HOW Design Live

Stephen Gates – *Herding Pink Elephants: Using Remote Work to Overcome Barriers to Creativity and Change*

May 5, 2020

Speaker Introduction by Amy Conover, HOW Show Director:

As you know, we would have been in Boston and we would have seen and heard Stephen Gates in person as our opening keynote yesterday. But clearly life has shifted and things have changed drastically for all of us. And what we've learned among many, many things is that we can still connect virtually and share great messages and insights and really continue to support and build people up and strengthen our community. So with that in mind, I am beyond thrilled to share with all of you our first of many HOW designed online digital sessions followed by the Q+A with Steven Gates. Let's talk about Gates for just a moment. He's the Head Design Evangelist at InVision. He's the host of the Crazy One podcast. He's a designer, a keynote speaker, a street art hunter, and an amateur chef.

He's a teacher. He's an advisor to C-Suite executives and design leadership teams at companies like Google and Amazon and Home Depot and Facebook and many, many more. He's been at this for over 20 years. He has an incredible resume and portfolio, but Stephen himself has said some of my greatest work will never appear in my portfolio. And that my friends is a very true statement and really speaks to the incredible human and just the force of nature that is Steven Gates. I'm going to speak candidly about him now, which typically makes him a little nervous. And because this is a webcast he can't see me and I can't see him, which makes it a little weird for us. But it's been said by Gates and many others that brands will be remembered for what they did in these times, not what they said.

I'd like to give you just a little insight into what he's been doing while we're all living in the midst of COVID-19. He's still running his Crazy One podcast. He's addressing more real life topics such as "What do you do if you get laid off"? He's on YouTube now. He's doing career coaching, like "How to create an incredible resume and what not to do". He's talking about managing imposter syndrome. He's teaching master classes and tutorials on how to design great slides, advanced animation and things like that. He's leading his Crazy One office hours and conversations with people across the globe. He is speaking at more virtual events and I can't even keep track of - Some are Remote 8, 20/20, Experienced Fighters, Digital Design Days. And of course he is speaking with us today. He's also a mentor for the Amazing Design People list, where there are over 1,700 amazing designers worldwide on this community led talent base during COVID-19. They're helping people. If you've lost your job or looking for a job, they can help you find one. So be sure to check that out. One of the things that is so honest to who Gates is if you look at his Twitter posts, you'll see that he's just very authentic. This is a typical post of his, "There are few more powerful words these days than what can I do to help". And that's what encompasses Steven Gates to me. He's one of those people that are out there always seeking to help. And right now I'm excited and pleased to welcome Stephen Gates to HOW Design Online.

Stephen Gates Session Start:

What's going on everybody? Well, I know I speak for everybody when I say I wish we were in Boston. I wish I was a couple hours away from doing the opening keynote again this year. But a few things have

happened and that can't be the case. So I thought, you know what, let's try and do the next best thing and let's get and let's do this webinar. So last year, whenever I was on stage, I did a talk that came to be known as **Exist Loudly**. It was a really special talk for me. I think it really kind of marked a moment in my career from a lot of the things that I talk about because it was just different. For my work, I've always really tried as a designer, as a leader and even as a public speaker, to try to figure out what is the human truth in what we're talking about. And that talk last year really looked at what is the truth of being creative, what's the truth of being a part of an organization and doing what we do commercially. And there was a lot of content in there that I hadn't done before and it was obvious that it resonated with a lot of people. Well, I've been working since then to do a new talk for HOW this year and we're going to hold that off. We're going to keep it for November. I put a lot of work into it and last year we sort of looked at the forces that surrounded us. I want to do a talk this year that was a continuation of it and really look at the forces inside of us that affect our creativity. But the talk I wanted to do today is called **Herding Pink Elephants**.

And it really is the successor, the evolution of the talk that I did last year because it's been interesting. That it has sort of become, I don't know what, a magical presentation. It's something that really connects with so many people. I've traveled the world giving that talk and a lot of it has evolved and there are a lot of new things that I've really sort of come to understand to be able to research, think about and things like that. So that's what I'm talking about today is how do we get more creative and especially how do we do it in this moment. This is a once in a generational moment when we need creativity more than we ever have, whenever so much is changing. And again, I think it can be disorienting, it can be frustrating. There's a lot that's going on, but I think there's also a moment here of hope. It's a moment to be able to take time to reflect, to think, to evolve. And so that's some of the stuff I want to talk about today or what are some of those things? How do we maybe think about some of the things we've talked about in the past, maybe in a slightly different way and be able to talk about some whole new things all together. But that's what we've got in store today. So let's get started with **Herding Pink Elephants.**

