EPISODE 50

[INTRODUCTION]

> *"**TG:** There're so many things that have brought me joy. I would say number one is meeting new people. Before the podcast I was really feeling like the only black designer in the world, because like every job I went to, I was the only black one there. And then the one job I went to where there was a black designer, he left in like a month. I was like, "What is going on here?" But yeah, just connecting with people all over the world from different countries, different backgrounds and hearing their stories of how they got into UX is just extremely inspiring."*

[00:00:41] TG: You're listening to the UI Narrative podcast, the bi-weekly podcast that shares the stories of people of color interface designers and researchers and their contributions towards creating user-centered experiences. And I'm your host, Tolu Garcia. Let's get started.

Hey, guys, it's Tolu here with a quick word from our sponsor. To design great products, a focus on the user is everything. That's true for me and for the teams at Google. Today's sponsor, Google Design, produces original content, like articles and videos to show how Google's products come to life, and to inspire designers everywhere. For example, on design.google, you can learn how Google Maps streamlined a palette of 700 colors down to 25 major and minor tones, or how an R&D team distilled five years of research into a tiny, intuitive, emotionally intelligent radar chip. How cool is that y'all?

On Google Design, you'll get to know how the products used by billions actually get made and hear from designers behind some of your favorite products like Chrome, Google Maps and Nest. Head over to design.google to get inspired. That's design.google. Or follow them on Twitter and Instagram @GoogleDesign.

[EPISODE]

[00:01:58] TG: Hey, everyone. Welcome back to the 50th episode of the UI Narrative podcast. Y'all, we made it to 50. We did it. We did it, Joe! This is like a very, very special episode to me, because y'all know, we've been through a lot these past couple years. So I'm doing something special, something different in this episode. I invited listeners to come on the show. Shout out to everyone who left comments on Instagram to be a part of this episode. So yeah, I'll be doing a q a panel this episode. And I'm just so excited to talk to everybody.

Before we begin, I want to give a quick shout out to Hype Henry who left a review on Apple Podcast Netherlands. They said the content of this podcast is amazing. As a black student UX designer, I learned a lot from this podcast. The topics are very interesting and helpful for future jobs or internships. Being black in tech can be stressful in a wide space area. And hearing experiences from other BIPOC designers can prevent you from those weird situations.

Thank you so much for taking the time out of your day to write me this review. As a reminder, listeners, if you love what you're hearing, make sure to leave me a review on Apple Podcast. And if you don't listen there, tag me on Twitter @uinarrativeco and let me know what you think of the latest episode.

All right, let's get right into the show.

[00:03:28] B: Hi, Tolu. Thank you my name is **[inaudible 00:03:32]**. I live in Istanbul. I'm a user experience designer with six years of experience. Consider someone who works in the user experience fields. Should this person get specialized in some way? Like this UX person can say I'm doing e-commerce websites. I'm doing fintech applications. I'm designing user experience of mobile games. Or this person can say I'm an information architect. I'm a researcher. What do you think of getting specialized as a user experience person or as a UX designer?

[00:04:20] TG: Yeah. I think this is a great question. So I think starting out, like if you are going towards your first job, I think it's a bit better to be less picky so that way you can get more experience under your belt. But for someone like you that's more a bit more

experienced, I think it's great to get specialized if you have a particular interest in something. You can use the experience that you have under your belt to put that in your portfolio.

I feel like one of the main things is getting familiar with like the lingo, the business for whatever industry that you're trying to specialize in and getting comfortable with understanding like the types of products in the space. So you can see like if there's a gap in your portfolio when it comes to saying like, "Maybe I'm a UX designer that specializes in fintech," right? So you'll need to have at least one example of fintech on your portfolio, because it would be a bit harder to say like, "Hey, I'm specializing in this."

Of course, maybe like for your first fintech job you may not necessarily need that. But if you're trying to brand yourself as like the fintech UX expert, you need to have like multiple examples of that to get hired over the other person that's just a regular UX designer.

And I think another way to like get more comfortable with the industry is like joining online communities, connecting with people in industry like sales and marketing to better understand like the goals for selling products. And also, too, you could build a connection with those people and have a foot in the door for if like they're hiring at their company. So yeah, I think it's all right to specialize.

As far as within the skill sets when it comes to like information architecture and other avenues within UX, you won't see as many roles for this when it comes to UX. I mean, you'll see like interaction designer UX research. But because UX is like the umbrella that houses all the things underneath like IA, usability, etc., you don't see a job that will necessarily specialize in that one thing, because companies kind of like to put it more on the UX designer to do all of those things.

I think previously those things were separated, but now I think companies are seeing the value as far as like saving money by having one person that can be kind of like a unicorn in UX and do all the things underneath the umbrella. Not necessarily for research. I feel like if you want to specialize in research, you should become a UX researcher, because the majority of the job for UX design is design thinking. So I don't know that specializing in a

specific umbrella as far as like I only do this will help your career. It's more of like a good selling point if you are – Let's say you prefer to work for startups that are just starting to create their design system or like they don't really have like a fleshed-out product yet. Maybe you specialize in IX as far as like that's like your top skill that you have. I think you could portray that to them as like, "Hey," like a selling point in the interview, like I can really help build the information architecture for your business starting out. So that way they get it set up for the right way.

