

EPISODE 60

[INTRODUCTION]

“AG: Content is sort of the string that connects all the parts of the customer journey together from when they first hear about your product, to when they visit the initial website of your product, to when they decide to sign up for your product, become a customer, use your product and tell their friends about your product. Content is really that connective tissue between the entire customer experience or product experience.”

[00:00:35] 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?

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[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:50] TG: Sup, everybody? Welcome back to the UI Narrative podcast. Let me introduce you to today's guest. Aladrian Goods is a speaker, mentor, leader and advocate. As content design manager at Intuit, she partners with leaders across disciplines, functions and designs

craft to elevate opportunities for content design, which influences and impacts product experiences throughout Intuit's virtual expert platform.

She holds a BA in communication from UC Santa Barbara, and earned her UX design certification from Career Foundry. Aladrian's superpowers our storytelling, connecting with people and cultivating inclusive environments. She cares deeply about creating equitable opportunities for black women and people of color and design. Discovering new music, experiencing it live, and Lakers Basketball.

Aladrian, welcome to the UI Narrative podcast.

[00:02:48] AG: Hello, hello, hello. That was a beautiful introduction, by the way. Thank you for that. And thanks for having me, too.

[00:02:55] TG: You're so welcome. Alright, so let's start out by talking about your first memory of being interested in writing.

[00:03:03] AG: Cool, this is a great question. The first memory that's coming to mind is like sixth grade. I think it was around 2001, and the World Trade Center had just happened. And I remember there was like an assembly, and my sixth-grade teacher at the time wanted us to like write to help us express what was really going on. And then I wrote a poem. I don't recall the poem. Don't remember it at all. But I remember the process of writing. And it was very cathartic. And I performed it, and folks clapped. So I think it was an overall good end-to-end experience for me. But I think that's like the earliest memory that comes to mind was like writing poetry in Miss Holmes' class all the way back in sixth grade.

[00:03:50] TG: Shout out to miss Holmes. I think that it's amazing how that impacted your new interest into writing. Because I feel like a lot of people, they don't really know things that they're good at, or things that could really stick with them until they're exposed to it. So I think it's awesome that you had that at such an early age of your interest in writing.

[00:04:10] AG: Oh, for sure. And I think it grew over time. Like it didn't necessarily – Like I said, like, it's not something I knew I really had an interest in. But I remember that moment distinctly.

And then there's other moments in high school where, in AP English, that you saw the AP tests, right? And I think a nine is the highest score you can get on the AP test. And my AP English teacher in 11th grade, Miss Howet, she never gave out nines. And I was one of the students who got a nine. I think one of like three students in like five years that got a nine. So really, really love that.

So I think writing was a big part of who I was. Now I'm thinking of like all the scholarships that I won, like all these things that came from writing. So, you know what? Like, I think, when you know, you know. And it doesn't often have to – I don't know. Maybe, I think, everything is connected. And I'm sure we'll get into a bit more about my career and how I journeyed into content design as a career path. And it wasn't straightforward as, "I knew I was going to be a great writer since I was 11. And now here I am, content design manager at a top tech company, blah, blah, blah." Like, it's not a straight path. But I'm excited to get more into it.

[00:05:33] TG: Yeah. So before we get more into your journey to becoming a content design manager at Intuit, I'd like to clarify some terminology, because I know some of you listening may have never heard about content design before as a career in UX. So in your own words, Aladrian, what is content design?

[00:05:51] AG: Yes, I love this definition. So in my own words, I think content design is basically applying design principles. So I know it's the UI Narrative podcast. But design thinking, and really using that framework to apply to the words that show up in the page. But not just about the words, but the combinations of illustrations, and charts, and iconography, and typography and how all those things work together in a digital interface to help someone accomplish their goal, whether, in my case, it's completing their taxes, or helping other folks with taxes, or helping other folks clean their books up, or you checking your pictures or checking your notifications on Instagram. Like, content design is a part of those experiences as well.

[00:06:46] TG: How did you first hear about content design as a career path?

[00:06:50] AG: So first time I heard about UX content design or content design as a career path was when I was applying for my first job at Intuit, honestly. So the job role was product content designer. And the description really stood out to me because it had this balance of, "Hey, we

need someone who can apply product design thinking and do UX design, but also have really strong writing skills and able to use the Intuit voice and tone to apply it to the end product content for our professional tax software.”

So in reading the actual job description, I showed it to a friend, and she was like, “Oh, my goodness. This is exactly who you are.” And then from there, researching and preparing for the interview, I just learned about more content design and picked up the content design book by Sarah Richards, the content strategy toolkit by Megan Casey, and started reading articles online and really helped sharpen my content design/UX writing skills.

And most people, when you look up content design UX writing, is either like very close or mentioned in the same sentence. I think these things are two sides of the same coin. Or content design is kind of the full picture where UX writing is actually the act of writing the copy that goes into the wireframes, prototypes, and the products as well. So long answer short, I learned about content design when I was applying for product design jobs. And the rest is kind of history.

[00:08:29] TG: That's so interesting how you stumbled upon it just from like a job application. Like, that is so wild to me, but it's like amazing at the same time, because you were able to figure out like a new career path for yourself just from seeing like the different skill sets that you already were doing.

[00:08:47] AG: Mm-hmm, absolutely. In my job at Lexus, I was working as a digital communication specialist, which was basically taking the Lexus voice and tone principles and applying it to how we say no to customers via email, chat, and social media. So I was almost doing parts of the content design job without even knowing it.

