IxDA Sydney Mentoring Program Podcast

04 - Mags Hanley

Audio Transcript

Mags Hanley

So the value of design I feel the first bit is that we don't actually codify the value of design very well ourselves.

Sam Hancock

Hello, and welcome to the Sydney IxDA Pod, the show that guides you through the stages of design mentorship, whether you're just starting out in design and looking for a mentor, or you're a veteran designer that's been in the industry for 20 years. There's something for everyone. I'm Sam Hancock. And in this episode, Vinita and Molly, we are talking to Mags Hanley about why it's important to think beyond your role as a designer, why you should be taking notice of aspects adjacent to our role like data, and why learning about other people's business needs to improve your sphere of influence. Mags is a career and Information Architect. She works with designers at all stages of their careers, help them identify the path to go on, be more effective at work and support them in leading their design teams. His recently published career architecture, analyze structure and plan your design career, a guidebook for designers working out where to go next in their careers. Now let's jump straight into it.

Vinita Israni

Hi, Mags, it's lovely to have you here chatting with us today. I just wanted to start with kind of an initial question. We've all come out of lockdown, and had our various freedom days. So what has been your lockdown silver lining so far?

Mags Hanley

So my silver lining is that I started my business just before lockdown. And I had limited my business to Melbourne, which is where I'm based. And my silver lining is that I spent the last two years actually providing services across the world. And that wouldn't have been available to me if lockdown as quickly if lockdown hadn't been there.

Vinita Israni

That is quite amazing. I know that the lockdown has opened things up. But from a business perspective, I'm sure that sprint brought in a lot of amazing perspectives and stories and experiences as well.

Mags Hanley

Yeah. And conversations, mostly with women across the world. Because I do a lot of coaching with women.

Vinita Israni

I have been a recipient of those, and it has been lovely. So kind of to get to what we're talking about today, quite in line is what does mentoring mean to you.

Mags Hanley

So let me bring up two bits two, which is mentoring versus coaching. So mentoring for me is bringing my areas of expertise in particular within design and design leadership, and supporting other people. And them actually asking for my perspective as opposed to being a coach and a coach is actually asking a set of questions to get the person to find the answer within themselves. So I find myself doing a lot of mentoring, which is using my 20 plus years of experience in design leadership, and helping others with

that. But I also use coaching techniques when I need to, which is let me dig a little bit into you find out if you have that answer within yourself.

Vinita Israni
Can you speak a little bit to maybe the difference between like guidance versus advice? That's kind of what it sounds like?

Mags Hanley
Yeah. So guidance is it's almost like the facilitation aspect where you are sitting there and providing people with a structure and helping them use that structure to find the answer. So the guidance being here's a framework for you to do this. Versus advice, which is, this is what I think you should do.

Molly Lewis
Perfect. I guess our next question would be What is the difference in between people interaction and people management?

Mags Hanley
Sure. Let me give an example of someone who I had a conversation with a couple of probably a year ago. And he turned to me and he said, I do not want to be a people manager. I've been a people manager before and I don't really like the having to deal with the tears or having to grow a person or sitting down and working out what someone's career is going to look like. But what I love doing is interacting with people within my work. So having conversations with them, influencing them, making sure that I understand what their needs are for the project. And that's the difference. So it's the difference between working with people versus looking after and managing a person.

Molly Lewis
That makes sense. Thank you. And I guess on that with being more that senior and how do you be seen as I guess mid level or senior in an organization

Mags Hanley
so mid level to senior, is that what you mean? Yes. Okay, cool. So if I think about a mid level designer, a mid level designers focus is actually understanding of beginning to do their practice, or their craft, with some sort of fluidity. When you're a junior, you're learning, you just, someone's giving you some guidance, and you're learning how to do the stuff. At a mid level, you're starting to have a fluidity, you know, enough, you're starting to go into a project and being able to do enough of the project, but maybe getting some guidance from someone a bit more senior. When you move to a senior, you know, your practice, you know, your craft, you know how to do it. And if you've never done a method before, you have enough experience to be able to go and research a method and bring it in and apply it. And you may go for someone to have a bit of a review of it and say, Okay, did I get this the right way. But you are definitely a person who can go and do their practice by themselves. You may also be sitting there and coaching a junior and a midweight, and supporting them in the work that they're doing.