So I would think it just depends on the person on what they feel interests them the most, but I don't know that it would necessarily give them a huge advantage if they specialize in one skill over the other in UX. I mean, design, of course, and research is good too. But I mean, yeah.

[00:07:44] K: So my name is Kim. I live in Orlando, Florida, and I am a designer with about four years' experience specifically in the agency background. I have been trying to look for a UX role for a bit now. My background is pretty untraditional. I am graduating from a university with an unrelated degree. So I don't plan on joining a boot camp after graduation, but perhaps some certifications.

I've been utilizing a lot of resources for design and networking in the UX field, but I haven't had the best luck. It's definitely getting better. But, overall, I just want to know your advice for designers without a traditional background.

[00:08:37] TG: Yeah. So I feel like a lot of people are starting out like you can't really – I'm not sure if you heard of the episode with Maya Rhinehart. What's it called? Using your work history to your advantage? So she started out with an unrelated degree like you, in engineering. And I would say check out that episode too because it's pretty inspiring, like her journey.

Some key tips as far as like making progress, you'll need to make sure that you have some solid UX training. And it's hard to do that without putting a curriculum together. So in that episode, I sit what Maya. She does talk about like her journey to creating like a Frankenstein curriculum from different courses that post their curriculum online. So that's

one way to go about it without having to break the bank. You can just see the outline there, bullet points, and do the research on your own, YouTube, even Skillshare, which is more affordable as far as like I think maybe 4.99. Or I don't even know how much it is. I'm not going to say a price there. But it's less than a boot camp, right? So getting some education that way is a path you could take.

Also, she talks about how she utilizes a mentor. So I think it's really important to be getting constant feedback as you're building together your portfolio. So I know you do have like previous design experience and you're utilizing some of that UX work, but you're seeing that it's not enough to show. So in order to compete with the competition that's out there though, you'll need to show multiple examples of UX design thinking and some solid UI design in your project. So you'll have to make time to add more projects to your portfolio.

And I do go over this a little bit in a couple episodes like how to improve your design and research portfolios and how to land a product designer job. But I think it really helps that you have some design work experience, and you can leverage that to stand out from the competition. But in order to get the interviews, your portfolio needs to be solid. So just really spending some time thinking about what type of projects you need in order to compete with the other people that you're seeing.

And I think one of the key things to keep in mind is that whatever hiring manager is on your website, they need to know in like a minute that you will qualify for this position, right? Because they only want to bring in people that they can retain, right? So how you show that is making sure you have examples of the UX process from the very beginning of ideation to doing a little bit of research on your own. And also, too, UI design is a key component too, because that's like the eye candy that draws people to look at the actual case study that you've created. So keeping all those things in mind.

[00:11:17] A: My name is **[inaudible 00:11:19].** I'm a front-end developer trying to transition from a graphics designer. **[inaudible 00:11:25]** question. My question, I'm kind of a newbie in front of development, and I'm kind of having a hard time getting my foot in this space right. So there are lots of challenges coming and things. It looks really, really hard. I mean, I understand every career path has their own challenges you understand. But my question

is just like I said in the Instagram comment, right? It's a simple one, but still very complex for me to answer. So like but what would you advise? Would you advise newbies trying different career paths to see what suits them? I mean, this is not just for UI designers or not just for designers generally, just like for newbies in tech. One minute you feel like you're the best in the business and you are really doing well. And another minute this impostor syndrome just comes in. I mean, there was a time I was really feeling good. I mean, I took some courses online and I was able to build stuff. To the extent I got myself an internship. And I was feeling good. But a time just came and I really didn't know what was going on anymore and I wasn't really sure. So what do you advise in such situations? I've seen people also going through these kind of challenges too and I don't really know how to advise them, or I haven't really figured out the best way to tackle these issues because it's becoming very rampant in this space.

[00:12:58] TG: Yeah. So first of all, I think it's very normal to feel exhausted while going through this process, because we're constantly pushing our brain to problem solve for the best possible solution, right? Or we risk creating a product that no one wants to use, or they'll open it once and ever again. So that feeling of like fatigue and frustration, I don't know that there's a way to completely avoid it, especially starting out, because you're learning something new. I mean, I feel like this is for anything when you're studying. Like even in school, right? In grade school, maybe you're learning a math problem for the first time and you get frustrated because you're like, "I'm not getting the correct answer that's on the board." But with practice comes that feeling of achievement.

So I think taking note of the areas that you're struggling with so you can give it more focus time. And I think in order to really feel if product design is meant for you is to practice creating like good shit. So what I mean by that, take some time to learn how to use a design software, like maybe Figma, and practice recreating a UI that you think looks amazing. And reflect on that moment. Like after you create it and you see what you created that looks good. Did you enjoy that process of creating it? I think that's a moment of like having a realization that this is what I'm supposed to be doing. At least it was for me.

