



# IxDA Sydney Mentoring Program Podcast

## 01 - Chris Naylor

### Audio Transcript

#### Vinita Israni

Hello and welcome to the IxDA Sydney MP pod, a show that guides you through the stages of design mentorship, whether you're just starting out and looking or you're a seasoned designer. In this episode, Molly and Sam are chatting with Chris Naylor. Their conversation dives into how to develop people skills, and about how to step outside being just a designer to bring more to your craft. They go into some really tactical methods on how designers can build up their commercial skills, while still balancing flow speed and craft. Chris Naylor is the regional design practice director for Accenture Interactive for the APAC region. He's a design leader focused on making complex systems simple, and driving customer experiences that solve jobs and generate stakeholder value. He helps businesses develop growth strategies and experiences to achieve key outcomes through strong consumer science, design, leadership and management skills. Let's dive right in.

#### Molly Lewis

Hey, Chris, it's great to have you with us on the podcast today.

#### Chris Naylor

Thanks for having me.

#### Molly Lewis

Excited to chat. And obviously, I'm lucky enough to work with you at fjord which is part of Accenture Interactive, but for those who haven't heard, man before, would you be able to give us a quick intro as to who you are?

#### Chris Naylor

Yeah, and this is obviously not a pay beautiful intro by Molly to get some good career credits. And yeah, look, my name is Krishna Allah. I'm currently the original design practice director for APAC, for interactive. That largely means I help drive build evolve our design practice. My career started quite some time ago when I had some hair, if that's any indication, that could also be the kids who knows? Jury's out. But yeah, look, I, I've got a range of experiences. over my time, my formal background was in graphic design. That's where I first did my unit studies in graphic design, what was called New Media, which was basically building websites in Flash and Dreamweaver, if the people on this podcast are not gonna know what those two things are, but you know, the original kind of web development and design sort of tools from Adobe. And from there, like my career's been fairly nonlinear in terms of where I've gone to. So I've, I've largely just gone wherever my mind's been sort of stimulated by a problem, or something that I've found really curious to dive deep into. So from sort of graphic design and branding, I taught myself further to code and moved into more digital design UX UI, then became increasingly sort of interested in strategy and more of the outcomes that the design was sort of creating or, or influencing. So I continue to sort of build out those skills and then moved into more strategic disciplines looking at strategic design, service design, business design, research, and really, at the moment, a bit of a jack of all trades. But yeah, that's that's kind of my background quite quite varied.

#### Molly Lewis

Awesome. You might even have a few people who are squat graphic designers, potentially, Chris, and came to dig into some of those skill sets later on. But just a question, we ask all our guests on this podcast, and you're actually the first for 2022. But what are some key learnings you had from 2021? And what are some of those learnings you want to roll into? 2022?

**Chris Naylor**

I think probably my biggest learning from 21 na n I'm going to apply it to this year, but it was largely around where do i Where do I get my energy from? And I say that because, you know, we've all gone through a fairly tough year, two years, you know, I don't even know what the time is. But, you know, we're we've all gone through, you know, quite a tumultuous period. And I think part of me growing and sort of staying staying afloat has been to just spend time reflecting on what is it that gives me energy? What fills up my tank so that, you know, I stay motivated, I stay engaged, you know, and I'm not getting sort of tired and depleted. And for me, you know, That's a mix of things, you know, whether that be sport running, surfing, spending time with family, you know, connecting with teammates, it's just having that sort of thinking around, Hey, these are the things that give me energy, I want to invest more time in that. Because, you know, if I'm feeling energized, then I'm going to be at my best, which means I can give more of me to my team, and help them to be their best. But, you know, that's, that's probably the key learning just to stop, reflect, understand, you know, what is it that fills my tank? And concentrating and making the time to look after those things?

**Molly Lewis**

Yeah, let's see great learning. And I think a lot of us definitely forgot there in the last couple of years of working from home, and then the changes COVID Just trying to pack in more and more screentime. And not really taking the time that I guess refills our tank. That's great learning. And since this is a mentoring podcast, I must ask, you know, what does mentoring mean to you?

**Chris Naylor**

So, in a mentoring, to me, probably comes down to just having someone that I trust to guide me in my craft, or whatever topic that is, because they've been on that journey already, you know, they're probably way ahead of me, or, you know, ahead of me in some respect, and that's going to accelerate my experience and my craft, through their experience. And I say trusted, because you want someone to be able to speak into you that you do trust, you need to have sort of an open mind. And, you know, let down your guard, so to speak. And that can be tough. You know, that's, that's super tough, you know, and I think that ever gets easier. But, you know, letting down some of that ego and, you know, your defense mechanisms to have someone else speaking to you around, whatever it is that they're providing that advice on, because they have that sort of mastering that domain that you're you're seeking.

