



IxDA Sydney Mentoring Program Podcast

07 - Dear Vinita

Audio Transcript

Vinita Israni

Psychology has always been there. It's just it's very subtle and it's under the surface but it actually baselines everything that we do.

Sam Hancock

Welcome to the IxDA MP Pod where we'll be answering our fan mail, and many questions from the farm out.

Vinita Israni

I will be speaking in third person the entire time. So just be ready.

Molly Lewis

And I will be asking the hard questions on your behalf.

Vinita Israni

So shall we get started? I think we're gonna be reading out a couple of our specific fan mail pieces and then tackling the questions together.

Sam Hancock

Like our plan, but one thing to properly kick us off is a jingle which I prepared early on. When really okay, her name is her name is her name is Vinita Israni. Her name is her name is her name is Vinita Israni. In these sessions, we need to answer all the hard questions. So he best prepared for your design career putting in place strategies to last you throughout the year. Her name is her name is her name is Vinita Israni.

Molly Lewis

I'm saying no, I'm not doing this. And yeah, it was great. That was amazing.

Vinita Israni

To hear. The first one deserves the jingle. We're sorry for the rest of the people that come after they're just gonna get a simple deer.

Sam Hancock

Yeah. Okay. Dear, Vinita, I'm loving the podcast. I've met with my mentor a few times. But I'm struggling with the cadence of our meetings. How do I keep the relationship fresh so they're both accountable for our actions. Yours Truly cadence crisis Chris.

Vinita Israni

I like his alliteration there?

Sam Hancock

Just Just so you know, everyone we've kept all of the emails anonymised, anonymised.

Vinita Israni

and me, anonymized, normalise, so the question was around keeping the relationship fresh and accountable. One of the things I've seen that work really well is having some kind of either Google Doc, or I'm a huge fan of notion, a doc, where you actually basically record meeting minutes. And I know that sounds silly, and maybe a little too corporate. And I know a lot of the mentoring is being done in a out for professional context, but outside of work time, but I think this really helps to keep people accountable, because you could have little sections like next steps, and setting up the cadence, and it will help you at least reflect on what has happened. So even if three years from now, you look back on that Doc, you can say, Oh, we actually talked about this in the session. And these were our next steps. So that's what I would recommend. And I've seen work well, what about you, Molly?

Molly Lewis

Yeah, I think that's a really great point, I would also recommend maybe just, you know, selecting a day and a time and, you know, try stick to that. But if it changes, just keep communication open, whether that's a Slack channel, or email or text and just, you know, reminding ourselves that it's a two way relationship and things do pop up and happen, but at least, you know, establish a day or a time that works best. And then during that week, you can make changes if required.

Vinita Israni

So one of the problems I've noticed with cadence, and this is digging a little bit deeper, is sometimes I realised that a mentor may step up to be a mentor, but it's doing it possibly just to say that they are so so my question back to you guys is, you know, how do you really know if you're ready to step up and be a mentor? And part of that is a maybe a time commitment? A brainpower, commitment, but what are your thoughts there?

Molly Lewis

I think it's always good to take on a new challenge and push yourself further. But I think to be honest, if you're already finding your current workload, and your organisation, you know, a bit of a stretch and you're already pushed for time, then I would actually suggest, you know, maybe it's not the right time right now to step up and be a mentor, but maybe think about it as a future opportunity when you maybe have less on your plate. But in saying that it's up to you and the mentee, how much time you want to put into it. And I think if you set those boundaries for yourself, then that will help going into it as well. Like you know, can only it could just be 30 minutes every fortnight if that's what you and your mentee agree on. But just knowing before you go into the conversation, what your limits are for timing,

Sam Hancock

I'd actually push back on that and say, Yeah, you may work out, you might not have the time on your hands to be the mentor that you want to be. But the mentor that the mentee may need, may only need like, some ad hoc advice or sessions every three to four weeks. So having that conversation with the, with the men to say, look like I felt that I did have this amount of time, but some things come up, everything always comes. Something always comes up every so often. And just being clear to set those kind of rails to say, Look, I'm sorry. But are we able to just re jig the way that we currently do things?

Vinita Israni

And I think that talks to a little bit of mentoring styles, like mentoring and mentoring styles, right? We've noticed that there's these two patterns, one that's a bit more ad hoc, one that's a bit more structured. And I think both do emphasise the point that it's a two way relationship, right. So there's both giving and receiving on both ends. And having that communication to really talk through how you want it to go is really important. And so that kind of leads me to another follow up question, which is, what do you do when someone just says, I don't know? Because there are things that we all don't know. And if a mentor, just as an example, says that to you? How do you start to figure out an answer or as a mentee, if you don't know, how do you also start to figure

Sam Hancock

out one, I'd say if a mentee says they don't know maybe it's opportunity for that mentor to dig into why. And probe, we've set some questions as to Okay. Like, say, for example, they're looking at getting into UX, just pure UX research. And they, they don't know why they want to go deeper into into something, then it's like, okay, you, you're gonna have to ask further questions.

