

# EPIISODE 027

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## JAKTAR

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Perniclas Bedow, Bedow

AND

Igor Melnikov, Jaktar

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

### **BRYONY GOMEZ-PALACIO**

Hi, this is Bryony Gomez-Palacio and welcome to episode 27 of The Follow-up.

This week we are following up on Jaktar, a builder of high-end boats that are, as its tagline efficiently states, “engineered for exploration”. Created by outdoor enthusiast, Igor Melnikov, who partnered with Dutch boat design studio, Vripack, to design it, Jaktar boats are inspired by coastal adventures in Scandinavia’s Far North and hand-built from marine-grade aluminum by skilled welders to deliver a, quote unquote, “finely-tuned balance of speed and stability, fuel economy, handling, and safety”.

The project, designed by Stockholm, Sweden-base Bedow was posted on Brand New on March 30, 2021. You can pull it up on your browser at [bit.ly/bnpodcast027](https://bit.ly/bnpodcast027) that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast027, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Perniclas Bedow, CEO and Creative Director of Bedow, and Igor Melnikov, Founder of Jaktar.

In this conversation we get to learn about... well... about how a boat is created if you have the passion and stamina for it as Igor has, moving from prototyping to testing to refining. We also hear how Bedow's identity work influenced some of the final details of the boat in order to create a product that was cohesive from stem to stern. It was also great to learn about Bedow's strategy and design process and how important it is to define early on the key sentence that defines what the product is about. In this case, the solution, quote on quote, "Engineered for Exploration", was defined on the taxi ride back from the first workshop with the client. As fast and effective as the Jaktar boat itself.

Now, let's listen in as Armin follows up with Perniclas and Igor.

**ARMIN VIT** Hello everyone. Today, we are here to talk about the boat I never knew I wanted so badly, and how its design and branding came to be. Perniclas, Igor, welcome to The Follow-Up.

**PERNICLAS BEDOW** Thank you, Armin.

**IGOR MELNIKOV** Thank you, Armin.

**ARMIN** Igor, let's start with you. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? What's your background? What got you interested in boats? And the question most of us have, why did you decide to start your own boat company?

**IGOR** As for my background, first of all, both of my grandfathers were sailors and one of them served on the military ship during the Second World War. After the war, he was working as an engineer creating small and middle sized torpedo boats. Another one finished up the career serving in the national cargo ships as a Captain. And I believe this reason helped me make the decision to start up a new brand. Having been working as a distributor of the Worldcat American aluminum boats, more than 12 years, I was thinking of building my own brand, which would satisfy all the customers groups that I was watching

weren't completely met. Having been experienced enough, I made up to launch the brand development and not let down.

**ARMIN** Torpedo boats. That is the first time that has ever come up on the podcast. And it's the most exciting thing I've ever heard. You could have done a leisure boat or more of a lifestyle boat, but this is like an exploration... heavy duty boat. What attracted you to that aspect of this particular approach to boats?

**IGOR** Not many companies produce the boats like these. I have compared many brands and many styles of boats, and I tried to take the better qualities of any styles and combining them to provide future costumers, such facilities, which can serve them very well in such expeditional conditions. To be autonomic, for example, for three or four days, without problem. To allow to have this boat trailer boat, because the width, and length, and size, and weight—this combination allows to do everything easily without very difficult procedure.

**ARMIN** Got it. Now, one thing I meant to mention about your background you're based in Russia?

**IGOR** Yes. I'm originally from Russia. I was born and raised in St. Petersburg. This city called "North Venice", you know. Our city surrounded from any side of water. From one side, one of the biggest in Europe lake, Ladoga Lake and from another side, this is the Baltic Sea.

**ARMIN** And then the boat, is it marketed in Russia or more in the Nordic countries as pictured in the project that we saw?

**IGOR** Yes, the boat is produced in Europe, in Scandinavia and one of the Swedish factory. And also it's going to be selling in Europe and Russia, and also, one of our goals is to get a corner in the American market.

