

## Agency for Change Podcast: Gareth Evans, Founder and CEO, VECKTA

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### **Gareth Evans:**

Live life to the max and create a world that was not possible before you.

### **Announcer:**

Welcome to Agency for Change, a podcast from KidGlov that brings you the stories of changemakers who are actively working to improve our communities. In every episode, we'll meet with people who are making a lasting impact in the places we call home.

### **Lyn Wineman:**

Think about how far the power for your home has to travel to get to you. If you trace the electric wire that's connected to your home back to the nearest pole, then to a transformer, across miles and miles of transmission lines, and finally back to the power plant, you might find that the electricity powering your television, or your refrigerator came from a surprising source. Fossil fuel, like oil, natural gas and coal, have been powering electric grids in the U.S. for years. But there's a growing movement to change how we get our energy by reducing reliance on fossil fuels and turning to low carbon renewable sources like wind, solar and hydropower.

One of the companies helping to accelerate this energy transition is VECKTA, and you'll hear from their founder today, where we'll be talking about some of the biggest trends in the energy industry, how VECKTA is helping businesses gain energy independence, and what the organization has planned for the future. Hey everyone. This is Lyn Wineman here, president and chief strategist at KidGlov. Welcome to another episode of the Agency for Change podcast. Today's guest is Gareth Evans, founder and CEO of VECKTA, which helps business leaders around the world design and implement energy transition roadmaps to achieve more profitable and sustainable outcomes. Gareth, welcome to the podcast.

### **Gareth Evans:**

Thanks for having me, Lyn. Excited to hang out for the next little while.

### **Lyn Wineman:**

I'm excited to hang out with you, too! I don't get to talk with people with British accents very often, so that makes this extra, extra fun.

### **Gareth Evans:**

Sure.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Gareth, could you walk us through what VECKTA does and how you help people?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah, sure. VECKTA, our mission is to simplify and accelerate the energy transition. Really, what we're passionate about is decarbonizing businesses operations really quickly and profitably. And so, what we've built is an integrated technology-enabled platform that allows business leaders to really discern actionable insights such that they can make really informed decisions, and then leverage our vibrant marketplace of suppliers and constructors who can then go and build their energy system. And what we're really empowering business leaders to do is to do this competitively and get access to the right energy system for them, without having to rely on consultants or being sold to by a supplier.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I love that. I think everybody wants to do things that are great for the environment, but sometimes you do wonder, "What's that impact going to be on my business, and will it really work?" And I'm curious, and this may seem like such an obvious question to you, but why is helping businesses gain energy independence so important?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah. I'd say it's probably less obvious than you think, Lyn.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Oh, good! All right.

**Gareth Evans:**

And I'd say probably even a year or two ago, businesses weren't really thinking about this in a lot of focus. I'd say what's come into clear focus is we're electrifying everything. Whether it be our vehicles, our heating, cooling systems, our equipment, everything's been electrified. And so really, it's the lifeblood of everything we do. And so now we're realizing that without it, we all expect when we flip that switch on, to have the lights come on and be able to charge our phones and our iPads, and you imagine scaling that out to a business level. When the power doesn't come on, it has huge knock-on effects and massive impacts to businesses, bottom lines, as well as their ability to sort of look after their staff, deliver on their promises. And so, it's becoming more and more critical, and I think about it in terms of energy sovereignty. So, how to ensure that businesses and communities can have energy sovereignty and take control of their energy future.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That sounds so cool. You should think about that for your tagline, by the way. So, Gareth, there's that line, "If it's not broke, don't fix it," right? What are the risks of continuing with the current electrical infrastructure?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah. Well, I think that tagline is right. And it is broken, so we do need to fix it.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah.