Molly Lewis
We'd love to know, how do you go from expanding your skills from craft to actually leadership skills?

Mags Hanley
Sure. And I think this comes down to what do we consider is leadership. And I think one of the bits for me when talking about leadership is leadership is not always managing people. And I feel as if when we talk about leadership, a lot of the time we talk about especially the first thing that midwives are seeing as a given is you're going to learn how to coach someone. And actually, what I want people to think about is that leadership comes up into all the four different ways. Leadership is leadership in practice. So can you lead the practice? Can you define what the practice is? Can you define a design system? Can you come up

with what the process is? Can you scope a project? We have leadership and strategy? Can you define what a product and service is going to do? Can you work out what the vision of that product or service is? And then can you work out tactically how you achieve that vision? Do you know about people, so you leading people, either by people management, or people being able to take people and say, here's the vision that we're going towards? Do we know how to bring people to that vision? And the last one is leadership when it comes to business? So do you know how your product and service meets the vision and the needs of the organization? Do you speak the language of the business? So therefore, when we sit there and talk about how do you move into leadership, you need to as a senior to identify which ones you're good at? Which ones are you not, and then you can then choose which type of leadership you move into. And you can't sit there and say, I'm only going to be a people manager, I'm only going to be this, you've never tried it before. So I feel as a senior what you're doing when it comes to leadership is trying out as much of this as possible to work out which one suits you, or which couple suits you and then find the role that supports that type of leadership.

Vinita Israni
I actually have a question right around that. So with all the different kinds of leadership that there are, do you see any unique challenges within design to those the four kinds of leadership that you outlined? Yes.

Mags Hanley
So I think the main ones for us, for leadership for design is actually the business leadership. Because most of us in design are not taught how to be business leaders. Our focus is definitely on the craft. And as we move up to on looking after people, and this suits us as designers quite well, it's about empathy. It's about people, it's about making sure that everyone's okay, practices good because we sit there and go, it's things like design ops, or research ops. So we're understanding and codifying what our practice looks like. But most of us are not taught how to be business leaders. We're not taught about values, we're about value. We're not taught about how the language of business and as we move up the ladder, this has been the main place where I talk to a number of my peers on a number of slack groups about leading design. And once we get a seat at the table, we're unsure of what to do with the seat at the table, which is what does design provide to the business? And the feedback from many CEOs and if you have a busy McKinsey report about this is that CEOs don't know what design does, and they don't know what design provides to the business. And the focus is always managing down. And at a certain point design supposed to be an equivalent peer to the rest of their lead at the leadership team. And we don't play in that arena very well.

Molly Lewis
Yeah, just thinking about that, how do you think that we can start thinking about business design or learn more of those skills at more of a mid level? So we don't have, I guess, that challenge when we finally get that seat at the table when we're maybe more senior?

Mags Hanley
So I think that the difference in there is to start saying, Why are we creating these, and realizing that as much as we love to think about keeping the user at the heart of the problem, and at the heart of the product, and the service that we are designing? No product or service will be successful if we don't make the business requirement? So we've got to take into consideration the business and the context of where we are designing at a mid level, so that when we move upwards, this isn't a new concept to us.

Vinita Israni
Are there any resources or recommendations that you have for kind of gleaning this business context? Is it a lot of just experience and working in different kinds of organizations as kind of a mid level designer,

Mags Hanley
I think some of that is and you've put me on the spot. So I can't sit there and go, you need to read these three books, I'm going to just come back to you. I feel that some of this is pairing up with people at a

higher level to talk about business and this may not be sitting there with your boss, because your boss may or may not do this particularly well either. So it is finding people within the rest of the organization who you compare with. And so this is a sponsorship or a mentoring outside of your design organization. So paying attention to product, because products focus is purely on business. They may talk about that a user centered they're not. It's okay. It's fine. Their focus is the business because that's who they are. That's what they've been measured on. I think that's the bit that we've got to realize that every single one of us is measured on different things when we're working in the business. So engineering is based on what they're delivering. Product is based on whether they're actually going to be meeting the requirements of the business, whether it's making more money or reducing costs. And design is actually making sure that the users are happy with what we're providing. But if all of us are focused solely on our own aspect, we're not going to make sure that the actual products work very particularly well, because we're not at a triumvirate of people working together. So I feel as if when we talk about designers at a mid level or senior level, understanding business, work with work with product, work with strategy. See if you've got a connection in if you can go up as high as you can talk to them and make them as much as possible.

