



## IxDA Sydney Podcast

S02 E01 - Felix Lee

Audio Transcript

**Felix:** [00:00:00] Do you really think that you're the center of their universe? Because I think a lot of designers and people building products tend to think that when we design, so. Somehow the users just gravitate around our product.

**Vinita:** Hello and welcome to the IxDA Sydney Podcast, a show where we can't guarantee answers, just better questions. This season we're exploring all parts of the zeitgeist of design from Web three and NFTs to data science and sustain. I'm Vinita Israni, and in this episode, Jess and Sam are chatting with Felix Lee, the co-founder and CEO of ADP List started in 2021.

ADP List is the world's largest mentorship platform for people in the tech industry. Since then, Felix has overseen ADP list growth to become a community of over 10,000 mentors who have mentored over 10 million minutes across over 140 countries [00:01:00] and regions. Felix has embedded his bold creative roots in ADP lists, culture, product, and community.

He's been featured on Forbes. Straight time tech in Asia and Bloomberg. Their conversation dives into a myriad of paths from Felix's journey in creating ADP list and using the right tool at the right time to the hustle spirit that has continually fueled him to how he's found the market fit and is growing the platform.

We also hear Felix's perspective on the power of ADP list in breaking socioeconomic and educational barriers, as well as how the team is working on upholding a code of ethics to sustain quality and sincerity of both mentors and mentees. Let's dive right in. Hello Felix. Incredible to have you with us and appreciate that you've joined us so early in the morning from Singapore.

**Sam:** How are you today?

**Felix:** Thank you so much for having me. It's Friday morning. But I am, I'm energized. I'm, I'm [00:02:00] excited to be here.

**Sam:** Awesome. Good stuff. I feel that for the most, if not. Every UX designer in this space has heard of ADP List and yourself in some regards. So I'd like to start by exploring what you were doing before ADP List and whether that had any influence on the creation of such a fantastic community.

**Felix:** Yeah, of course. Thank you so much for that, Sam. Before ADP is, I was actually a full-time design lead the first design hire at Go Trade which is which is really like the Robin Hood of Southeast Asia that helps people to trade US stocks out of Indonesia. It was a pretty exciting journey.

I had, I had about a year and a half experience there. But before that, you know, I, I had started my first company back when I was in school and had I had sold my first company. By the time I was in my final year of school. So that's back in 2018, you know, pretty interesting journey back then.

It was a travel tech company, so I've [00:03:00] always been a entrepreneur and a designer as well. And then I, when I saw that company, actually saw it to a Indonesian family in, in Jakarta. So they, they run a bigger travel company as well. So I saw it to them. I saw the software to them and. I, I moved to Jakarta for like, I would say like for one year, I think. Yeah, so it's about one year and I stayed there as the, almost like the head of product and design. You know, just overseeing the processes and you know the, the, the design work as well/ it gave me the most exposure, I think, to not just to the country, but I think to the, to design in itself.

Day after which I enlisted into the military and then I spent two years in the Army and then came out. I went to trade. Obviously Then after that I started a d p list quite recently, about a, a year and a half ago.

**Sam:** Awesome. So ADP list came out of COVID initially as your v MVP was essentially just a list of great, great designers were in the spreadsheet. Is that correct?

**Felix:** [00:04:00] Yes. It was a spreadsheet. Yeah. When we started the Excel spreadsheet, you know, it was, it was pretty random to be honest, because for me, I was still working at Gold Trade and for James, you know, we still hadn't met each other yet. Right. So when, when the Excel spreadsheet happened, James and I were still pretty much strangers.

We don't know each other to be honest. So what happened was that you. I wanted to just do something during the pandemic, right? I mean, I was like, you know, I had my full-time job, but I just needed to do something that I think would help people around me. Just a lot of people were getting laid off and just a lot of things were happening back then.

It's very similar to the situation that we have right now, but just that people were less familiar with it because it. Super sudden and people just getting laid off. So right now, the layoff market, you see people are kind of a little bit burned out, like, you know, about helping or about getting help as well.

It's a little bit of all that combined and it's a holiday season, so you don't see that much. But back then it was like a sudden hit of [00:05:00] things. Right. You know, for me, I've always, I've always wanted to help people. I think I've always wanted to just, you know, Support people as well. And so I was finding ways to be able to, I think, just support people during the pandemic.

I thought of many different ways, right? I, I thought of ways like, you know, maybe contact tracing or whatnot. But I didn't have the, the technical excuse to make it happen, right? I, I, I, I didn't have enough of the technical skews, so eventually I decided to help the people who were laid off and you know, just helping them first of all find jobs, but also connect them with someone who is able to help them, which, Mentors in this case, able to help them, give them a, you know, portfolio review or a resume review or so on and so forth during this time.

So when I decided that, you know, spreadsheet. Especially would be the way to go. Just because, you know, it is the easiest way that I think a, a designer could do something without like really going into the nitty gritty, but also it was the fastest way. Right? And so I decided to, to go with that method.

