the moment?

Big Data became huge a few years ago. But what was lacking was the feeling that brands were truly part of people's lives – that is something that goes beyond big data. Now the trend is towards using that big data to customize, to make the user experience more personal. We need to look at the big data, analyze what the customer really needs, then add the human touch – make connections, emotional connections. It's where brand building meets customers.

You've come to Spark with fresh eyes. What are your top priorities for the year ahead?

My top priority is to strengthen Brand. Most of our current growth comes from Mergers & Acquisitions, so we need to work on building up our ten diverse brands by looking at each of the niche communities, working on their pain points, and ensuring that we are selling the right product for their needs. In other words: improving our brand value proposition and bridging the gap between marketing and product.

What should prospective employees know about working in Marketing at Spark?

The exposure to all our different brands means working at Spark is like working for ten companies in one. It's diversified; we work with different geographies, different markets & different strategies. So it's never boring.

We already have a top-notch team, so you could say that anyone joining is to 'add' to the experience, not 'fix' it. You can learn a lot from the people here.

Do you have any advice for women who want to reach C-level positions?

There's a lot out there on tactics, strategy, and how to behave as a woman in the workplace. But I don't believe in that – if you follow these tips you will just end up adopting stereotypically male traits and behaving 'like a man'. No! Own what you have, own your differences! Whether it's gender, nationality, sexuality, own it – it's your USP (unique selling point). I remember when I started a job in Munich, I walked into the boardroom and it was filled with German men. And I just thought, I'm a Latin American woman, they chose me for who I am, so I'm going to be exactly the warm person that I know how to be.

When it comes to success, what do you wish you could tell your past self?

Just go for it. The worst that can happen is you won't be successful. What do you have to lose by trying? Go faster, be more bold.

On a practical note, I would say, learn *how* to sell something. Never lose sight of the bigger picture. If you're speaking to the CEO don't tell him/her that you want to change the online strategy, show them the numbers, explain the potential; speak their language.

What question should I have asked you?

'What's your biggest learning and why?'

What's your biggest learning and why?

Don't stick around if your heart isn't in it. I didn't want to quit medicine because I had already invested 6 years of my life in it. I shouldn't have carried through with it, I think I just didn't have the guts to make that serious decision - I didn't trust my instincts. I was living a life that I wasn't pleased with. I was boxing up my feelings instead of addressing it. Since that learning, I don't regret any of the decisions I have made – except for not taking action earlier! Follow your heart.