Stephen Gates Session Start:

Just in case you don't know, my name is Steve Gates. I am the Head Design Evangelist at InVision. Now before I get started, there's actually a free resource that I wanted to share with everybody. So if you don't know, InVision, which was founded in 2011, has been a 100% remote company since we were started. And what we did was pretty much the whole company got together and we said, look, we know that creatives, we know that designers are sort of going through a lot right now as they're suddenly being moved over into remote work. Well, since we've been doing it since we were founded, we thought, you know what? Why don't we actually share the best practices and share everything that we've learned. So we put it into this book and make it free to anybody. Just go to designbetter.co. I think you just have to give us your name and email address and you can download this whole thing. And again, this is the best practices. Everything that we've learned about doing remote design is in this book.

But a little bit about me, if you haven't seen me talk or don't know anything about me. Throughout my career I've worked in advertising. My father was actually a creative director. I spent nine years building the global brand design and innovation team at Star hotels, spent three years as a Global Head of Design at Citibank. And then two years ago, I joined InVision and like I said, we were founded in 2011. I'm not a hundred percent sure where we're at on people today. It's somewhere north of 700 and the company is 100% remote. But the thing with that is that my role really is to help companies rediscover creativity, to

be able to create the actual innovation that they all talk about. And to actually have designers and creatives have a real impact inside of that company. Now I get to do it with a lot of different companies of all different sizes of all different maturity levels all over the world, and so it gives me a really great perspective to be able to really understand what's going on.

Three and a half years ago, I started this passion project called [The Crazy One](#). Never really thought that the world needed another podcast, but we're nearing the 100th episode, so it seems like they did. It's a place to be able to talk about the issues that we're working through, to be able to talk about some of the struggles that it is to be creative and how do we overcome that and things with the quarantine and a bunch of extra free time. I've also moved it onto YouTube. I've got career coaching, I've got tutorials on things like keynotes. If you want to make decks that look like this, you can go on there. Subscribe. I'm putting up one or two different videos a week on a variety of subjects in addition to the podcast, so feel free to go check that out.

I think the thing that we're right in the middle of right now is a lot of challenges. This is a once in a generational moment where we all find ourselves working completely differently because all of a sudden it's not like where some people are remote and some people aren't. All of a sudden everybody's remote. And I think that in this case, leading a team that is 100% remote is very different from leading a distributed team or a partially remote team. When I came into [InVision](#) two years ago, I thought since I've led multiple studios all over the world and I've led these really big teams, I understand how to do this. The last two years have taught me is how bad I really was at it because it is really different and because I think that a lot of the issues that we're facing, I'm going to argue, started long before this pandemic.

I think that these are things that we always should have been investing in and these were things that we always should have been paying attention to. There are issues that have come up that I think now just being moved from being altogether to being remote has a lot of those problems and it has let us really see how big of a problem it is and how much we need to focus on it. But I think that the biggest thing in all of this that people are trying to get adjusted to is whenever you go into this remote setting, especially when everybody was all together, it really exposes your company sins. If you have weak leadership, if there is a lack of trust, if you have bad infrastructure, if you have process problems, a lot of those things that honestly could have been smoothed over whenever we were all together when all of a sudden they can't really get smoothed over quite as easily because you need to do crazy things. Leadership needs to trust the people that work for them and other things like that that they may not necessarily be used to doing.

I think a lot of it is also showing a lot of people that the failing leadership models and mentalities are just failing a lot faster. This is one of the number one things that get brought up all the time, is you know leaders who are like, well how do I know if people are working if I can't see them. And I will constantly turn that around on them and say, what the hell kind of team or culture or company are you building then? That was the first question that comes up. But also other things like again, the leaders who would do things like, my door is always open, come to me if you have a problem. There are a lot of these things that worked for leadership but created a willful disconnect between them and the rest of their company.

They couldn't see that what they were doing wasn't working, but again, there wasn't a huge amount of interest in that. And now in this new format, those things that had been failing slowly that we were able to sort of patch up and maintain are suddenly failing much faster. But I think that it also is really a moment where you start to really recognize that the boundaries between your business and personal life are put in a blender on candidly a minute by minute basis. And what that means is, well, if you think about it, it used to be you'd have a block of time in the morning that was personal. You'd get up, you'd get ready, you'd talk to the family, you do whatever it was, and then you would go to work. And then you had a some sort of a block of time in the middle of your day where you worked and then you would leave there and come home and again have more family time.