So I think, my background in marketing or content marketing, whatever, and me, just being a passionate writer since a young age, started to like build up, build up, build up. And then once I discovered that UX design was the framework that I needed to kind of scale content design, yeah, it just kind of worked out. So shout out to LinkedIn job recommendations, because that's where I saw it.

[00:09:39] TG: Wow! I've been telling people LinkedIn has some good jobs, like, especially if you know how to network. You never know. Like the person you're talking to could connect you to the job they just posted. Or just reaching out to the recruiter that's posted the job.

[00:09:53] AG: Absolutely. And I think, yeah, and LinkedIn was a part of that my secret sauce too, because I would go to tons of UX events and things. And what I would do was I would take copious notes, as well as ask thoughtful questions to the panelists. And then I would be the first person to post about the LinkedIn event and just provide value to the community. And this is back, way back in the day when we used to meet in person. So you know how everyone had just really connected on LinkedIn. So I would tag the speakers, tag the event, tag the sponsors, and then put all the details in it. So all the folks who we just connected with we've led to my posts, reshare it, all these things. And then, I guess, that helps the LinkedIn algorithm know the industry I'm in and recommend me good jobs.

[00:10:46] TG: So I know you have a background degree in communication. So you also took a UX bootcamp at Career Foundry? Do you feel like that helped prepare you to land like an interview? Or did you have to do like additional training outside of that schoolwork?

[00:11:02] AG: That is a great question. So I was really intentional about taking a certification, like, I use certification intentionally, because I think boot camps get a tough rep, or a bad rep, or have a negative connotation. One, because it's this sort of, like, just pumping out UX designers type of thing. But with Career Foundry, it was like 10 months, and I was also working full time. So it was definitely an investment.

And I think where it really helped me is having the language to do it, because I had been working in digital marketing. I started my career in marketing events. I was doing content marketing. Like all these different types of marketing. Even making wireframes and prototypes, in some instances, but didn't know the language of UX, or the framework.

So I think once I got into the program, I was able to connect the dots really quickly. And then I think one thing I really focused on, too, was connecting the coursework to a real-world problem. So they gave us a brief, a design brief, there was several to choose from, but you can interpret it the way you wanted it. So the one I selected was really aligned to a problem a friend was having

with her startup in the Bay Area, trying to scale walking tours based off of her postcard company. So I was really intentional about working with her as a stakeholder, and her co-founders as stakeholders, to try to translate the goodness from what she was doing, like the problem she was trying to solve with the walking tours, as well as scaling it from her just being the one leading it, to people being able to lead it themselves.

So I think that's the advice I give to a lot of folks I mentor and tutor is trying to connect the work you're doing to a real-world problem so you have that confidence to communicate the value of it and a little bit of the experience of stakeholder management when you're applying to UX jobs. Because I think the programs that exist, there's so many that exist now, it's good. Like the information you're getting could be quality. But that sort of understanding that UX is relational a lot of times. And I think that's something that could be missing.

[00:13:40] TG: Yeah, I totally agree with you on how bootcamps do get a lot of bad rep. I'm like in between, because now that I'm getting into education, it's like I see the faults in a lot of them as far as misguiding people into like false promises. But I do think like if you put in the work to understand how what you're learning is applicable, like what Aladrian said, like, understanding that, "Okay, this is the framework that I'm learning from this UX, right? How can I apply it to something that I like using my everyday life or a problem I see someone else having?" That's when it's really going to start to click. Because if you're just going with like the cookie cutter problem, like, some bootcamps will just say like, "Okay, everyone's getting this problem that they have to solve." It may not click as well for you, because they might give you examples that kind of like already solved it, you know? So I think it's really, really helpful for you to be able to apply that to your own work.

[00:14:34] AG: Absolutely.

[00:14:35] TG: So when you were like going through the process of like taking this bootcamp, like what was like some of your biggest struggles for, I guess, connecting the dots as you were like learning?

[00:14:45] AG: I think the biggest struggle for me was just procrastination. And this is when we were still going to work in-person and the world was open to pre-COVID in, like, 2018. And I

very much am a like people person, and especially in learning environments. I love learning in a classroom setting where I can raise my hand, I can make a joke, get energy. Maybe ask the question that everyone's thinking, but no one wants to say, as well as engage with the folks there. So I definitely missed that aspect of it. So the procrastination was really, really kind of my Achilles heel in the learning aspect of it.

But I would say that community was really important to set up, too. For me, engaging the folks in my life, even though they don't necessarily understand what UX is or UX was. Just having a shared calendar and say, like, "Hey, I'm going to study at this time. I'm going to do these things." And my mentor and tutors that I had were really helpful in that way too, to like hold me accountable to those plans.

But to answer your question about connecting the dots to a real, real problem, I think I would just say just the learning pains of trying to learn something, implement it, as well as kind of teach the folks that you're trying to help. What you're doing, as well, was hard, or was a challenge. But I also think that that helped me. Because once I got into content design, I was doing a lot of the same, like learning, doing and teaching at the same time. And as I continue to elevate in my career, that skill is becoming more and more apparent, especially in these teams where I'm the first, or the only, or one of few in my design craft discipline who is responsible for not only delivering the work, but collaborating with partners, and being able to teach and inspire. And now there's a new layer of hiring folks to do the same.

So yeah, I think that was the toughest part. But I think learning through it and just having the safety net of the program, having the safety net of working with a friend who trusted me with her thing. And it was also good for her because she was trying to learn what she wanted to do with it. That really kind of prepared me for the challenges I would face in the coming roles.

