

Episode 22 - Your First Remote Hackaton I

Olabode Felix Akinyemi

Interview - Felix: [00:00:04] what actually interested me was, the goal of the hackathon. Like, you know, now, the whole world is in the mess of Covid-19 death here and there from every country was when I saw the team for the hackathon, which is very nice. I'm very okay with it and I think there can be a way, we can come together.

You're listening to the UI narrative podcast, the biweekly podcast that shares how industry leading designers got started interface design and how they create successful user centered experiences. And I'm your host, Tolu Ajayi let's get started.

Tolu: [00:00:46] Guess who's back back. Back back again. gain gain gain. Tolu's back. Back. Back. Tell your friend friend friend. Hello everyone. Welcome back to the UI narrative podcast. How have you been? I've missed talking to you and ranting about design, but I needed a break. I burnt out and to put it simply, I was doing too much for one person and I panicked and I had to just stop everything. At once so I could breathe. Especially with Covid-19 my anxiety has been at an all time high. I had to disconnect and just take time to focus on what to do next so I don't have another burnout. So some things I noticed is I don't need to do all the things that I'm doing right now. I took time to do a deep dive into, okay, what really makes me happy.

What do I really enjoy doing and what am I doing? Because people around me are telling me to do this. And what it comes down to is I have my design side, okay. Which is what I thrive in, and I love talking about it and learning more about it. And then there's my music side, which has been pushed to the side for a few years or more now.

So I started therapy last week, and I have come to realize that because I'm not including. Music in my life right now. I've been missing a part of me, which I know sounds crazy, but, so I used to write music and play guitar regularly. Not professional in any sense or anything like that, but it was just a hobby of mine. And I had started playing several years ago in my teens, and. When I got really deep into my design career, I started to neglect playing and writing, and it's been affecting me because music was my way to express my feelings. I would write and play about how I feel about things and it would just get me in the right mental place, so I'm going to get back into that.

But what this means is I have to cut some things that I normally do, which sucks, but I realized it's okay to. So my main focuses for now are this podcast, of course, because I love you guys and I love talking about design. Um, my consultation calls. Um, so the only calls I'm accepting now are my discovery calls, portfolio reviews, layout, grading system design reviews and followups. I've stopped accepting all workshops. I know this is annoying and I'm sorry if you were planning on booking a workshop session with me. So the reason I'm giving up things I was doing is to, number one, reclaim my me time so I can play more video games and write music as my hobbies. And. Number two, have more time to continue to work on the bigger picture that I have in mind, and I'll hint at my bigger picture, but I won't say more than that because I want to get on with the

episode.

So imagine an education platform where you can play games and learn about design. That's all I'll say. Let's get into the episode.

Interview - Tolu: [00:03:56] Today we have a special guest. Olabode Felix Akinyemi is a UI designer with experience in graphic design and branding. He started out by obtaining a degree in statistics and a masters in information system engineering. He has a passion for people with respect to understanding their needs, behaviors, and skills.

expressions. Felix has worked at a wide range of companies from corporate and freelancing jobs and utilize this product design knowledge to create astonishing website mobile products. He also was the UI designer on the recent hack from home hackathon that we did together, and I'm so happy to have you on the show. Everyone, please give a warm welcome to our guest, Felix.

Interview - Felix: [00:04:46] Hi, Tolu, how you doing? How's everything?

Interview - Tolu: [00:04:48] I'm doing great. Thank you so much for agreeing to do this episode. Last minute, guys. I reached out to him like three days ago and it was, it was a spontaneous idea. I was like, Hey, do you want to come on the podcast and talk about our experience doing a hackathon together? And he agreed to it. So I'm just really grateful that you're spending your weekend time to come on this podcast with me.

Interview - Felix: [00:05:11] Yeah, that's not a problem. Thanks for having me on board. Thank you very much. I really appreciate.

Interview - Tolu: [00:05:16] No problem at all. So first I want to get into what a hackathon is, so we're all on the same page. so hackathon is an event where designers, developers, data gurus, marketing, et cetera. People come together to create a product that solves a problem in a very short amount of time. And these events are usually usually like a three day period, or sometimes it's one day or like a one to two weeks long.

