IxDA Sydney Mentoring Program Podcast

03 - Tim Yeo

Audio Transcript

Vinita Israni
Hi, Tim, it's lovely to have you here chatting with us today.

Tim Yeo
Yeah, thank you so much for having me.

Vinita Israni
So our first question we've been asking a lot of our podcasters has been, how was your 2021? And do you have any changes or habits that you want to start off or implement in 2022

Tim Yeo
If I thought 2020 was a year of change, for me, personally, 2021 has been even more change. In fact, in the last two weeks, I've moved states, I'm currently based in Adelaide. I also started a new job in 2021. With IBM consulting, it's been a lot of change. I think my experience working in startups previously has probably set me up well to cope with that change. But if there's anything constant, when we just thought that COVID was over, all of a sudden the Pokemon variant of Americana showed up is it showed us all that, you know, this is still an evolving situation. So I'm glad my experiences taught me to be told me to be adaptable. So yeah, 2021 has been still a year of a lot of change for me personally.

Vinita Israni
Yeah, I think we're, we're all adjusting. The only thing constant is change. Right? So we'd love to hear a little bit about your background. And you mentioned startups. You just mentioned IBM consulting. Can you talk a little bit about all of your experiences in the past?

Tim Yeo
Sure. So I've been a designer and a design leader for the last 16 years, eight of those years has been on consulting in all those years has been client side, the most recent eight has been working in startups client side. In those companies, my role as a design leader was to set up the design function for the first time. Firstly, asked for x o FX, which did international money transfers, then it prosper that does business loans made easy. And then we have funded that US financial comparisons. So my role has really been to set up the design function. hiring designers figure out who we need to hire when we need to hire, once we've actually hired them. What do we do with them? How do we help them progress and level up to become even better designers. And that was my primary role in each of those companies. Recently, I joined IBM consulting, which is probably the biggest organization I've ever worked in, I think at last count, IBM has over 2500 designers globally. And that's just designers. And my role is to really help our practice, which is customer transformation, to help our practice scale.

Vinita Israni
So working with so many different kinds of companies as well as designers, kind of my first question to you is what comes to mind when you think about mentoring.

Tim Yeo
So, I might start with my own mentoring and coaching journey. So a few years ago, about three years ago, I started giving a talk called Design leadership for introverts. I'm an introvert, there was really many role models of leaders who were introverts that could model off. And I found that over the years, I started finding the best ways to actually have impact my own way. And after giving a talk, maybe over the last

two, three years, I want to find a way that I can have more impact to help more introverts, and more introverted designers. So earlier this year in February 2021, I started coaching, and mentoring. So before the only people that I used to coach were people that were on my team designers that were Almighty. But earlier this year, I started coaching complete strangers, designers that I've never met before. So I put up a post, people who want to sign up signed up, we spent about half an hour to one hour talking about what issues they were struggling with. And I up to date, I probably coached about 100 designers. And during that time, I did this for free because I've never have I don't have a professional coaching license or coaching education and wanted to give back. So through this process, I learned I read a lot. I tried to help them work through their issues and problems. And it's been great so far.

Vinita Israni
What inspired you to kind of open it up to everyone, rather than maybe staying with kind of a core group of I'll call them mentees.

Tim Yeo
I think number one was, I wanted to see if I could do it. When when I was coaching and mentoring designers that were on my team, I had the luxury of spending a lot more time with them, getting to know them as individuals. But when you hit a scenario where you're just meeting somebody for the first time and you want to In a short amount of time, get to know them understand what issues they're facing, and to leave them at the end of a 30 minute or one hour conversation with some actionable steps that they can take away and implement. It seemed like such a interesting challenge, like how do you do it? You know, how can that be done. And yet, when you look at the coaching profession, so many people have done this as a career. So I suppose I wanted to know if I could do it, I want to know how to do it, I read everything that I could find all the books that I could find about coaching and how to do this well. And the best way to learn I found was to practice. So that's what I did.