[00:17:35] TG: Yeah. I like that you brought up teaching as something that never really goes away as far as it being something that helps you learn and grow. You would think like, "Okay, this person has hired me to do this job. They obviously know what I do." But in a lot of cases they don't. It's just like someone internal in the company or external in the company was like, "Hey, you need a UX person for this to improve this." And they're like, "Oh, okay. I trust that person. Let me go hire this." And then they bring you in and expect you to have all the answers.

So it's something that I think every person getting into UX should continue to build that skill of understanding how to talk about the terminology, how to defend your value at whatever job company that you're at, because most of these employees, they don't really know what UX is. And it's not entirely like their fault. It's part of our jobs to educate them. Because I mean, that's why we have job, because we got to advocate for why UX is important.

[00:18:36] AG: Absolutely. And I think to add on to that, too, is even coming into a design team where maybe design – Everyone knows what design is. A lot of your role as a designer, content designer, service designer, visual designer, UX designer, UI designer, is working with stakeholders, and stakeholders don't always know, like, clearly what it is that you do, or why they can't just say like, “Hey, give me the words.” Or why they can't say like, “Hey, I need you to turn these designs in yesterday,” when you still need to test with customers. You know what I mean? So it is that education part of it? Because I think, in some places, UX maturity is really, really big. Like they have large teams. They're running at scale. They're doing a lot of things. And then other companies, UX is pretty small, or maybe still new. Like people know they need it, but don't necessarily know how to work with them. And I think that was my case as an incoming content designer, is that everyone knew that we needed a content designer in the product. However, no one knew what to do with me or like how to work with me, because they hadn't worked with a content designer before. And in my first role, I had to figure that out and got to fail fast and like figure it out and just kind of like figure it out, honestly, and just try things and see if it worked. But then as soon as you find the things that work, then you can teach and do good work and kind of scale as well.

[00:20:23] TG: You mentioned how community was a part of what helped you with your growth. Do you have any recommendations for content designer communities or just UX communities in general?

[00:20:33] AG: Yeah, there's a ton of content design communities. So there's a couple conferences that I've attended, both by Brain Traffic events. Shout out to Kristina Halvorson and the crew over there. The first one is Confab, or Confab, is a conference that's content strategy. So that will have everything from product marketing to in-product content strategy. And then there's Button, which is specific to UX content and product content design. And I've had the chance to connect with them. And those are two great communities and conferences to look at.

There's also working in content.com. That creates a lot of content. I know. I'm using this word so much. They create a lot of things around early career content. They post content design jobs, and really pushing for salary transparency. My guy, James Dear, is running that. And he and Candy Williams are actually working on a conference called Perspectives, that there's a free track, and then there's a more direct kind of paid track, that if folks are interested in content design, they should definitely check out.

And then there's the UX Writing Collective. There is – Yeah, I think there's a ton of things out there if you just drop UX writing communities. Oh! Content + UX is a great Slack channel that I'm a part of. I joined that early in my career. And there's just tons of folks in there posting about jobs. And it's a global community too. So if folks are not in the United States, or wanting to connect with folks who are in a more global demographic, then that would be a great place to check out, too.

[00:22:34] TG: Thanks for those resources. I've gotten all those written down, and I'll have them in the show notes. So another thing I wanted to ask you – So I know there's the term UX writer and content designer, right? And sometimes I've heard that use like interchangeably. Have you like seen any other alternative names for content designer? Like, for example, I'm a product designer, but I'm also called like UX designer and action designer, even though like they're all technically different roles, but they get used interchangeably from time to time. Mainly, the goal here is just to see like if someone's applying for like a content designer job, what are the types of roles should they be looking for as far as titles?

[00:23:16] AG: Absolutely. Yeah, I think, for designers across the board, we have a naming problem. I wish we could just all get on the same page with this. But for content design, I think the distinction really is like you'll hear content designer, you'll hear UX writer. Sometimes there's UX copywriter. Sometimes there's content strategist. I think there's a different meaning, but it's very nuanced. And I see a lot the big companies are following into its lead with calling their UX writers content designers.

So I know Facebook has done it. Google's in the process of making the name switch. Adobe is doing that too. Or I think Adobe's already been content designers. But I think the biggest

difference is sort of mindset, right? So I think copywriting is a very specific thing, where it's like heads down, you're writing the copy, and it's usually within a marketing or editorial context. For UX writer, in some cases, it is really just writing the copy in the frames, or the product wireframes, etc.

What I love about content design is content design treats writers as designers, right? Like we're not sort of a transactional, at the end of the process, kind of checkbox, check the box off. We're actually a strategic partner who's there early enough in the process, and as often as needed in the process. So that can be at kickoff meetings when a folio is being created for a feature to be done. UX content designers can also be in research sessions. I've ran tons of research as a content designer. And also getting a Figma and make a mess, move some things around, play around with illustrations, play around with hierarchy, try out variations of headlines, and subtext and things of that nature. That kind of expands what they do. And UX writing is like a small part, or a part of content design.

And I guess, to kind of build on the small part, is that a lot of the work that I do as a content designer was not writing. It was getting context. It was managing relationships. It was really trying to get an understanding of what the current experience is, and like what the customer problem really is. It's understanding like what matters to our stakeholders and why? And like, what are our business goals? Or what are our metrics of success? And really understanding that. And then once you have all that context, then sitting down to say, "Okay, I have enough information to actually write something that will deliver on all those things."