Um, hackathons are usually hosted in one location, but. Sometimes they're done remotely. So with Covid-19 in our lives, all of these hackathons are becoming, you know, forcefully remote. So, because that's the only option. So in this episode, Felix and I are going to talk about, our first remote hackathon experience and give you all the behind the scenes of what to expect when doing a hackathon from your couch.

Um, all right, so you're interested in a remote hackathon. Now, what some places you can look for, hackathons is you can head to Twitter and follow the hashtag hackathon and look for, you know, hackathons going on. Or you can look for them on a website.

Like hackathon.com devpost.com or hackathon.io and I'll also link these websites in the show notes. Whenever you're looking for a hackathon, make sure you look at the project objective and things you're interested in. For the hack from home hackathon, it was a three day project with the objective to contribute to the struggle against Covid-19 by building technologies and leveraging their personal data.

But. In an ethical way. So the project themes were citizen science, community help and mass coordination. When you're thinking about joining a remote hackathon, see if you can get a better understanding of how things will be

communicated throughout the process.

So Felix, what did you think about the communication system set up for hack from home? Did you understand how to get information you needed?

Interview - Felix: [00:07:19] Yeah, it's a very nice one for me actually. And, because, the communication systems they set for us. I think it was on Slack right. Mmhm. Yeah, Slack is being used everywhere. Like for example, where I work currently, we communicate with Slack. So it's very easy for me to communicate with other participants on Slack.

Everybody in the hackathon was put in the same group together so you can get information across to everybody we want at the time. For the subgroup we had on the hackathon information is being passed to each other, like we didn't do groups. So I think it's a very good one.

So it's very nice and well presented.

Interview - Tolu: [00:07:57] Yeah, I agree. I think it was really great using Slack with everyone. So something to note is from the beginning, it'll be easy to tell if the organizers have their shit together or if they're just like everyone's for themselves. So hack from home was pretty organized with how they spammed us with messages on Slack every time.

Like I had to turn off my notifications at one point, I don't know much,

Interview - Felix: [00:08:19] yeah, yeah,

Interview - Tolu: [00:08:20] but they were really good with, um, constantly giving us information. And then all of the Slack channels, they have like , a data channel where they would just post a bunch of articles and then they also had a channel where, if you needed people on your team, you could go there.

And say like, Hey, I need these people. Or if you wanted to join a team, you could just post on there like what your skills are. but yeah, like with their Slack, it was really efficient in the fact that. I knew that I could probably just find my answer in the chats before asking.

But there were some times when I kind of wish they told us the information a little faster, mainly with, um, how the projects were going to be turned in. So, cause I would have thought about things a little bit differently from the beginning. I don't think he had like a mess this up in any way. I think he's like overall did an amazing job considering the circumstances.

But, something I was taking note on how they're going to go about communicating to everyone during the hackathon. Like is there a Slack channel set up or , is there a Facebook group will there be video or audio calls on zoom or Skype. And also to, will there be any workshops or resources to help your team find data for the project?

That's one thing. Hack from home was really helpful with is providing like, um, experts in certain areas. And we even got like a mentor that helped us with our process and he was posting some links in our Slack channel. Um, and also just, yeah, and how are you going to be able to communicate efficiently with the organizers and your team?

But just like the key thing to, to figure out before you join.

and with hackathons, there's, always a set project theme that everyone is designing a solution for. So think of what role you want to play on a team and also think of if you have an idea for the project. But keep in mind that if you have

an idea for the project, you most likely will be the default project manager for your team.

Unless someone can take that role. I had to be the project manager for my team and build the team because I had an idea, and this was unexpected for me. When I first reached out to you, Felix, I was not expecting that. I was like thinking like, Oh, you and me will team up and be like, you know, UI, UX designer together and then join a team.

So it was, it was definitely a surprise for me. Um, but like. Also, if you don't have a project idea, that's fine. You can join a team that has a project idea that you're interested in, but just be aware that it is. It's a lot more work if you're the person that's like leading the team because everyone's going to look to you for like , what do we do now?

