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The Future of Data Disruption

Meeco is a privacy solution that many Australians don't realise they need.

Images courtesy of Meeco

Meeco offers individuals the power and ability to capture and control their individual data and save to a personal cloud which is part of a private global network. Owning and protecting personal data in a world increasingly devoid of privacy is a vital solution for the modern Australian.

Katryna Dow, Founder and CEO of Meeco, says it's a natural response to the evolution of technology. "I'm constantly surprised at how many people don't realise the impact it has on their lives and how data has become not only a valuable form of currency but almost like our DNA. If people were mindful that their DNA, bank account, or identity was being used they would be more concerned but because it's not so transparent they don't realise the impact. Meeco is a solution for a problem that people are only just starting to recognise."

"Our response to big data is, 'small data, big insights'. Big Data can be really powerful when used correctly. For instance, when looking at health issues, epidemics, or understanding how to plan a city. There are so many very positive markets for Big Data. One of the challenges is that it tends to be used for more commercial reasons.

"When it comes to the individual and where Meeco can make a huge difference is the idea that individuals could have the same ability to analyse, aggregate, understand, and draw insight from data, so they would have the same power as institutions and corporations, except that they

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would have that on an individual level. They would be just as informed as organisations or governments on their own data and they could decide where to share it and with whom."

Katryna was first inspired by a scene from *Minority Report* where Tom Cruise runs past advertisements that tag his location and biometrics and deliver tailored offers to him. Seeing a glimpse of that possible future, Katryna decided that she wanted to invent an alternative.

"What we haven't realised is that we've become the product. The information that's used for marketing may seem innocuous but in fact companies are not transparent about how your information is used and shared. For instance, a leading grocery store was found to be selling grocery cart data to their insurance arm to model insurance rates."

Since that first spark of an idea, Katryna says she's strived to develop Meeco over the past decade. "About five years ago I was looking at whether there was something possible along the lines of what Meeco has developed into and whether that was achievable. At that stage, we still didn't have smartphones so the idea of technology being at people's fingertips wasn't there. Cloud computing was still something for organisations rather than individuals.

"Around three years ago I decided to co-found a think tank and pool all the research from the previous decade together and start looking at what a technology solution would be like and testing the

concept. I did that alongside my full-time consulting work for around 18 months, and then a year ago I founded and funded the business, in terms of developing a prototype, and then earlier this year we took on an angel investor. It's been a journey of a decade in different ways but the past couple of years have been absolutely focused on bringing a solution and making it available."

This solution was launched alongside Meeco's partner, Respect Network. Katryna says, "I was at a conference in Silicon Valley when I met Drummond Reed, the co-founder of the Respect Network. What we realised was that there was absolute synergy between the network that he had been developing and Meeco as a suite of applications that could use the network and give people a really practical, fun, and simple-to-use application from the very beginning of the network being established.

"Partners have been essential to me. Up until recently I was funding this whole process myself and for the past few years it's meant working seven days a week. Being able to partner, joint venture, and collaborate has been a huge contributor to not only Meeco getting to the place where it is now but also helping to prove the theory in our business model, which is around shared values"

Regulation is tracking ahead of consumer demand with the Australian Government and the European Union instigating laws to better protect the individual. As more people choose to preserve and protect their personal data, Australians will turn to Meeco. •