Molly Lewis
That's great. And I wanted to say a few heads memorable mentor, when you were first starting out,

Tim Yeo
one of my most memorable mentors is still my current mentor. And he was actually my boss from one of the companies I used to work for. He's not actually a designer. The reason why he's been such a great mentor is just his way of working. I always know where I stand with him, he's always been pretty clear. He's an experienced executive who's worked in different kinds of businesses for a very long time. And this just, there's an aspect to having a good relationship with your mentor or your coach, there is a connection that's hard to define. Sometimes people go through meeting different kinds of mentors and coach before they find a person that works for them. I was just lucky that my boss happened to be a really good coach and match for me as well. And we still have a relationship, we still connect every one or two months. If I'm not wrong, I'm actually connecting him tomorrow. So yeah, it's a good relationship. It's he's a really good person two, as a sounding board for some of the things that might be facing right now.

Vinita Israni
So jumping in a little bit deeper. One of the questions we've definitely had a lot of mentees ask is, how do you land your first job? It sounds like you've also transitioned to a lot of different roles. How has that transition been? What would you recommend when talking to someone, maybe that's a bit fresher out of school?

Tim Yeo
Yes. So I moved here to Australia about nine years ago. And I was previously from Singapore. And when I first got here, I noticed that there was this interesting way that people hire fresh graduates. And it was weird, because a lot of the times when I talked to people that were starting out for the first time, their story was this, their story was they needed experience in order to get hired. But oftentimes, people don't

give them the opportunity to have that first job to have experience in order to get the experience to get the job. So if no one's ever going to give you that first opportunity, how do you get the experience to get the first opportunity by making sense? So here's a very weird thing for me to encounter. Because back from where I was from in Singapore, this wasn't a thing. I just figured this must have been the Australian thing. I'm not sure maybe you guys can tell me more. But because of that, whenever the teams that I lead got to a certain size, where we could have people coming in who were less experienced, it was an opportunity that I seized. And I it was not just beneficial for the people that were less experience, I found that having less experienced people on the team is actually a good thing for the more senior members. There's a saying that you don't really understand the topic till you can actually teach somebody else you can show somebody else how to do the thing. And I found that when you do have less experienced members, the more senior members also level up themselves when they are able to mentor and coach, the less experienced people.

Molly Lewis
And so what are some ways that juniors can initially get their foot in the door?

Tim Yeo
I think there are three things that you can do. Looking for a job is hard, not just for new status. But for everyone, I would say the three things that you can do the real, the desired outcome is really to be remembered. You have to understand that when hiring managers are going through that hiring process, they might be seeing 234 candidates in a single day. It is a process they want make sure that they find the best candidate for the job. And through that whole process. You know, if you're seeing one person after another over the course of a few weeks, it's really the people that you can stick to their mind that the memory that they will remember and you have a higher chance to get employed. And there's a few ways that you can do that, right. If you're starting out and you don't have a lot of experience, you will be very unfair for hiring managers to expect you to have all the technical skills to have a massive library of work examples. It's not fair because you are just starting out but when What you can do is to show some positive energy showing enthusiasm. So an openness to actually learn, if you can show that if people can feel that coming through you as a candidate. That's, that's what I personally look for. So that's the first thing, show up with a positive attitude, positive energy, and a openness to learn. Number two, always be networking. Don't just be looking for a job when you need a job. Networking should be something that you do all the time, even when you don't need a job. You should be meeting people understanding what their needs are, it might not be today that they need somebody like you, but it might be further down the road. And if you were successful at being memorable, then guess what, maybe even before the hiring manager writes your job description, they might already be approaching you about the role. So always be networking. And then number three, I would say follow up. Sometimes through the hiring process, people fall through the gaps. Like it or not, it happens. So don't feel shy to be checking in directly with the hiring manager or the talent acquisition person, following them to see, hey, where am i How's the process going? Just so you know, this is where I'm at, keen to hear back from you and just check in. So the three things are showing up with a positive attitude. Number two, always be networking. And number three, don't be shy to follow up.

Molly Lewis
That's great. I think that's three really good, you know, practical points that people can take on that advice. We did wonder though, how do you find networking, if you're an introvert, or maybe you're a bit nervous to start the new working journey.