And like, Oh wait, I got to figure out what to do with myself. so the project idea that we had for hack from home, what's called health connect. And on this website, you'd be able to find real time Covid-19 testing availability near you. The problem we saw was doctors needed a way to guide patients to the right place for Covid-19 testing.

Or treatment, and this is particularly important because in almost all countries, the number of testing facilities is comparatively lower in comparison with test demand. So health connect would help doctors guide patients to the right place. We cover 19 testing or treatment, and , we wouldn't be able to validate its effectiveness by checking if.

There's an increase of patients being tested after doctor's consultation during a certain period of time. So once you have like your project idea, it's important to build out like what the problem is and the solution that your product is going to be, aiming to solve. Another thing is after you have an idea, check in with your friends on who's interested in joining your team, because it's so much better to work with people that at least have some type of like familiarity with who you are. And, some type of, like. It's not completely strangers at all. Me and Felix had met online, which is pretty cool cause we had a, we're already friends on Twitter. , so as some of you may remember, I had put out a post on Twitter like a month or so ago. Asking if anyone wanted to team up with me to join the hack from home hackathon.

And Felix had reached out to me right away and asked if I had an idea and I was like, I have no idea yet yet. He's still agreed to be on my team. So now Felix, I want to ask you this question. This was your first hackathon as it was for me to what interested you in joining a hackathon.

Interview - Felix: [00:12:54] what actually interested me was, the goal of the hackathon. Like, you know, now, the whole world is in the mess of Covid-19 death here and there from every country was when I saw the team for the hackathon, which is very nice. I'm very okay with it and I think there can be a way, we can come together. As a techie, if I see needs, a solution that we can provide to the masses, to every country and every human being.

another thing that made me to join the hackathon is connection to meet more people. Yeah. Because like for you now you're a UX designer, we meet, product managers and underlies programmers. So. The idea for me is just the goal of the hackathon and connection to meet more people. So that's what I can say that

makes me, join the hackathon.

Interview - Tolu: [00:13:43] Yeah. I'd had some of similar interests as you did too. Like I was really interested in the goal that they had for the project themes. I thought it was gonna be a really cool chance to try to solve. For, issues we see going on with, you know, Covid-19 and any ways that, you know, designers could help. I was like, this is a perfect chance to at least try to put brains together and see if somehow we can come up with a solution for something.

and also I wanted the challenge of just. Putting together a product with the limited amount of time. I've had similar challenges working in like agile environments, but this hackathon was like a whole nother level, and we'll get into the stressful parts of the event. so the type of people that you need on your team for hackathon is a project manager, designer, researcher, or data guru.

In a developer. So our developer ended up ghosting us during the hackathon. He was there and he was so engaged at the beginning, but then like, I don't know what happened. Yeah. I'm like, what the hell? Where did you go? I was so, he was like so excited like I had, we were doing like private DMS to each other and he was like, you know.

Telling me about stuff. And I was asking him questions like, Oh, what'd you be able to do this? And he was like so engaged. And I was like, okay, I guess he, you know, but then it's like, you don't know what happened. So to was like, I don't want to be thinking negative things cause it's like you don't know what happened in his life to make him, to stop, replying back.

But, it's okay. The main thing is like if something like this happens, don't panic. It's okay. I think like at least having a designer to create the idea is one of the most crucial people on the team. So as a designer listening, please don't ghost people. If you join a team, if you can try your best to follow through and work with them throughout the hackathon.

Felix was the UI designer on our team and he didn't ghost us. So we turned out pretty great. Yeah we tried our best.

first thing your team needs to do is have a team meeting to get aligned on your goals and tasks that need to get done, and this is something I really struggled with starting out. Felix, what was your experience when you first got started in the hackathon? Did you understand what was going on? Did you know what to do.

Interview - Felix: [00:17:31] Oh, I know what to do and I will say, I didn't what to do. Because I joined the group, I think somehow late, but, when I entered, I answered that. Okay. It seems to have been structured, like you've aligned every, like rows for everybody to do. And, I think finally I later saw this document that was saying to the group, like, okay, this is what we are working on.