And of course there was some bleed over both ways into those times, but generally, you know there were some clear boundaries between those things and we understood what was going on. Now all of that's put in blender because on a minute by minute basis you need to be a chef to your children. You need to be an educator, you need to be on a conference call. You need to be thinking about your financial projections. All of this, and it is just wildly different than what anybody's dealt with in the past. But a lot of this for me is that we need to rethink how we work and to be able to do that. And I use this quote from **HOW** last year when **Greg Larkin** spoke. If you don't know his book, This Might Get Me Fired. I know Greg has it on sale right now for $.99, go to his website. Trust me. It is a fantastic read, but one of the thoughts in there that so crystallized the problem for me was him talking about how the innovation that most companies need will not be authorized and what that meant is to be able to do the things that we all talk about, to be able to get this sort of stuff out into the world, to be more creative, more innovative, do better design. There is so much red tape, there is so much structure, there is so much stuff that gets in the way of that creativity that for it to actually be created, it has to be an in a way that really circumvents the existing structure. That is obviously a huge problem, but here again, you know, no matter what, what you are, man, woman, anything else, our problem continues to not be having ideas. That is not the thing that we are challenged with.

The thing that we are challenged with is that all the BS that surrounds those ideas, things like politics, legacy thinking, the fear of change, apathy of why is anything going to be different. I can't tell you again in these times how many leaders seem to think that the shelter in place orders extend to their brains. They just seem to be willing to wait to see until everything goes back to the way it used to be. Not recognizing things have changed and not recognizing that normal may not come back for a significant amount of time and their business may not be able to survive that length of time, but again, this has been our problem for years. This is not something new. Again, it's just a moment that is pulling it to the surface. Now again, if you want to be able to create any change, if you want to do anything differently, you have to understand that there are two different elements that are involved here.

Behavior and thinking behavior is just what it sounds like. That is the way people act. It's the expression of the problems inside of a person, a team, a company, whatever it is, and these are often brought to life through words. The way people talk through processes in that anytime something goes wrong, we have a ton of processes that get created, but the problem is most change just deals with behavior. And what that means is that we get some new values. We talk a little bit different. We get some new posters up in the hall or a new desktop for your computer, but then the fundamental problems still remain and they just sort of pop up a new ways down the road thinking this is where the real problems are. This is where it is. Again, how do we think, how do we act? What do we actually do day in and day out?

And that makes the real difference. But on a concentrate on today are two things to deal with thinking. Now the first of those is going to be the pink elephants. A pink elephant is these problems that sit right in front of us every single day. Everybody's aware of what they are and we don't do anything about them. And from there I want to talk about trust because if you look at one of the hallmarks of really great teams in any venue, in any different area, trust is a huge part of it. But let's get started with pink elephants and like I said, these are the things that are right in front of us every day. My feeling here is that what we need to start doing is to start to realize that we need to invest in cultural and emotional innovation the way we've been investing in product innovation because for us it's about how many designs do we create, how many apps that we launched, how many web pages have we done?

We tend to think that somehow if we just do more work, our culture and sort of our emotional intelligence will get better. I will argue from my experience that is not the case. It is why for years I've said "The work is the truth", and I say that because the work that is produced by you and your team is a direct reflection of your culture, of your state of mind. Of all of those sorts of things in that, again, if those things aren't working, if it's not healthy, the work shows it. But you know, this is my thing is that the best teams have always been deliberate in the way that they worked, whether they did it in person or whether they did it remote. It's why some teams have anywhere to transition to this time and haven't missed a beat because they were investing in the right things.

And I think that there is a future. Many teams, a few too many leaders who are over-correcting thinking that they need to change huge parts of their company just because suddenly they're remote. And again, I think this is where we need a little perspective. We need to be able to realize that these are the things we should have always been doing. It's just now we have the means and the ability to focus on it. But one of the most common mistakes that I see is that in all cases, tools and processes are the foundation of what you do, not the solution. Because here again, I work with a lot of different companies. I will see two teams. They have the exact same tools. They have the exact same processes. They hire people from the exact same schools. One of them is wildly creative, essential to their business, well-funded and well-respected. The other one is disrespected, under- funded and a basically a low-grade dumpster fire. It's because things like tools and processes are not the key and I think too often we get caught up in that. What that is, it's the foundation. It's all the things that you place around that. It's the way that you work that make the real difference. But I think that again, this is what we need to do is we need to look at what are some of those cultural barriers? What are some of those things that we all know about and nobody does anything about. The first one, and I think this is the biggest one, if you work for an in house team, if you work for a company that's been around longer than probably a couple of years is cultural apathy. Meaning what? Why? Why is anything going to be different? Why should we put in the work? Why should we try to change anything? Why is it going to be different this time whenever it's just simply easier to accept the way that it's always been and the way that most often comes to life is every company that I've worked with, and I've tested this at every single one that I go to has a phrase. And the phrase comes to life whenever we're doing a brainstorm, whenever, whenever we're in a meeting, we want to do something new and it's going to be difficult, challenging where you need to change something, we need to think differently. And in that moment, whenever it gets hard, inevitably someone will utter this phrase. And most often it is something like, "Welcome to working at this company" or "This is this company's way". Because that is cultural apathy at its finest. Because it's saying, well, it's going to be hard.