**Molly Lewis**

Yeah, I think that's a really good point where you touched on just, you know, seeking, if you're seeking a mentor, you know, being open to that feedback, as well. And then how you action, that feedback? And have you had, I guess, a notable mentor, and then your passes made a difference in why you've, I guess, maybe become a mentor to others?

**Chris Naylor**

I wouldn't say that I've had like, one specific person, you know, I probably say throughout my career. And probably more in the latter stages, is where I was, you know, I've been I've been exposed to some really amazing people. And I don't think it's been through a formal mentorship at all. It's not, it's not like that I've come up to someone said, Hey, can you be my mentor, but I've had the pleasure of being sort of informally mentored by both peers, other directors, other project leads where I've been quite honest around, just, hey, this is what I'm looking for advice on. Or, I'm looking for, you know, your knowledge and what you see in how I'm doing things to, you know, correct me, you know, which is again, like, it's sometimes tough, but, you know, I've had the pleasure of just working with some great people, and, you know, having great conversations with those, those people helped mold me and for me into sort of not only the person that I am, but also the designer than I am and how I see the world of design, how I see business, how I see, you know, solving problems.

**Molly Lewis**

Yeah, no, that's, that's great. And I guess, for the designers out there listening, you know, why is it important to, you know, seek out different feedback or different perspectives?

**Chris Naylor**

Yeah, look, I think, you know, when you when you're really starting out on your career, you're, you know, you're just very green, you don't know, that much realistically, you know, you may have gone through a course, you know, learn some of the basics, but you're lacking that sort of real world kind of experience. So, seeking out other people's views on how you're practicing your craft or how you're, you know, doing your job is a valuable thing and just your normal sort of career growth. And I think if you're wanting to be a person that sort of goes far in their career or, you know, become can become the sort of the best designer and the best person they can be, then it's worth seeking out people that can take on that type of role. You know, And it's probably going to take some proactiveness on your half, and your behalf to go and find these people, you know, whether that's a colleague that maybe knows something specific, you know, that you don't have knowledge or a gap in or seeking out your boss and you know, or someone else and another, another leader in your organization to help, you know, be that mentor be that person. Be it's, it's, it's a key part of just a career, and, you know, growing and evolving as a person and as a designer.

**Molly Lewis**

Yeah, that's a great point. It's not just, I guess, as a designer, but as a person, you know, having hearing different perspectives, and you know, being being open to them as well, obviously, is super important.

**Chris Naylor**

Yeah. Yeah, just on that, Molly, like even. We're, yes, we're designers, but we're in the people business, ultimately, you know, I mean, like, you don't work in isolation, you work with a team, you work with other peers, you know, you're often having to communicate to executives are other leaders. And that's a people that's a people skill. That's not a design skill, you know, how good you are in figma? Doesn't really matter if you know, you're a pain in the backside to, to work with? Yeah, it is about, you know, how do you evolve as a as a person? And not just as a designer?

**Molly Lewis**

Yeah, I think you touched on a really good segue there into, you know, as a as building up your knowledge. And your domain as a designer, you know, what is important beyond the craft or beyond those technical segment skills? Just say,

**Chris Naylor**

beyond your craft? It's a great question. So far, as you know, a few things just sort of come front of mind. The first is probably just storytelling. You know, how many times have you had to explain, not just explained, but tell the story of how you've landed on a solution. You know, most of most people, most designers, when they start out or basically roll through the design process, we had a problem, I went and did the research, and then I found an opportunity area, and I come up with a solution, then we did this, and we did that. But that's not really storytelling, that's just explaining what you did. Storytelling is really having that sort of connection, emotional connection with that audience around why this matters, and how it's going to improve whatever it is that you're trying to sort of solve, you know, it's going to help try and drive action of some description. So I think storytelling, you know, is going to be is a critical skill that you're going to have to learn outside of your craft. And I think, given the context that we are right now, I mean, you know, we're on a video call that where 95% of our work days is conducted right now, you have to have the ability to tell stories in this sort of remote setting, you know, how you look on camera, how you tell that story on camera, you know, it's different skill to being in person and telling a story in front of a group, or telling a story, you know, spontaneously when a leader or you know, a boss, or whoever that is, turns up and says, Hey, tell me how you're going with this. You know, it's a it's a difficult skill, it takes time to sort of learn and develop, but it's fundamental. I think, one of the other things that comes to