[00:26:29] TG: So speaking on context, because for me, like, I've never worked with a content designer. So everything that you do sounds amazing. And I wish I could work with a content designer every day, because I'm the one trying to write this copy.

[00:26:42] AG: Yeah, talk to your boss. We got to change that. We got to change that.

[00:26:49] TG: I know. Right? So about context, like how do you typically go about finding the context for what you need to like move things around on the screen, or create new copy for a section? Like, do you have to do like additional research? Or do you like typically get to work with UX researchers?

[00:27:10] AG: Sure. So I think the context lives through people and documentation, right? So I hate Jira. So I'm not going into Jira to figure out anything. So I'm going to talk to the person who either created the Jira ticket, or maybe the designer, or the PM. It's just like, "Okay, let's have a kickoff meeting. Let's talk. Let me ask all the questions that I possibly need in order to understand like what it is that we're trying to solve with this."

And if it's early, like if this is a new feature, and we still have research question to solve, then I'm happy to host some of those research sessions. Happy to be in some of those research sessions and work with either the researcher or the designer. Because at Intuit, everyone's empowered to do customer research. We got like a whole customer connect. That's what it's called. Like that department specific to connecting into an employee is with Intuit customers.

But basically, coming up with the learning plan and discussion guide and making sure there's content related questions there. So I really understand what type of language the customers are using when they're describing this type of feature. Or like what is really the pain that they're facing? And being able to understand that from the get go is dope. But if I come in – And maybe it's like midway through a project, like they already tested out. So like low-fidelity stuff, and now they're iterating going forward. Then I just ask the people. That's how I get the context.

[00:28:50] TG: I love that. Because I would just imagine like how much more different roles that would entail into your job if you do have to do all that stuff on your time. I love that it's split up into different roles.

[00:29:03] AG: Mm-hmm. For sure.

[00:29:05] TG: So since you've started at Intuit as a content designer, you've been promoted a couple of times. So, woohoo there. And now you're in a manager role. Congratulations on that. What's a day in the life like as a content design manager at Intuit? I know that this role is still relatively new.

[00:29:27] AG: Still fresh.

[00:29:29] TG: Yes. Still fresh. Since you like just started at the beginning in this year, but I'd love for you to give us like an overview of like how has this first month been? Like, the good, the challenging, new responsibilities that you might have now?

[00:29:45] AG: Sure, absolutely. So I think the challenging – I'll start the challenging and with the good. I mean, it's all good. It's all good. I think the challenging part is really just understanding, one, the new team, the new area, the new problem space that I'm in, as well as who the new people are and who are the key players. I think it goes without saying that I really care about people and connecting with people first. And I know that a lot of what I do is going to be influenced. It will influence people and be influenced by and through people. So just trying to understand who does what, where. And also decide like what meetings do I need to be in? What don't I need to be in? So I can really focus my time and energy on the most important stuff.

I think another challenge that comes with managing is actually hiring. So you wonder – I mean, as a candidate, you're like, “Oh, man, this will you take you forever,” like, not hearing back from anything. Yeah, there's processes. There're so many processes that go into hiring candidates.

[00:30:51] TG: Yes.

[00:30:55] AG: If you knew. If you only knew. So that's been something. I'm like, “Dang.” Like, “I'm used to just like moving fast and wanting to say something.” Say, like, when I say do to happen so quickly. But working with people, and processes, and approvals and things of that nature I would say is a challenge. And then two is just adapting to, for me, a larger team. So I was – The ratio was less than 10 designers to just one me, which was still a lot. But now there's 30 designers.

[00:31:31] TG: Wow.

[00:31:33] AG: Yes. So I have lots of stakeholders and lots of folks who need content design support, but there's only myself. But it's exciting, because now I get to – I think this is the good part, is that folks know they need to work with content design, and they respect content design and know that there's opportunities to improve. And that's the best place that you want to come into, is a space that already knows that they're excited to have you there, right?

So I think I'm looking forward to just elevating the craft of content design, getting everyone on the same page about what it is, what it isn't. And really, us being the catalyst to connection throughout the organization is something I'm really looking forward to. And yeah, if you're a content designer, and/or a senior content designer, or looking to get into content design, I am actively hiring. So I'll put the LinkedIn in the show notes as Tolu would say.

[00:32:43] TG: Yes. Definitely.

[00:32:46] AG: I think that's that. But the biggest – I guess the day-to-day for me is a lot of it – The first month was really about meeting people and having conversations, and attending meetings, and getting to know my new team, and talking to potential candidates, and strategizing what to tackle first and envisioning what I want the team to look like. And working every day to just get clear on that vision.

[00:33:19] TG: So it kind of sounds like they didn't really have content management department like before your role. Is that what I'm hearing?

[00:33:28] AG: There was a content design manager in the role before me.

[00:33:34] TG: Oh, okay. Okay.

[00:33:34] AG: Yeah, they had taken on a new opportunity. So the cool thing about Intuit is that Intuit has a pretty strong content design community. And a lot of them are based in like QuickBooks or TurboTax. And we got content designers all over the world.

[00:33:53] TG: Oh, yes. I forgot about all those acquisitions that you guys have done.

[00:33:58] AG: Oh, yeah. Well, those are the core projects. No. I'm just kidding. But yeah, we even got MailChimp now.

[00:34:03] TG: Yeah, I saw that one recently.