It worked out pretty well. [00:06:00] in that sense. You know, people started to take notice of it. It wanted to be a part of it just because it was more than a spreadsheet, you know, it was. I think the way that I would describe discretion is that, you know, it had an essence to it, which is, you know, people knew that it was, it was done to support them.

You know, there was a deeper meaning behind it. And so, you know, people started to join, you know, on both sides. Whether it be I needed help or I want to help you, right? People just started to, to, to gravitate towards it, you know? And it started off with a few friends of ours and Steven Gates came in, envision came in with the first sponsorship.

And then more people started to come in as well. And that was how it got this spread. And then the, in 2021, February, I remember Jims and I, we sort of left our jobs and then started to this full-time. And that was when, you know, we decided to build a real website for it and stuff like that. So, so that's really the history of it, that it's been pretty exciting and interesting.

**Sam:** That's amazing. And I love how you knew what tool to use for [00:07:00] that particular purpose at the time. And I guess that also shows as a designer that you also have knowledge for business knowledge. So how did you, how did you develop that? Did that just come through time and the experiences of what? Of your side hustles? Or did you actually use that through education?

**Felix:** Yeah, I think, you know when we look at the experience as as a business person, I think a lot of it came from, you know, my first startup that, that obviously I had, I had sold back when I was in school. They gave me a lot of exposure.

I must say, you know, I think. Not a lot of designers had probably been in that position before to, you know, make decisions you know, sign contracts, you know, and be a part of everything. And so I think it's a pretty fortunate and humbling position to be in. And there's just learned from there.

And also I think growing up I've just been very curious about. You know, business from people around me. So, you know, I tend to read a lot of books around those things as well. Just how people navigate those. But no, journey is perfect, [00:08:00] right? I, I mean, I made my fascia of my mistakes as well.

That's exactly how I learned, I think through a lot of trials and tabulations and, and, and errors and just. Come out from there.

**Jessica:** I'm curious to hear a little bit more, I guess, that kind of hustle spirit that you have. Felix, and I'm sure you get asked this a lot, and I'd love to hear a little bit kind of, I guess, where it's rooted from and maybe just tracing back to kind of how you grew up. I think that'd be really, yeah. Really curious to learn more about that.

**Felix:** Yeah. You know, I, I grew up in an environment where, you know, my mom's a teacher and you know, my, my dad's He's, he's like a, he's like a, he, he manages his own bakery here in Singapore. And so, you know, growing up I would, I would be out at the bakery as a young kid a lot almost every other day.

I would be at a bakery and I would obviously either be spending a lot of time there and I will be, you know, helping to sell some. Pastries and breads and stuff like that. I think that [00:09:00] that had, you know, really helped me and supported me. My mentality, I think of this hustle spirit since I was young.

I was never afraid of hard work. I think hard work is a big part of my life and I think it, it is. It continues to be, it continues to be, I think a, a very pivotal, I think, attribute for me. You know? And so, you know, just growing up I was, I was, I was sort of like taught that I was shown by my father, you know, waking out super early in the morning, you know, coming home very late, you know, it's his own business, right?

And so, you know, there's a lot of that element, right? And also my grandfather was involved and so, you know you, you get to. every side of that. And I think there is a beauty, right? In, in, in growing up in a family like that where people you are with every day, it's almost like a hustler. And so you know, I think that work ethic itself really inspired me a lot, maybe unconsciously.

I mean, I, I never sort of debit and be like, oh, I wanna do this all day kind of thing. I think it, it definitely has a, has a big impact on that. That's one for [00:10:00] sure. The second one, I think fundamentally, I think I'm always, I've always been a very curious person by nature. You know, I remember at age of 16 years old, you know, we were visiting Grab or Scott Grab Taxi.

So we, so my school organized a company visit to grab hq and they were Calli back then. So they were very, very small. They were still like a. They were not like this unicorn that we have today here in Singapore. And so I visited the office and you know, one of the things that I can remember was that, you know, the, the general manager Jerry at the time, and he hosted us in the grad office and it was pretty exciting.

A big 16 year old kid, you know, see. All these things for the first time, the moment that, you know, I sort of like knew that hey, Jerry was a smart guy. I remember, you know, at that age, I just went up to him and said, you know, before everyone went up the school bus going home. And, and, and I, I, I just said, Hey Jerry, I think you are pretty smart.

You know? Can I have your name cut? Can I just stay in touch with you? . And I remember calling him like, you know, two weeks in later and just asking him for [00:11:00] coffee, you know, and just learning from him. And I think, you know, it is, it is these attributes that I think maybe it's just innate in someone who is just curious.

I mean, you can learn that from anywhere to be honest. And so you just, such behavior since I was like, you know, very, very young, I would question a lot of things. That I think get me very much self, you know, propelling in towards a lot of things. And, and that's just one example, right? I mean, you know, I remember funnily enough at age of 15, and this was

like, you know, this is probably one of the best time of my life when I was having a lot of fun with my friends.

I was starting quantum physics. I remember I was starting quantum physics and I was literally going to classroom and just challenging my teacher on everything physics related. Oh, it's gravity, a pool. And I was like, oh, it's not a pool. It's a push, right. In a relative term of physics. And so it is, there's just a lot of moments in, in just growing up.