And also, too, there're videos on YouTube of like daily life of a product designer. If you enjoy watching their day-to-days, could you see yourself in their shoes? I'm not going to lie.

Product design can be a bit tense because you're working with deadlines of creating the best product possible within a phase of time. But what I've learned over the years, you give yourself grace. You only know what you know why you're doing it, right? And there's never – Like at least for me. There's never been a product where I'm just like a hundred percent like, "Yes, this is perfect." Because there's always a way you can iterate on something and make it better.

So coming to terms with when I create this it's going to be the best thing that I've ever created for this moment, right? And just being less hard on yourself. Like you're going to feel tired, a bit exhausted because you're pushing your brain to the limit of like creating design. I'm not sure. Does that answer your question as far as understanding like it's a universal thing that UX designers feel kind of burnt, but it's like you have to find the balance within yourself of, "Okay, I'm spending this amount of time doing my UX foundation work right now, but I'm also, too, working on some UI design work." Which one is causing you more stress at the moment? Maybe they're both causing you stress. So maybe you put one to the side for a little bit so that way you have less workload for yourself.

[00:15:52] K: So this is kind of related to my previous question about me graduating shortly. I have a communications degree that I'm attaining. I was wondering, I'd graduate next semester and I feel like I have been overworking myself throughout the entirety of this year during school and working full-time trying to land a product design role officially. And it's looking like I'm going to have to probably take another break as I continue to iterate and develop a better portfolio, better presentations, better case studies. I do that process over and over and over again. And this is probably like the fourth run. So if this variation doesn't work, I might plan to start again after graduation. But I'm worried that by that time after next semester, which is about spring, that it'll be even harder to get my foot in the door or that maybe the value decreases. Maybe product designers are being paid significantly less. I don't know. I just feel like time is moving by very quickly. Do you have any initial thoughts on that?

[00:17:03] TG: Yeah. So first of all, product designer jobs are here to stay for a very, very long time. Think about it this way. There's always going to be a company trying to create a product that meets the needs of the world. Even during the pandemic, there were product

design jobs surge especially towards the end now, because a lot of companies are trying to create features. Maybe it's like Covid related features or completely new products that help with the pandemic. But there's always going to be jobs out there for product design. It's just a matter of putting yourself in the position to find them and also, too, to get your foot in the door.

But I don't think that you have to think of it that way of time is running out. I think it's better to take time to make it good than to rush it and then have to keep making little changes to it every like a month.

Let's take a short break.

[BREAK]

[00:17:59] TG: So one of the top questions I get about product design is how do I stay inspired? And the other day I decided to take inventory of what I'm doing routinely. The biggest thing that stood out to me was how I'm always investing time to understand products that are advancing in design and technology. Today's sponsor, Google Design, produces original content like articles and videos to show how Google's products come to life, and to inspire designers everywhere. On Google Design, you'll get to know how the products used by billions actually get made. And hear from desires behind some of your favorite products like Chrome, Google Maps, and Nest. Head over to design.google to get inspired. That's design.google. Or follow them on Twitter and Instagram @GoogleDesign.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:18:53] JS: All right. Hi, my name is Jocelyn Stevens. I am an artist and an art teacher in Houston, Texas. And, Tolu, my question for you is as an artist at heart that loves tech, I also have a graphic design background. And I'm wondering, as I move into transferring into to UI, are there times where designing custom elements, for example, icons or illustrations are encouraged? Or is it best to utilize pre-designed stock images and elements?

[00:19:23] TG: Yeah. So with iconography, something I always like to implement whenever I'm designing is using pre-packaged paid iconography UI kits mainly just because it saves me a ton of time and I'm able to have a lot of speed while designing. Initially when I first started out, I did create custom icons. And it is a good skill to have. If you have the time to do that, I would say do it. But I do recommend having the pre-package with resources like Noun projects, or any resources online where you can find free iconography or paid iconography.

But as far as like illustrations, you can also use paid or free. But it's not necessarily like encourage to do one or the other. It's more of like what works best with your flow. But as far as my preference, as far as like having good speed and consistent quality with my designs, I like to pay for icons, pay for illustrations and just have a library for myself to pull from.

[00:20:26] JS: Okay. Sounds awesome. So as I am developing my portfolio, I know I should be working on speed right now so just kind of use what's already available out there. And then maybe depending on where I land, where I land a role, if they encourage it, I guess that's when I could bring in my creative side and experiment.

[00:20:46] TG: Yes, completely. And also, too, think of it this way. In a lot of companies, depending on if you're working with the initial stage of a product, you'll most likely be using an established design system. So you won't really have to be creating icons anyway unless it's something that's completely new.

[00:21:03] JS: Awesome. Hey, that's good to know. I just wanted to make sure I had all my T's crossed and my I's dotted before I did my portfolio. So thank you for that.