mind, you know, just thinking about what are the future skills, you know, this kind of what we talked about, prior to this mulling around sort of just that future of a designer, but I think increasingly, it's going to become so important to be able to blend sort of your craft with commercials. And so what I mean by that is that, you know, design work is often about sort of generating value for the customer. Pretty sure everyone's been in a meeting or a playback session, with stakeholders with a design team around you know, but what is in it for the customer, you know, this is going to provide so much value for them, it's going to meet their pain point their need. But commercials and sort of business work is really around how they capture that value from the customer. I mean, this is a reason why we design it's, it's, it's not just one input, you know, it's an input to an output that is another input to something else in a business model. So I think design that are able to blend sort of their craft with commercials is going to be increasingly important. What that maybe tangibly means is getting really comfortable with understanding data, and analytics, you know, if you're working for a, I don't know, a SaaS products, you know, what's actually happening. They're understanding some of the key metrics like customer acquisition costs, retention, churn rates, things like that, you know, these are valuable metrics that dive deeper into the commercials of our product of a business. And understanding those and understanding those issues and the value that can help you shape your design. So again, like I think, getting comfortable with that data, understanding it understanding the flow of that value, then being able, again, to tell a compelling story around that is going to be really important.

#### **Sam Hancock**

So you touched on something that's been a key theme for all of our podcast is that, which is understanding what other parts of the business not necessarily just moving design and doing? And why? What would you recommend for designers to learn about those types of areas, such as commercials in detail, while still staying true to design.

#### **Chris Naylor**

So if you wanted to really unpack more of the commercials in your organization, your your context, there's probably a few things that you could do. So I think most companies are well, you know, companies that are listed in on the stock exchange, you're going to have an annual report. So let's just start with a one on one basics, go read your annual report, it's going to break down your business model that's going to tell you around sort of the strategic objectives of that company where the where the CEO is allocating capital, which is super important, because that's really their strategic bets into the future where they're going to unlock growth. So you know, get comfortable reading an annual report, that's probably never been said in any design course. But it's, it's, it's an easy 101 Getting it to understand sort of a business, you know, understand how they make money, where they're making money, who the customer is, the size of their customer base, there's different segments, you know, you'll find most of that information in a annual report. I think the next thing you could do, again, if you're in a look, if you're in a product, organization, ie like some kind of software business as business, I probably schedule some one on ones with some of the product managers, you know, get across what are they what are they working on, typically, you'll find product managers that are working on sort of the core growth of the product in so they're looking at how they could, you know, execute on certain features, or experiments and beds to to grow their product, don't talk to them around, hey, you know, why are we doing this? What are your current thinking? What's your hypotheses around this, what else you're doing? What is the data saying, they're going to have all of that quantity, and you'll find product managers, you know, across, you know, the entire product. So, invest the time to go and do that. I mean, there's no getting away that this is an exercise that requires time and work, if you don't put it in, you're not going to get it out, you're not going to get anything from it. So you know, you need you need to put time in to build up that knowledge and understand what's really happening. I would hazard a guess that at most sort of town halls or all hands that companies have, you're also going to find out a little bit more around the business, what's happening, what are their strategic priorities? How are they tracking on those things? Again, another great sort of touch point, the other you know, sort of interesting channel that I often go to, at least when I'm, you know, working, obviously, we work in a consultancy, so we're dealing with lots of different

businesses. Just going and searching the web, you know, is interesting, you'll find, you know, some Highline high level sort of articles out there, typically, but if you dive deeper into sort of Twitter and some of these other channels, you know, read it. More often than not, you can start to find people that are doing, you know, deep analysis on the company that you work for. And I call that out because, usually, you know, they're an unbiased sort of spectator unless there's sort of like a, you know, an investor whether the board is sort of place their bets but even so, you're gonna find In a another point of view, to sort of counter whatever you're hearing internally. So again, as a designer, what you're trying to do with sort of this curious mind and apply curiosity is just thinking around. Why are we doing things this way? Why do we think like this? Why are we doing that? Why does this person think that we're going to do X, you know, an understanding more about the businesses a lot just around asking these questions. So I think, you know, starting starting with those types of things is quite an easy way to sort of get started. If I was to, to throw out one more, one more sort of channel or area that I'll get to it just be the sort of normal business podcasts, there's that many great podcasts out there. You know, one of my favorites called invest like the best, this guy is an investor. But what he does on on his podcast is he just does no real big deep dives on companies. And he will bring in the CEO, he'll bring in the Chief Operating Officer, or the chief product officer, or some high level executive. And now just pull that business apart, and put it back together again, and just listening to them do that, over time, you'll, you'll start to understand the nuts and the bolts of a business, you'll be able to actually translate that business model canvas into something quite specific, you'll get I get what that sort of cost center means now, I get what we mean by revenues, and how that could be impacted by the design that I've I'm wanting to introduce. So again, just keeping that open mind and that, you know, an ear to that type of thinking, that type of analysis is going to help build up your skill set, over time.