That wasn't a start to understand what we'll do like this is are you gave me a heads up on. So on all the interface it looks like, I think that's puts me on track on what to do and projects.

Interview - Tolu: [00:18:04] That's a good, I really struggled being a project manager because I had never managed a project in such a short notice. So I created the project idea, as I said, and then realized, Oh, I need to manage this project. And I was thinking like, Oh, I'll just submit the idea and then I'll help with the UX. Design or the research.

So it was really like a brand new experience for me, and I'm still deciding if I liked

the project management experience or not. overall experience. Yes, for sure. I loved it. but some things that need to be figured out whenever you have your first team meeting is during that first team meeting, everyone needs to get on the same page for what the product goals are and what you're trying to achieve by the end of the hackathon.

I think for like me and our group, I was a bit unclear with that at the beginning. I mean, I did put together like documents in Google drive and I'm assigned people like tasks and roles, but I was still trying to figure out like, okay, what are we trying to solve for? And like, how is this product going to be, you know, helpful to these doctors and these patients that want to get tested.

I think too, like, just having y'all support on a team really helped. me define what those goals should be. but by the end of that first meeting, everyone should, know what the team wants to achieve by the end of the hackathon. So, and everyone should know, like, who is doing what and how much of that are they doing?

And I mean, like quantity-wise so for designers, they need to have an idea of how many screens and what screens they need to design, because otherwise it's kind of just like up in the air and it's like a never ending. project. So it's like having that like hard cut of, okay, you're writing this specific copy.

You're creating this specific screen. Like if you have multiple designers or one designer, you know, and it also like what type of content on that screen. So the data gurus and researchers need to come up with that content along with like the marketing and of course, the project manager. So look, I'm giving you this like step by step guide, but really in reality there's no step-by-step, because. Things are unexpected. Remember our developer, like ghosted us, so you really just have to go with the flow when things go wrong. Felix, what did you struggle with most with the UI design, once you knew what your tasks were for the project.

Interview - Felix: [00:20:28] what I struggled with was, the, to decide either to make it normal web display or a web application. So I was stuck in-between the two actually. I first designed for normal, web but like. This is like an emergency. They don't need to scroll to it let me just make it a web application. Just logging in there and putting details and you get what he wants.

when I decided that the want to work with application, the other thing is time to executive because imagine designing a whole system just within. 24 hours because on Sunday you have to do of that stuff that you have to do, but the main thing I struggled with deciding either for web application or with the time constraints to carry out the processes?

It's just what I know. I struggle. I really took, it took a lot of my time, like I was tired

Interview - Tolu: [00:21:19] Yeah.

Interview - Felix: [00:21:21] well

I think it's

like

that was a good result.

Afterall.

Interview - Tolu: [00:21:25] Yeah. I guys like when I need to show y'all guys , the

screens that he put together in like 24 hours. It was wild. I was blown away because I had given him, you know, little very little direction on what to do. And I was like, Aw, he's probably going to have like one screen tomorrow because I didn't, you know, go into detail of, you know.

An idea of like what this whole system should look like. but in 24 hours, he came up with like eight screens cause he had two ideas. One was like a website design, as he said, and the other one was more like a desktop app. It was just like really mind blowing and seen that he was able to put together so much work with such little direction.

so something I struggled with was the content management. I'm not the best copywriter. I also struggled with just creating like the holistic view for the idea we had in putting this together in a presentation, to explain it. So one of the biggest things, in this hackathon was the presentation I had to present the idea with a slide deck.

No more than seven slides in three minutes. Talk about brief as fuck. Like I was sweating y'all. it was difficult for me. I've never done anything like that. Intense content wise, in my life. So it was really interesting seeing just like how everyone was coming together, pushing their limits of what they can do in like 24 hours time.

Because like that first, cause we had three days, the first day was just getting aligned on like, okay. What is everyone supposed to be doing? And then the second day, like, Felix busted through what these UI screen. So then everyone I think got like this boost of energy. Like, okay, we can do this. but mainly it was just us two.