Tim Yeo
I'm terrible at networking. So in the beginning, networking was always me in a crowded room of people that I don't know, standing in the corner with a glass of wine and a slice of pizza, just staring around the room hoping somebody will make eye contact with me. That's me at a physical real world networking event. But what I found over the course of my career is, that's just one version of networking. And it

doesn't have to be my version, it doesn't have to be your version. What I learned over the course of time is there's actually many ways to get to know people that are interested in you have social media, you have LinkedIn, you have Twitter, you can follow people that you respect that whose ideas you share. And it's never been easier to reach out to them and start a conversation. It doesn't always have to be about the job. It can just be they're talking about something interesting, and I'm adding to the conversation. So networking doesn't have to be just in person, it can also be online through social media. Now, when you're also networking in person, and once it is safe to actually do so there are a few things you can do as well. The one go to technique I always use if I'm networking person, is to pretend that it's user research. So when you're at a networking event, you know, if you're pretending the user research, somehow there's a part of your brain that just clicks over where you feel less shy. And you start approaching people and asking them, you know, why are they here? What do they want get this event? You know, how can they help? The trick here is it's not really user research. You don't want to be asking questions or interrogation the whole time. It's really a conversation. So pause in between, and allow people to ask questions and make statements. But don't just keep on asking questions all the time, because it's not really user research.

Vinita Israni
So what you're saying is, don't be creepy, and just hone in on on their personality and what they're doing in the world, but also offer things that you have that you're working on and reading about.

Tim Yeo
Yeah, no matter what, don't be creepy. Don't be creepy. Good

Vinita Israni
design tonight. I think we all tried to follow most days. So following up on that around being a little bit creepy, and sometimes I think I feel creepy in my own design position. Can you talk a little bit about imposter syndrome.

Tim Yeo
So I've always struggled with imposter syndrome. Even after all these years of working in design. When I started out there was user experience wasn't even a term that existed. There was no school that you could graduate with a user experience degree. So everything that I learned in my career to do in design has been learned by doing learn by reading learn by learning of other people that way in this industry before me. Same thing applies when I was learning how to be a design leader. There was no MBA that I could graduate in that taught you how to be a designer The the same thing learning off people learning off learning by doing learning from the people that are respected in our industry. So given that context, you know, there was never that baseline confidence that I've been advocated to do this job properly. And everything I learned was just doing and trying and see if that works, getting coaches getting mentors, helping me learn how to be a better leader. So in that sense, I've always struggled with imposter syndrome, worrying that I'm not actually as good as I could be. Because I've never had that formal education to lean back on to give me that confidence, that emotional boost, to actually say that I actually know what I'm doing. So it's something that I still struggle with every day. One I heard this really interesting story, funnily on clubhouse, actually from a coach who was talking about imposter syndrome. And how she said she dealt with her imposter syndrome was she treated it like a third party like an external person. So whenever she felt her imposter syndrome creeping up, she was the Hey, mister imposter. I see you, I know what you're doing, you're there to try to keep me safe. But you know what, if I want to try, if I want to learn, I need to stretch I need to grow. And yes, maybe I'll make some mistakes. But I choose to grow, I choose to do this, I choose to try. And it feels different. Because you're accepting you actually acknowledging that it's there is a feeling that's there, but it's there to protect you to stop you from failing. And it makes it a lot more, okay, it makes you a lot more open to try. And that's how I deal with it.

Vinita Israni

That's pretty awesome. To think about imposter syndrome is like a difficult stakeholder that you may have to deal with once in a while. So kind of on that, what are your recommendations for junior designers starting out and kind of stakeholder management for them, because when they're new to the field, they may not have some of that experience to know how to present themselves or speak

Tim Yeo

when you're talking to stakeholders is important realize that they are people to their people with interests, they have business interests, they have a role to play, I think it really helps if you actually spend some time connecting to them as human beings, as real people, you know, it's relationship building is building bridges, getting to know them as people first before we even start talking about work. Sometimes what I do in meetings, if I do arrive early, is I've actually learned to make small talk, I've taken an interest in the people that I work with, I treat them not as clients versus people on our team, not that kind of client partner relationship. But really as cross functional team members, they're my tears that I work with. And we are on the same team playing to reach the same objective. And is interesting when you actually start seeing the world through that lens. In naturally build relationships. You want to know more about these people, you want to form a good working relationship so that you can do good work together. So I find if you really want to start and have a good working relationship with stakeholders, start off by connecting with them as people because stakeholders people too.

Molly Lewis

That's great. And what advice would you give to maybe someone that's just starting out on how to handle maybe internal politics or team politics?