**ARMIN** Perniclas, turning to you, how did you first get involved in this project?

**PERNICLAS** I got an email in Fall of 2018, two and a half years ago. It was a pretty standard inquiry for an identity of a new boat brand. Except from the survey or product that was quite unusual, many of these inquiries

never result in anything. We get a lot, but we exchanged a few emails with Igor's colleague and finally ended with a meeting. Igor came to Stockholm. We had a meeting in our studio here and we explained our process. What we think is important in a branding job and how a possible collaboration could look like. I mean, this was a great opportunity for us. I'm not a boat fanatic in any way, but I grew up on the West Coast of Sweden and the sea has always been present and I used to have a sailing boat before I got kids. And now I have a small motor boat. So I'm quite used to the boat life, not comparing to what Jaktar is, but it's still a boat. This was a really nice opportunity to do something. And we'd been working on the project for over two years now, and still like an ongoing collaboration.

**ARMIN** Yeah, I don't think many boats compared to a Jaktar boat. And I think that's what so many people reacted to so well on Brand New. Now, Igor, how did you end up contacting Perniclas?

**IGOR** You know, we organized some kind of tender having researched the internet, many companies. It was about... I think first list was with 20 companies like these, probably half of them send us some proposal, half of them no. After studying proposals, they are so difficult. Some prices were super high, but proposals looks badly. Some prices were cheap, but proposals looks nice. Having looked at all of them., we decided that the Swedish designers, brand designers, are the best for our philosophy of our brand. Having seen their jobs, what they have done. I went to Stockholm and I met three companies. One of it was Bedow, and after discussing with all of the companies, I decided to go with Perniclas because his approach inspired me. The way of thinking, the non-standard approach to customers, stuff like this. It was a key point.

**ARMIN** Makes sense. Now, Perniclas, for my curiosity, a little bit, and also for our listeners. Can you tell us a little bit about your studio? How many people work there? How is it set up?

**PERNICLAS** We are a studio in Stockholm, we're five designers employed, all of us are designers, but me and my colleague Anders are the ones that are running the studio and managing the projects. I started out in 2005 on my own. We are working mainly with branding, but also some packaging designs, and art books from time to time. So we have three legs. We have one in the commercial world, one in the cultural world, and also we're working with quite a lot of NGOs like UNICEF and UNESCO and a few organizations like that.

**ARMIN** On a personal note, it's been great to see your business grow. I think we've been featuring your work for the past 10 years—it's been great to see how it has evolved. Now, Igor, you partnered with Dutch yacht design studio, Vripack to design the boat. Can you tell us about this process? How much of it was your vision? How much of it was Vripack's because I've never heard about how one goes about designing a boat.

**IGOR** Well, if you're asking about the process, it wasn't easy at all. I spent many sleepless nights figuring out the different proposals, shapes, and the stuff. I handed down all my ideas to them, principally to explain my vision of the final product. And they got to work in this direction using their experience and unique experience in this field. That was the key point to start.

**ARMIN** How long was the process process?

**IGOR** The process took about a year. After it, we started to build the first prototype directly in Niederlande. I've decided to build close to the studio, to keep everything on the control, and to make some changes if it needed.

**ARMIN** This may be a silly question, but did any of the prototypes sink or something that you didn't expect to happen?

**IGOR** Oh, it was just prototype to test all technology or connections, weldings, stuff like this. Prototype was perfect. It's still in our yard and we are

testing it, and having some changes and notes—what should be improved for a next serial boat?

**ARMIN** Was there anything memorable or interesting that you learned along the way of what it takes to design boat?

**IGOR** It was a lot, a lot of stuff. Memorable. First of all, I went to sneak the city where Vripack is located and this is small, very cute, very nice city, like a fairy tale city. It was exciting to go every time to their studio. And we spent about two days to discuss many stuff using VR, virtual reality to test everything, almost in real life. It was very exciting time.

**ARMIN** Yeah, I can imagine. Perniclas, how do you even begin to tackle a project like this? Because I'm sure it's not a common thing for your studio to design identities for bad-ass looking boats. So, how does that process go from getting the proposal approved to getting started?

**PERNICLAS** We treat all projects pretty much the same. We start with researching the industry and we went to St. Petersburg for a site visit. We identify the target group and look at the competitors in the industry. Together with Igor and his team we had a workshop in St. Petersburg where we could identify the strength of the project. This is how we always work. And that strength, it usually ends up with a word or a sentence. That could take a long time, or it can be quick—it depends on the product or service, how hard it is to write something good about it. But in this case, we were pretty sure what we should do. Right when we got back from the office, when we went to the hotel, in the cab, we were discussing what was the key values in this product. Engineering was something that we decided pretty early. So we wrote that tagline that we have today, which is “Engineered for exploration” in the taxi back to the hotel. So, that's how we take on projects by researching and discussing with the client. And it was a fantastic trip to St. Petersburg. I've been to Russia before I've been to Moscow, but never St. Petersburg, it was a great city. Igor took us to some nice restaurants, and we went by boat, not the Jaktar boat, that wasn't finished at the

time, but his other American Worldcat boat. So that was nice. It's nice to see a city from the seaside.