I think, obviously, besides the hard work part, I think curiosity has played a very big part in my life. And I just, and I think these are, [00:12:00] these two things are probably the biggest part. You know just me growing up and just me being as a person right now

**Jessica:** That is so amazing. I'm gonna diverge a little bit, but are your parents still running this bakery? Should we visit this in Singapore?

**Felix:** Yes. You should. You should. When you come, you know, let me know and you know, I'll, definitely be hosting anyone here if you wanna go. Yes. They're still running it.

**Jessica:** Yeah. Awesome. I guess from, you know, having that curiosity and the hustle spirit and leading on to kind of I think what we talked about with, you know, how you started a d p list how you started this in Singapore as well, like what is the design scene like, and how has been, how has it evolved and how have you contributed to that?

**Felix:** Yeah. You know, I think this is a very interesting question. I don't think anyone has ever asked me that, to be honest. I am not you know, like familiar with the design scene in Singapore as a disclaimer. I mean, I'm not close with anyone there in that sense, but I could tell you that, you know, just not being involved in that has allowed me to, I think, see things from a very different perspective.

I think, you know, just probably the way [00:13:00] that I was describe Singapore's design scene is that it is like, pretty much like an. Club where anyone can walk in, but it's also very like clique-ish. You know, you have many different things going on and there's no one clear leader of the club. Right. And so, you know, that's, that's the way that I'll describe it.

And probably many communities around, you know, I've been as well. So I think I was never a part of it, you know, just even as a founder, I'm, I'm not, I don't think that, you know, I know a lot of founders in the startup ecosystem as. I just kind of run my things day to day and you know, the way that I probably have contributed to this is, you know, I think first of all, partnerships is a big thing that Ad Plus does.

So I think that's something that we continue to want to. You know, support and just, you know, have fun with everyone. I think that's, that's just the main point, you know like I always tell a team, just have fun with these things, right? And so that's something that I think we, we've done a lot with local communities, and I'm very, very excited about all of these things.

I think the second one, I would say is that, You know, just [00:14:00] being into a little bit more into these, these different communities that are set up and understanding, you know,

how we can help bring, I would say, international exposure to it. I think that's something that, you know, I, I hope to do more of you know, and I'm pretty excited, you know, because I've been in like, you know, a few countries this year and I've been able to like, be fortunate enough to meet a lot of people like yourself, Jess.

So I, I think this is something that we wanna do more of in the next year and in and in the coming years for sure. I think it's, there is so much more valuable experience than, you know, bringing these people together. I think it's fun, but it's also very valuable.

**Sam:** I guess like one area which is huge for ADP list is of course mentoring. Why is mentoring so important and how has it affected you and your career trajectory?

**Felix:** Mentorship is a, in any way, like a. Like an accelerant for anyone's career? You know, I think the way that, you know, I've seen my own career and, and many people's [00:15:00] career grow. Mentorship has always been a very big part of that growth for someone, right.

It's a way for you to go on the right path without, you know making so much of the. Mistakes that someone else has made, or, you know, just knowing that, you know, certain things are gonna come and you just have to learn from it kind of thing. But you have someone who's able to guide you through that.

And I think, you know, we don't, we don't get enough of that in the world today that we live in. And, and, and why I would say mentorship is so important. This, right. , I'll give you an analogy later which I find really beautiful when, when, when, when I share it with the team. But I think that, you know, a lot of people they don't get the right access, you know, growing up.

I think as much as we like to think that it is, even in Singapore, I couldn't think so I think that because especially design and, and, and certain expertise is not much talked about in school, you know, you kind of just let it slip away, right? And so a lot of people don't get the right access to the network.

They can help them, right? They can help them understand design, they can help them understand product management. They can [00:16:00] help them understand engineering software development. And the reason why I say that is because it's the society. It's almost like Fulfilling prophecy, right? I mean, you know, you have, you have people who are born in the middle or lower class, family, families, and then they have the upper income families as well.

And obviously, you know, if you don't come from a, you know, the top 10% or like the upper income family, your opportunities significantly differs. And then it's lower, lower than anyone in the upper class family. And, and I've seen that, for example, you know, grow. . I mean, I belong to more of like a meet lower class family.

And so I've seen that growing up and, and you would, you would often notice like a lot of people maybe in like Harvard or Stanford just Ivy League around the world and especially in international school as well maybe here in Singapore, but maybe around the world you would notice that a lot of them comes from our privileged family.

I think that's just the. It's made up of, and then you see them hanging out in the same group. And then obviously, you know, like people who go to Ivy Leagues are, you know, like, [00:17:00] you know, they, they come from more well to do family and there is a reason for that. Right. It's, it's basically education inequality and you know, and, and, and obviously it's not that we can't solve that.

I think it's a tough problem to solve in the world. . But I also think that, you know, like just growing up, because these people are, these kids are born in the same group, right? Whether it be you're the lower or middle class family, or you're in the upper class family, you just grow up. Knowing that this is what you have.