[00:34:06] AG: Yeah. So we there's a lot of content designers. So even though I'm sort of the first content design manager, or currently the only content design manager in this specific part of Intuit, I can easily plug in and like reach out to content design managers or even just content designers at Intuit from those existing relationships. So it's not like I'm on an island by any means. So it feels really good to be a part of the community.

[00:34:38] TG: That's good. Yeah. That's good that you have some other people you can weigh in on different maybe troubles or situations that you're trying to deal with, because I know it can be a bit scary, intimidating, starting something new from scratch. So just to have any type of like foundation from what someone else has done that you can make your own sauce is great.

[00:35:01] AG: 100%. I ask all the questions. I ask all the questions. I'm like, "Well, have you thought about this? Like, this is what I'm feeling?" Yeah. But there's great people at Intuit and some of the smartest people I've ever met in my life. So excited to learn from them.

[00:35:16] TG: For people that might be interested in applying, what are some of the type of skill sets that you would say a content designer needs to have to be able to succeed in their role?

[00:35:26] AG: That's a really great question. So I think to succeed in the role in content is – Obviously, I think, writing craft is table stakes. So I won't go into the details of grammar and making the noun and verb agreement and like all those things, or subject and verb agree. So I think those are table stakes.

I think empathy is really a huge one. I know we hear that a lot with UX. But really caring about people and the folks you're writing for, and the partners that you're writing or collaborating with is really important. I think being able to see the forest for the trees. So yes, we need to think about like the details of it, but being able to zoom out, and try to see how the thing that you're working on fits into the larger picture is really important. Because I think content is sort of the string that connects all the parts of the customer journey together from when they first hear about your product, to when they visit the initial website of your product, to when they decide to sign up for your product, become a customer, use your product, and tell their friends about your

product. Content is really is really that connective tissue between the entire customer experience or product experience.

And then lastly, I think – I mean, it's innately collaborative. It's innately collaborative. Like you have to be willing to make connections, be a connector, even if you're – I know there's folks who maybe introverts, whatever. Not whatever. Sorry. You can cut that out. But maybe introverts or maybe a little bit afraid to speak up. I think a lot of content design is speaking up and saying, “Well, have we considered this? Have we thought about it this way? Well, this is inconsistent. Or this isn't accessible and based on XYZ.” So not being afraid to own your perspective and rationale is something that makes a good content designer too.

[BREAK]

[00:37:42] TG: Let's take a short break.

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 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.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:38:38] TG: It's funny, though, because something about the introvert thing. Like I've had people talk to me of like, “Well, I'm introverted. How do I adapt to being like a UXer?” Because in order to be successful UXer, you actually you have to be comfortable with presenting, like, all the time, communicating all the time. Like, you're talking a lot about what you do and reiterating it several times to other people. So it's just like you have to learn your balance of what you need as far as like boundaries of like, “Okay, I know that this person wants to have a meeting. Maybe

you have some type of like block on your calendar for like only a certain amount of meetings a day if that's possible. And if that is always possible, depending on where you work. But maybe limiting, like, okay, maybe only a few times a week compared to like every day. But it's a balance of figuring out what works best for you sometimes. Meetings don't need to happen. You'll be like, "Hey, I know you want to meet about this, but actually like I already have it typed up here. I already have it ready to go here in this presentation or something. I would love for you to review it so that way, like, if you have any questions, then we can have a meeting." Because some stuff, it's like, "Well, you don't really need to talk about it if it's already a done deal type of thing." But it is something that you just have to learn to lean into. I know it can be a bit uncomfortable if you are introverted. But you got to learn your balance.

[00:40:11] AG: Exactly. And I think there's a lot of tools out there now that can speak to that. And even for me, like, even though I'm an extrovert, I'm also like an empath. So it's like I don't necessarily need everybody's energy all the time. So I've been using tools like Slack now has a new feature where you can record videos and share your screen and just like send it right to the person. Doing things like asynchronously, right? Like making a recording. Like putting the context and everything. And then dropping it into a chat channel and then getting feedback that way. Or Figma is incredible for that. Like you can comment. Go back and forth. Or even just jump into the huddle feature where you don't necessarily have to be face-to-face, but you do have to communicate. So I think I love that.

And some of the best designers I know are introverts. But you have to be able to confidently communicate your design rationale to stakeholders. And that's just table stakes for the game we're playing. So it's things like Toastmasters. You can practice. You can hype yourself up with music. Make sure you have a break afterwards. Things that will help you recharge. But yeah, like folks need to hear you rationale or hear your rationale because, yeah, I think that's just a part of being a designer.

[00:41:44] TG: A tip that I always tell people, because I had the confidence. I was like, "Oh, you seem like any conversation. You're just extroverted. You can just talk." But it's like, really, I kind of match the energy of the room. That's just kind of like how my personality is. And for every single meeting I go to, I always have bullet points, even if it's just like a 10-minute meeting. Because something I also realize is that if I don't come fully prepared for any type of question,

then that also drains me. Because then you kind of feel like, “Oh, man.” I got just like a longwinded answer of like, “Oh –” Like, you don't have your thoughts together, then I might make you like panic a little bit. So it's just like just always come. Or like even if it's just like one sentence of you giving your update. Like know what you're going to say if you don't have anything to show, or just whatever the conversation may be about. So that way you feel prepared. And hopefully it doesn't drain your energy as much if you don't have to worry about what you're going to say.

[00:42:44] AG: I love that. Stay ready so you don't got to get ready.