**Sam Hancock**

Would you still use that type of framework if you're creating a new growth area within a business? Would you make it? Would you approach it quite differently?

**Chris Naylor**

A new growth area?

**Sam Hancock**

Yeah. So say for example, Westpac wanting to create a new area of digital banking for for millennials?

**Chris Naylor**

How would we approach that?

**Sam Hancock**

Would you approach it very similar to how you mentioned? Or would you would you look at using different methods,

**Chris Naylor**

I probably go about that maybe slightly differently. You know, if you're, if you're looking at creating a new product for, you know, a new growth, a new revenue stream, you're trying to unlock something like that, then, you know, in the case that you explain then Sam, like, you know, bank trying to reach a particular segments, you know, a younger segment at that, I'd go and look at who else is doing it right now. And if there's a bunch of startups, there's a bunch of fintechs. And I'll go and do a lot of deep dives, or what I call tear downs of that startup, or that, that FinTech what is a tear down? I'm going through an understanding sort of page by page on their website, what is their value proposition? What's their brand? How do they position themselves? What are the key features that they highlight on their homepage, it's always a telltale sign of where they're, they're finding sort of like a hawk, or a real pool for that segment, you know, and that's often what if you're the existing legacy company, you're probably hearing a lot from your customer researcher at those particular features. So again, what is the value prop, the brand, how they're

positioning themselves, the features and the benefits, the actual app or the product design itself? You know, are there any interesting interaction models? Is there anything interesting about the experience that gives them that sort of distinctive sort of flavor compared to what else is out there in the market? So I conduct a lot of that. The next thing I'd probably do is I maybe not the next thing, but one of the things that I would do is definitely go and look at one of the VCs saying, so the venture capitalists, and I call them out because they, they're quite good at one, looking at where the money is. Because they're investors. First and foremost, they're they're investing in companies that they think are on a massive growth trajectory that they can get a huge return on. So who are they backing? Why are they backing them? What is their thesis for backing this particular startup? What is their view on the future of finance? What is the view on Millennials or a particular audience? What are they going to be the levers for engaging with our community. So I'm going to go and do quite a deep dive in on those sort of investors, those VCs, that might mean, listening to podcasts, reading some blog posts trawling through a Twitter feed of, you know, not just the venture capital firm, but who was the lead investor, who are angel investors in that. In that particular, you know, startup because they're all putting forward, what they think is really interesting about that particular growth opportunity. The next, again, not the next thing, but one of the things is to look at sort of just the commercial value. So, understanding again, where's the value? And how we can do it? How could we possibly create it? And how can we possibly capture it? So with a millennials, or a younger audience, you know, traditionally banking, you know, you're finding a lot of the revenue coming through, you know, your home loans, you know, other sort of traditional products, financial products, and services, what is gonna be the primary source of revenue capture or drive are for a younger audience for a different audience? Again, I don't know if anyone's tried to buy a house lately, but they're expensive. So maybe, you know, we're not going to get home loans through this particular segment, what else? Are they doing with their money? How else are they utilizing their money. And again, sort of coming at that sort of customer research alongside sort of the commercial value is really important, because we're wanting to understand, you know, behaviors mindsets, start to build out a bit of a view of the world of jobs to be done. Now, what are the functional jobs to be done? What are the emotional, the social jobs, you know, we're trying to build up more of a view around what what we do this is all sort of secondary research, you know, prior to even talking with that customer. But again, doing all these things is going to help you to get out of your bubble of just whatever specific craft discipline you're in, and start to take on the mindset of almost like an owner, hey, I'm owning this as a, as a growth opportunity, I'm owning this as a sort of a business person, I might not wear a suit, but I'm thinking in the same way that you know, an executive would think, and I want to apply that type of thinking, but blend my sort of Craft and Design sort of sensibilities to what

### **Molly Lewis**

Yeah, no, that's great. I think there's a lot of wisdom in there. And also practical examples of you know, where to go and what to look for, you know, specifically in a project, or maybe we're looking into a specific company evening, but I'm just thinking, Now, if we take a step back and more of a higher level, obviously, it can be quite overwhelming, you know, looking for things during this research, you know, and your time, I just wanted to ask, you know, what's the difference, and identifying these signals or evidence, you know, amongst the noise of everything else that's on the internet, which can be quite overwhelming.