**ARMIN** It's always exciting when you're able to dial in, into what makes a company, product, or service, special right away. And I think it's even more satisfying when you achieve it in the taxi back ride from the first meeting. Even more rewarding to see it be used. It's not that you just came up with the original idea, but the original idea that stuck to the end and became the tagline for the company. Igor, was there any specific goals you wanted to achieve with the identity and branding? Or was there any direction that you gave Bedow to steer them in the right direction?

**IGOR** The main goal for the direction in branding was a visual attachment of the brand and its name to the appearance and the philosophy of the product. Was there any direction? Yes and no. We did it mutually, because it would have been difficult to steer Bedow though without their experience to achieve the goals with the brand.

**ARMIN** Were there any sources of inspiration that you said they want it to look like this? The history from your grandfather, is that something from their era? Was that part of what you told them? Or maybe that's part of what Perniclas, what you extracted as you did some of the visual research.

**IGOR** It's difficult to say exactly now, but I think, yes, my background, and my passion for the boats, my passion to make something new and progressive helped me to describe the direction with the branding—to get a right direction with Bedow.

**ARMIN** I think it's interesting, I think when you mentioned progressive, that is something that comes to mind immediately from looking at both the boat and the identity. So even just one word alone can set the direction pretty straight and focused on what you eventually arrived. So Perniclas, what did the first round of design exploration look like?

Did you quickly narrow it down to only one design option to show Igor? Or did you go in with more than one?

**PERNICLAS** We agreed on the ground narrative, the “Engineered for exploration” very early in the process. It’s usually not that early that we can nail something like that, but that made it quite easy because Igor was comfortable with that too. He could see how meticulously careful and well-crafted the boat should be. We discussed that, and we came up with the two different direction of how to visualize this. So that’s pretty much our process goes, we first write this tagline for the project, and then we try to visualize it. We avoid using mood boards or any images of how it should look like, because it often just ends up with you plagiarizing what someone else just did. So, we prefer to use the words as the foundation for our work. And in this case, we presented two different concepts. The first one was built around like a compass card, wind rose, and we were talking about the exploration part. It didn’t look too good. I remember Igor liked it, but we tried to steer him in the other direction where we more wanted to work with the engineering word. So we sent those proposals to Igor and they had a discussion and talked about it. So that was good. They chose to go on the engineering part. I think that’s more unique strategy for a brand strategy for Jaktar. Adventures is good too, but I think engineering is really what makes the boat unique.

**ARMIN** Yeah, it’s what sets it apart from other adventure boats, I guess.

**PERNICLAS** Yeah, exactly. Parallel to this. We had a process with the naming the brand, and first we went three names, but Igor was not happy with those. So we spent some extra hours on coming up with a fourth one. And then Igor you involved Vripack and a few of the boat manufacturers, there were a part of his project and they discussed it on their side to see what was best. Our first proposal was Navark, which is like mix of naval and architecture, which we thought aligned well with the brand narrative of “Engineered for exploration”. But when we came up with this fourth name, it was Jaktar, we all felt that that’s

better. It's quite hard with the naming process today to find a solid name that is available to register and to find domain name. I'm really happy with what we achieved there.

**ARMIN** Somehow, it's a perfect name. Like I can't imagine it being named something else. And not that it is something that I had thought about before, what should an adventure engineered boat be named? But when you look at the boat, when you look at the identity, and you hear the name, it's all like all perfectly aligned.

**IGOR** After having read about this name, Jaktar, because Jaktar, this is an old word. It means sea farer , an old England word, and also nice that this name was the name for all Navy of Great Britain during the First World War. Kind of Jaktar moving to another sea or something. And also Norwegian, this is hunting. Am I right Perniclas?

**PERNICLAS** Yeah, it is in both Swedish and Norwegian. So there are several details in that name that makes it suitable for the Scandinavian market.

**IGOR** That's why I've fallen in love with this name after not a long time of thinking about another proposal, because it's unusual. And I would say a name with good characters.

