

CEO, KOGAN

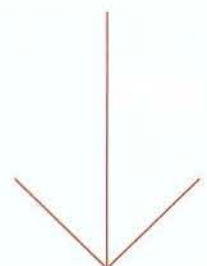
Ruslan Kogan

The essential tech of the main mufti of Kogan Technology

INTERVIEW DAMIAN FRANCIS



He's to consumer technology what Dennis Rodman was to basketball. Or Juan-Pablo Montoya was to Formula 1. Or even what John McEnroe was to tennis. While you won't see him with fluoro hair swearing his mouth off while smashing a circuit board, Ruslan Kogan will stick his opinion to you at every opportunity. It makes for extremely interesting conversations. It's a refreshing change from the usual, bland, generic CEO speak. It also indicates passion for what he does. **T3** caught up with him at a conference on the Gold Coast where the conversation topics hit astronomical heights... geddit? No? Read on...



What developments in consumer technology are you most excited about?

I'm excited about internet connectivity integrating into all sorts of devices, not just mobile phones, TVs, Blu-ray players, and even in your car for example. This will allow us to interact with people and information from wherever we are as though we were on our computer. It means we'll be able to get into our car in the morning and have feeds of the news that we're most interested in pop up on our dash, where you'll also be able to see your e-mails and live traffic updates.

What is the most disappointing consumer technology you've seen lately?

Microsoft's Bing. It was hyped up to be something that was going to take us away from Google and give us a real alternative. I've used it once or twice and never gone back to it again. Google is far superior.

What gadgets could you not get through the day without?

My Google Nexus One Android mobile phone. Everything to do with organising my life is centred on this one device, including all my e-mails, contacts and calendars. They all sync with Google at all times. The ability to do voice activated searches and voice-controlled phone functions while I'm driving is very handy also. It's very fast and the AMOLED screen is great.

I couldn't get through any work day without my Gmail account either. My Gmail account is my knowledge base, document management system, to-do list, and much more.

What are your favourite gadgets at home?

My robotic vacuum cleaner which cleans my house for me. I switch it on, go to the office, come back and the house is clean! I used to have a huge amount of gadgets at home, such

as a PDA for e-mails and another device to make Skype calls, but this has all been replaced with my Android phone.

What gadget are you really excited about owning?

An IPTV that will be able to connect to your wireless internet at home, stream content on demand from anywhere in the world, make Skype calls, and interact with countless widgets. Kogan will be selling varieties of them soon.

If you could claim you invented something already around, what would it be?

The DVORAK keyboard. QWERTY keyboards were initially designed to ensure the mechanical hands on a typewriter didn't collide with each other. We are well beyond that because nobody uses typewriters now. The DVORAK keyboard is proven to increase efficiency and typing speed by over 30 per cent. Taking into account how many people are typing away on their keyboard this very moment all over the world, not using DVORAK keyboards is costing the global economy billions of dollars. Kogan would love to be the company that invented the DVORAK keyboard. But it's not too late for Kogan to be the company that makes DVORAK the new QWERTY.

Describe your average day.

I wake up at about 6am. Then I roll around in bed and check a few e-mails on my phone. I'll either swim some laps or go for a run around Albert Park. I'd usually do a video conference with the Kogan management team - most of us are in different cities. At about 9am I get into the office where there's usually a line-up of new and upcoming gadgets for me to have a play with and test out. Quite often I have to travel into the city for a few meetings - a trip into the city would also mean lunch with a few mates. Late in the afternoon I'll either play a set of tennis or squash, or go for a jet-ski. For dinner I try to catch up with a friend I haven't seen in a while before spending far too much time in the evening and at night in front of a screen doing more work and sending e-mails. I usually get to bed in the early hours of the morning and then start it all over again.

What are the best and worst parts of your job?

The best and worst parts of my job are the same thing - all the travel I have to do. The great things are that I've got to see a lot of the world, meet some great people, and do some

really cool stuff. The downside of it is that it's very often extremely exhausting. There have been times when I've flown twenty times in two weeks across different time zones. This is only getting more intense as Kogan Technologies expands around the world.

What's coming out soon from Kogan?

At the end of May we'll be shipping a Blu-ray player with WiFi internet connectivity. We're also introducing WiFi connectivity into our entire range - it's already in our digital photo frames, and it will soon be in our LCD and LED TV product lines. Also expect a lot more connectivity options in our devices - expect many more HDMI ports and USB ports on most of our TVs to record and playback multimedia files.

You're going to space with Virgin Galactic. Why the hell would you want to do that?

I love innovation and entrepreneurs that break through rules and boundaries. Virgin Galactic represents what an entrepreneur is capable of in terms of technological breakthroughs.

Russian and USA government have spent approximately \$500 billion in the last 50 years to send 512 humans into space. Richard Branson is doing it for 1/5000th of the price that it's cost the governments to do it. To me this represents how entrepreneurs and savvy businesspeople strive for the best, most efficient ways to do things.

How's the astronaut training going so far?

There hasn't been any official training yet - they're still going through the test program at the moment. I'm making sure I'm keeping fit in the lead up to it and looking to participate in some triathlons later this year. I am also starting my pilot's license training soon so I'll be ready to help out the Virgin Galactic pilots!

Tell us something we don't know about you.

I finished top of the Victorian state with a perfect score in Year 12 for Information Processing and Management. That score arrived several weeks after I had to beg my teacher to give me a pass before the final exam. I wasn't attending any classes so they threatened to fail me. I guess I showed them! I also run Milan Direct, which specialises in designer furniture at milandirect.com.au. A bit different to consumer technology, isn't it!



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FIVE TIPS FOR THE TOP
RUSLAN KOGAN'S TIPS TO STARTING UP A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

- 1 Listen to Nike**
Their slogan 'Just Do It' is the best possible business advice I can give. Kogan and Milan Direct were both started within a week of the initial conception of the idea. I've heard many people talk about good ideas but they just don't do them.
- 2 Value**
Always start a business with a clear value ad to the customer. Whatever business you start, there must be a good reason or incentive for a customer to want to transact with your business over and over again. Kogan's value ad is the best prices.
- 3 Work hard**
Be prepared to work 24/7 with few breaks in-between. I haven't worked less than 70 hours a week since I began in the corporate world. If I only worked 50 hours a week then Kogan wouldn't exist. You have to put in serious effort to take off.
- 4 Love what you do**
Love what you do because if you do you'll be very good at it. You'll love dedicating your life to it, which is the attention a successful business requires. If you follow these steps you give yourself a great chance at having success.