### **Chris Naylor**

Yeah, so signals versus noise, it's a, it's a tough one, again, because it takes time. You know, and part of this, you know, as you start your career, you need to start to build these sort of spidey senses of what is start, you know, signals versus noise. And the way that you do that is by enlarging your sort of aperture for for information. So, it takes time to go and do the research, there's no shortcuts to that. But what you can start to find is through, you know, doing their research, you start to find specific people or organizations that tend to be on the money, you know, whatever they're sort of reporting or whatever they're saying starts to come to see, like, Oh, my case, I'm going to elevate that person sort of thinking maybe ahead of, you know, someone else, you know, if I was looking at GE, who to think of, you know, I might, I might go to straight to a direct Twitter source for sort of some signal in a specific area, rather than

a Business Insider. Sort of Article, because that's like, five days out, because I got, I went straight to the source, and I already know about it. And so I can start to pick up more of the signals where, you know, if I, if I haven't attuned myself to those types of things, and I'm just getting caught up in, here's all the mainstream sort of media, you know, pushing out the listicles of the top 10, fintechs. In Australia, you know, and everything else, it's like, I don't need to understand that I need to get to the source of what's creating the environment for you know, in that case, fintechs, what's creating the, yeah, what's helping them, you know, succeed. So it takes time, and I think, you know, deep diving into specific areas is going to help one build out your knowledge base, but it's also going to help you identify who are the the real thought leaders in that space. I know, we throw around thought leaders a lot. But you know, who are the people that are really driving the conversation in that specific domain. And I think that's, that's an important thing to start to do. Because she starts to then realize patterns, you start to connect the dots, because you've moved yourself away from sort of secondhand third hand information.

### **Molly Lewis**

Yeah, yeah, that's really interesting. You kind of become your own design investigator, which is great. And then I guess the more you practice, the better you get at it. I guess my next question firing off that is You know, obviously, as designers, we don't just have room to do this all day, you know, we have a lot of meetings and admin. So how do you suggest we leave room for, I guess, creativity and this research and busy days? Yeah.

### **Chris Naylor**

Well, I think that two things, two things in their body like one, one creativity, and the second, you know, research, so two different things for me. If you were to if you were to go on to creativity, how do you how do you keep your creativity flowing, then I think it's probably going back to the, to my learning from, you know, last year, and what I talked about at the beginning, which is, where do you find your energy? You know, so I think looking at how you feel, you know, your tank is often, you know, the first step to unlocking sort of creativity, because it's really hard, you know, to think creatively to come at it from a different angle, when you just, you just buy it, you know, outside, like, how are you gonna come up with stuff like that, yes, creativity can explode within some like hard constraints, but you're probably going to be your best when he, you know, you're at your best, your best creativity is probably going to come forward through there. And I'd also say, you know, with the creativity, it's finding, you know, a few people that you could just jam on jam with, you know, that you probably have them already, you probably seeing their faces right now, they're the people that you're like, hey, I really want to chat to them about the latest news in design world, or this startup, or, you know, some core design thing, and then you just start riffing on what it was, if you did this, you know, and it's those kinds of connections, those relationships, again, where people business around unlocking sort of creativity, and it's that kind of discussion and dialogue that helps sort of unlock that. So think, you know, find out what are the things that fill your tank going fill your tank, and then you know, who are the people that you know, you really love chatting with that not only build you up, but you know, help spark some of those creative juices when it comes to research. Well, that's, that's a whole different ballgame. So I think, you know, if it was me, and probably just actually, you know, speaking from my own experience, it's, it's all around time allocation, I mean, we've all got the same amount of time, but what sets people apart is how they use it. So you know, the person that comes home from work and you know, switches on Netflix, someone just watches that online, compared to the person that you know, goes off and researchers other things, and you probably going to see a difference in their careers long term, you probably going to see a difference in their thinking, because they're just gonna be a bit sharper. That's not to promote, like a crazy workaholic culture. Because again, you need to understand what fills your tank. So again, you know, watching Netflix, or something like that, if that, you know, fuel sort of, you're creative and get your brain going, then you know, you should do that. But you should also understand that, you know, time is a constraint, we only have certain amount. So if it was me again, like, I would be wanting to concentrate on a specific domain or on a, on a specific topic, and sort of just deep dive into that for probably, you know, a week or two, see it as a spring, you know, because we can't not these days, everything's a sprint but you know, I probably see it as as consolidated