Right. And so the people who have more resources obviously just grew up thinking that that's just the way that low is. And then for the middle and lower class family, you know, they just hang out in the place that they know, you know, they don't know that there's a bigger world out there. They, they might not know that there's design.

They might not know that this product management, or they might know about it a few years later, right. Than anyone else. And so, and, and by then, you know, Every kid would already have got another job or something. For me, my role is to be able to help someone elevate their access is to elevate their access to such opportunities to learn [00:18:00] and, and, and, and to be mentored, right?

But also to allow us, you know, this generation or even to, to, you know, mentor artists as well. The way that I would describe ADP List is this, right? And this is the analogy that, that often share people, which is this, I think quote this, right? Imagine it's a cold, you know, stormy night you know, just super dark as well.

Or even if it's just really early in the morning, 5:00 AM 4:00 AM where you don't feel like running, right? You don't feel like running. , and I'm not sure how many people run in this room. I'm sure all of us do a few times a week. And so, you know, like imagine just running in such a environment right in the morning and you're just so tired and no one wants to run.

And it's rainy at off. You know, ADP List is like the person that is standing at the lamp, you know, the street lamp and cheering you on at that timing. You know, ADP's not just for people who, who wants to win, but I think it's for people who wants to try and that's exactly what we represent as a community and [00:19:00] as a brand.

So I think, and that's why it's so important to work.

**Sam:** Hundred percent. And I feel I've gained so much from your platform and the community, some lifelong friends, some really, really valuable mentors and mentees insights, so I'm really, really thankful for that. In our last series, we covered quite a bit of ground within the mentoring space and just kind of keen to dig a little bit deeper around the concept of Askhole Syndrome.

I'm not sure where, whether you've actually heard of, of, of that before. So ask Askhole Syndrome is the concept of a mentee continually asking the same questions and. Taking any of the advice given by the mentor, is there anything around that, that you are looking to try

and kind of decipher and, and, and move across from, from a ADP list perspective around like the [00:20:00] quality of some of the mentor sessions and, and how you can work around building out a better mentor mentee session?

**Felix:** Yeah, for sure. You know, I think there's a few things that, you know, there's, there is a few checks and balances that, that we put. ADP list, I think this is probably not talked enough you know, talked enough on any of our channels or even my, my own personal channel which is first of all to be a mentor on ADP list.

That's a vetting process, and I'm sure you know, like all of you who are mentors know about it. There is an approval and stuff like that. So a lot of people, they, they, they actually don't get approved. I will tell that based on statistics 30% of people get approved. 70% of people don't. And, and, and and this is the first layer of ensuring quality, I think, you know We couldn't have been at 20,000 or even more you know, mentors today, but we're at about 11,000.

And so you know, like the reason for that is because, you know, we have been very ruthless in terms of when it comes to like, [00:21:00] Hey, is does this person display the right attribute? At least, you know, based on the resume mean, Their portfolio websites and also they are LinkedIn that that is sent it, right?

So we have a sort of like a small team who goes in and check all these profiles. And we look for all these attributes, right? There is a whole list of things, but you know, it's, it's what we call the mentor criteria. So there is a whole list of attributes that we look for and, and, and we vet that.

So that's like the first way that we wanna ensure a quality of people. The second thing is that, you know, After every session on ADP list, there is actually a way for someone to you know, leave sort of like not just a review, right? But also immediately after the call, if we just introduced this like a few months ago where you could leave like an MPS score, right?

It's like an net promoter score. So it's like, hey right after this session, right? Immediately, the, the, the next screen that, that, that you will see would be how would you rate this session? Right? Is it like a, like a one outta 10 kind of thing, or is it like a, you know, is it amazing or is it not that good?

And why? Right. If this is [00:22:00] amazing, why you know, is it because the person was very communicative, was very much prepared and so on and, and, and you know, like or, or, or whatnot. So basically when, when we look at that, you know, When we introduce this mechanism you know, it is a way for us to actually understand who was just consistently doing amazing job.

And I think we wanna reward people who has amazing job. So next week we're actually gonna announce the 80 plus hundred awards, which is, you know, the, the. 80 plus top hundred of the year in 2022. But also it allows us to recognize if there's any negative like negative behavior, right? Or if there's any bad actors, right?

For example a mentor might not be giving the right advice or might be too junior or might be, you know, might be abusive or whatever, right? I mean, we have not had that but you know, I'm just hoping not to go there to others, but you know, there. A lot of things that this all this, you know, checks, you know, approval all these NPSs ratings and whatnot helps us to actually identify if actually someone is, you [00:23:00] know, actually sincere on, on, on being, being on, on, on the platform and in and in the community.

Right. We don't mind like a man boss spending say 15 minutes each week or even just 30 minutes or whatnot. Right? We advocate a lot for flexibility. But the one thing that, that we want and hope for, I, I think is the quality, but also the sincerity of, of everyone on the platform, on both sides, right?

The mentor and the mentees as well. In this case. So this is what we're currently doing. We're gonna do a lot more but those are still things in the works. But I think quality remains a very, very important part of adp.