Tim Yeo

That's a really hard question to answer. I mean, every organization is different. I think the one thing we have to accept and realize is that people are politics. If you have people, you have politics, that's it. The only question is, depending on the organization, do you have a lot of politicking? Or do you have very little I think it comes back to the same point. People have interests, you have to understand what those interests are, what their needs are. Because those interests are guiding their behavior, it is actually channeling how they're behaving. So if we can understand what's in it for them, what they tried to get out of this, he will actually inform you why there's the way why they're saying certain things and why they're behaving a certain way. It's kind of like, again, like user research is really understanding and drilling down and understanding what their motivations are, which are then driving their behavior.

Molly Lewis

Now that makes sense. We're we're all social creatures. So I guess on the more practical side of starting out, how would you suggest one starts to shape their portfolio when trying to get you know, into a new job or maybe their first job and they don't have a lot of experience?

Tim Yeo

So when you're building our portfolio, and you haven't done this for a long time, designers by my definition They make stuff for other people to use. If you're applying for a UX design role, but you've made other kinds of stuff, right, put it in a portfolio, it doesn't just have to be UI, work, user experience work, if you can show people other stuff that you've made. I think that's something in my view, I'll be very interested to actually see, because part of what I want to see in candidates who haven't had much experience is I want to understand how they think, how do they approach a problem? Because just because they haven't done something before, if I can actually understand how they approach a problem, the questions that they asked the way that they problem solve, what we're really looking for here is potential. And if they can show that either through other kinds of stuff that they've made, to showcase their talents, their abilities, I think all those kinds of things will be things I'd love to see in a portfolio. I mean, what's the alternative? Right? The alternative is you only share a small library of UI work that you

might have done. But there'll be a very small set of examples. If you have stuff that you've done. You guys can see this year, it's a podcast, but there's a beautiful mural that's behind me on the wall right now. If you had done stuff like that, I will put on my portfolio, just showcase your talent, show us show employees what you can do.

Molly Lewis
So it doesn't really matter what particular design role you're going into whether it's more UI or UX focus, but it's more around thinking.

Tim Yeo
Yeah, sure, Intel, sure stuff that you've made.

Molly Lewis
Awesome. So I wondered if you recommend any design challenges to share as part of portfolios when when people were trying to break into that first job?

Tim Yeo
Wow, that's such a such a big question. I say it's a big question, because you are pretty much doing free work. So this is my view, right? This is what I'll share. I think the hard thing here is and the reality we have to accept is that people who are working, they need jobs, they need to make a living. And it is so onerous, to actually ask people to do stuff on top of full time work full time, life, everything else that they have to do. The irony here is, if you don't have examples to show, it's very hard for people to actually assess the kinds of work that you, you, you might be good at to actually even show you the kinds of work examples. I've seen many, many candidate portfolios where they spent hours and hours trying to create a full fledged work example, to put onto their portfolio examples that you've been you've been you were talking about earlier, I think the best advice I can give here is if you choose to do these things, and put them in your portfolio, make sure that you are calling out your strengths. Make sure you spend the most time focusing on things that you actually love things that you know, you are really good at. It might be UI design, it might be design research, you know, spend time really, in going through these exercises, really practicing and harnessing your craft. If you're gonna actually invest time in doing this thing. Make sure that you get something out of it to you're actually practicing, and trying out and getting better your skills. And then how deep you choose to go is entirely up to you. But if I had any advice, focus on your strengths, showcase it, because when people actually hire you, as a designer, they're not not going to hire you for your weaknesses, they're going to hire you for the things that you're best at. So if you want to practice, focus on work examples that are your best work, the work that you enjoy most doing that you're best at doing, and showcase that.

Vinita Israni
I think that's a totally valid point. Another thing I've heard recently is some of these design exercises, especially when you're looking at an existing banking app as an example, right? There's hundreds of designers and developers spending hours making one small feature, right, and as a young designer to try to tackle that and understand the entire complexity of it. It's quite difficult. And so I think it's great that you're talking about one really specific thing that they want to highlight about their skill set, right, so they can see how it would potentially add to that team if they were to join it rather than trying to boil the ocean, but boiling a feature that's within a product of oceans here. And it's a great point. So taking a different kind of flavor to this question is how do you start to develop a deeper understanding of design systems and components and kind of Creating that craft before you even, you know, starting to apply it to something like a design challenge.