**ARMIN** Yeah, definitely. Perniclas, talking about the design in particular now. One of the great things about the wordmark is how the J is shaped like the forefoot of the boat, which is a term that I learned from reading the project case. So it was the thin italic approach there from the beginning, or did it require a lot of exploration to find the right way to turn that boat shape into a J and then into the rest of the letters?

**PERNICLAS** It wasn't there initially, it was something that came up along the way. The first wordmark we worked on was a vertical version of the type that we finally ended up with. But to be honest, I don't think it looked very good. We felt like we were a bit stuck at that stage in the process, but I knew that we could do something good under this concept. And instead of using the angles from the bow in the details of the letters, we slanted the type into the same angle as the boat had. And when

we did that, we realized that that was the way to go. It felt much faster and align better with the boat design. Pretty quick, our designer, Peter, who has been working on this a lot, he came up with the idea of using the shape of the bow in front of the boat for the first letter. And that was a turning point of the project, that little ingenious part that lifts the brand to a new level, I think.

**ARMIN** I think you were paying karma from coming up with a tagline far too quickly in the taxi, and now getting to the logo, it took a little bit more work. Things, even now in the grand scheme of things. Now, in terms of that really beautiful green color, like at what point did that come in?

**PERNICLAS** Except from summarizing a product or service in a sentence that we do, we always combine that word or something with three or four emotional keywords. For Jaktar, we used technical, minimalistic, and adventurous. That was like the three emotional values that the boat should be, how the boat should be perceived, and the brand. And these three words have been with us throughout the whole design process. And why we do that is because during a design process, you bump into hundreds of questions. It's not only what color or typeface you should use, and if you should answer each and every question individually, that would take a long time to do a design project. I think the end result would not be very coherent. So that's our method of designing. And that's pretty much what a concept is to me that you have one answer to several questions. So when we pick the colors for the brand, we use these three keywords, technical, and minimalist, and adventurous, and then we just pick them from the environment where they're both existing.

So it's this sea green color... instead of using standard blue for water, I think this deep green color is way more adventurous. And then we have this call to action, orange color, that derives from the buoys and life vests. And then we have gray from the dark skies. So that's how we came up with that. Why it ended up on the boat was because me and Igor had a discussion about it, and most boats are white

and I've never really understood why they are white. Doesn't blend into the nature at all, it just looks misplaced. So we said that let's try to make it green instead, which also brings us to differentiation. I always tell our clients that when you have a good product or service, I think the differentiation is always positive. Design can be perceived as strange, or they can be ugly, or it can be cool, but in the end is just an individual perception. We're adaptive creatures. We adapt to expressions and get used to visual expressions. I think it was a good choice to find the colors there. And as long as we stick to the strategy, what to communicate, people can think what they want about it.

**ARMIN** Well, that was a very comprehensive answer, touching on a lot of interesting subjects and ideas, ways of approaching design. So thank you for that. Question for both of you. One of the great things about this project is how nicely the logo and the different elements of the identity are integrated into the physical details of the boat. What was the process like and how closely were Bedow and Vripack working together in getting all these details right?

**PERNICLAS** The boat design was already started when we were approached by Igor. So we had a pretty good idea of what the end result would look like. We got technical drawings and renderings from Vripack that we could take inspiration from while working on the branding. But it was interesting, Igor, you told me that you've been iterating on the designs since the first version. And then you told me you were inspired by our branding work, which I thought was a fun thing. So we were inspired by Vripack's design and then Igor changed the boat design based on our branding work.

**IGOR** I was inspired by Bedow design. By G-form, by Jaktar letters. The first design was very nice and cool enough, but when we placed the logo and the big G on the ball of the boat, I noticed that for example, aft part of the boat doesn't match the style of the Jaktar letters. I decided to change aft part a little bit. I mean, the panoramic windows had very sharp angles and I asked one of the Finnish guy, his named Teemu

Suominen, he's a professional designer, also, he is a carpenter. He does unique stuff. Okay? And, uh, he designed — redesign the glass shape to combine curved line with the sharp lines. Taking in account the shapes of design Jaktar brand, because Perniclas provided us not only the brand unique typeface, but also some kind of abstract elements with some angles, with some line, which keeps narratives of the brand better. We've decided to use this elements and to make some kind of more shapey as part of the boat. I very satisfied of this work.