We haven't really been up for hard or you know, it's just going to be easier to leave it the way it always been. So even if it's gonna be better for everybody, it's just gonna be easier for us to leave it the way

that it's always been. And so this phrase is then sort of like to get out of jail free card that whenever you say it, well then it's fine for you to not actually go ahead and put in that work. Just go ahead and be mediocre. Now the thing that I do with all these different kind of elephants is I like to create a framework and a framework is a wildly overused word, but what it really is to me is just some way of taking this on. It can be very simple, it can be a process, it can be something much more fluid and organic.

In this case, what I like to do is to be able to create what I would sort of call like an apathy swear jar. And so what you want to do is get a jar and write whatever that phrase is for your company on it and start taking it to meetings. And whenever somebody says that phrase in your presence around your team, what you want to do is to ask them to put $20 in the jar. And I know everybody's eyes get really big. Whenever I say $20 and the reason why I picked that number is because if it's a dollar, nobody cares. You know, it's just, it's not enough to be memorable. But again, I know that a lot of people, especially in this day and age, can have trouble budgeting their money. So I don't want it to be so much that nobody's going to eat dinner, but enough that it's memorable.

But what I want to do and the reason why you want to do this, and again, make it the jar, make it whatever you want it to be, but something that is going to point out how often this happens. And then whenever it happens, it's not okay. We can't keep having this apathy sit right in front of every meeting and think that anything is going to change. Another thing that comes up, again I think if you've listened to me talk for any amount of time, going back to actually the very first episode of my podcast, which was called [Light Bulbs are Bullsh*t](). I know Amy hates it where I swear, but that was the title of the talk. So I get a get out of jail free card. Light bulbs I hate because I think that it probably gets this idea that what we do is somehow easy that you just sit around and you wait for this light bulb to come along and then you get all the answers and we all know that is not close to the way this works.

I think failure is another big one. I see so many companies that talk about fail fast. Failure is not the outcome that you want, right? Because failure is whenever something doesn't work and it hits an end state where there is no progress past it, that is not what you want. What we want is learning. And I think that even in many cases, no matter what word we use, too many companies are afraid of doing it. That we've all been taught you need to do something and get it right the first time whenever that's not the case. But for me, that's why I said it's like failure is badly positioned. Learning it is what happens when we don't share. It's what happens when we don't evolve. Whenever we don't discuss, whenever information stays in silos and does a lot of these other things, that tends to be the problem.

But I think that here, the way to be able to take this on I think is to be able to pull it out into the light of day. So doing things like the belly flop of the week. So if in the next team meeting you have, whether you're leading it or a part of it, imagine a time where what if you actually showed up and you gave a reward bottle of champagne, free lunch, something to the person who showed up and admitted that they did something wrong and what they learned from it. Because here again, I think that creating cultural change, some of it's very obvious, some of it's not. The idea here is that we need to make these conversations ok, we need to make sharing things that didn't go right ok. That it's only failure when we don't share it. It's only failure.

When we don't discuss it, that's when we fail. And so again, by doing these sort of things, where we pull this out into the light of day can create real cultural change. But again, if your company is like so many other ones where you have to be perfect all the time, that's not what creativity is. You can't actually be sustainable and do that cause you need to be able to learn. You need to be able to try things. That's what the process needs to be. But a lot of it also for me is to think about what is the mentality when you are doing your work. And the interesting thing is that I think for so many of us, we obsess over processes, methodologies, 360s, feedback, big 5s, KPIs, all of this sort of stuff. And in my experience, what this often is, is that these are things that address problems reactively and retroactively. Meaning, let's wait for something to go wrong and then address it and that that thing will be in the past. And so I just think we're constantly looking the wrong direction. We're constantly looking at what went wrong and then how do we legislate process to fix it. And I think that's why so many times in so many different industries processes get big and bloated and overworked because everything is just simply a reaction to something that went wrong. But the problem in all of this is like how are we actually defining the mentality for the work we were about to do? So instead of just looking to the past, how do we look to the future? How do we all agree that this is the way we want to work? So we, this is the way that we want to come together. And so again, the framework that I like here, this is going to be things like defining behaviors.