[00:21:11] TG: Yeah, no problem.

[00:21:13] Jeff: Hey, my name is Jeff, and I am from Dallas, Texas. And I'm actually about to make the jump into UX/UI. I was a graphic designer. And currently I'm a communications director. So Tolu, thank you for making this podcast, because I've just really enjoyed listening to it. It has been super helpful as someone who's trying to explore the field. And I think one of the unexpected things that I've enjoyed about UI Narrative is just hearing you

talk about the need for more diversity in the field. So my question is, as a white male, what are some practical ways that I can help advocate for that change? I want to be part of the solution, not the problem.

[00:21:54] TG: Yeah, first of all, Jeff. I appreciate you looking for the best ways to be an ally in the UX community. I think it takes a lot of inward growth and reflection to come to this point, right? And I think there's a lot of growth levels to this. So let's break this down. So at the base level, I would start doing some research. So what are you consuming to help better understand why diversity is an issue in the tech space, right? So what types of diversity issues are out there? The biggest one is black people, but disabled black people is even worse.

So I would start by doing some research in those areas, because once you start to learn more about the why, you'll be able to understand how to talk about it more casually in conversations where I know at first it may make some people tense up a little bit. But the more knowledge you have about it, the more comfortable you'll be able to talk about it. So I guess the next level would be getting out of that comfort zone and connecting with people of color and blacks maybe on LinkedIn or social groups looking around to see like what people of color are actually needing.

For example, maybe they're trying to get a job and you have a connection to a company. Or you can be an ally by giving them recommendations or connections for a position. So another scenario maybe someone's new to UX. You could spend five to ten minutes giving them tips for how to get started. Or where you're at right now, I know it may not feel like you know a lot because we talked before, you're completing a boot camp right now. But you still have more perspective than a person that has nothing at all, right? And you could go over things like maybe later on like what helped you in an interview.

Another level to this, once you start working in the UX space, being an ally in the workspace. So looking around the room and getting comfortable with the leaders of your organization. So this means asking them simple questions about diversity and pressuring them to find ways to diversify their candidate selection. So if you are already like connecting with diverse candidates at the base level, then this part would be super easy.

It's not as simple as like just sending them like a website with black or LatinX or any people of color on it, because how would you know who's even looking for a job? You got to have like a connection with the person so you can personally recommend them.

And I think this is one of the fastest ways to bring in diversity to a company. I guess what am I? I'm maybe like fourth level. Having the conversation about the products that you're creating, right? So making sure your products are racially inclusive. So if there is not a single person of color in the room while you're reviewing this product, you must point out the need to bring people of color or like black people into the conversation or you're running the risk of releasing a product that's limited to a particular world view or ethnicity. And you don't want to miss out on you know like an improved cultural awareness for your product. So I think that one's pretty important.

And I guess another level too, asking hiring managers during interviews about their diversity. I highly doubt that they're used to getting this question especially from a white male. So that one would really, I think, push a needle. So basically, in general, like what I'm trying to say here is it's not just like a one and done type of solution. You should always be looking, listening, growing. And when it comes to advocating for diversity, a way you could start today, like following and joining groups like where are the black designers and listening and reading their conversations about like allyships and then start making connections there.

[00:25:38] Jeff: Awesome. Thanks, Tolu. That's super helpful. Those are really practical things. And that's kind of what I was looking for. So, yeah, I appreciate you speaking into that.

[00:25:47] TG: Yeah, no problem. Glad I can help.

[00:25:49] JS: So I've been trying to move back into design. I've been teaching for five years, and I always said I wanted to go back into design. Tolu, is it possible to start a junior position just as a UI designer? Or are they typically looking for UI and UX and junior roles?

[00:26:07] TG: So it really depends on the company. What I'm seeing as far as like in actual job boards, it seems like it's mainly UX design or UX researcher for these junior positions. I'm not really seeing like junior UI/UX or junior UI roles.

[00:26:23] JS: I have a strong design background, and I was trying to move back into design sooner than later. I was kind of under the impression that maybe I can just focus on the design aspect right now and look for roles in that and then work on UX. Tt gives me more time to work on UX. but if it's just more smarter to learn both, to work on both at the same time before looking for roles, I was just wondering if that would be the smartest route.

[00:26:52] TG: Yeah, I think so, just because you'll find issues whenever you're interviewing. So applying even –Unless it's specifically like it says UI designer role, if it's any UX designer role, you'll find the issue of them wanting you to explain your thought process design thinking for why the design looks the way it does. With UI design, you may not find that. But I think it's still a good practice to understand it, because it will help make your design more functional.

And I would say I know it can seem a bit overwhelming to feel like, "Oh my gosh! Like I have to learn UX," even if it's not something you're passionate about. But I would say just go for the fundamentals, like 101 UX fundamentals. And what I mean by that, going to OS guidelines, like material for Android, and human interface guidelines for Apple, and take a look at how they created their operating systems. Both of those companies have practice good UX fundamentals. And already, if you're just following their guidelines, you'll be able to have a basic understanding, the basic foundation for UX.