Molly Lewis

I think for the flip side, if you're a mentor, and you don't have the answer, that's okay. Because I think a lot of people may be intimidated to sign themselves up as a mentor, because they think they need to know everything. But there's other resources you can lean on and just be transparent. Really, I don't know if the answer to that. But next time we catch up, I'll find that out for you or suggest other places that have been taken, potentially find that answer. Google.

Sam Hancock

Yeah, so say, anecdote from my current mentee relationship, mentees looking at going into like a UX writing role. I don't have bad experience within UX writing, I'd say my school teachers, and my parents, my partner, say, I'm a terrible writer, I probably have borderline dyslexia. So to be advising and providing mentorship around someone who wants to be a UX writer probably isn't the best, the best match. But I feel that I have enough knowledge on the subject to point them in the right direction, looking at and showcasing Okay, these are some good portfolios that, that our UX writers, and this is how they break down their work. This is how they work with UX UI designers. This is examples of books such as say, like everybody writes, is a really great book resource, which goes into like the intricacies of UX writing. So So providing those types of resources and just having a bit of a dig to work out. Okay, what what is good enough to hold, hold yourself to a conversation and back and back what you already know about the industry as a whole can provide a good kind of direction.

Molly Lewis

All right, up next, Dear Vinita, I have found that I extend mentoring as a great chance to have experience having a mentee to practice mentoring skills that isn't available in my organisation. Are there any other mentoring programmes that you recommend? Sincerely curious, Charlie?

Sam Hancock

Not curious, George. That's curious. Curious Charlie. much other than the kind of obvious of ADP list. So if you're looking for being a mentor, I think you can, you can sign up. And that application process I think is a quick kind of 15-20 minute form that you fill out, just give us a bit of information about yourself. And then they review it in in a few weeks and then come back to see whether you can actually go on to the platform. You can just book in like half an hour, mentor, catch ups with with people or mentees can also do the same as so yeah. If you're looking at providing more mentor and sharing your experiences with Mentees, then yeah, I suggest ADP list. I think that's a great resource and a great tool to use. And anyone have over say, a couple of years experience should be looking at going on to ADP list,

Vinita Israni

a couple that I researched while we were setting up the mentoring programme. And these I don't personally have experience with these are just ones that I've researched. And we've kind of pulled ideas from. So the first is mentoring club. There's also Design Lab, mentor, cruise, recreate and UX pa also has its own mentoring programme. I have also read down designers ship by Michael Wong, who will be featured on one of our episodes, you can hear a bit more. But I think he actually does a lot of great like video mentoring through YouTube, which is pretty awesome. And the other thing I was going to add in was, during COVID, a lot of design leaders actually marketed their open design office hours where you could just sign up for a one off time and have a chat with them. And that was their way of coming back to



the community, you know, at a rough time, and some of them are still doing it. So that's actually how I had a chat with him yo, who's on one of our other podcasts. And I would highly recommend that because those are I know those are not as consistent. But a good way to just talk to someone random which ADP list I think does just as well.

Sam Hancock

Love to say that you're plugging out previous guests. Hey, Molly, any comments on that?

Molly Lewis

No, I think you guys have done a great job of answering that. So let's move on to the next one.

Vinita Israni

So our third one says Dear ME, which is dear bonita, I am really enjoying the mentoring experience. But just wondering, how do we best end the mentor mentee relationship? Can we continue catching up? Kind regards about to be broken up with Abby? Molly, what are your thoughts here?

Molly Lewis

I think definitely keep catching up. If that's what both agree to, you know, again, it's a two way relationship. So just maybe have a chat with your mentee or mentor and see, you know what their thoughts are, they can go away and think about it come back. And if that's an option to continue the relationship then I would say differently. And it doesn't have to be maybe the same cadence, but even maybe once a month or something like that if you just want to keep in contact and that works well. For me and my mentee last time, I IxDA programme, so yeah, definitely to catching up. Otherwise, if you do want to end. I'm actually not too sure when our last week is but maybe just sending him an update saying, you know, the wrap up on the experience and maybe just keep in contact?

Vinita Israni

Yeah, I think the last week of our current programme is the last week of May. We are thinking about doing more sessions this year. We've previously done group mentoring, as well as one one on one mentoring. And for our first session this year, we decided to focus on one on one mentoring but keep your eyes and ears open for another opportunity probably later this year. So your mentoring experience doesn't have to end.

Sam Hancock

This one is a short one. Dear Vinita, how do you learn more about psychology within UX and how do you implement it? Here here, psychologies site. Why don't you give me this one. I can't say those types of words. Psychologically stun, Sally. There we go. Vinita you you have background in psychology, right?

Vinita Israni

I do.

Sam Hancock

So I think you're the best person to answer this. but it's it's a hard question.