I personally know it is not a popular opinion. I don't think mission statements and principles and things like that work. Because whenever I go into these companies, I ask them to show me or tell me how is the mission statement that your company has actually reflected in your work? How do you bring it to life every day? Probably more than nine times out of 10 they can't because again, it is, it's a big lofty goal that doesn't really translate down into what happens every day. Behaviors I think are something that can, and these are just simple things, not rocket science. Simple, simple things like put customers at the center of everything you do. If you want to stop these endless fights about who's right, if you want to be able to validate that the work you're going to do is some of your customers actually want.

This is a huge part of it. Again, I talked last year about cognitive bias and what projection bias was. This is a great way to be able to address that. Other things, if you have collaboration issues to be able to say, we're always going to invite diverse perspectives to the table. Now again, like I said, none of these are rocket science, but what you can do that works really well is to put them on cards. Even whenever you work remote, how much does it cause to print eight cards and send them to everybody? And what you do is you keep them with you. And if somebody is demonstrating one of those behaviors, they're putting customers at the center of what you do, they're inviting diverse perspectives to the table. You hold up that card and you call them out and you be able to reinforce that behavior as being something that's really good.

But the other part of it is that it's not happening. That gives you a shared social contract to be able to say, Hey, look, we remember we said that we were going to work this way. So it makes those tough conversations much easier because there's an agreed upon social center that you can draw from. Without that, people get argumentative. People just simply get run over. You get a lot of outcomes. You're not really gonna want. But I think a lot of it is, and especially in these days, especially as we work remote, you need to take on the elephant of what is quote unquote normal because I think that this is running rampant in a few too many cultures because one of the things that I think if you too many people realize too late is just how easy it is to suffer in silence.

It's easy to turn on this webcam to put on a performance, to be able to put on a happy face and be able to say how great everything is while you feel incredibly disconnected, you feel incredibly overwhelmed. And again, it's hard to be able to express that. So I think that for all of us, no matter what position is in a team, we need to think about how do we create spaces for real conversations and real connections. Because again, the thing is that what is normal right now is that nothing is normal. And so there are some parts of these things that I would encourage all of us to help everyone adjust to things like interruptions are okay. What are the biggest things that I see all the time is that people get embarrassed whenever their dogs snore or their child runs into the room.

Those sorts of interruptions are okay. If anything, what I would argue is remote gives you the ability to know people in a much deeper, more profound way than you ever did at work. You get to see into their homes, you get to see them to their families, you get a glimpse of them. That was not possible before and again, I've been a part of meetings very recently where one of my peers had his son come in in his underwear and introduced himself to the whole company. I've been on a webinar with one of my peers, whenever his children decided to make popcorn and set off the smoke detector, right? Like these things happen. That's just a part of life. That's the recognition again of the personal professional boundaries getting put into a blender. So make that, okay, leave your camera on, leave your microphone on, do those sorts of things.

We need to make sure that going slower is okay and I'll get to this in a minute. This sort of like how we somehow think we're always on to be able to do this stuff, but we are dealing with a lot. There's a lot of things in here that we aren't necessarily sure how to be able to deal with and so again, you know in some cases we need to make it okay for people to slow down, for people to be able to work on their hours to do things a little bit differently because I think, this is one of those moments where I think empathy and humanity are going to matter more than ever because the teams that don't do it are going to see a mass exodus. The teams that have managers over leaders, the teams that are putting work over people in an era when companies and teams are going to change remote work is going to be a bigger possibility. The teams that don't do this are going to suffer for it. We need to make and not make, not being always on ok. I'd never understand this, why somehow now that we're all digital, everybody seems to think that everybody should be available all the time. That is a hundred percent not the case. It wasn't the case whenever we were all together in the office because people would be on conference calls, they'd be in meetings, they'd be at offsites, they'd have sick days. They're all these sorts of things. And so you know, again, think about how are you modeling that behavior? I do that all the time. I don't have children and I don't sleep. If you write to me at 11 o'clock or midnight, I will probably most likely write you back. But you know what, that's not a behavior I want to encourage.