period of time where I maybe want to read a book I want to listen to some podcasts gonna go troll Twitter, find who's talking to who look at who they're following in that thing, you know, and go down the rabbit hole. Yeah, so look, I'd I'd spend some time you know, time boxing a particular topic, and, and just spending some good time, you know, doing the hard work to get under the hood of that topic, whatever it is. And then what's most important is not just to have it all up in your head, but get it out on paper, you know, even if it's just the bare minimum, what are the key key learnings or the key points around a particular topic, you know, start to build up that database of knowledge and information so that you can refer back to it because the last thing you want to do is invest two weeks of your time investing, you know, a lot of energy into understanding a topic that you know, is potentially new to you only to completely forget it. You know, the next week when you come across some cool TV series. You want to be able to document it you also want to go and talk to someone about it. So hopefully you know that that topic Israel into whatever project or business you're in. But you should be able to go and maybe talk to a project product manager, you might be able to go and talk to a peer or your lead, or you know, one of your boss says, Hey, I've been researching X Y, Zed, what I found is really interesting. What do you think are the applications for us? Here's some of my loose thoughts. What do you think? Again, you need to get the thinking out, so that you can actually have sort of the discourse and start to refine your thinking. And again, we're going back to the earlier topic of enlarging your sort of field of view, you know, you want to get different opinions, you want to you don't want an echo chamber of just a we all agree if people all agree, they're probably not telling the truth. Like there's always going to be someone that disagrees, even if it's not a hard disagree. So go and speak it out. Go and talk to others around what they think.

#### **Molly Lewis**

Yeah, I think that's a really great takeaway there. Because I know it can be like, overwhelming, so much out there, obviously, Internet access and reading lots. But then I guess you get to a point, it's like now a lot, you know, I've spent and invested my time and my energy into this, and then what do I do with it? And then actually get it out of your head and onto either paper or sharing your thoughts with, you know, whether it's your team or, you know, friends that are like minded? I think that's really important.

#### **Chris Naylor**

Yeah. I mean, you might have a goal, like an NDA goal that you're like, hey, I really want to become quite knowledgeable in a particular area, like, you know, it could be a domain, like the metaverse or NF T's or crypto, it could be a particular research method. You know, it could be figma, you know, it could be a tool that you're using, you just want to become the know how you know that the go to person for that, you're going to have to invest the time, again, being able to put out tips or learnings you know, yeah, Molly, you're, you're an example with, with just you're sort of here some inspiration. And here's some cool links of things that are found on a particular topic. You know, that's, that's an easy first step that people can take to one getting out. And distributing all the information that they found that they thought was really interesting, but also creating a perception around you that, you know, you're the go to person for a particular area. And slowly but surely, over time, you'll start to, you know, Garner that perception within the organization.

#### **Molly Lewis**

Yeah, and I think it's awesome to then, you know, weave that new learning or domain area and to, you know, projects or whatnot, or even seek out projects that may relate to that, and tie it all together.

#### **Chris Naylor**

So I guess, in going back to sort of the curious mind, you know, one of the things that I often do is read books. super interesting. I don't read. I don't read all that. Yeah, though, those paper things, you know, that they look good on a bookshelf, and most of them live there. But every now and then I open one up, and I read it, and, you know, there's a few books that have really made an impact for me, or at least challenged my thinking. And one of them is a book by Cal Newport, called deep work. And there's a there's a part in his in his, in his book where he talks around thriving in the new economy. And I guess just