Tim Yeo
So if we're talking about design systems, maybe let's talk about what a design system is. So for me, my understanding is a design system is actually a set of reusable components, not just pitfalls, but also code

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code that an engineer could take could use and have confidence that this is how it's meant to be designed. And it was built well, it was built once it was tested well. And I have full confidence that if I use this component is going to be consistent, I'm not breaking any rules. And for me, that's what the design system is, I want to share a view that may not be immediately obvious, but design systems aren't actually for designers, design systems are actually for engineers, they actually make an engineers life so much easier, and so much happier. I've been in so many companies, where designers have tried for a very long time to get the right buy in to actually get give them time to actually work on design system. But where I found much more success is where we can actually pivot the conversation and start focusing on how much time and value we can actually give back to the engineers to solve even bigger problems. So when we talk about design systems, is really understanding how is it that I can design something once? Well, so they can be used in multiple places, in the same way, users will love it, because it's predictable. Designers will love it, because it's consistent. Engineers will love it because they only have to build something once. And they can use it everywhere. And it's stable code, it works, it functions and happy days. So if you can actually understand that, that is the purpose of a design system. It creates consistency, ease of learning for users, and reusability. For engineers, that's a very good place for you to actually start. And as a designer, as you're starting to design these things, start thinking about all the different contexts, that the thing you're designing, whether it's a drop down menu, or an accordion or call to action button, start thinking about all the different contexts that something that you're making is going to be used. Because you may not be the designer that's designing these every single interface, the thing that you're making might be ended up using by other people in ways that you might not have intended. So start thinking about how each of these components that you making might be used in a multitude of contexts.

Vinita Israni
It sounds like design systems is really good place for designers, fresh designers to start, what are other kinds of domains you think would be really helpful to develop kind of a foundational understanding of moving between different parts of a product or even within a consultancy.

Tim Yeo
My thinking always comes back to Designing for for the user that you're designing for. I think, over time, our industry has specialized. And as you specialize, you get to a point where you only focus on your discipline silo. So there might be product design, you know, you might have a case where a user researcher might say I only do user research, I don't do product design, talk to the product designer. But from a storytelling standpoint, for understanding the meaning behind what you're doing. I think a good place to always start is to always start with the person that you're designing for, who is the user? Why are they using this thing? I think it's a really good leveler, because no matter what your role is, whether you might be an engineer, or product designer, there's always somebody that's using the thing that you're making. So if I had to choose one place to start, it's always the same place focus on the person that you're designing for. So that the conversation doesn't get to a point where you're only looking at the thing that you're making, and you forget everything else. You got to always remember who you're designing for.

Vinita Israni
So that was great to think about really designing for the user, right? And you talked a little bit about how we shouldn't get stuck in our design disciplines in silos and always thinking about designing for the user. So related to that, how do you start to leverage scenarios and domains and things outside of design to actually influence the design world as well, because obviously, as designers, we're also human so it's good to kind of look outside of our island for lack of a better geographic analogy.

Tim Yeo
I think it's important as designers to realize that we are just one piece of the puzzle. So, in order to ship something, it's not just designers that you need any product managers, you need marketers, you need engineers, this to deliver and ship product is a team sport. And when we're shipping stuff is very easy to think, Oh, I've done my job, I have made my pixels as perfect as they can be. Now I'm gonna take what

I've done, and then go pass it over the fence and let the engineers deal with the thing that I mean, right? That's not how that's not how real teams ship work. Real teams ship work by if I use the metaphor, it's like a slice of a pie. If you're having a slice of a pie, you're not going to eat the crust, first, you're not going to eat the feeling next, and then you're not going to eat the next layer below it. When you eat a slice of a pie, it's a complete slice, you got crust feeling, and the thing at the bottom. So when you're shipping product is the same thing. You know, don't think of it as I'm done with the crust, and my job is over. Now, I'm just gonna give it to engineers to put the feeling in. That's not how it works. So when you're thinking about shipping product, remember, it's a team sport, you are shipping stuff, one slice at a time. And it's got to be a complete slice, not just the crust, not just a feeling, it's gonna be one complete slice of a pie. So remember, work is a team sport, you're not the only person on the team. And this, that's how you should be thinking about how you actually ship features and work.