[00:28:09] JS: Oh, okay. That's great. That's actually really detailed, because I was wondering which company do I look into? So that's great. Apple, and you said Android?

[00:28:19] TG: Mm-hmm.

[00:28:19] JS: Okay. Is there a particular time of the year that is best to apply for roles? I wanted to start applying toward the end of this year. So maybe something would be open. I could start working at the start of the New Year. But I also hear that a lot of hiring

managers, they wait to the New Year, they've got their new budget and all of that. So what would be your advice on that?

[00:28:43] TG: What you heard is correct. The beginning of the year is like the best time just because new budgets. But the good thing about applying towards the end of the year, you may never know, like some companies have run-over budgets as far as like they have extra money to spend that they need to spend before the year is over. So you being a new hire could be a way for them to spend that.

[00:29:05] Speaker: Oh, okay. Never thought of it that way. Thank you.

[00:29:09] Jeff: Tolu, it sounds kind of like you and I have had similar backgrounds with graphic design being kind of how you started out. And then correct me if I'm wrong, but you did a UX boot camp as well. Is that right?

[00:29:20] TG: Mm-hmm. Yep, general assembly.

[00:29:23] Jeff: Yeah, I'm doing career foundry. So from graphic designer, to UX boot camp, to landing your first job in this field, for you, what was maybe the most difficult part of that transition? And then any tips for starting out?

[00:29:37] TG: Yeah. The most difficult part is understanding how to design for UI. So as a graphic designer, a lot of our foundation training is around balance and hierarchy, scale, etc., right? And learning how that relates to interface design, I feel like that's the hugest challenge, because a joke that's in the industry is like whenever you see someone's portfolio of like a graphic designer that's turned into a UX designer, you can usually tell because of the way we design based off of how we've been trained to design for like print. So I think really just being able to understand scale when it comes to type I think was a big issue for me. Understanding like, "Oh, my font size is too small for this screen." Because you can go a lot smaller, maybe like eight point with print. But you have to understand like, with mobile, the lowest you can go is 16. So just starting to understand a lot of those like guidelines really helped me design more functional screens, because I feel like the visual design, I don't think you'll have as much problem with that since you have that branding

background. The trouble is really understanding like, "Okay, how am I making this functional and not just creating something that I think looks good?"

[00:30:57] Jeff: Right. Yeah, I totally agree. I feel like even through the boot camp, I've seen – Hopefully. I think this is true. I've seen my design transition from what my default was as a graphic designer, print designer to a UI designer. So that makes sense. So I'm about to start applying as well hopefully toward the end of the year. And I just didn't know of looking back since it's been a few years since you landed your first job. And I know this differs depending on the person. But just any general non-negotiables for you in choosing a job? Because I know there're lots of roles out there and they all are a little bit different. So do you have any first job non-negotiables for those of us that are looking to jump into the field?

[00:31:41] TG: Hmm. That's a wonderful question.

[00:31:45] Jeff: Thank you.

[00:31:46] TG: That's a really good question. Something that I wouldn't want – Because it I feel like it changes like as you level up, right? So when I first started, I guess non-negotiable is like moving. I don't want to have to move to like California or New York, another state. Another one, as I become like a more senior, is project-based. I like to work on more complex problems now, like design systems for instance. Compared to if a client just wants a marketing website. I don't really find those as fun anymore. I mean, I'll still do it. I'll enjoy it, but it's not my first choice.

So I guess to answer your question, being able to talk to designers on the team. I prefer to not work complete silo. So having another designer to bounce my ideas off of is really important to me. So asking in an interview like, "Okay, are there any other designers on the team?" Because I think starting out, if I didn't have other designers on the team, I kind of would have stayed stagnant as far as like my growth when it comes to becoming a better designer, because I was able to have the other designers on the team challenge my work and make me improve it. So yeah, that's definitely something that is really important.

[00:33:12] Jeff: Yeah, that's great. That's one of mine right now, is I think, especially starting out, I'm in this boot camp, but I'm also paying these tutors to give me my reviews. So I want to be around people that'll give me honest feedback so that I can get a good first experience, I guess, with that first job. And then I was just curious about just any moments in your career over the last few years that you're most proud.

[00:33:38] TG: Oh, man. Putting me on the spot, Jeff.

[00:33:40] Jeff: Well, I'm just asking because I feel like – And maybe I'm wrong. But like with graphic design, at least for my process, you turn around deliverables more quickly because it's like here's a print piece. That's done. I'm proud of that. But at least from what I've been learning, it's like it can be a marathon, not a sprint. So maybe seeing those wins isn't as frequent. So that's kind of a fear of mine, I guess, it's like, "Man, how do you stay encouraged and motivated?" So yeah, just wondering maybe what are some moments that you're proud of.