[00:42:48] TG: Yes. One of my favorite quotes. Someone like me that sucks at copywriting – Like, I mean, I've started telling people English isn't my first language, even though that's not true. But it works. Don't judge me. So help a sister out and the listeners, too, that want to become like better writers or content designers, UX writers. How do we improve our UX copywriting skills?

[00:43:20] AG: You get better at writing by writing.

[00:43:22] TG: And I had a feeling we're going to say that. **[inaudible 00:43:27]**. You get better at the thing.

[00:43:31] AG: For sure. Like, the only thing to get better at writing is by writing and editing. So one thing I like to do as a content designer is do – I learned this from one of my teammates. She did this really cool presentation, and she did like a two by two, and put different like opposing voice and tones on the end of each spectrum. And then we knew the intent of like what the headline should be. And then she would go through each of them and do like three to five different ideas in each quadrant. And it's kind of cool. So get all the terrible ideas out. Get all the ridiculous things that will never make it into product out.

And then when you find something like, “Hmm, I like this.” Like, continue to revise and iterate on it. And then get feedback. I think getting feedback is something that's really – Specially when it comes to writing, because I feel like writing feels sometimes a little bit private, and it's personal. But I think the best thing to do is get feedback on it from other writers or other designers. And

that will also help you get better. Because writing short form crisp and concisely takes a lot of time. And it's a skill. So you have to really practice the skill.

And there's a thing called the Daily UX Writing Challenge. That is an incredible resource for anyone trying to get into UX writing, or just trying to improve their writing, where it gives you daily prompts and character limits. And for like the headline for the CTA, and you know what the prompt is. And it really challenges you to have to be succinct, be clear, and be not punchy. Like, punch is the word that came out. But doesn't always require you to be punchy. So that's what I would say, write, write, write. Get feedback. Then write some more. And check out the Daily UX Writing Challenge.

[00:45:46] TG: Cool. All right, I'm going to add that to the show notes as well, that resource that she mentioned. So do you have any additional advice for someone that's interested in getting started in content design?

[00:46:00] AG: Yeah. I would say there's a lot of resources, and books, and things out there now. I think, for me, when I was getting into it, even though it was only a few years ago, the number of resources have probably doubled in the last three years. One of my favorite books is called *Writing Is Designing* by Michael J. Metts and Andy Welffe. It's an awesome book. Kind of puts it in perspective, which I love that book. It's good. And just not think of yourself as just a writer. But how do you apply design thinking to the words that you're writing as well as the products that you're designing?

And, hmm, what's another tip that I have? Drink water. Mind your business.

[00:46:55] TG: Mind your business.

[00:46:57] TG: Mind your business. No. I'm just saying. Like, do the thing that's important to you. Don't go try to be everyone else. And really think about the type of problems you want to solve and the customers you want to write for. I think folks, getting into the industry, take that for granted, and just want to dive into the big companies of the world and get the big title, get the big check. And I'm all for getting the big check. But I also think it's important to love the thing you're going to be doing the most and like be aligned with the problems that you're going to be

solving in the work you want to do too. So really take the time to think about those things. And give yourself grace, because there's no quick trip. I think my quick trip took two years. You know what I'm saying?

So there's no quick fix for it. So just be patient. Take the time and really do the internal thinking in journaling to make sure you're doing things that are aligned with who you want and who you want to be, who you are and who you want to be.

[00:48:10] TG: All right, so next we're going to get into listener questions. I asked on Instagram, "What questions you have for Aladrian?" And here's what some of you guys had to say. So the first one is from StarXAAS. They asked, "When switching to UX from a different industry, how do I figure out when my work is workforce ready? Will feedback from strangers on social media really get me where I need to be to apply to UX positions?"

[00:48:39] AG: Yeah, this is a great question. I think I alluded to this a little bit earlier, is get feedback for folks who are working in the industry. Not just posting the this or that. So sick of seeing those on LinkedIn.

[00:48:53] TG: Oh my God, girl. I could delete them. Give me the admin.

[00:48:58] AG: I wish I could delete them. I'm like hide all of these. I don't see any more posts like this.

[00:49:03] TG: Where's the filter feature?

[00:49:05] AG: Exactly. So don't do that. And also, just don't – People neglect showing the process.

[00:49:14] TG: Oh, yes, yes.

[00:49:15] AG: In telling a story, in connecting the dots, don't neglect that. I think that's a huge part. And if you get feedback, get feedback from folks who are actively working in the industry. I think ADPList is a great resource to connect with designers from around the globe. I think

there's over 5000 design leaders and designers on their now who have calendars up where you can get active, real-time feedback on it.

And I always tell people folks who show me their stuff, I'm like, "Don't be afraid to show the ugly parts." So when you feel confident about your process, about like your wireframes, or your chicken scratch that you did on a piece of paper, and you could show me how you went from that to your shiny final design, I actually appreciate that more than just seeing the final shiny design as well. But how to know if it's work-ready? Only get the feedback from designers who are working. And then the only way you get that real feedback is if you apply to jobs and start interviewing.

[00:50:25] TG: That is great feedback. Because once you go to the interview, you'll realize what everything that you're doing wrong, especially if you didn't like nail the first one, which is very common to see. You'll interview better each time, because you'll identify like, "Okay, I had struggle. Even though I practice, I struggle with these questions that they threw at me. Or when they wanted me to paint in an example for like this scenario, maybe doing like a little workshop session with them." This helps you become better at understanding like how you think, how you articulate your decision-making process. And you just become better at it.