**Jessica:** Yeah, for sure. I think it's also about, you know, building that trust over time, right? Like, I think as a mentee who's booking in those sessions, being able to see that there are these people who might have shared the same background with me getting those reviews. I think that's, you know, super important. I guess just, yeah, like I said, building that trust. . But I, I am curious though, like I know you mentioned, hopefully you won't have to go there, but you know, if there are, I guess at some unfortunate situations where certain [00:24:00] conversations just didn't quite pan out the way it did or, you know, maybe it was just you know, some users, for lack of better word, abuse this platform.

And I guess kind of an extension of the Askhole syndrome, like what are some other things I guess to kind of manage each person's ethics and respect for this?

**Felix:** Yeah, for sure. You know, I think we, we, so one of the things that, that we have done is to build a trust and safety team and trust and safety team.

Meaning that, you know these people actually every week they go and review, you know, if there's any reports, any incidents that they have to check on and so on and so forth. So, They do a very stringent job, to be honest. And we all, we usually start off with, you know, the reviews that are given the data points that has been given as well, you know but also things that has been reported, right?

If it's not reported, obviously, you know you know, may maybe a user is not too much affected by it or whatnot, so we don't really, , you know, cash, all those things. Right. And I think that this has been a big part of ADP list. I think it's been a, it's been a quiet [00:25:00] operation, I would say, but it's been something that we have been putting in a lot of effort.

For example, even like the most recent one, like don't show, right? So people like mentees that. You know, obviously for mentors we have a different policy, right? But just for the sake of for, for quarter, mentees wise, we would give everyone, like, I believe it was like, it's like three, three chances.

So if you have booked certain meetings and if you had gotten past three times not showing up and reported by someone you would. Permanently be suspended on the platform. We, we don't need you as a member. We don't need you as a user because you're abusing the platform. It's obviously affecting someone else.

Right. And so we would rather not have you and not serve you as a user. And I think we have been because of this approach, I think we have been able to, I do, I think, you know, really suspend a lot of bad actors on the platform. And I think you know, that's just, you know and for us, you know, it's.

Taking an approach where, where, where, where, where we have like zero tolerance to, to abusing. I think someone else, whether it be a mentor or a mentee [00:26:00] vice versa. In some cases we do also bend mentors, right? Like like multiple complaints on one person. Like, oh, this person is not qualified. Or maybe like the language.

Not language barrier, but like, maybe like language that they use. Right. You know, it's just not appropriate and whatnot. And so in such incidents, you know, we, we just have to take the approach where we are like, we'd rather not serve you. Right? We'd rather not work with you to make things happen because, you know, our, you know, it's just like, because you, because you don't respect someone else's time or, you know, space or whatnot.

So I think a lot of cases, we really have to draw the lines very early and our team have to do that. I mean, it's not an easy addition for sure. Like we make a lot of additions and especially, you know, like serving designers, you know, you get a lot of feedback and, and questions as well. You know, and they come more of a leader than anyone else. And so we want to take the right approach, to, I think maintaining, I would say all in the chaos, right? And, and also I think that's the first part, but also the second part is for us is education, right? Continuously [00:27:00] educating people on the platform. You know, what's a good behavior, what it's not you know, sending them emails from time to time.

I think those are the bigger things that, that we need to have on ADP List as well. To be honest, we haven't done enough of that. I sincerely, I genuinely hope to do more. And we have plans to do more actually studying in January to implement a lot of things beginning with education, right?

On what is right and what is wrong. I think that will be a very, very big part of, of our uh, Sort of like initiative study in 2023.

**Jessica:** Yeah, for sure. I think, I think there's definitely that component of, yeah, like, you know, just holding people accountable but also maintaining that respect. And I think, like you said, like time is probably one of the most valuable things anyone can give.

It's something you can't buy back and. Have back. So yeah, definitely promoting that respect is super important. And on behalf of all mentors, I think we are all very grateful and really following up those updates very closely. So thanks for that Felix .

**Felix:** Yeah, of course. I mean, I enjoy writing them and just also like sharing them as well, so it's a pleasure of mine, I [00:28:00] just have a lot of fun.



**Sam:** I guess ADP list really practices what they preach with using the product design E for ethos by capturing feedback from the community and then integrating new features, functionality to drive product market fit. How? How have you managed to set up and create those guard rails?

**Felix:** Yeah. I think the journey towards product market fit has been, has been a pretty interesting one because, you know, we started with a spreadsheet, so there's no really no you know, right way to do that.

I think. The best, you know initially what we really did and in the early days was, you know, really just talking to a lot of people who were, who were just being a part of ADP list, right? How did they feel? What do they want? You know, we, we take a lot of feedback from everyone. We're like, we're basically, you know just talking to a lot of users.

Almost every day. I mean, especially me, right? And [00:29:00] so you know, I get close to I think a lot of mentors just like, you know you know, it's almost like you know, it's almost like I know them as, as colleagues, you know, I know them as partners, right? It's like, it's like Jess, right? Just my, we're we're somewhat connected on Instagram as well, you know and whatnot.