Vinita Israni

I love that analogy. I think it's a, it's a really good example of how we should work together in a team. Also, it makes me quite hungry, that dinner will be coming soon. I've also heard something quite similar. That is talking a little bit about not shipping the org chart. So a lot of things that we ship, you know, are siloed in a certain way, even for the user at the end of the day, because we can't hop things over the fence as an example. How do you see, in particular introverts working in design teams that might be quite siloed.

Tim Yeo

So if you're an introvert in a team, as a design leader, something that I've always tried to do is to make sure that I hire for my team's weaknesses. So part of that process is to really understand what are the strengths are the people that have on the team, where are the gaps, and as we start hiring out individual people on the team, we I want to make sure that I'm actually filling in the gaps still exist on the team. Any kind of diversity needs to have different kinds of people. And the reason why we want diverse teams is if you have a homogeneous team, where everyone is the same, that tends to lead to homogeneous ideas, same thing, lots of same ideas all over again. For me personally, that's why that's why I've always tried to hire diverse teams. So on a diverse team, you can't just have all introverts, you can't just have all extroverts, you can just have all ambivert, senior really good blend. And the key here is people keep talking about asking and wanting for diverse teams. But what they don't realize immediately is when you have a whole bunch of different people working together, that also brings a very natural tension, because we're all different. We're not the same. So it's really about learning. How do we want to show up? How do we want to work together as a team? And how do we become the best team that we can be. And a lot of that has to be around agreeing on the norms that we should have as a team. I'll give you one example. On a team that I was once on, there was a very strong tendency, where most of the designs were actually introverts. And there was one extrovert on the team, who during a team meeting, was always a person that was talking. And it was very hard for the rest of the introverts to have the time and space to make their point. And it was only during one of these team retros when we talked about it, that the extroverted designer then realized, oh, you know, I thought I was just feeling space. I thought I was helping other people avoid awkward silences. And that was the intention, but they also did not realize that in them hogging the microphone, they will actually not giving into other introverts on the team and opportunity to make their point. So we We agreed, we all recognize that this was happening on our team. So something we agreed as a team was to develop a small set of Team norms we call T norms are really just behaviors. And one of the norms that we agreed as a team to have was to pass the microphone. So all that is, is when one person finishes speaking, they just say, What do you think, and they pull in another designer. So just because we're different, just because we are different people, whether we're extroverts or introverts, doesn't mean that we can't work well together. It just means that we have to find a way to actually work well together. And the way I found to do that is to have things like Team norms, agreed behaviors that we all agree to stop practicing, so that everyone can participate as a team.

Molly Lewis

That's a great example. I guess we wonder if those team dynamics differ between in house and agency teams?

Tim Yeo

I think so. Maybe, honestly, in my own experience, a lot of the designers that I've encountered, have tended towards introversion, rather than extraversion. And I think there's a reason for that. I think as introverts we, as introverted designers, we tend to focus on making sure that the thing that we're making is as good as it can be, like we're polishing we're perfecting. And in doing that, it's a lot of focused solitude. And I think if this kind of work doesn't give you energy, then you probably be finding another career or something else, that that's better suited to your personality. I think that's why a lot of designers that I've met tended towards introversion, because they in order to make that thing as good as they can be, they have long periods of quiet solitude of just focusing on your craft.

Molly Lewis

Yeah, that makes sense. So I wonder, how do you lay it over personality types and skill set?

Tim Yeo

That's a very good question. I don't have a scientific approach to that. Usually, in the interview process, there will be behavioral questions that we ask, we infer we make guesses. I wish I had a better, better approach to do it. But really, we're looking for a good blend of behaviors, personality types, and also the hard skills like design, product design, and etc.

Molly Lewis

Yeah, awesome. And is there anything you recommend for those who want to work on their soft skills further, or maybe are introverted know that's an area that they want to really work on moving forward?

Tim Yeo

I suppose you want to get very clear on the skill that you want to improve. Soft skills is such a big umbrella term, whereas it's fuzzy. And so many things could go into it right? When you say soft skills, the immediate things that come to my mind are things like how do you manage stakeholders? How do you play well with teammates so that you can deliver work well, and have a good time working next to each other? I think it's really understanding what's the thing? What's the skill you're trying to improve. And then focusing on those things and trying to get better at it, practice, reading up about it, talking to other people watching how they practice, learning of other people. And if you do nothing else, it's really practice. It's, it's the only sure thing that you can do to make sure that you get better.