Molly Lewis
How do you best teach other teams about value of design?

Mags Hanley
All right. So the value of design, I feel the first bit is that we don't actually codify the value of design very well ourselves. So I was talking with someone who's coaching me and I, the conversation I was having was, I want to be a designer feel wants to be respected as an equal partner with product and engineering. And he turned to me and said, Guess what product and engineering don't care about you being a equal partner, they just don't. What they care about is What does design provide to them, that makes their life easier. So the value of design is not that we are valuable, it is we provide something to those two other groups have to the business or the hire up to the business as well. So the value of design to engineering is that we help them design the right things. So they don't have to re recode that we reduce the amount of rework that's required that they build the right thing the first time. The value for product is that actually, that we bring the user's voice and that we design the right thing that our MVP is the right thing for the customer, as well as the right thing for the business. That we create a product which is complete, that a user can complete a whole customer journey, rather than just feature doing a feature factory feature feature feature feature. That is the value to product, which is something that a user can use the hallway and someone will pay for it. So if we sit down say the value of design is that we do this and the value of design is what we provide those two groups.

Vinita Israni
So to get a little personal is there an example of an experience that you've had Where you've seen this, either work really well, or potentially kind of the opposite as a learning experience.

Mags Hanley
I think for me my failure, my big failure was at the BBC, where I didn't connect as much as I should have with the senior management in the controller of the internet. And I didn't understand what his perspective was. And so therefore, I wasn't taking into consideration what he needed. And therefore, that really struck me in my products, that we actually weren't designing what was required by the organization, because he had a different and I wasn't sitting there and having that conversation with him about what he needed. And therefore, you know, I was overruled, and what our products were going to do. So you sit there and go, okay, okay. This is why stakeholder and people interaction becomes the highest connection that we have to do past our, our business of learning our craft. Because the persuading, and the influencing is less about us telling them what they should be doing a more about us understanding what their problems are, and how design will help solve those problems.

Vinita Israni

And so in terms of influencing, what do you see as the maybe the biggest challenge that mid level designers have, even in terms of how they understand what influencing is?

Mags Hanley

Yeah, I think mid level designers don't understand. I think we're very internally facing, our focus is on the process and the deliverable that we have to achieve, because that's what we're being asked to do. As opposed to, we go round and make sure that it is the right deliverable for what the needs of the organization is. So that's the first one. The other bit from influencing is, as a mid level, your focus is I need to create this prototype, I need to create this visual design, or I need to create these end designs that are going to be coded up by someone and influencing it that perspective is have I created the right thing. So am I influencing and working with design with the product to make sure that I'm creating the right thing? And the second one, is the conversation with an engineer on am I bill? Are we building the right thing and influencing them there. And a lot of the bits for me was always at that level, the conversation of having enough tech to be able to have a really decent conversation with an engineer to say, really, you're telling me no, I want to have this conversation with you about this, because I feel as if we could actually achieve this. And I think that designers actually don't know enough about technology to be able to influence we are the number of times I have had someone at a senior tech level turn and say to either me or to other designers and said you're not technical. Lee almost like pat me on the head. You're not technical. And actually, I'm incredibly technical for a designer. And so when someone tells me that I sit there and go rubbish. And that that's that bit where it's just like how do you prove this? You we actually can't let ourselves just be focused on our own area, the same ways we can't let ourselves only be not be able to address business, we need to be able to address technology.

Vinita Israni

Yeah. So curious there. How do you build tech, it sounds like you're advocating for building technologists part of the craft of

Mags Hanley

So technology is not coding. I'm not recommend. I'm not saying that you have to be a coder. What I'm saying is that you have to understand technical, technical, technical architecture, you have to understand, you have to be able to read code. I don't I don't ask you to write code. I can't write code, or I did many, many years ago. But now that asked me to write a database database trigger. But I understand what database triggers are. I can see what I know what API is I can read an API, understand what a SQL query is. Understand how servers are set together, what a headless CMS is. Want You to Know what these mean, and then what they mean to your design. If you don't know that, how can you design Well, we're designing for technology. If you can't you need to understand the technology to be able to design well for it.