**Gareth Evans:**

I think we've all witnessed this, whether it be through COVID or through the recent war in Ukraine right now. Whether it's politically, from a business perspective, from an energy perspective, we've all come to rely on these centralized systems where they're easier to design and manage, but they're also highly vulnerable and they have many points of failure throughout. And so, when you look at COVID, we have this centralized infrastructure, and then suddenly all that was exposed and we all had to nestle down into our little distributed pods to kind of survive and get through it. And same with the energy infrastructure. We've built an amazing infrastructure that served us really well for the last 100 years where we generate energy at one location, and then we transmit it out to where it's needed. But we're realizing that infrastructure's now getting older. It's harder to maintain.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yes.

**Gareth Evans:**

It's becoming more expensive to maintain. Ukraine's kind of really highlighted where their energy and water infrastructure are being, I suppose, exposed and being taken out. And that then really threatens the livelihoods and security of an entire population just by being able to focus on a few key locations. I'd say today, we are all passive consumers of energy. We don't know where it comes from.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Right.

**Gareth Evans:**

If and when we'll get it, how much we should pay for it. And what we want to really drive is that we want to take control of that. We want to be active consumers, if not producers, and we want to really ensure that we all have access to that affordable, reliable, clean energy when we want it, at the price point we want it, and being able to do that in a really sustainable way.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Those sound like all amazing things. And you're talking about big things like countries at war and big businesses and communities. I think of one day when it was very cold where I live, and there was so much power usage that there were rolling brownouts. And at 5:30 in the morning, my house was below 60 degrees, and I was on my Peloton and the power went out, and it was perhaps one of the saddest days of my life. And that seems so simple compared to the big things that you are talking about.

**Gareth Evans:**

But you are spot on there, Lyn. I'd say energy, it's critical, isn't it? And so, from your individual perspective where it's an inconvenience, through to if it goes on long enough, you start losing product in your fridge...

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah.

**Gareth Evans:**

Can't use your utensils at home, you can't warm yourself, right through to the extreme level of the last results we saw were businesses in the U.S. alone lost \$1.5 billion worth of opportunity as a result of power outages.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Ouch.

**Gareth Evans:**

And so, you can see the impact is significant.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow! Wow. All right, so you've talked about a lot of big things. Can you take me through VECKTA's approach? So, let's say I'm a business that wants to save money and switch to a more sustainable power source, and probably a big business to be scaled for the work that you do. How would VECKTA help me?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah. So, I'd say, Lyn, we actually support businesses right from local microbrewery ...

**Lyn Wineman:**

Really?

**Gareth Evans:**

We don't do individuals and houses. But at a business level, that's our primary focus, commercial industrial businesses. So, from an individual brewery, right up to then a leading corporation with facilities all around the world. And I'd say the primary challenges that our customers have is they either have a pain point or they have an objective. And in your case, you said a de-carbonization goal. So maybe they need to be net carbon-neutral by a date that they've committed, maybe 2030. So, they've got a goal and an objective. They've typically got some data, but it's fairly unstructured. And beyond that, they don't know what's possible, who to turn to, where to begin. I'd say the challenges, the capabilities and the services exist in the market to help businesses deploy these onsite energy solutions where you build, generate, and store energy right where you needed it, so you don't now rely on the centralized grid.

And these systems can be deployed really effectively, but the biggest challenge customers face is that information asymmetry. So, the people who want to buy them don't know a whole lot about energy, energy infrastructure. The people who sell these solutions know a lot, and so there's big information asymmetry today. And as a result, a lack of trust. The customer doesn't know what they should believe, what's possible, who they should turn to. So, what we support businesses to do is baseline where they're at today: how much energy to use, how much does it cost you, what's your emission profile, how do you get from where you are today to your objective? That's all automated through technology versus spending months to years with a consultant.