Vinita Israni

It sounds like soft skills need some kind of definition, as well. What about hard skills that you would recommend for any student coming out of school?

Tim Yeo

Depends on the rule that you're looking for. So the one skill, and again, I'm biased, because my own background tends towards user research. I've always got a lot of joy and insight from just meeting new people and talking to them and understanding their motivations and what they're trying to do with the thing that I'm making. I think it's a good skill that people everyone should have. But again, I'm biased, focus on your strengths. If it's product design, go for it spend hours perfecting and polishing the stuff that you're making. And yeah, I think we have a tendency to, to label and to silo, by the skill sets that we're developing. I think it's important to recognize, like some of these disciplines that we're talking about, like service design, they, in my mind, they didn't even exist as a term even user experience didn't exist as a term when I started out. So you have to accept that as a discipline matures. There's going to be new definitions coming out. As somebody that's starting out my best advice I can give you is focus on the thing

that you're doing. focus less on what it is called, but focus more When actually doing the thing, practicing the skill, you might be called product design today, but you might be just designing a really nice button or component, for example, focus on that focus on getting really good at that focus on talking to people, you know, you might call it user research today, you might call it something else tomorrow, but focus on the actual activity that you are doing, and you will get better at and focus on that. I think that's

Vinita Israni
really good to think about that focus, but really getting to the core of something and making sure that it has impact. And I think I so I am a self proclaimed ambivert. And I struggled to figure out what are the ways to push introverts and extroverts around me to have impact, but I believe that you are also doing that in a much better and scalable way.

Tim Yeo
Yeah, so earlier this year, I started coaching introverts, one on one. And today, I've probably coached close to about 100, introverts. During that time, I feel like I was giving back, I developed a lot more a stronger confidence in what I'm doing. So the next question I had in my mind was, how can I try and help as many introverts as possible? And I knew, as I did, the some sets, I did the math, I knew I couldn't scale. One on one coaching was amazing. But at the same time, if my goal was to help as many introverts as possible, it wasn't a scalable way to achieve the outcome. So I thought, what else could I do, I could do group courses, which is something I'm thinking about. But then what I landed on today is what I'm calling the quiet achiever. And the quiet achiever is we help introverts have impact and influence without pretending to be extroverts. It is a mix of short bite sized videos that you can watch online, kind of like Netflix, and they are bite size. So if you want to learn about how to network, how to do it online, how to be heard in meetings, how to be more visible in your organization. Each of these lessons or things I want to help people learn are delivered in short videos, two to three minutes long as you can watch it during a lunch break. And you can actually put it to practice. There's also an online community of fellow introverts who you can talk to, and you can share your challenges and things that you're going through. We also meet up once a week during office hours. And we also have monthly guest speakers, people who are working in the design industry that we know about, but might not know we're introverts themselves. So that's what a quiet achiever is.

Vinita Israni
That sounds awesome, to me, it's been a lot of hard work on your part, to put together all of your amazing knowledge and experience into something that can be shared more widely with so many designers.

Tim Yeo
And the key thing here is, I think, if you look at the things that the kinds of things that we're sharing, I wanted to make the point that it's not really about introverts or extroverts, introverts versus extroverts versus ambiverts, for example, it's not it's not about that it's really about practical skills that can have you help you have impact at work. The only reason why I'm focusing on introverts is because I am on and this is the only reality that I know. And these are things that I've learned over time, and I want to share it because I think you can help other people like me, who have gone through the things that I have.

Vinita Israni
Well, thank you so much, Tim, we really appreciate having you come chat with us today. And I think we will all be checking out the quiet achiever course and hopefully have an ongoing chat with you as well.

Tim Yeo
Again, thank you so much for the opportunity, and I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Sam Hancock

And that concludes our latest episode of The IxDA Sydney MP pod. If you want to learn more about my IxDA Sydney's events and mentorship programs, please visit by IxDAsydney.org. See you next time guys.

Tim Yeo

Hi, I'm Tim you and you are listening to the IxDA Sydney MP pod