Vinita Israni

So curious there. How did you navigate that?

Mags Hanley

So in my own experience, I of course I started in design almost 27 years ago and I started working when no one knew anything in a small group called the interactive multimedia systems group at yellow pages, which census and they've just recently changed the name. So I can't know what they've changed it to. And we all knew nothing. So we all did everything. And my first boss turned to me and said, I think if you're going to move into this, and I was doing a lot more project management work, she said, Do you think you need to go into a qualification in software engineering? So I went and did a grad dip in software engineering. And I was rubbish at some of them. Absolutely rubbish. But I know enough. But I've also because I'm technically an Information Architect. It's my technical area of expertise. Databases, data has always been my world. So therefore, anyone asked me about API's, they I can read my API's, I understand

the databases understand what AI is, and machine learning. Because an end search search is my search. And CMS has been working with those technologies for forever. You need to be able to sit there and say, Where is my design being connected into, and therefore build up your expertise in that. So all of this has been a so I still geek out, mentioning this to someone today, I still geek out and go to a meet up about search and personalization. And I go to that meet up, it's once every couple of months, it's now online. And these guys are they're maths nerds. They're computational maths, nerds. I go into these and I understand everything. They're saying, there's nothing there that I can't understand. But that's because it speaks to my level of technology. And if we as designers sit there and say, Oh, I'm just No, no, no, we design for technology, we actually leverage technology, you've got to learn about it.

Molly Lewis
That's great. I just wondered, you know, with this technology knowledge, and you know, as a designer, ensuring that you know, the language that the developers are speaking so that you can design for it, because it's helped you become more confident in the decision making, in general was part of the project from a UX perspective.

Mags Hanley
I think it does, I think for you being confident that you understand what the technology is, and how everything is connected to each other means that when you are designing an interface, which states you understand what calls are being brought in, and what information can be displayed and what information then goes back. And when you're doing a GET or a push. So you're starting to be able to understand that well enough that your designs are not just something magical happens here, that you understand that something magical is happening there. Because all of these things are happening behind it. And therefore, you can then move forward. And if you can demonstrate and say, okay, my expectation is when we do that, that these three calls, and we get a config file, which will have these error messages, and they turn up at this point or this microcopy turns up at this point in time, you're going to have so much more credibility.

Molly Lewis
And speaking about credibility. How do you wade through team politics or tricky situations you may have?

Mags Hanley
Okay, Team politics. This is all about relationships. And I always go back to something Vinita. And I did originally, which was we did some stakeholder mapping. And then between the two of us, we went through where all her relationships were. And that is the big thing, which is you understanding where those relationships are doing this current set analysis, the same way as if you were working with set of stakeholders, as a client, as a consultant, you'd go off and do a stakeholder map and understand who was related to who and who had the influence where and where you wanted to connect, and who you needed to make the connections with. You need to do the same thing put on your consultant hat. If once you go into a new squad, and actually understand that, but do it with a sense of authenticity. If you sit there and go in and say I'm going to there, these three people and I'm going to make up to them. And those are the people that I you will sometimes go in and say I need to develop some relationships. But if you go in and quite a false way, you've never met these people before. Or I'm thinking back to someone who I can see picture in my mind. And I was leaving the organization and he decided to head and talk to the guy who was sitting next to me for a year. And I was leaving, and they decided he decided he needed to start talking to him again. And it was just going, Wow, I'm observing that, right, that feels very false to me. So team politics is all about relationship building is understanding the power structures. We don't do a large amount of that when we add our practitioners, because our focus is what are the deliverables will be when you're moving into senior or moving into later roles, you actually have to understand what those relationships are.

Vinita Israni

So from going from designing kind of your relationships and your stakeholder management, within your work culture in your organization, to transitioning to how do you start to see mid level designers designing their careers, you started talking a little bit about how business acumen was quite important technology was quite important. What are some of the other things that you think are really critical here.