And then, another woman named Camilla who was helping us with the presentation. , so Felix, what was the key thing that you think helped us get the project done in time.

Interview - Felix: [00:23:21] Okay. I think I'm understanding the goal of the, hackathon collaboration within ourselves. Effective communication, brainstorming, and good teammate because, . It's not, as much as we understand that the goal of what you want to do, then we are good to go at first. Then collaboration between ourselves because you've, divided the roles for everyone.

Like, okay, you

are doing this You are doing it. We collaborated together so as to make things as fast as possible. As I'm working on the UI, UX design, Camila, she was working on the presentation and we had effective communication. Though we had different timezones. But we had good communication within ourselves, and I think we both had a brainstorming session together like, yeah, and brainstorming really addressed like, okay, this screen is too much.

We don't need this. This is going out of point. Then yeah things went on good after the brainstorming session and um. Good. Team leading you really organized things very well, like it was like perfect. Because this is my first time. I felt like things might mess up. When I saw the structure on ground, I think this is a good, I think I'm good to go and I'm interested in this.

It's very nice one.

Interview - Tolu: [00:24:36] I really appreciate that comment felix, because to

me it was like, it was chaotic. I was like, these people don't know what to do. Like I'm not being clear enough. And I was like, I need to, I need to have a one on one with everyone. But like, I really do think like that. video call that we had did help with getting alignment on, first of all, me speaking out loud, it was like helpful with.

Figuring out what the hell am I trying to do here? And being able to tell you, okay, this is the direction I think we should take with this. Cause it's like I didn't really know until I started talking about it out loud with you. So I bet you didn't expect that. from the call, like I didn't really didn't know what I was going to say until the call.

I'm like, okay, I think I know what I'm going to say.

But yeah, I do think like communication definitely was one of the biggest things. that helped us get that project done in time. Constantly checking in on the Slack channel. And Felix and I were the main people that were active members in the group communicating. but it was also like a time zone issue cause everyone was in different countries and we had another person, Camila, who turned up the last day and did an amazing job doing the presentation.

I was just like. Sweating with how am I going to get this presentation looking good? Cause it's like the content is, you know, getting together and it's getting put there. But I'm like, I don't have time to make this look pretty. But then it's like, she's like, Oh, I already have it already done. I'm like, what?

I didn't even know. So that was like such a great surprise. and also too, like the mentor we had Azfar, he shared some data links during the process, which helped too with, the presentation and pointing out, some key points, findings, to back up our problem and solution statement. So you need to be extremely responsive online during this process so you can give regularly.

updates on your process. Felix was really good about doing that on Slack and I was panicking when I saw our developer wasn't responding. I know I've said this probably like 15 times episode, but I was like, seriously? Like, cause I didn't know. I was like, if the developer does it, does that mean we're just qualified? I'm like, what are we going to do? But it is like after talking to the organizers about it, cause I also too, the organizers had set up like check ins with the team leads to like talk with them about whatever problems they're having. And I was just telling him everything. It was like my therapy session during this whole hackathon.

But yeah, it was great because he just came through with the designs and, , I would say like hackathons are a learning experience. Like, seriously, you learn how to work under a really tight deadline, how to collaborate with others quickly. how to communicate when you don't understand something and when you're working through your design process.

And also to like, are you being nice to others and keeping a positive attitude because no one's getting paid to do this. So, you know, you gotta be nice and respectful with each other and just. Communicate and speak out whenever you have a question or concern about something. so Felix, would you do a remote hackathon again?

Interview - Felix: [00:27:48] definitely.

Interview - Tolu: [00:27:49] we

Interview - Felix: [00:27:49] should do that

Yeah, yeah. Because it's, it's kind of, tasking, but I love the, processes the people I met and, I actually learned more from what I've been practicing for. Okay. Do you know, the funny thing is, I think a week before the hackathon, I was reading some of our new installs about what application either had been structured or they've been put together.

I worked with it, so it's. It gives me more room to learn from what I've read about before, I would

Interview - Tolu: [00:28:21] do it again.

Interview - Felix: [00:28:22] Definitely.