And then what we do is we help them prioritize where they get the greatest return on investments across their portfolio sites, design the optimal energy system for their specific business needs, location, objectives. And then, we've built a vibrant marketplace of suppliers who then they can push out their opportunity to. They do it in a real simplified manner, so we help them ask the right questions in the right language at the right time of the market. And then suppliers get to them, propose their responses,

negotiate an award end product, and then ultimately monitor that the asset, once it's built, is performing like the suppliers promised. So, we're bringing an end to net end solution from our customers to accelerate their energy transition journey.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Gareth, it sounds like you pulled everything together to take something that feels overwhelming and almost impossible possible, truly, by bringing and making it all automated. Automated and pulling everyone together. So, I'm curious. We talked a little bit about my very sad day when the power went out on my Peloton, but also rolling blackouts. And I think people can all still remember when the grids went down in the troubles in Texas in the last couple of years. I'm curious, what's on your radar right now? Are there any energy trends or regulatory changes, or just significant events that you're helping clients prepare for?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah, so I'd say at the macro level ... the four Ds as people refer to it ... it's really to decarbonize-

**Lyn Wineman:**

Decarbonize, yep. Yeah.

**Gareth Evans:**

Decentralize, digitize, and decrease energy use. So, in the first instance, customers need to decrease their use as much as possible. That comes through energy efficiency. Then, they get to decentralize their asset through what we facilitate them doing, is being able to build onset energy solutions. That then results in decarbonization. And this is all facilitated by using products like ours, which are digitally enabled products which accelerate that progress. So that's really what we're all driving towards in terms of the big things that are going to really help move that along right now. The Inflation Reduction Act, which sort of came out and there's over \$360 billion being driven into this industry, which is huge. That's really going to accelerate the opportunity for customers over the coming years. Customers that we work with, they can actually get tax incentives between 30% and 60% against any capital expenditures. So really, it allows them to deploy these systems and get paybacks extremely quickly. Several years ago, we're seeing paybacks of three, five, 10 years. Now, you can get it in less than a year.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow!

**Gareth Evans:**

So, it makes these solutions really, really amenable and sort of accessible. And then I'd say locally for us here in California, the California regulations are changing around something called net metering, so our ability to sell our solar-generated energy back into the grid. And up until now, you've been able to sell it anytime you want at a rate that is very favorable towards the person producing it. It's not ideal for the utilities because they're getting the energy whether they want it or not, and they're paying for it whether they want it or not. And so, the new rules really support businesses who are willing to put storage on their facility as well, and they can store energy during the day when the sun's up and they've got lots of free access to energy.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Smart. Yeah.

**Gareth Evans:**

And when the grid needs the energy at the end of the day and the sun's gone down, you can sell it back at a premium. That's quite exciting for us right now because businesses who want solar only, they need to act between now and April. They have to get legacied into the old rules.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's a pretty tight timeline-

**Gareth Evans:**

Exactly.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Between now and April.

**Gareth Evans:**

It really is. And so, then anyone who wants to get the optimal solution to maximize their upside, then we'll support them post-April to pursue the new net metering rules.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow. All right! So just in case anybody heard that and wants to get in on the April deadline, we're going to have a link to Gareth and VECKTA's website in the show notes on the KidGlov website there. So, Gareth, what do you think is the biggest misconception for business leaders when it comes to considering energy options, and what advice would you give them?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah, I'd say the biggest misconception is that, actually, business leaders and consumers don't realize that they have an alternative to buying energy from their utility or their grid. I think we've started seeing more homes putting solar on the roof, but how do you then scale out to business-level objectives? There are multiple technologies out there to consider, multiple vendors. Every location, every business type is different. I'd say it's really onset energy solutions that are accessible today. They are complex. But how do we simplify that and give more people more access to it more quickly? I think in addition to that, the last misconception is that these things are expensive-

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yes.

**Gareth Evans:**

And that you don't get a return on your money. And today, you can deploy a solution that is cleaner and more reliable than what you'll get from the grid, and it'll be the same as, if not less costly than what you pay the grid for your bill today. And you can lock that in for the next 10, 15, 30 years, so your operational cost is now locked in and you're not going to be exposed to the annual escalations, which is super important.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I feel like we just shared a big secret there. You just shared a big secret. We can save the planet and save money at the same time, and it's not as hard as you think it's going to be. Because to me, this process sounds very difficult.