[00:51:02] AG: Absolutely. And always ask for feedback on interviews, too.

[00:51:06] TG: Oh, yeah. And speaking about adplist.com, Aladrian, is now on there.

[00:51:11] AG: Yow, pull up on me.

[00:51:13] TG: You can book an appointment with her — if you are really wanting to have a conversation, get some feedback.

[00:51:20] AG: Talk about content design. Yes. If you reach out to me on LinkedIn, I will send you the link. So my calendar is the most up to date. And yeah, I have several times during the week to meet. So yeah, hit me up, Tolu, when you get on the ADPList.

[00:51:40] TG: Girl. I don't know. —

[00:51:42] AG: I know you got 100 – You got 101 things going on. So I'm not even going to force your hand. I totally, totally understand.

[00:51:53] TG: Maybe one day. But y'all could just – Y'all, you could DM me. That's the fastest way you can get a feedback. Don't look for me **[inaudible 00:52:01]** a feedback, DM me, email me. Y'all know.

[00:52:06] AG: Mm-hmm. Respect. Respect. Respect. What's up? What other questions we got?

[00:52:13] TG: All right. Next question is from ComoyM, asking if you're hiring, which you did say it. So I'll have that linked in the show notes.

[00:52:22] AG: Yeah, for sure. I'll give you my link. So the jobs that I'm hiring for, I'm still waiting for them to go live on the website, that whole process thing I was talking about earlier. We're still waiting on that. But yeah, if you're interested, feel free to send me your portfolio around content design. And again, I'm hiring for content designers. If you find something that's product design, or visual design, or other things related on the Intuit website, feel free to send me the link. But also, just know that it might be – It's 100% chance that it's another hiring manager hiring for those roles. But yeah, happy to talk and see if it makes sense to get you connected to the right folks.

[00:53:13] TG: How much experience do people have to have in order to apply?

[00:53:18] AG: This is a great question. And at this point, I am looking to hire – I hate being this person because I know the value of junior roles, but because the team is so big right now, and there's a lot of work to be done. I don't know if years of experience counts towards anything. But I think I am looking to hire a senior role. So someone who's confident in their design skills can manage conversations with stakeholders pretty well and can help me scale content design within the virtual expert platform, as well as be able to elevate the craft of content design. So it's a tall order. But if you're up for the challenge, hit me up.

[00:54:06] TG: If you're someone just starting out, don't forget you can get experiences from startups or maybe someone like locally in your community that might need a little bit of help with their website. So just consider that as a way to get some real-world experience as you're getting your education.

[00:54:25] AG: Yeah, for sure. And then, also, yeah, we'll be hiring some contractor roles in the future. So if you're just getting into content design, and you want to keep in touch, we definitely can chat about future opportunities too.

[00:54:40] TG: Don't miss out on that. Y'all, that's a huge, huge opportunity right there. Let's see. We still have some time. We'll go ahead and through these last two questions in. Another one from ComoyM. They asked how to make the transition from being a writer to a manager. How do you know if you'll enjoy being a manager?

[00:54:58] AG: Oh, this is a good question. I think I'm still figuring it out. And I think I went from content designer as an individual contributor, which is the person who's really responsible for delivering the work day-to-day and working with the working teams, like the designers and product managers, to really deliver those experiences for our customers. To now like it's a level up, right? So thinking more strategically about the vision for the team of content designers that I'll hire and how that vision fits into the larger design, org vision, which also fits into the larger like business vision, which is bigger into a vision, all the things. So I think, for me, the transition has really been how do I lead and like – I don't know, I'm still learning. I've only been out here for like three days. No. I'm just kidding.

[00:55:56] TG: It's a loaded question.

[00:55:58] AG: Yeah, for sure. It's a loaded question.

[00:56:00] TG: Give her some months.

[00:56:03] AG: Yeah, exactly. I'll keep you posted on how those things are going. And I think some indicators that you'll enjoy being a manager, if you like people, if you care about people and helping folks succeed, is a key indicator. And if you want to be responsible for doing – I

mean, not doing the work, but empowering the people on your team to do the work. Yeah, I think there's a lot to say about this question. And I feel like it can almost be a whole new, like, episode like a year from now. Like how this is really going. So we'll put a pin in it right there. And then maybe Tolu will have me back sometime in 2023.

[00:56:49] TG: Mm-hmm. Yes. Last question is from James Castro UK. They asked, "What have been their best and worst experiences with managers? How have they incorporated those lessons into their style?"

[00:57:04] AG: Absolutely. So I would say my worst manager experiences haven't been at Intuit actually. So I've had really great people leaders. Been lucky to have really great design and really great people leaders in my corner. I think some of the more challenging things for me is just not having that trust or like the space or freedom to actually step in into my leadership and not challenged or trusted to do something that's a little bit bigger, or not in my job description, but definitely within my capability. I think that's been like the most challenging part for me.

I think the best experience with managers is someone who really cares about me as an individual and is able to understand like my goals, and my strengths, and opportunities as well. So to really empower me and trust me to lean into my strengths and create like opportunities for me to show up and show out as well as grow. And then when there's – And then coached me through my challenges or weaknesses, or places where I need to grow. So I think those are kind of like the best thing.

And I think, for me, I hope to incorporate the best of my manager and hope to avoid some of the things that didn't work for me as an individual contributor with previous people leaders that we just didn't really connect on that level. And right now, it's just like I just try to meet people where they are. I talk like this with my team pretty candid, pretty conversational, and just really try to understand and help them still comfortable with being transparent with me about things, and then try to just help people help themselves. That's kind of the goal here.