So I put it in the mailbox and I wait to let it to send at like 9:00 AM the next morning because I don't want other people to feel like they need to do what I'm doing. But again, that's that idea. And here's the best practice. I would tell you here, be deliberate. Sit down with your team and say, Hey look, if I send you an email, get back to me today. If I send you a Slack, get back to me whenever you get back to your desk and if I text you, that's the bat signal, the red phone, I need you right away. But then people understand urgency, they understand a lot of those sorts of things and that becomes really helpful. And I think more than anything we need to make not being okay. Okay. You can still be in a good state.

You can still be in a good place and not be okay. You can be in a bad place and not be okay. But we need to be able to create spaces where we can have these conversations about how are people really doing, not the blanket answer, not brushing past it. Again, whenever you get on Zoom, don't just jump right into work. Be purposeful and thoughtful about how do you connect with people. But that's the thing is that you know, these are opportunities that don't come around often. And if you blow it, you don't care about it, you fake it. People can tell, and again, I'm telling you, you're going to lose a lot of talent if you want everybody to be perfect and always be on and be really super chipper. It's just not realistic. We need to make not being okay. Okay? But so much of this, and I think this was one of the hardest lessons that I've learned, is that it really is about empowering vulnerability, meaning that there's no substitute for asking how people are doing, leaning into what's going on.

Really taking the time to understand how are they doing, to be able to say, look, you know, I'm going to ask you those questions, but I need you to be the other half of this equation. If you're not okay, if you're not at a hundred percent if you aren't feeling it, I need you to say that and it's going to be okay if you do. Because that's the thing is that in that moment it's easy to let technology win, to let distance win, to let the new ways of working win. Like there's a million excuses. There always are, but in this case it really is about how do we empower people to be vulnerable and to be human that this has been one of the leading currencies in leadership for so long. Dammit. If it isn't more important than ever, but the other part of this is to really understand the inescapable truth is the importance of trust because I think that's the thing that I mentioned that before, is that the most challenging aspect for leading teams remotely for most people is trusting that the people who are out of sight are actually doing work.

I constantly will turn that around on those leaders. Again, like I said, asking them what sort of team are you building? What sort of culture do you have? Or that's the first question, but this is going to be two of the things that that a lot of people are going to need to realize is that again, the most functional, the best teams, have the power of that company evenly distributed across their org chart. It doesn't just sit at the top. Because especially in remote work, if you want everybody to sit around waiting for some leader to make a decision, your calendar is going to be packed with useless meetings. You're going to get a fraction of that amount of work done. Your company is going to grind to a halt because that's not the way that you need to work.

But again, I've said this for years where the best companies, what they do is they do this crazy thing where they hire smart people and then they trust them to do their job. This is that moment to be able to realize and for a lot of leaders to rewire themselves to think about why this is so important because the trust is the key to everything and like I said, that is true. Whether we're all remote or whether in person or a blend of the two. Trust is such a huge part of this. Think about it, how important this is for teams, for sports teams, for musicians. I mean, how jazz is a living exhibition in trust? I mean hell, even superhero movies, right? Like the Avengers or somebody like that always struggle until somebody decides, Oh, we're going to trust each other and then they go out and win.

So we're so used to seeing this but we don't bring it into this context, but there are actually two types of trust. I think too often people just think about this as a one dimensional thing and there are two different types. There is practical trust and there is emotional trust. Practical trust is just what it sounds like. This is whenever you trust people to do the basics. Whenever you just show up on time, whenever

you leave, whenever you say you do what you say. Just the simple practical things that are involved in working with somebody. This is often expressed then through process tools, applications, things that are super fundamental and, but the problem here is that whenever that's all you focus on, you tend to have people in teams who just simply come to work for a paycheck because all they're doing is they're following a process because someone told them to.

They're doing things because someone told them to. Leadership maturity tends to be very low and anything beyond practical trust is nonexistent and as a result, again, the work is the truth. Then the work simply reflects that. On the other side of that, then we have emotional trust and this is whenever you actually believe that someone is on your side. Whenever you can trust them with something that might be embarrassing, it might be damaging. You start to hear people use emotional words. I believe in the company, my boss believes in me. These sort of things that are, again, much more emotional, sound, very different whenever you suddenly know to listen for them, but emotional trust comes to life through things like culture, leadership, things that are truly transformational and the companies we all love really understand the importance of getting creatives and getting teams to have an emotional level of trust in each other because whenever this happens, people come to work for each other.