So it's always a deeper relationship beyond just, Hey, I'm, I'm. In your community. I'm just using sort of like adp, these kind of thing. You know, and, and, and that's the kind of relationship that I personally strive to have with every person that I think that I can reach out to or that I, that comes across.

Right? And so I think that has been a big part of product market fit and finding product market fit at ADP because, I think when you are like really close with someone and just like trying to get to know them you get, understand their pinpoints, you gotta underst. You know, their frustrations and you get to understand what also makes them pick as well.

And I think that's really kind of like what, how we're working towards, right? I mean, initially there's not a lot of data, right? You don't have a lot of data to work with. So you really have to work with [00:30:00] the people who are just. There. And so I think, you know, in the early days I was just really fortunate and even right now, you know, I continue to do that every day.

And so I think it's a big part of ADP list and it's a big part of like being a designer. I think you should talk to the people who spend time with you and the community and the users. And that's just, you know, been a part of like our DNA since the very beginning. Which is why we even have a mentor Slack channel where everyone just hangs out and share feedback or even just, you know, just network and stuff like that.

That's generally what we hope for as well, you know, just to get things out of there just to get people to get together as well. I think that's, that's just, you know, a very integral part of like, you know, finding a product market fit. I also think that, you know, a part of that is also, you know just understanding that everyone has a life, I think outside of the product that you build for them, I think that's so important. Or the community that you build for them. I think one of the important questions that I ask my team, or even myself very often is that, you know, you really think that you are the center of their universe.

Because I think [00:31:00] a lot of designers and people building products tend to think that when we design something, somehow the users just gravitate around our product. But, you know, these are people where the moment they log off your, your app or your website, you know, they come to your app 15 minutes or your, or your, your website for 15 minutes and of their time of the day.

And that's about it, you know? And for the rest of the day, they have their kids or they have their boyfriend girlfriend, whatnot. They have, they are Netflix shows to watch. They have a movie to go to. They have a date tonight. They have a train to catch. They have a friend who is not feeling well.

They have a friend who is calling them. They have emails to reply. They have work. So to, to know everyone has a life of their own. And everyone is a main charact. Everyone is a main character in their lives. It's a very important part of my realization as a designer in a very early days, even to their apus, is that they might be sharing you feedback.

They might be just yelling at you about certain bucks and fixes and whatnot, but you're a small part of their lives. You know, they're, they're, they're just [00:32:00] giving you what they have in the, in the, in that very moment. You know, they're just giving you what they have in that. Minute or the specific hour.

And so I think that is a, that is a big part to understand as a title. And I think that just knowing that if you don't design. People's life around you as a center of gravity? I think things usually work out. I mean, but it's hard to not think that way just because, you know, you are working on a problem 24 hours a day, sort of like 24 7.

And so it's easy to be, you know, sort of like in the picture itself. But it takes a lot of, I think it takes very much a lot of self-awareness to, to know that, you know, everyone is the main character in their own lives. You're just. 1% part of it, or maybe 10% sometimes. And you have to acknowledge that, and I think you have to design that to your advantage.

You have to build things around that. But also, you know, try not to be a main character in their lives. Try to be the you know, I would, I would love to let everyone be the main character in their lives and, [00:33:00] and the way that I'll describe, you know, an inventor. Designer, a great designer to be is being the orchestra of someone's life.

You know, because you are, you're not the main charact that, you're not the one playing the music. You're not in there, but you, you can somehow orchestrate something. , even with the tiny piece of contribution PhD. And I think that's, that to me is it's an important philosophy of mine. And I think something that I, I wanna continue to, you know advocate for ADP List is you know because that's how we actually found product market fit.

We're not complacent and we, we continue to, to not be complacent. I think just realizing that that fact and designing very humbly on a lot of things

**Sam:** Fantastic. I guess like, kind of follow on question for that is, so what is the future for ADP List? I understand from a whole design and mindset you may not know until it kind of hits you in your face, but yeah. What does the future look like?

**Felix:** Yeah. You [00:34:00] know, the way that I would describe ADP is, you know, it's nothing less than the help elevates. One's access to career opportunities by, you know, making mentorship accessible to everyone.

And so the way that I've always talked about ad places in two pillars, I mean the future of ad pillars as well, right? Which is in two pillars. First is what we have done, you know, is two phases, right? It's what we call two phases. The first phase is what we call building community. Building community as a learning enabler, right?

So, you know, how can you build a community where they can come together and exchange information and learn from each other? I think we've, we've done about maybe a little bit on that, maybe like 20, 30% of, of this phase one. Which is great progress. There's still a lot of progress to be made in the coming years.

But you know, the, the phase one, which is being a learning enabler, right? Community is learning and enabler. The phase two for us which we're also [00:35:00] beginning is what we call building community as an opportunity enabler, right? So beyond just being a learning enabler, we wanna. Opportunity enabler.

So that means that, you know, by building a community, how do we get people to enable opportunities to be shared among each other, right? Like, hey, this person is amazing. You should hire him, right? Or her, and you know, or like, this, this job, you know, I have a job opening, right? Do you guys, does anyone wants to collaborate on or does city or want to join my company?