[00:34:14] TG: Yeah, I have two, because it's changed over the years. So initially when I started, I got to work on the Fuel Rewards Shell mobile app and see that launched. And for me that was like, "Oh my gosh! Something that I designed is being used by millions of people. I can't fathom this." And that felt like, "Okay, yeah. I'm doing something good here, right?" Until I see all the things that were wrong with the product. But going into like now, moments for me when I can convince the stakeholders to go with my design, I feel really good, especially when it's like a tug of war of them not agreeing with me at first. And I may not have the resources to do user research. So I have to go based off of like UX fundamentals of what I know from training, of why my decisions work. And maybe I can do some small, like one or on the team usability testing, right? But being able to convince them and then them actually being like, "Okay, yeah. Yeah, this is a great idea for our product. Let's go with it." Like I feel like such a winner when they agree to it because it's like you spend so much time on the design. And it's like, "Well, the design could change at any time." So I've learned not to be as much attached to that, because you can come up with a million great ideas, right? But at the end of the day it's whatever the client wants, what they think looks best for their product.

[00:35:44] Jeff: Right. Yeah, that makes sense. Cool. Thanks for sharing that. Appreciate it.

[00:35:48] TG: Yeah.

[00:35:49] JS: So starting off, as a new UI/UX designer, should we look for roles that are in an office, that way we know how to communicate with people? Because I feel like working remote is a dream. That would be a dream come true. But at the same time I know there's a lot of learning on the job, and working online over a camera with people is kind of harder to pick up on personalities. Am I making sense to them? How am I coming off to them? So would you say stay away from remote positions or pick either or?

[00:36:22] TG: I don't know that you necessarily need to stay away from either. It's more of what best works for your personality and your comfort levels, because I think in both ways you can provide value and you can still learn just depending on what you need and communicating that to your co-workers. I currently work remote. We just brought on a new person who's a junior UX designer. And she's been doing well. Like I don't see how working remote would be a disadvantage. If anything, it takes away some of that anxiety of needing to be in front of people and present yourself a certain way. And you can just really focus on the problem itself of whatever the call is about. So yeah, I really just think it depends on your personality as far as like what you should choose. But I think you could succeed in either remote or in-person.

[00:37:18] JS: Thank you for that clarification.

[00:37:20] Jeff: So I think as somebody who comes from graphic design, even though as I've gone through this boot camp, I'm really excited about it. Even some things about the UX process that I honestly didn't know if I would enjoy that much, it's been enjoyable, it's been fun to learn. But I think there's still part of me that's like is this job, whatever job I end up taking, is it going to be as creatively fulfilling as a graphic designer position? Or is it just going to be kind of formulaic and take some of the creativity out of the process?

I guess maybe you could speak to that as a previous graphic designer. Like are there new challenges and opportunities that actually, although different, they do fuel that and fill that

bucket that you still have? Or is it just kind of, no, you have to learn to enjoy different parts of the job.

[00:38:13] TG: Yeah. It's definitely enjoying different parts of the job. I would say the thing that closely relates to graphic design is the branding of the app or whatever product you're working on. So if that's something that is a concern for you, startups might be what you're more interested in rather than like a well-established company that's like iterating on their existing products, because you may not have as much wiggle room for like visual identity. But if you're working at a startup, you might be a part of like, "Okay, illustrations, the color palette," etc., for setting the branding for that product, which I could see how that could be a disadvantage for some people of it not being exciting when it comes to like the beginning stages. But I still find exciting moments with product design.

I mean, for instance, like with creating design systems, this is why I'm so into design systems, you get the challenge of adding in a new component or element that doesn't exist in the system, but you have the freedom to make it look how you want to look. Of course, you have it within the guidelines to make sure it matches the system. But I like that I'm able to like, "Oh, we don't have a red in our color palette. Let me find a red that I like, a red tone." So it's like you still get that excitement. It's just like it might not be as much on a granular scale compared to like branding the entire product.

[00:39:46] Jeff: Yeah, that's helpful. I think the question I've been asking myself and a lot of people that know I'm about to make this switch are asking me is like where would you want to work? What kind of place would you be interested in? And so I've thought more about startups for that reason just to give me that variety that I think I like a lot. So anyway, that's helpful. Thanks, Tolu.

[00:40:07] TG: Yeah. Also, too, consider agencies. That's one of the reasons I'm an agency because I get the flexibility to work on different projects. And depending on what the need is, you might be working on completely new like startups and stuff like that all the time. So you'll get to do branding a lot, unless they have graphic designers specifically on the project to create like illustrations. But still you would brand like all the UI components. So that's another consideration.

[00:40:36] RS: Hi, my name is Robin Smith, and I'm a freelance illustrator and soon to be a UX design student from Los Angeles. My question is I'm currently looking to expand my career into the world of UX/UI. What advice/tips would you give me while I start this journey? And how do you think I can utilize my current illustration skill set?