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah, exactly. I think from the outside it feels difficult, and that's what we want to overcome. Let's use technology and smarts and simplify the message such that people feel like it's more accessible.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah. So, Gareth, tell me this. What do you think the biggest challenge is in communicating this message out to people? Because it kind of sounds like a no-brainer, right? Cleaner energy, more reliable, energy sovereignty. Honestly, we ought to think about that for your tagline.

**Gareth Evans:**

Yep!

**Lyn Wineman:**

But why do you think it, maybe, is taking a minute for this to catch on?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah, I think there's a few things. First of all, I'd say the energy industry is complex.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah.

**Gareth Evans:**

And I think the way a lot of companies are approaching it right now is the messaging is complex. We're talking about megawatts here and kilowatts there and leveled costs of energy, and it all sounds really scary.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yes, it does. Yes.

**Gareth Evans:**

About microgrids, and we change that term to onset energy or local energy to try and simplify it. So, I think the biggest challenge is actually how do we simplify the message for a non-technical audience? Because people who are responsible for making these decisions are chief financial officers, facility managers, sustainability managers, and they're not energy experts. And so where are they, where are they, getting their information and how do we give them that information in a really simple, digestible, accessible way? That's definitely the biggest challenge.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah. Though, honestly, you've just described marketing in a nutshell right there. Getting the right message to the right people at the right time in the right way, in a way that they can trust and believe it.

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Gareth, when you think about your long-term vision for VECKTA, what predictions do you have for this company that you've built?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yep. So, I think when you think about booking a holiday, you think about Expedia or Booking.com. When you think about buying personal product, you think about Amazon. When you think about grabbing a taxi these days, you think about Uber, Lyft. I want every business leader in the world, when they think about energy, to go to VECKTA. VECKTA will be the energy platform that helps them achieve, manage, monitor their energy objectives.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That is not a big, hairy goal at all, is it? I think certainly attainable with you at the helm. My next question was to ask you if there are any big goals or milestones you're working towards. That's a very big one. Are there any other goals or milestones that you'd like to share?

**Gareth Evans:**

That's certainly the ultimate vision, and we're already working with some really big, household brand names, right through to the local breweries that I described before. Ultimately, it's about expanding that customer base, increasing our exposure to the market and getting businesses to understand that sustainability doesn't have to come at the expense of profitability. In fact, today, they go hand in hand. Milestones, in the coming years, we want to see \$1 billion worth of transactions going through the marketplace, so that's quite a significant milestone, which we'll ultimately see, we believe, approximately 300 megawatts worth of clean energy, being deployed to customers. So, our internal north star is megawatts deployed, which is the amount of energy being deployed, and so that's our focus. For me, personally, I've committed to the team to try and build a million followers across my personal and our company channels.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Yeah!

**Gareth Evans:**

Excited to hear what ideas you got for me to really help excel through that.

**Lyn Wineman:**

All right. Let's talk about that! Well, the first thing we'll do is we'll give all of your links in the show notes. That will be a start. That will be a start.

**Gareth Evans:**



Sounds great.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Gareth, you mentioned you're in California, and you obviously don't have a California accent. I'm interested in your story. How did you get into this line of work at this moment in time?

**Gareth Evans:**

It's definitely an exciting and squirrely story. There have been lots of zigs and zags.

**Lyn Wineman:**

The zigs and zags are the best part.

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah! Originally from Liverpool, England. Brought up there, had a great childhood. At the age of nine, actually, my dad took a role working in the Caribbean for a few years, and so I got first experience of living abroad, living in a new culture, being exposed to new and exciting and wonderful things. So, I always then had, I suppose, a yearning, or ... I sought that adventure, let's say. After school, I didn't know what I really wanted to do, so I went traveling. Spent six months in South America doing charity work there. Went back to university, got sponsored by the Air Force to go through university. So, I was flying at the weekends with the Royal Air Force, and then studying environmental science during the week.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow!

**Gareth Evans:**

At the end of university, decided to go the non-Air Force route and traveled around the world a bit more. Spent a couple of months with the Shaolin monks in Northeast China learning kung fu-

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow.