And. You know how do we build a community to be an opportunity enabler? I think that is the future as well for AD APIs. Right? You know, just beyond learning, I think opportunity to be, you know getting a job or Opportunity to maybe col collect collaborate on the new project or whatnot.

Right? I think these are things where, you know we hope to help someone get as early in their career as possible, or even as late as well, right? And, and I think that's something that I think we are actively working towards, which is how do we get someone the opportunity [00:36:00] that they deserve as well.

And this is something that I wanna also share quite publicly, which we are working on. It's not live yet, but I'm just gonna give like a brief idea. Which is which is starting from mentors, right? Everything that we do starts from mentors. And so, you know, one of the things that we see is, you know, there's a lot of interactions on adp, right?

And so the being a learning enabler and being a Opportunity enabler shouldn't be two separate phases. It is, it is all together. And the way that we see it is that, you know, are there things that we can use in the phase one, in the phase two as well? And there are things that we see and we saw is You know that there's a lot of meaningful interactions between two person or one to many on ADP list.

And, and you know what, if we're just imagine we're able to use these social interactions as a form of social credibility for someone when they're looking for jobs, when they're looking to

get hired, when they're looking to get a promotion, when they're looking to, you know just, you know, get into a new place, right?

What is all the social [00:37:00] credibility you know, can add up to something? . When someone looks at your profile, a hiring manager looks at a profile or you know, your manager looks at your profile, they know that you're doing something incredible. They know that you are a trustworthy person. They know that you're a credible person.

Like what you say based on the social credits, right? Based on the sort of like a social you know karma points or whatever, right? It's not just the numbers, but you know, how do we exactly display that to people that you know, that say that, Hey, this person is. Who you should hire. This person is who you should promote and play a bigger part in someone else's career, right?

Or someone else's life. That's something extremely exciting that, you know, I am personally working on with the team which is to use this social interactions and data point to form such a. Picture for the rest of the world you know, that, you know, your contributions to adp. This as a mentor, is not just contribution.

It adds up to something bigger. All this interaction adds up to something that can help you propel your career in ways that you, you [00:38:00] probably would never imagine or, or have known before. And we got this inspiration by looking at the developer community, where on GitHub right, you would make contributions to GitHub and today, a technical recruiter could not go a day if they're hiring a, you know, a developer, they could not go a day without looking at GitHub because you need to look at someone's GitHub profile to know how much commitments they have made, you know the co the, the gigs that they have produced, you know, what people say and stuff like that, and all those things.

So from that basis, you know, the interactions on ADP leads for a mentor, you know, we wanna trust it with something like that. Where your good will and your good karma is translated to something extremely meaningful for your career. And I think that will be transformative. I think that will be, You know, a leap forward for, for mentors, right?

In a sense, it's, it's probably the most expensive currency that anyone can buy. You know, because it, it is a currency that I think help propel someone career and in turn help [00:39:00] propel their livelihood. And I think that's what we wanna do for the mentors to begin with. And that, you know, is a big part of the future of ADP List, which is to integrate ourself you know, from learning to opportunity enabler.

Putting that system into the entire hiring system as well. And I think that's, that's something that, that, you know, we are truly excited about.

**Sam:** That's incredible. Yeah. Thanks so much for sharing that piece of information with us. One, one area that I did wanna kind of really kind of quickly touch on is are there any plans for monetization, like further down the line?



Just because from a funding perspective, for you getting funding from VCs, would they kind of looking into one, what are you doing with the money? And two, are you planning on, on monetizing later on down?

**Felix:** I think, you know there's obviously interesting stories around that and the way that, you know, I, I've always seen PCBC funding.

I think I think just growing up you know, just looking at some startups, you know, you'd be like, wow, this person has faced like 20, [00:40:00] 30 million. Which I think has always been a very interesting perspective. I think. You know, like erase from the best investors. And I mean, we have raised from some of the world's best investors today.

And I can tell that, you know, their values are very much aligned with me. I mean, that's the number one thing that I think both parties look for, right? It's like, it's like looking for a job, right? The company has to align with you, you have to align with the company as well. It's very similar. And, and, and I think we're both very aligned of how, you know, we want to make mentorship accessible. I think that's the one thing people, you know, who, who are not financially capable shouldn't have to pay for it. I think that's always been, been the fundamental of that. People who are able to give more. I think, you know should have the ability to water two bit more forward as well in, in the future.

I mean, you know that's just how the principle that we have been operating on you know, there are no monetization models in place right now as of this very moment. But there will be very soon. And, and this monetization model will not involve things like, you know you know, we, we are really not involve [00:41:00] things like, Hey, now you.

Even now, now you have to pay just to even get a single session. Right? It will definitely not involve then. But I think what you were involved you know, in is, is basically, you know when someone gets hired by a company, right? Hopefully, you know, the companies are willing to pay for the talents that they're finding on ADP list or hiring from adp.

List the opportunities that they're sharing as well. I think a lot of that is monetizable without hurting you know, You know, the principles that we stand for. Right? And, and, and I think these are very much aligned with the principles of ADP list. I mean, when we first fundraise and we sort of shared an announcement to the world, I think it was last August, last year you know, it's been the year right now.