to back up, you know, the book is around largely around, how do you sort of do deep work, you know, deep focus time in, you know, a context where we're working at a million miles an hour, you know, context switching all the time, my watch is going off, my phone's going off, people are talking to me, you know, emails are coming in notifications are going off. It's like, crazy center. You know, how do you actually carve out time to do the deep work because it's in the deep work, that you develop your expertise that you develop your sort of craft and mastering that. So there's a passage at the start, where he talks about how do you thrive in sort of this new economy where and the context of all that happening, and he mentions two things. The first is the ability to quickly master hard things, plus, the ability to produce at an elite level in terms of both quality and speed. So to go back to the first thing, so the ability to master hard things, he makes the distinction that hard things these days are hard. You know, typically, most of us are using consumer products that easy to use. Google, easy to use, searching through Reddit easy to use figma. Your design tools are pretty easy to use. I mean, they've been designed that way. They've been they've been designed to you know So, make sure the experience is really self service and self explanatory. You know, great usability. So that's not hard things. What are what are hard things to learn in sort of this new economy is potentially learning how to, you know, code in the blockchain, it's potentially understanding how NF T's work. How do you design for NF T's? It's potentially learning, you know, deep data, products, machine learning, how do I put in a bunch of data that I have, and run sort of like a cohort analysis or run some kind of machine learning algorithm to produce a particular outcome? These things are not consumer grade, you know, you're gonna have to go through and learn and do the deep work to figure that out. But you got to master those things quick, because I think you know, even you know, of late, Metaverse, exploded, NF T's exploded. It's hard to it's hard to keep up with that. And the only way to do it is to basically forego other things that you would typically do, like, you know, watching telly, to invest your time in, I understand that space. So that's the first thing ability to quickly master those hard things. So again, not just know about it, but actually be practitioners in that. The next thing is the ability to produce at an elite level in terms of both quality and speed. So I think, you know, this one, this one really stood out for me, because I think one of the things that we often hear as design leaders is from our team, saying, there's not enough time, I don't have enough time to do my research, I don't have enough time to do this design, I need to go and chat with more people. If we're going too fast, we need to slow things down. That's not to say that sometimes things should be slowed down. But

we live in a in a world where things are moving at a super rapid pace, and then not gonna slow down. So I think, you know, as designers, we need to get quite comfortable with the context in which we operate, which is our pace. And so to be able to produce at an elite level, in both quality and speed means that we probably need to get really good at our craft. So again, if you're a young designer, it's probably investing the time to really hone those craft skills, you know, before you start going T shaped, build out that spine, build out your you know, whatever crafts, you have to get really, really darn good at it. So that you can move at speed. And that's what you see, for more experienced designers, they'll do it, they'll move at pace at speed with a very high degree of quality, because they're putting the time to learn that track, you know, that the tradecraft? You know, whether that be that the tools that you're using, plus also that you know, the fundamentals of design. So I think, you know, it's really important to understand that this is where we're going to be living in that we are living in, and that we need to, if you want to be successful, this is what's gonna this what success is going to look like, you know, combined with some of those other things that I mentioned earlier, you know, designers increasingly becoming more commercially minded and understanding how the business works, and being able to put that into practice. Off the back of that, I would say that one of the defining sort of characteristics to work in that type of an environment is resilience. And again, it's probably the theme of however many years I've been in this weird world. But it's how to look at learning how to deal with setbacks, learning how to deal with differing opinions, opinions that you may strongly disagree with, and being able to pause and reflect and think, Alright, what did I do? What can I learn what was my role here in this particular situation? You know, we need to spend more time doing that universe. That's how we learn. That's how we identify areas for growth, growth opportunities, we start to build resilience in that way. I think seeing things in chapters. Right now you're probably in the middle of a chapter or you may be starting a new one where you're thinking, this is really

bloody hard. I don't know how I'm going to get through this. Well, you just in the middle of the story, or you're starting out in a new story. Give it some time. Could be a month, could be a few months, could be a year, but you'll finish that chapter and that chapter will say this is a story of how I overcame X, Y and Zed. So I think again, just having that sort of long term view and building out some of these resilient practices around just being much more self aware, letting down your ego, being open minded, you know, is gonna really help. And ultimately, you know, being resilient means that you just keep pushing, you just keep getting up when you when you fall down, I think that's, that's one of the things that we're all going to have to do not just this year, but over, you know, over the course of your career, there's going to be setbacks, and you just need to work hard, and you just need to keep pushing through.

#### **Sam Hancock**

And some of the books I hold quite dear to my heart, when kind of learning through that kind of deep work processes, Sprint, Lean UX. And also just enough research by Erin Turner is all well and good though learning those areas from a book, and I understand your kind of comment around resilience, but how do you put some of those learnings into practice? And, and learn from the learners and telling everyone that it's actually okay to fail?