**Gareth Evans:**

Traveling around the world, ended up in Calgary, Canada, and used my environmental science degree there to support oil and gas companies to clean up their old well sites. So really got back into, how do you take the environment from what it was and has been used for something else, and convert it back to what it should be? That took me off to Iraq, where I did social environmental liability assessments on behalf of companies moving into the region after the Second Gulf War. Super stressful, super exciting, but really fulfilling. And that was actually the catalyst for the first inception of VECKTA. We were operating on some of the biggest energy reserves in the world, but working on a day-to-day basis with locals who were surviving on two to four hours of power a day. Things just didn't add up.

And so that was kind of the first idea of we need to do something about it, but the technology didn't exist at the time. Got to travel around the world a bit more, exposing myself to how we deploy mega projects with a large engineering firm, Worley. So, I moved off to Australia, back to Canada, then to the U.S., all with Worley. And then, technology-enabled access to distributed energy, so that's when we

thought VECKTA would be the right time to launch. San Diego felt like a good place to launch the business, clean tech, center of the world, lots of software and tech talent. Yeah, it's great place to be.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Also, a great place to live out your active and adventurous lifestyle, Gareth.

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah, exactly.

**Lyn Wineman:**

I love your story. Very inspiring. I'm going to ask you, next, my favorite question.

**Gareth Evans:**

Yep.

**Lyn Wineman:**

People who listen to the podcast know that I love inspirational quotes, and I get to talk to so many interesting people. I'd love a Gareth Evans original quote to inspire our listeners.

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah. I'd say, live life to the max and create a world that was not possible before you.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Wow! I think that could be a big, famous quote that people put on their walls. That's fantastic. So, Gareth, you're working to get a million followers. How can our listeners find out more about you and your work?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yep. So VECKTA, our websites, we've just done a nice upgrade on that. That's a really good resource for all things energy transition and what VECKTA does, [www.vecta.com](http://www.vecta.com). VECKTA is V-E-C-K-T-A.

**Lyn Wineman:**

And we'll have that in the show notes too. I keep saying that, but everybody will know they can go get that link if they want it.

**Gareth Evans:**

And interestingly, a lot of people ask, "Where does VECKTA come from?" But it's super interesting. So VECKTA is a play on vector, which means to bring magnitude, direction, and scale, so we're bringing that to the energy transition. And the logo's got a few unique aspects. The V is "out with the old," the A, upper arrow, is "in with the new," and we've got a-

**Lyn Wineman:**

Nice.

**Gareth Evans:**

Green E for clean energy. And then both myself and VECKTA are on LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube.

**Lyn Wineman:**

Fantastic. Actually, I'm glad you offered that up because I was thinking in my mind ... I have been aware of VECKTA for a while, but I did not know where that name came from. So, Gareth, I loved this conversation. As we wrap up our time together today, what is the most important thing you would like our listeners to remember about the work that you're doing?

**Gareth Evans:**

Yeah, I'd say the biggest takeaway is as business leaders, we're all responsible for creating a thriving future for all. Sustainability does not have to come at the expense of profitability. When done right, they go absolutely hand-in-hand. This is a multi-generational transition, and so we need to all adapt purposefully, but really challenge our limits and make sure that we're doing right things by our businesses, and by our customers, and by our communities. The opportunities exist today, and we're here to try and simplify it and make it way more accessible to you.

**Lyn Wineman:**

That's fantastic. Gareth, I fully believe the world needs more people like you. And heavens knows, you've lived almost everywhere in the world. Thank you for taking time to share with me today.

**Gareth Evans:**

It's been a pleasure. Thank you, Lyn.

**Announcer:**

We hope you enjoyed today's Agency for Change podcast. To hear all our interviews with those who are making a positive change in our communities, or to nominate a changemaker you'd love to hear from, visit [KidGlov.com](http://KidGlov.com) at [K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com](http://K-I-D-G-L-O-V.com) to get in touch. As always, if you like what you've heard today, be sure to rate, review, subscribe, and share. Thanks for listening, and we'll see you next time.