Mags Hanley

So it goes back into my four bits, again, which is my practice people strategy and business, I feel so what I want to do is actually start with what the different career types of career paths are. And as a middle level, you don't need to make a decision right now, you never need to make a decision right now, the decision you make right now, will last you for 1218 months. So don't worry about it. When we look at it, there's three different so I have a book called Career architecture, which actually goes through that the three different primary job roles or job paths that we have our practitioner, which could be couldn't called an individual contributor, six, one half dozen together, manager and consultant. Now, when you sit there and go out of the practitioner, focus goes into three different types. You have a practitioner, so you've got a generalist, you've got operations, and you've got a specialist. So, at a mid level, you are not considering whether you're going to become a manager, you may consider moving into a consultant role. But let me take the three practitioner ones, and then I'll go on to consultant, the three practitioner roles, basically, am I a generalist? So I do I like to continue to do everything of my craft. And do I start to make sure I'm doing more project leadership workstream leadership and strategy leadership for the product. So that's we sort of moving up that way, and continue to be on the tools I like doing the craft, the specialist comes out going, you know, I really love to be reading research, or I really love content strategy. And what I really want to do is focus on doing that as my primary aspect of the craft that I do. And the operations is all about, am I operationalizing my research or my design to make sure it can be implemented across my organization. And the reason those three is still under practitioner is we are not focusing on managing either the business or people and that's where the managerial role comes in. But as a mid level, you are not anywhere near this and a mid level you may be at the decision point of going do I want to continue on generalist role or do I feel that specialism is where I want to be? consultants on the other hand, the difference between a practitioner and consultant is that a consultant goes into an organization and provides their expertise and get out of an organization. When you work in a product organization, your focus is you can be working years on one product or within a group and you're developing relationships and you're working as a practitioner moving through. The consultant is always bringing their area of expertise. The lowest level of a consultant is a freelancer. You go in and you're mostly doing production work for someone. The next sort of the middle level, is when you are brought in to be a contractor who was fitting in a shape whole have a role. A senior contractor is doing something similar. When you're an independent consultant or someone who is an expert consultant, you are leading projects for an organization, but you're still brought in for your expertise and you get out. So when you sit there and you'd say am I in a do I want to move from that practitioner role as a mid level into that contractor. The difference is us, you've set up and you've positioned yourself as the expert in whatever it is that someone will buy that expertise for a limited amount of time. The difference is you've set up and you've positioned yourself as the expert in whatever it is that someone will buy that expertise for a limited amount of time.

Vinita Israni

So can I throw a little bit of a wrench here? How'd you start to layer this really wonderful, wonderful design career architecture alongside the varying levels of design design maturity within an organization. So, for example, a mid level designer may be doing you know much more than what is outlined essentially and might be at a different kind of career trajectory because of the kind of design maturity in the organization. but they're in.

Mags Hanley

Sure. So let's talk about design maturity levels, and that the one that I like to use as a model that I base it on is envision one. And envision has the levels, we should go from level one to level five. Level one is

definitely a production one where you basically see people are sitting there and doing production work, there's very little maturity of UX. Level two is when design tends to be more in the workshops, they tend to be actually starting to lead and be part of the conversations as well as creating the craft and delivering level three is an operationalized maturity level. So there's actually levels in there, there's operations happening, you actually, these are the organizations which have the largest number of people in the design organization, you shouldn't be talking about 100 200 people, level four is where their experiment is. So they actually bring experimentation, business experimentation into design. And level five is design is part of defining the business starts. So they set the levels within envision. When you are going in at a level, usually a level two, there is usually no design, maturity level one, design maturity and a level two and you're doing a lot more, it means that you are sitting there and you're actually punching above your weight, you may be doing a senior role, because there's no one else there. When you're at a level three, and you're at a mid level, you're purely a mid level. Because it's that level, you actually have loads of different levels within the organization. There's so someone has defined because it's operationalized, some will have defined the skills, they will have defined what you the stick step and the the gates, you need to get to move to that next level. At a four as a mid level, you're probably not doing the experimentation. Or if you are someone else is leading the experimentation. And you may be learning about experimentation. And this is not running usability tests and prototypes, this is actually doing business experimentation, you may be working with someone else. So therefore you may be learning and observing where you may not be getting that expertise within three and two, you might actually be doing some of that feeling, feeling a bit out of your depth. And level five, this is where design maturity is really high in the businesses. And as a level as a mid level, you're not seeing that very much, you know that's happening, but you're not really seeing it, you could observe sometimes if you were lucky enough to have some sort of connection with the CDO. But you probably know that that's happening as opposed to actually observing and having it as a lived experience. So the one where I feel at the level that a lot a mid level gets pushed higher, is going to be at a level two. And it's that point where you sit there and go, Okay, I'm lucky I'm learning stacks, but I'm also seeing, probably I'm making loads of mistakes. But that gives you that impetus to actually move up more quickly.