[00:40:56] TG: Yeah. So first of all, I think it's awesome that you're an illustrator. That's a big plus up for any designer getting into UI/UX. So I guess one of the first tips I would say is to just start immersing yourself in UX content, whether that means like you're reading books, you're watching content, you're following people on social handles, watching YouTube videos, any way you can get more familiar with what UX is and the way people talk about it.

Also, too, starting to connect with like designers and researchers online, starting to look for different terminology that you're hearing in conversations. Maybe you see a post somewhere and you might be curious of like what that thing is, starting to look those types of things up. And I think one of the biggest important things is just thinking about how you want to go about education. I recommend finding like an online boot camp that fits your budget needs and finding a mentor to help you along the way.

As far as like how you can use your illustration background, I think that will help you a lot with when you're creating UI in your projects. Typically, a lot of designers will use templates or like UI kits that have illustrations already included. But that's a nice add-on to your portfolio of saying like I created these illustrations. And if this is something you would like to be included in your products, I could provide that benefit for you.

There was this one person on the podcast, Jay Allison, who does illustration on the side, and she was able to use that to her advantage. I think it was Microsoft she was working at to help out with one of the projects that they were doing. Because she spoke up and said, "Hey, I have this skill. Is this something that I could help contribute to the company?" So it's nice you get the both worlds of like the design, but also you get to have that creative freedom to create some illustrations.

Also, too, you might find that like illustration icons might be your thing. I would look into that. Do a Google search for that of what those look like, and just iconography in general. With illustration, you have to be good at visually like representing something. And sometimes it's in a literal way, and sometimes it's in an abstract way. So I think that might be something that will be up your alley as far as utilizing your skill set even more.

[00:43:24] RS: Great. Yeah, sounds good. Thank you.

[00:43:26] J: Hey, I'm **[inaudible 00:43:28].** My pronouns are they or he. I'm based in Minneapolis, and I'm a UX researcher. I was curious, what has brought you the most joy in creating these first 50 episodes? And what are you most looking forward to in creating the next 50?

[00:43:41] TG: Oh man, that's a really good question. Let's see. There're so many things that have brought me joy. I would say number one is meeting new people. Before the podcast, I was really feeling like the only black designer in the world, because like every job I went to I was the only black one there. And then the one job I went to where there was a black designer, he left in like a month. I was like, "What is going on here?" But, yeah, just connecting with people all over the world from different countries, different backgrounds and hearing their stories of how they got into UX is just extremely inspiring to see like the struggle to no struggle of like how they're able to make a successful career from that. So yeah, just connecting with people has brought me joy.

And as far as like what I'm looking forward to, I would say just building a foundation with listeners of what it takes to become a successful UX designer in their own eyes, because I feel like there's a lot of pressure of trying to live up to what we see, right? But being able to understand that sometimes what you're content with may not be what you thought it would be as you become more established in your career and as you begin to understand more of like how you work, right? Like what's your pace? Because not everyone is going the same pace when it comes to their speed or like what they actually enjoy to create. So just being able to help designers understand that, and then also, too, building my own education company within UX. I'm still defining what that completely entails, but I know that I want to help anyone that is getting into UX have the like most smoothest, the easiest, simplest path

of how to get started, because there's a lot of confusion out there when it comes to what boot camp do I choose. How much money should I spend on this? Should I go to college? What book should I read? So just helping filter out a lot of that noise is like a big goal for me, whether I do that solely through the podcast or through some educational products that I put out in the future. I feel like that's what I'm looking forward to the most.

[00:46:04] J: Yeah, thanks for sharing that. That definitely answered my question. And I just wanted to share some feedback that you're already organically accomplishing that first point that you shared that you're looking forward to of inspiring like new practitioners and new folks in the design space, because I think just by listening to your podcast my like impostor syndrome has dwindled. I'm like, "This is what I like to do. This is what I'm good at doing and so I'm just going to own it now instead of trying to focus on being an expert in everything." So I really appreciate that.

[00:46:33] TG: Thank you so much for sharing that with me, Jabrie. It warms my heart a lot, because I feel like we all get so tongued up, and what do people think of me, right? I feel like it's hard to separate the self from the design as far as like this design is who I am, right? But really it's not that way. It's just an extension of like our thinking. It doesn't make you any less of a person if someone doesn't agree with your decision for what you chose. It doesn't make like an idiot or any of those things. So yeah, I think it's one of those topics that I'm always going to talk about because it always creeps up on you no matter like how established you become, because you spend a lot of time working on different projects. So it becomes a part of your life in a way. But just learning that it's okay to separate the design from the person.

[00:47:27] CR: Hey, thanks so much for having me on the show. My name is Cindy Ross. My pronouns are she, her, hers. And I'm a recent cognitive science graduate from UC Davis. Aand right now I'm currently working as an associate product designer at New Relic. My question is how do you balance feedback on your designs from stakeholders, from co-workers, to managers, to even executives in the company? How do you take in their feedback and work through designing that compromise?