Interview - Tolu: [00:28:22] That's good. Awesome. Awesome. Yeah, for me, I don't know just yet. I think it's just because of the role I had on the team. It was, really stressful for me. Like I lost sleep unwillingly because I had to stay up late working, so it was a curve ball and I wasn't expecting it to be like that at all. , it's like I knew it was going to be a lot of work, but it was like.

More than a full time job and for three days, you know, and I had a lot of trouble figuring out how to put my thoughts in my head into a presentation. but I think, you know, I think I would do it again, but. I would want to have my, project idea more defined before I joined. So that way, like I can hit the ground running as far as like, okay.

Here's the project, here's what I think we could do, or whatever. So that way there's not this time spent trying to figure out what we're trying to do. and everyone could just like hit the ground running as soon as they join the team. If I were to be a project manager again, I would definitely do it again as a designer. Cause it's like I don't have the stress trying to figure out, how everything's gonna work out. It's just like I go in and I'm like, okay, what's my task? And I designed the things, or I do the UX research. That's fine with me, but project management, I would definitely need more time to just sit and think hard about

what I'm trying to accomplish here.

, For you, did this experience stress you out at all, or like, how was your overall opinion? And I mean, I know I was your partner, but you can throw shade at me. I'm fine.

Interview - Felix: [00:30:04] Okay. Yeah. The, it's really stressed me out a lot. It's like my life, my friend that we lived together, I was like, you have to take some time to rest but it really stressed me out like a lot.

Interview - Tolu: [00:30:27] Yeah, I think it was a really great experience too. Definitely. Like. One I will remember forever. so the results of the hack from home didn't result in us winning the grant. But you know what? I gained that experience working with, working at a hackathon and I gained my new friend, Felix.

Interview - Felix: [00:30:46] Nice to

Interview - Tolu: [00:30:46] have to have you too as a friend.

All right. So I'd like to end the show with a random question completely unrelated to what we've been talking about. Is there an app that you hate but use anyways?

Interview - Felix: [00:31:02] The app I don't like, ah, I think that should be

sincerely Facebook because when I log in, I see a of For example, like sometimes it's even notification. I don't want start from where they were to start clicking this job.

Even if miss it for on Facebook, it might take years for me to respond because I switched on notifications entirely. it's too busy

Interview - Tolu: [00:31:24] Yeah.

Interview - Felix: [00:31:24] Like yeah. For me it's just Facebook's sincerely.

Interview - Tolu: [00:31:27] Yeah. I, I'm annoyed with Facebook too cause they give like fake notifications too. I don't know if you noticed that. So I'll tap and I'm like, why am I hearing nothing is there's nothing for me to see. They're misleading the user on something that has an alert that really doesn't have an alert.

They just want them inside of there to see whatever new feature or a new category or whatever they added. And it's just annoying. Like I already, don't use Facebook personally. I'd mainly on there for groups. Now I had deactivated my other account cause I just got annoyed with them. But then I ended up still having to come back to Facebook because of the dang groups. The main app I don't like right now is the Facebook messenger app, but people keep sending me a message on there, so what can I do. I have to open it up. I don't really like the UX of it because I think the messengers should be on the Facebook app.

I know not everyone may agree with me on that, but, I'm thinking back to like, you know, when I first started using Facebook years ago, you could access the messages on the Facebook app, but now they have it separate. So it's like this kind of, hard or like janky experience. If I opening a whole nother app for you to communicate with someone that you're friends with on Facebook app, you get the disconnection there.

Yeah, All right, so where can we connect with you online, Felix?

Interview - Felix: [00:32:55] LinkedIn

Interview - Tolu: [00:32:56] Akinyemi Olabode Felix.

Twitter, @Ui_uxdesigner Instagram @halo_design.ng

awesome. thank you all for taking your time to hear me and Felix rant about our first hackathon experience. please just, you know, tag us on Twitter or Instagram. If you have any other questions about hackathons in general, we would love to answer your questions and I appreciate you taking the time to join us on this episode today.

Felix. And I know the listeners are excited about, joining remote hackathons.

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Talk to you later. Bye.