[00:59:16] TG: That's all the listener questions for this week. As a reminder, you could be included in the next episode. Make sure to follow me on Instagram @uinarrative. I randomly ask questions that could be featured in an upcoming episode.

All right, so I like to end the show with a random question that is completely unrelated to everything we're talking about.

[00:59:39] AG: Okay, yeah.

[00:59:40] TG: If you could transform back and forth into any object, what would it be?

[00:59:46] AG: Oh, if I can transform back and forth into any object to what would it be? I mean, a palm tree is coming to mind. Like I think palm trees are amazing. They're beautiful. They're usually located by the beach somewhere, or coastal cities. So like I would love that. And one thing about palm trees, like they bend and they don't break, because their roots – They don't just like plant down. They plant wide. And they go in they wrap around like a rock like under the earth. And that's kind of what makes them strong. So if you ever see like on the news during these crazy storms and hurricanes, like you'll see the palm trees like bending and like shaking in the wind, but you'll never see like a palm tree snapped in half, or like palm tree – You may see like leaves and stuff like flying. But you won't see a palm tree like broken. So I think I would transform into a palm tree so I can be like in a coastal city with the vibe and so I can weather any storm.

[01:01:02] TG: I love that. Rooted, trustworthy, always there.

[01:01:07] AG: Beautiful, glowing, lit, loved by everything.

[01:01:10] TG: To have your leaves blowing with the wind.

[01:01:14] AG: Yes, I would love that. What about you? I want to know what you want to transform back and forth –

[01:01:19] TG: Um, for me, I would be an airplane, I think.

[01:01:26] AG: Okay. Airplane.

[01:01:27] TG: Because I'd like to live in places like depending on the temperature, like whatever I'm feeling. So like, there was snow last week in Texas. I'd be like, "Well, let me fuel up. I guess I'm flying my ass to Miami this week." Have like all the best amenities on my airplane. Invite my friends. Do you want a foot massager?

[01:01:49] AG: Come on for a massager. Oh, that is too funny. I love that. You want a manicure? You want a mani-pedi? We got it ready. Now that's funny. That's awesome. Yeah, I like that too. I was like, "I like plants." No. There's no there's no comparison. But I love that. Like, I love that. Oh no. Gas is kind of expensive out here.

[01:02:18] TG: I mean, airplane fuel?

[01:02:22] AG: I don't even know how much that costs. **[inaudible 01:02:24]**.

[01:02:26] TG: That's got to be at least like 100k like a ride or something.

[01:02:30] AG: A ride, bro. Because it's 1000s of miles. And you got to go round trip.

[01:02:35] TG: Yeah. Well, where can we connect with you online?

[01:02:39] AG: Let's see. Where you can connect me? You can find me on the socials, primarily like for design stuff LinkedIn and Twitter. So Aladrian Goods on LinkedIn. And then Twitter, it's Aladrianno_el. But just a little heads up, is like I do tweet about design stuff. But I also tweet random facts about the Lakers. I play Wordle. And you might catch me cussing out Zendaya for stressing me out on Euphoria as well.

[01:03:13] TG: So you're a human is what you're just telling.

[01:03:14] AG: Exactly. So I'm a human Exactly. Yeah. Those are the primary places to find me. You can also find me on Instagram @aladrian_noel. But again, like don't expect exciting design stuff all the time, because that ain't my life.

[01:03:36] TG: So basically, don't @ her. If you get pissed off by someone, she's – No. I thought you'll piss anybody off. Maybe. But it won't matter.

[01:03:45] AG: Maybe. I'm maybe, but be nice about it. And it looks like fuel prices are not too bad in Texas. It's like five 5.58. The average is like 5.80. That's not bad. But you just got to get more of it.

[01:03:58] TG: Yeah, I guess.

[01:04:02] AG: You just got to get more fuel.

[01:04:04] TG: Yeah. I don't have a car current. But yeah, I haven't looked at gas prices in a little bit just because I've been Ubering around.

[01:04:13] AG: Uber everywhere, huh?

[01:04:15] TG: Mm-hmm. Well, I don't really go out, to be honest. But when I do, it's just like I don't really pay attention to it as much.

[01:04:21] TG: There's bug going around.

[01:04:23] AG: Yeah. If you guys have any questions or comments about today's episode, make sure to tag Aladrian. I'll have all of her social links in the show notes. And tag me @uinarrative on Instagram or @uinarrativeo on the tweets.

Also, don't forget to share this episode with anyone that you think would benefit from it. Thank you so, so, so much of Aladrian for having this interesting conversation with me about content design. It's one I've been saying I was going to do, and finally have done it. So thank you.

[01:04:56] AG: Absolutely. Thank you for having me. This podcast has helped me in my career, especially with like negotiating and just thinking about how to work with stakeholders. So shout out to you for the consistency. I know this ain't easy, but you're doing a great job. And really appreciate you having me here on the podcast.

[01:05:16] TG: Thank you so much.

[OUTRO]

[01:05:21] TG: Thank you for listening to the UI Narrative podcast. If you like what you hear, make sure to share this podcast some love by commenting and subscribing where you listen. You can find me on Instagram and Facebook @uinarrative, or Twitter @uinarrativeco. I also respond to emails at hello@uinarrative.com.

Talk to you later. Bye.

[END]