Molly Lewis
Great. So, Mags, we want to know, how do you be seen as more senior? Or how do you position yourself as senior within your organization?

Mags Hanley
Sure. So I write this up in the book. So the book is career architecture, how to plan, organize, and strategize your design career, which you can buy on my website, which is Mags hanley.com. The positioning aspect I have in here is to do it as a three step. If we work from the bottom up, you want to be doing stuff being seen having done it to therefore be known. And therefore we work backwards. If you want to be known as a senior, you have to be seen doing or have comparable work by showing what you've done previously. So let's go through this as an example. So the example is if you want to be senior senior is seen as someone who can work with their peers, who can lead a work stream or a lead a piece of work, who can maybe coach someone more junior and can work and actually has a very good level of expertise of the design work they're doing. That means that if you are working as a midweight you need to be able to show that you've done this. Whether it is you go into your PD your into your personal development plan with your boss and say look, here's the examples of when I've on all of these things, it could be demonstrating this whenever you are working with your team. And showing that actually you are coaching other people, or you are working well with your peers, and your peers will, will demonstrate will have these conversations. To be seen, though, and this is where as an extrovert as one of the lone extroverts in design, most most designers are introverts. As a lone extrovert, I am quite willing to talk and to present and to write, and to have conversations, not necessarily I'm not having been as good, especially when, as I was a midweight, of presenting myself in this way. But I was quite willing to talk about stuff, you need to start to work on the ways that you are seeing within the organization or externally. So are you writing blogs? Have you put your hand up to do a lunch and learn about a new

technique? Are you teaching others? Whether it is you've noticed that within the design group, there is an area or lack of understanding of how to do a particular method? Or a lack of understanding about an audience? Are you actually showing what you're doing? Are you showing via behavior? Are you helping others? Are you communicating it, but to others also pay attention? And this is the bit where we are always a bit particular women? A little bit? Oh, my God, am I bragging? Am I showing off and you know, this is the tall poppy syndrome in Australia as well cut them off. I don't you are not bragging. You want to show yourself as competent, and, and have competency and capability in the work that you do? That then you can be known as because you can show and and demonstrate all of this. And if you haven't, if someone sits there and goes well, you know, the requirement is that you will have coach to people who sit there and go, Well, I haven't been the formal coach of someone. But I have juniors who come up to me and have conversations with me about this, or I meet up for with a coffee for coffee with someone once a week, or you know, actually I've organized for all of the people in my graduate. So say started as a graduate program. I've organized for us as a graduate group to meet up once a fortnight for us to share stories, that is showing people leadership. If you have those experiences and can demonstrate and have those conversations, you can then start to be seen and can demonstrate and position yourself as that higher level as that senior.

Vinita Israni
That's lovely Mags, I'm a little curious there. So there's studies that show that women are usually hired for roles having to really prove out that they deserve the role. Versus on the other side, men have a little bit more leeway as to essentially grow into the role to prove themselves once they've actually been in that role. So how do we approach that in our design, cultural context, and kind of larger societal context as well? Yeah.