Again, if we talk about sports, how many times have you heard a quarterback talk about, they'll throw up the ball, trusting the receiver, we'll go get it that again. In jazz, they're going to do something and trust that everybody else will be able to follow onto it. And I think that's that thing is where even in places like the military, if you ever interview people in the military, they will talk about how they don't fight for themselves. They fight for the people next to them, but that's the part is where there's an emotional investment in other people. And I think that whenever you do the two sides of this, the challenge is that too often companies only invest in the practical side because it's easier, but then often bemoan the results they get whenever they aren't getting the millwork that comes out of it.

Emotional side. But here's some numbers. I think just because everybody loves numbers, everybody loves to be able to prove why things are. And here's some of the research that we've done about whenever you look at high trust teams and their performance, on average, they have about over a hundred percent more energy at work, 75% less stressed. They are 50% more productive, 75% more engaged, 40% less likely to burn out, 30% more satisfied with their lives and on average take 13% fewer sick days. So again, this is not just some touchy feely kumbaya like go sit in a drum circle and do a watercolor of your spirit animal kind of moment. There is real impact that happens to be able to invest in these sort of things. And so there's a simple exercise that I ask people to do because whenever you think about it, there's actually three types of trust.

There is none practical and emotional because none is certainly an option. And what I ask people to do is to think about the five to 10 people who you work with the most. Write down their names and then for each one of them think about what level of trust you have in them. None practical or emotional. And on the emotional side you probably only get like half points if you have emotional trust because of something outside of work. If your children to play baseball or soccer together, if there are other different things like that, then again, I think that those are the sort of things that you just need to understand. They're going to contribute to that and it's not being created at work and that's a problem.

But most of the time this exercise is wildly sobering because what it shows you is that again, for what we need to be successful, how little of it we might actually have.

And so just to be able to kind of wrap this up and then we can get into some questions. I think that like I said at the beginning, this is a once in a general generational opportunity for us to do some really rare things, to pause, to evaluate and to evolve both as individuals, as teams and as organizations. Because most of the time creating change is damn near impossible because it's like trying to jump a full-speed locomotor from one track to another. There's just so much emotion that it makes it incredibly hard to be able to do that. Well, we have the moment, we have the time to be able to get some of these things done and for me, one of my favorite things about like getting a new job is that first six months whenever you can sort of get away with anything because you can try it and say, Oh well I'm new here. I didn't know any better. Well congratulations. We're all new here and we all have the ability to do that. But I think a lot of it for me is also to ask some fairly heavy questions about what is your role going to be as many of these companies resist change and evolution. We are the ones who are comfortable being uncomfortable. We are the ones who are used to doing these sort of things. We are the voices and the Sherpas and the people and the guides who can help them do that. Are you going to sit on the sidelines and watch things flag and stop and struggle and fail or are we going to get in and start to help be a part of that change in neuro and evolution and also what is our role going to be? Because I think we're definitely going to see a lot of brands who are going to get it really wrong whenever they think that they should cash in on this epidemic that if we want to recover, if you want to feel normal again, you need our product. At the end of the day a few too make brands don't seem to be getting it. That nobody really gives a damn. If you turn your store blue, nobody cares what you say. It's about what you do. It's about what you do with the people who work in your company. It's about what you do for your customers. Those are the things that are gonna matter. Those are the things that are going to resonate and the ones that is that just play lip service or play it safe or are going to run into problems for that. But I think that in many cases for me it's also really thinking about, you know, design and experience for me are just the beginning. I think this has been a big evolution in my thinking of really realizing, and again I've always said that like great design is a visual expression of great thinking. I think that continues to be true, but I think it actually cuts a little bit deeper than that because the thing that I would say is that we are in the consequence business far more than we were just in the design business because our work has consequence, our work has impact. You know, our industry has matured to a place where conversations around design ethics, conversations around a lot of these sort of much heavier issues are suddenly coming to bear. And like even I just said, what our role is going to be in the recovery is suddenly very much a part of this. But, but I think that this is for me is looking at what is the consequence that our behavior has on others? What is the consequence that our thinking has on ourselves? What is the consequence of what we're doing is going to have on my team, my company, and all of those around us. Because I think that's what we're able to do is to be able to help people to better outcomes, to better consequences, to better ways of doing things. That the real power of what we do. And like I said, I think this is the moment that where we have an opportunity to really cash in on that.

So somehow it seems only appropriate that we end where we left off last year because this was the slide that ended the talk last year whenever I implored and asked everyone to **Exist Loudly**, to look at themselves and to look at what was going on and to think about what was the impact that they wanted to make. I think now more than ever, I had no idea of what was going to await us a year down the road. I had no idea of what it was that we were going to be up against. But it seems to me now more than ever, the importance of this phrase now more than ever, the importance of how we support each other, show up for each other, how we all **Exist Loudly**. Because in a moment, like I said, it's so easy to feel isolated,

to feel alone, to feel separated, but it's only through whenever we come together, and in those moments, when we're able to do this, that it's going to make the difference. So as always, look, you know, you can find me on all the social media channels. That's my [personal email address](#) to be able to if you have any questions and things like that, you can feel free to reach out there.