Vinita Israni

Um, so I actually have a bachelor's degree in psychology and art, which at the time that I got it, I had no idea how to use, which was great. I thought I'd be a starving artist. Being able to do psychoanalysis and all the people that gave me money while they walked over me on the street. Psychology as applied to UX in particular, I think there's a lot of good resources at the moment. So there's one site I follow called cog load. And they actually take a lot of these specifically these cognitive, what they call nuggets, and show how they're acquired. Another one that I've seen as kind of this, it's not necessarily an emerging field, but

has come around quite a bit is change management, because that's actually taking those principles and applying them how you would like implement something. So for example, we have an app. And yep, it's great that there's, you know, principles that you can only keep seven things in your short term memory. So you would never put more than a list of seven things. But change management is then taking that and looking at how is that actually rolled out to people, and what sticks. And that's where you start to grow the disciplines of like marketing and advertising. And that's why design is pretty awesome in terms of how it relates to other fields, because it's quite open ended, right? So you can also have mentors in completely different areas. And that actually helps you more about how psychology and UX come together quite closely. Organisational and social psych are probably the two most sought after talked about parts of psychology. But there is more out there. And I would recommend those as starting points.

Molly Lewis

Are there any books that you recommend for needed to get started with?

Vinita Israni

I think a lot of psychology is understanding how people break things down and how they think. And I know that sounds super cheesy, but I would actually pick up like a Psych 101 book and read through it, because I think there'll be things that spark your interest in there that you can then follow up on. And I'm talking about literally college level, uni level, like Psych 101 classes and picking up a textbook and they're not that thick, I promise, there's actually quite simple and they make it quite digestible. Because Psych 101 ends up being the basis for a lot of other programmes and courses and stuff and certificates. So I would actually recommend that that quite a bit. Because then you can figure out what you want to focus on. If you already have your design lens on, then you're probably looking at psychology as a way to grow certain parts of your skills rather than trying to be a clinical psychologist, which at some point was something that I wanted to do.

Sam Hancock

So you've kind of gone through the theory there, how do I start implementing it? Is it that setting yourself a goal to say I want to be better at into end users to gain more empathy and ask better questions? Or is it just being implementing it across everything that you do in design?

Vinita Israni

Yeah, I think that's it's a hard question to answer because I don't think it's a one to one, like, you can't just be like, Okay, I'm going to implement three principles tomorrow. And by the end of the month, I will have implemented five principles. It, it doesn't necessarily work like that psychology, the study of the mind is literally it's much more subtle, and you'll see it kind of through the work that you produce over time. It's not a one to one. So in terms of implementation, I think what is helpful is holding yourself to a part of the process where you're looking at psych research and thinking about it when you're in the research phase of designing something, I think that's really important. So you almost like carve out some time and you say, okay, yes, I'm doing user research, but I also want to do psych research to understand how it could get incorporated in my design. I think that would be really important. I would say find people around you that are enthusiastic about psychology and like have maybe some background in it so that they're holding you accountable in your designs, and they kind of have that hat on when they're maybe doing a design critique with you. And I would also say, I work in a field where my I work is at the end of the day reviewed by an actual human factors committee to understand whether they, whether something I design for a pilot, as an example, is able to be released, because they, in some ways are a governance committee. So I think that would be really interesting from a design perspective, like, are there is there as like kind of a psychology governance within your organisation that could take on that role potentially before something is shipped or rolled out? So So things to consider, I think, it's psychology has always been there. It's just it's very subtle, and it's under the surface, but it actually baselines everything that we do. Whether that's change management, whether that's like, product design, you know, and even down to like industrial

design and things like that, right. So it's, it's there, I think, I like this question a lot. It's very difficult, but you're kind of trying to, you're trying to put a pin in like, a small fruit fly. That's the fruit flies is all the psychology around like us extremely ripe fruit. And you know, it's all there. And it's like, clearly working because there's fruit flies, but you're trying to actually pin that down. So it is difficult, but it's all there.

Sam Hancock

So it's not the doing it's a way of thinking.

Vinita Israni

I would say more so. But there are more ways of doing as well. I have had the chance to work with a couple of like, PhDs that are actually psych PhDs, but they do data analysis. And that's their lens, to figuring out how to put psych into UX. So I think everyone has kind of a different tool, set and mindset. And so it's how you want to put it into your process. And that concludes our dear Vinita episode. Sam. No jingles allowed at the end?

Sam Hancock

Can't Molly Sing us out or something?

Molly Lewis

Oh, no, I'm tone deaf. I can't I can't seem to say

Sam Hancock

you think I'm tone deaf?

Molly Lewis

No, I'll leave. I'll leave the singing to you.

Sam Hancock

But they say they need to we've had feedback that you have a very, very nice boy so he could do ASMR so maybe you could see yourself instead

Vinita Israni

of singing. I sang in the shower when I was in grade seven for half an hour and I came out and my mom said what was that incessant noise I have not seen in public since.

Sam Hancock

Well, now's your chance to

Vinita Israni

redeem myself.

Sam Hancock

Yeah.

Vinita Israni

I'm just gonna end with the fact that this concludes our latest episode of the AI IxDA Sydney MP pod. If you want to learn more about IxDA Sydney's events and mentoring programmes please visit IxDAsydney.org/mentoring.



Molly Lewis

And if there are any questions that you would love to have answered in the future, please continue to send them in to us and we'll try our best to get back to you.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>