[00:47:56] TG: Yeah, this is a really good question because I feel like every UX designer struggles with this, even UX researchers. And I think what it comes down to is getting everyone in the room, if possible. Sometimes that's not possible. But giving everyone in the room to have the conversation, because a lot of times you'll be pulled in different ways of people telling you what's important for the product, right? And no one's necessarily wrong. Like most ideas are important features to have in the project. But you have to get the person in the room who wants to set goals for the business like as far as like whether it'd be revenue goals or whatever the actual goal is for why we're creating this product in general or why we're creating this new feature in general.

So once you're able to figure that out, then it becomes a bit easier to balance like what request is most important, because you'll always get requests from different people, and it's good to have a backlog of all that stuff. But what it comes down to is like you'll have a priority of what is most important. You'll be able to push on that of like, "Well, yes, your idea for this is super important to the product. And I agree that we should probably add it in. But if we want to meet our deadline for whatever feature it is that we're building, maybe we should focus on this part of it a little bit more instead of that and we can put that on for another date."

[00:49:27] CR: That makes a lot of sense. Thank you. Now, being in my early career, I'm starting to realize how much alignment is such an important aspect of doing anything within a company. So that makes a lot of sense to me. If I can ask a follow-up question off of that?

[00:49:42] TG: Yeah, go ahead.

[00:49:43] CR: Speaking on the importance of alignment, how do you make that impact as an early career designer? Because, of course, I'm not in those conversations with the people who are really making the decisions. Sometimes I am. Sometimes I'm not. I can't always be.

[00:49:59] TG: I think that what you have to do, first of all, feel comfortable with asking why for everything, because sometimes that's what needs to be asked in order for people to think about, "Oh, well, maybe we're going the wrong direction, or maybe we need to like

vocal down a little bit more to focus on what the real issue is here." Because I know you may feel like, since you're not maybe the leader, senior designer team, like you don't have much pull when it comes to choosing what the task should be. But if you keep asking questions like why are we doing this, or like I'm curious of what's the direction for that specific task that we're doing with the feature update. Or, hey, I saw that we're making changes to this. Can I ask what's – I mean, you may not be able to ask like request source, because that may feel a bit pushy. But you can ask things like, "Oh, why did we come to this decision?"

And from there I think you'll be able to show that you are thinking about these types of decisions. I know it can be a bit hard to like show the assertiveness of being able to like decide what should be done, but I think it's good to show that you're thinking about those types of things, because it may give you an opportunity that you may not realize is available to you.

[00:51:25] CR: Thank you. That definitely answered my question. I think that's a good way to make an impact, but also always just showing that you're staying curious at every part of the project.

[00:51:35] TG: There are a couple of listeners that weren't able to make it live to the show. So I want to be able to answer their questions as well. At journey to UX designs question is once you're in the industry what are some concrete steps to move up in terms of more senior roles and compensation? We know traditionally it is more challenging for women and women of color to navigate this route.

The first step would be to take initiative. Don't wait to be instructed on what to do. Let's say your boss gave you a list of tasks to complete. Once those tasks are finished, put together your own list of what needs to be done next instead of waiting for your boss to do it for you. Also, set one-on-ones with your boss to make goals for yourself so that way they know what you are planning for with your future, so that way if they can help you they're aware.

In a recent episode with Donald Burlock, we talked about T-shaped goals. So identify what your goals are and what skills you can improve. One of the fastest ways to move up also

and increase your salary is to go to another company. And sometimes it's the people and not the job. So it might be that you need to try a new work environment, and that's like a last resort. Of course, first try to see what you can do at the company you're currently at. Talk to your boss and go from there.

The next question is from llii.dd. They ask, "What are some tips for moving up in UX/UI? Accelerated growth?" So my answer to this is similar to the previous listener. You need to identify your skill sets that suck and the ones that you're really good at so you'll have a better understanding of areas that need improvement. Then you can make a plan for how you're going to improve those skill sets for your current job or the job that you're trying to obtain.

And that's all the questions. That ends today's episode. This was so much fun. I appreciate every one of my guests for making this episode a success. I really enjoy talking with you all, and for you with your earbuds in listening in your car or at home right now, thank you, thank you, thank you for sticking with me for 50 episodes, y'all.

I started this out as a hobby and now I've made it into a business. So yeah, I will forever be thankful for you listening and supporting my niche podcast. It means so much to me really. I'm going to make me start crying. If y'all have any questions or comments about today's episode make sure to tag me @uinarrative on Instagram, or @uinarrativeco on Twitter. Also, don't forget to share this episode with anyone you think would benefit from it.

I love each and every one of you. Talk to you all next time. Bye.

[OUTRO]

[00:54:23] TG: Thank you for listening to the UI Narrative podcast. If you like what you hear, make sure to show this podcast in love by commenting and subscribing where you listen. You can find me on Instagram and Facebook at UI Narrative, or Twitter @uinarrativeco. I also respond to emails at hello@uinarrative.com. Talk to you later. Bye.

[END]