**ARMIN** Oh, that's like the ultimate compliment to a branding designer when the branding influences the product. And I think it's a case of everybody working for the same goal, under the same assumptions, trying to match the same attributes, being inspired from each other's work and making the best product possible. So it sounds like that happened here... in like, those little details about the windows. That's just a lovely detail to hear about. Now, another great thing about the project is how well it photographs and the beautiful photos of the boat next to the massive walls of rock and the deep blue waters that you photographed it in. Anything interesting to note about how to photograph a boat? Capturing the motion, capturing the dimension of it?

**PERNICLAS** Unfortunately it was not possible for us to go to St. Petersburg due to the pandemic. So Igor is the one who's responsible for the photographers. We've been only been working with retouching and calibrating the video footage and stills. What do you say Igor?

**IGOR** It is a part of our marketing strategy to involve high quality pictures, video, or stuff like this to show to our potential customers, all possibilities of usage for this boat. We're trying to show which conditions, and which places will fit for this boat very well and trying to make an emotions of customers that, Oh!, That's a nice rock. I know there are rocks off somewhere and I have to buy this boat to go there because it's a very far locations and no any other boats can reach this rock, for example. I want to go there, to stay there, to make a picture with the boat like this.

**ARMIN** It's definitely not a boat that you picture yourself sunbathing in, with your swimsuit and a drink. You're going to go to hard to reach places and they're going to be amazing places. So I do think that the photography plays a big role in shaping that impression of the boat. Now, starting to sum up the conversation, Igor did the final design of both the boat and the branding meet your expectations? And you know, I'm guessing that the answer is yes, because everything is out there, but does the final result match what you envisioned when you started this whole journey?

**IGOR** Yes. You see, it wasn't possible to imagine the final one on when we started. I didn't expect that result could be that unique. And for me, the bleed down. To be honest, at any glance at the photo... excitement feels... I wanted to say that—difficult to imagine that any look at the boat and into the photo to fulfill me of emotion. Absolutely astonishing, because it looks like if you see something every day, it should be, I don't know, just to think. But every day when I see the boat, it's fulfill me with emotions. It's very nice. Everything, the boat design, the shapes of G-letter, the Jaktar itself. And I want to go further with it to make something more progressive. It gives me a lot of power. Yeah.

**ARMIN** That's wonderful. I feel the power too. Perniclas, what was the most exciting aspect for you in working on this project?

**PERNICLAS** I think there were several. Firstly to get to know Igor, and the team, and getting a glimpse of St. Petersburg. That was a nice thing. And secondly, to work with such a well-crafted product, it's not so often that you meet someone that is so careful with all the details. Igor can call me, you know, in the evening asking like, hey Perniclas I'm working on the stitches of the seats, do you think the threads should be orange? Or should we use gray? He's like so meticulous with every detail. So, that's really fun, I think. I'm also very satisfied with the result. We haven't worked with this kind of product before, but I think everything is tied together. Everything from the name to the type design is anchored in the brand strategy. I think it was a great project. We like the product and brand that's built to last.

**ARMIN** Definitely. So last question, Igor with this great branding in place, this great product built, what's next for Jaktar?

**IGOR** Now we're working on a Model Jaktar J-25. This boat is going to be more mass, more compact, also for the next year, 2022, if the situation in the world changes and will allow to go internationally, we're going to show our Jaktar boats at European boat shows and also the goal to go to North American market. Because I guess this is a very demanding part of our work, because some kind of place like Seattle area is very demanding for aluminum boats like this. Yep. That's the plan.

**ARMIN** Oh, that sounds great. I do hope that eventually you're able to market it worldwide. I would love to see it in the Pacific Ocean in Seattle, or in Europe. I think it's a lovely product. Lovely is not the right word. It is a powerful, precise, progressive product. And it's great to see it. And the branding matches it perfectly. I want to thank you Perniclas and Igor for spending your afternoon or evening with me on The Follow-Up. Thank you again for sharing your story, and your project, and good luck with the boat.

**PERNICLAS** Thank you Armin.

**IGOR** Thank you for having me here today.

**BRYONY** It was nice to hear that not everything went as smoothly as coming up with the tagline in a taxi after the first meeting and that the design was the result of a deep exploration and sticking to the strategy. But, above all, it was great hearing Igor talk about his boat and how obvious it is that he has a true passion for it that brings him sheer joy. To be honest, if we had designed a boat that looks like Jaktar's with such a precise identity from a great studio like Bedow we would also be brimming with joy.

Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.