Mags Hanley
So the studies are basically saying that men are hired on charisma and confidence, and women are not, and that women who show more confidence and charisma can actually be penalized and not given the role. And men who are beta men are also penalized and people who are non traditional or non binary or LGBTQ plus, we'll also be penalized. So what does that mean for us? This means, firstly, if I think from a societal point of view, we need to get rid of charisma and confidence is the way for us to demonstrate that someone is capable of piece of work. And some of the the aspects that I've been trying to focus on, which is how do you actually hire for capability? And competence? How do you show someone shows that they are competent at what they do? Not that they can talk? Well, and they are? I'm going to say their you know, hipster brew, dude, I'm really sorry. It's two dudes. But why hipster dudes get so many more jobs than anyone else to because they match a cultural view that others don't. So this is one of the bits from me from a diversity perspective, which is to sit there and say, Let's take away so here's an example from the art in Britain and then actually started, I think it was the RSA. So the Royal Shakespeare Company started doing blind auditions where you could not see the people, you could only hear them. And therefore, they were actually doing a lot more diversity hiring, which is why you would get all different types of people going in, and being hired for different types of role, which would normally have been a white male, in the royal in the Royal Shakespeare Company. So you sit there and say, How can we take away from this? So from the first perspective, what they've done for a lot of is actually from a resume point of view, is taking all indications of age, gender, and name out of it, and just doing an analysis based on the way that the resumes have been written, and the demonstrated and the way it's been demonstrated, which does mean it makes a lot of sense that you have to put a bit more time into how you actually write up what your what your competencies are. That then takes away from the first bit, which is, if my if your name is Margaret Hanley, you are more likely to go job, get an interview, that if it is a more ethnic, it's a different type of ethnically diverse name. Here, I'm it. I'm a kilt. Yeah, she's by my name, I look white. Was takeaway mags is names. Let's take away names. The next one is if you're doing hiring is to look at the competency in the capability. Have they been able to demonstrate it? If you're interviewing? How do you do competency based interviewing, as opposed to charisma based competence being give me an example of when you have done this, and the interview and knowing how to probe to

get and understand what the key competencies they are actually hiring for. So total IA example, one of the things that I used to always put your host hiring for an information architect was I would ask them to describe all the different types of semantic relationships within the controlled vocabulary. Now, if an Information Architect cannot describe all of those, they are not competent, they need to be able to know that if you are asking someone to actually just describe a bit about what they've done, you can get away with this if they from a charisma point of view. So we really need to be able to say at each different level, what is the competencies we need to be able to hire at? And then the capability has this been done? Well, and this is where your portfolio is in case studies, etc. And your and your references come in. So well, have they done this? Well, as opposed to, I like Tim Mennella, I want you to talk about did they do a good job. And this is where cultural fit. People hire like people, because they see themselves reflected in there. We need to get way past that. There's Mag's rant on, on hiring for diversity.

Vinita Israni
We very much appreciate and love your rant on hiring for diversity. So curious there around the hiring, for competency in particular, but as a mid level designer, what recommendations do you have if they're transitioning to a new role? I'd love to hear your thoughts. Maybe if they're transitioning internally versus to a completely different organization and business company, maybe even domain? And what are some recommendations that you would have for them?

Mags Hanley
Sure. Internally, the place that you have to deal with is Are are you seen as something already? So examples being when BBC in particular, I was seen as information architect, I had led a quite a large information architecture team. But what I wanted to be seen was I wanted to be seen as a leader, and everyone just saw me as an IA. And I really had to sit there and say, how do I show what my leadership skills are and how I'm seen there. And that's the difference, which is if you've been in someplace for a while and they've seen you as something different, you actually have to do a full persuasion job of no actually here are the other aspects. And this is where you've got to change hearts and minds from what you're seeing as at the moment into what you could be out and a lot of the time. We don't ask for it. We don't sit there and say this is what I want. And I want you to take the chance on me. Because XYZ I can demonstrate these things which you haven't normally seen me because you just sit there and go see the deliverables that I create? Because that's what you're asking for. So that's the main difference when you're moving internally, which is how do I be seen as something different? And you have to bring your evidence to that. externally? In some ways, it's an easy one, because I don't know who you are. Oh, well, though, I have to admit that most of us get our job next jobs from our network. But even our network doesn't know who we are most of the time. They'll say, Oh, thanks. It's good woman, maybe I'll get hurt, we'll help. So this is where you are really focusing on your portfolio and your case studies, comparable case studies, maybe. So someone else I was talking to we were talking about her. She's talking about me, I haven't done any leadership. I'm a midwife. I want to move into something senior. And I said, she mentioned he had worked in retail as a student. And I said, Ah, okay, so what do you do in retail, she said, Ah, I was the shift organizer, I used to organize all the rest of the people who were on the shift. And I was the team leader. And so I had to make sure that everyone was trained. And I would close up the shop at night, I'm just sitting there going, Oh, my God, look at all of the comparable skills you have, you've never done it within design. But you spent probably a year two years being a shift supervisor in retail, which is harder than anything that you have to do in design, because you have to deal with the clients day in the customers day in day out as well. And when you're a shift supervisor in retail, at in your early 20s. And I've been there, it's hard, especially when there is usually no senior members of Team on Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday and Sundays. It's just you, and maybe a whole bunch of other people who are your age between the ages of 15 and 22. And you are the most senior person and you have to make my memories I had three of us, we were 1819 and 20. And we used to call ourselves we would do executive decisions, we would make all of our executive decisions, we worked at my and no one else was there. There was no one else senior. So of course, we were making an executive decision, it was no one else. But we made it and we move forward. And if you think that that made doing those sort of dismissing those