I think, you know, the majority of the community were, they were just extremely happy because they were a big part of it. You know, everyone, I mean, the next round that I'm gonna race all the way until like, you know know, optimistically speaking, like all the way until the New York Stock Exchange, the I P O you know, I think mentors will play a very critical role in that and they will be celebrated and will continue to be celebrated.

[00:42:00] You know? I imagine not, you know, if, if say we were to go public someday, you know, I imagine not me ringing the bell. I think I won the mentors to go up there and ring the bell. Right. Someone else, right. The first mentor maybe. Right. To go out there and ring the bell. And the reason for that is because I am just a spokesperson for the community.

Someone else you know is playing, , the main character in, the whole journey, right? And so you know, when we first raised our first precinct round you know, everyone celebrated because I wrote an email. I said, look, this is yours. I mean, you made this moment, right?

Without you, I am just a. Facilitator. I'm just a website in a sense. And so you know, everyone deserve to celebrate that. And I think they feel it. They feel it. They, they really feel, feel it and, and, and, and I want them to feel it even more as we grow that they're big part of that. But obviously, unfortunately, you know, but also at the time when we raised and someone was like, oh my God, you know, 80 threes just suddenly raised money.

What are they gonna do now? Are they gonna monetize, you know the. You know, one year in, you know, any platforms who would've wanted to monetize, [00:43:00] would've monetized in the past one year. You know, we did it right and you know the people who had said things about that, you know, there, there are nowhere way to be found near any place to be, you know, even as any fees grew larger and larger you know, I think, you know, all my life, I've always believe in just sticking and focusing on what you do best.

Sticking to the principles and your promises, and I think that's been always a big part of me. And you know, I think including when it comes to monetization, you know even if you have to take us, you know, Months and years to figure out without, you know, compromising on our principles, we will do that.

You know, we hope we'll just continue to just keep finding that and, and I think that's, that's, that's been the most exciting part.

**Jessica:** Wow. Thank you so much for sharing. So many, so many humbling thoughts just. Behind the, behind the brilliant mind of yours of ADP List. So I really appreciate it, Felix.

And yeah, a lot of beautiful things have been said. You have no idea, like Sam and Vinita and I kind of are just like trying to pick up all these sound bites to summarize. So yeah, really thank [00:44:00] you for sharing everything. I'm sad that this session is coming to an end, but we do usually like to end with a question for all of our speaker.

And I'm curious to know, are there any resources, obviously other than ADP List that you would recommend for, you know, designers looking to grow and I guess just the things that we've talked about all around mentorship and, and growing. In terms of mentorship wise, I think there's a lot of ways to grow.

**Felix:** One of the best points that I've found is I mean most of us are visual learners, so I think just like watching YouTube videos, I think YouTube is a great resource, to be honest. It's like Supered Maybe because just people who don't watch music videos, but, but I think that it's a, it's one of the best platforms to just learn from someone else's perspective.

You know, like Crystal, he's an amazing guy. I just love watching his video as well. But I also like, like pocket watching like documentaries of someone else's life of like, you know, how something came to me. For example last night I was, I believe it was a documentary on the, and you would not expect what's coming.

I was watching a documentary on [00:45:00] like, Blackpink. It, I mean, I'm no fan of Blackpink, you know, I love some of their, their, their music. And you know, just like watching such documentary, you know, allows you to sort of like step into a different world, get inspired, you know a lot of similar values as well.

And so I, so I think, you know, it just, it just allow you to, I think, you know, pick into, you know, the, the brains and lives of people without actually meeting them yet. And so I think it's, it's gonna be exciting if you constantly. Doubt yourself in such, you know different environments. And so for you to learn different things whether be on Netflix or on YouTube.

On Spotify where you can listen the podcast, I think just. You know, the essence and the, and the fundamentals of all these things is to, you know, indulge yourself in someone else's learning and someone else's life. That's the most important, right? ADP is all about that. I think YouTube, if you want someone's video, it's all about that, you know, Netflix as well, right?

So I think that's the most important assets I think anyone can, you know, seek to learn from.

**Jessica:** [00:46:00] That's awesome. I did watch that on Netflix as well. It was mildly entertaining, but just crazy. Like I had no idea all of this happened behind the scenes. Very interesting. But also Felix, if you ever have your own documentary, I'm sure one day you will. I'd love to see that .

**Felix:** Yeah. I would love to share it.

**Jessica:** Yeah, for sure. I'm so keen to see the heim of scenes of a bakery because I love I actually, I would wake up at 5:00 AM to go to a bakery if, if the bread and the pastries are that good.

**Sam:** So takeaway for this podcast is Jessica loves bakeries.

**Jessica:** Oh no, it's not about, it's not about me. Please don't. It's all about Felix. Yes. Yeah.

**Vinita:** And that concludes our latest episode of the IxDA Sydney podcast. You can find the audio transcript for this episode as well as any resources mentioned at [ixdasydney.org](http://ixdasydney.org).

**Felix:** Hey, I'm Felix Lee, and you're listening to the IxDA Sydney Podcast.