#### **Chris Naylor**

Great question, Sam. Yeah, a few thoughts come to mind. One is probably going back to what we mentioned before, it's, you know, if you're researching something, or a new topic, a new a new method and new skill set, you need to put yourself out there and apply it. So again, it's tough, I get it, it's tough when you're young, and you're at the sort of, you're at the bottom of the food chain, so to speak, you know, to really step out and put stuff out there, but you need to be bold, and take some bets. But putting out this thinking and trying to apply it is just one of the first steps. So if you're really looking at a new method, try and you know, convince you know, your lead or whoever you're working with, let's try this out. I think one of my other thoughts is, again, we don't do this all the time, but it's, you know, running retros and feedback sessions having a good feedback cycle. So what did we actually learn about this? You know, we just run through a sprint, you know, let's just take your example. Same where we've just learned a brand new sprint methodology or doing research in a very lean way. What was the outcome of it? What was the let's, let's really debrief after that, what are the learnings for us as a team? What could we improve? Is this something we would adopt, you know, showing that, hey, we tried something, we didn't completely fail. And so it's okay, let's keep, let's keep going. And typically, most of the things that we're doing, the business is still going to be here tomorrow, you know, the, the bets that we're making, you know, sometimes yes, they're big, but in most of the times, in the greater context, they're not huge. But at the at the time, that can feel, you know, humongous. So I think just, you know, adopting sort of that growth mindset, and getting the teams and the people that you, you work with, to think in terms of like, hey, let's constantly be growing constantly be trying new things. And that means, you know, hand in hand that we accept risk. And we're willing to try, you know, risky things, you know, things that are non standard, this isn't the method that we would normally go with, but we're going to give it a go and see how it how we go, because that's the only way that things evolve. But again, doing this sort of debrief and retro sessions, to understand what were the learnings there and getting the teams and your colleagues to understand that it, it was, you know, good, it was fine. And we're all here, we've also got our jobs and, you know, we can carry on?

#### **Molly Lewis**

Yeah, I think that's super important. And especially with, you know, the whole team, and, like you said, listening to everyone's perspectives. And I think that also touches nicely on, you know, critiques as well, and being open and sharing your work frequently in those sort of sessions. Because I know, it can be really intimidating to share work, especially in front of other designers who I think arguably are the most critical of your designs. But the more you practice doing that, you know, the easier it gets all the time. Yeah, critiques

**Chris Naylor**

are a great opportunity to apply some of your thinking and at the same time, receive feedback in a way that can help you grow. And again, if you play the ball, not the man, so to speak, you know, you can really learn a lot from critique sessions. And again, they're a fantastic place to actually put some of your thinking into action. You know, when you're doing your research on competitors or other things, you're going to come across a lot of different designs. A lot of different interaction models, a lot of different ways that people have solved for a problem that you're probably solving for. And being able to pull out those examples is super valuable for the team. And again, it's a build you up as, as an individual that, you know, knows about particular topic areas that builds a perception around you that you're quite knowledgeable in this domain area. You know, and that can be a really beneficial thing for you longer term in your career.

**Molly Lewis**

Yeah, awesome. Well, thank you so much for your time today, Chris, I think there was a lot of nuggets of wisdom in there. And a lot of practical resources for designers to go look at and think about. But just, I guess, end on final question. Is there any other resources you recommend for designers starting out or maybe some, some sites to go look at to get started with to find any inspiration?

**Chris Naylor**

If I was to say sort of non-design books, again, to sort of enlarge in your worldview and other things, is a great book was given to me from from an old boss called good strategy, bad strategy. Richard Bramblett, around out Google, Google will correct me on how we say his name. But go look that up a fantastic book on what is actual strategy strategy is one of those words like design and innovation that gets mucked around everywhere. But Richard goes through a very, very clear and concise way of defining what is good strategy and what is bad strategy and outlining you know, how to identify it, how to identify what he calls fluff, you know, which is just some nice words, that is an actual strategy. So go look at that. There's another book called a dozen lessons for entrepreneurs by Trent Griffin. He interviews a dozen, me a mix of venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, and sort of operators, any can really kind of funny, easy to easy to read way and again, in a way that you can just pick up and open up whatever chapter you want and read that story. You know, he goes through some of the mechanics of how business works. And again, it just helps acclimatized you to that kind of language that to that type of thinking that you're, you know, bosses or senior executives in a company that you work for I thinking so they're probably too easy books that I read or listen to if you're a fan of audiobooks.

**Molly Lewis**

Cool, thanks so much, Chris. I can't speak on behalf of Rambo definitely leaving us feeling inspired and and keen to kind of take more deep dives into into interesting topics out there. And you know, maybe I'll start looking deeper into the metaverse the next couple of weeks. So here we go.

**Chris Naylor**

Get lost in the metaverse Zuckerberg

**Vinita Israni**

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**Chris Naylor**

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