sort of decisions at 19. And then going and saying, well, here, I am a midway designer at 25. But I've never managed anyone of course you have you did it in retail. So I want you to think about that same thing, which says you've got compared if you've been working in these sorts of organizations, whether it's hospitality, or retail, or you've been a care assistant, or any of those sort of service bits, you have those people leadership skills that you may never actually been using as part of your design work as a sole contributor.

Molly Lewis

That is so important to highlight. I've just wondered, so how do you you know, hold yourself accountable for your own progress as a designer? So especially at a mid level, when you know, there's still possibly a lot to learn? How do you hold yourself accountable for those different skills?

Mags Hanley

Okay, so I feel as if you need to understand, my greatest thing for someone who is mid weight is to not specialize too early. I want you to learn as much as you can about design and all of the different disciplines and sub disciplines within design as as much as you can. Because as you grow into your career, you may sit there and say actually, this really suits me or that. And if you go and specialize so too quickly, you actually won't learn about what's available to you. So that would be my first thing, which is firstly, try and get as much experience in the whole of the process as possible. Try and get really good at those aspects. Do as much training as possible, someone's willing to do so external training, but also then as much shadowing as possible. So sit down and talk to someone who is an expert and saying okay, can you teach me this? In one of the organizations that I worked with, we always made sure that when we had we're doing we put a group together, working as a consultant. We would bring together a number of different generalists and then bring in specialists to support the generalist team in spirit participants. cific areas, what you would do is then if you are really interested in this, you'd sit there and say, Look, can I sit down with you? And can you go through exactly what you're doing? And why you're doing it? And can I shadow you as you do this, and you teach me during this process. So use your seniors and use their other specialists at you know, to learn more about it. So your job is to learn as much as possible, get as good as you can, and use checklists, tick off stuff, I'm good at stuff I'm not do that axe aspect of going, Okay, I think I might want to continue as a generalist by need to do that I'm going to be broad, I'm looking at the specialism. Don't limit yourself to that because in particularly if you look at something like research, when people specialize in research, they need to be able to hand off to designers. They don't know enough about design, how do they know any of the recommendations they're making are correct. So learn about that. Make sure that you're not closing yourself off from opportunities to quickly someone I was talking to said, I review myself every couple of months, don't do that, you're just going to get yourself into a Pareto analysis paralysis. Give yourself whether it's once every three or once every six, and then do a review by yourself. And also then check in with your boss or your goal coach or whoever it is, and say this is where I am, you can't expect a boss to do this for you. The majority of us do not have bosses who are particularly good managers. And therefore they are not going to manage your career. You have to manage your own. And therefore you need to survey where you are and what you're doing. And then choose what you want to be able to do.

Molly Lewis

And so speaking of learning from others, and mentoring, essentially from those within your organization, and maybe outside What's your guess, advice to mentees or mentors?

Mags Hanley

Okay. My advice to Mentees and mentors for mentees, I want you to have an understanding of yourself and be able to turn and say this is the support that I'd like. These are the situations that I'm heading towards. This is the the things these are the things I'd like to address to a mentor. bring as much as you can to the relationship. But if you don't have the answers, turn to them and say I don't have the answer. I

can either go and find it for you. Or we can find someone else within my network who can provide you with this area of expertise. You don't have to be all things to all people.

Vinita Israni
I think those are some great words, words of wise wisdom to end on. Thank you so much for having us mags and talking to us.

Mags Hanley
Thank you for inviting me. It's been such an honor to have this conversation with you.

Sam Hancock
That concludes our latest episode for the Sydney IxDA pod. If you want to learn more about IxDA Sydney's events and mentorship programs, please feel free to visit IxDAsydney.org. Cheers. See you next time!

Transcribed by https://otter.ai