Q &A

Q: HOW Design Online Attendees for Digital Session

A: Stephen Gates

Q: From Brian - He's been working at home from three, 3:00 AM to 8:00 PM and was ordered to give an account for everything he did that day, was being accused of not working. I am ready to quit.

A: Yeah. I think this is definitely, probably the single biggest thing is just this issue around trust. And I think that really is the hard part of a lot of this stuff is that organizations are now being asked to trust their people. And again, like I said in the thing, like it's just for me it really is one of the biggest things is that people, it's just this has really become a big issue where again, a lot of it organizational sin has sort of come up from do you have any suggestions for middle management? How can we make some of the suggestions and manage up? I think, you know, that really is the biggest change that's going to come out of this is that a lot of a lot of leaders are gonna need to figure out that, you know, the, the sort of power needs to get pushed down the org chart. It sort of depends on honestly who the middle manager is in general. I would say my answer would be, you know, look, just tried to go to them with suggestions or try to get other people on the team to agree that it is a good suggestion.

Or instead of just sort of going to them with a problem, go to them and say, Hey look, I feel like this is what we're not doing and why don't we try this. And I think if, if you're willing to do it, if you're willing to try it out, if there are other people who are willing to do it and usually if it's a conversation, usually that happens. That helps. But I will say it also just really depends on, you know, just how open-minded, how political house siloed and structured are those sorts of things. So usually that works the best, but it kind of varies from there.

Q: From Melissa - What are some suggestions to get my company to think about remote work after this pandemic?

A: You know, it's interesting, I have conversations every single day about this topic. I have conversations with a lot of leadership trying to get them to understand that this is not going to go back to just simply being normal like and again I think they always would sort of think we were weird because envision was a hundred percent remote and we were some abnormality.

I think it's just, you know, the understanding that as it comes to work life balance, as it comes to productivity, as it comes to some of these things, this is going to become a big part of it. There are so many companies I'm talking to who are saying, look, we're not going to go back to even whenever normal returns, we're not going to go back to that work. So I think that the base answer is going to be, look, if you want to keep your best people, if you want to be able to evolve around this, if you want to look at a better hiring model like I love, I love that I can hire people who work anywhere in the world and I just hire the best talent and they can live where they want to live. I think that there's going to be a lot of upside as we look at the talent war that's going to be able to come out of this. But you know to what I said before is I do think that it really is. No, how do you get them to trust? Because I think you

need to lead differently. You need to onboard differently. Again, there are tons of work in HR teams and CEOs I'm talking to every day about this stuff, but I just really think that a lot of it is how do we break down this myth of you have to be in person to be creative or the power of the Holy conversation and look, I get that. Those things help. But they aren't everything. And I think it's just sort of, again, getting them to understand and see the upside of this sort of stuff.

Q: From Erica - You spoke about creating a culture where employees feel a level of trust, which is great advice for design leaders. But what if you're an employee who doesn't feel like you're in a work environment where your leadership team cares about your wellbeing? Do you have advice for making it work rather than finding a new opportunity?

A: You know, Erica, I think this is the heart of what's on a lot of different people's minds right now. And I think it's sort of what I'd spoken about before where I think, you know, a lot of it's just going to come down to, so how does that leadership evolve? Because I would bet that they probably always haven't cared. Maybe they faked it a little bit better than before, but you know, at the end of the day, if it is something where you know, they, they don't feel like they're evolving, they treat people like resources. And I think that's what this is teaching a lot of people is it's people before work and I think, but that's always been true of great companies and if that doesn't seem like it's going to be the case, if they, you know, really aren't going to be that way, I think it may be time to look for that different opportunity. I think if they're making progress, if you feel like you have a voice and you can be a part of that change and try to show them the way, then it's worth sticking there and probably trying to work through that. But if not, then like I said, I think this was just really exposed for a lot of people. What was really going on underneath the surface.

Q: From Joel - How do you express the value of trust to a leader who's become a micromanager because her employees are now working remotely?

A: I think this is another huge explosion that we've seen is this sort of like FOMO of like, well now I don't know what's going on or I need to micromanage, so I need to flood everybody's calendars with a ton of meetings and know what you do every single second and do all that sort of stuff, like that is not productive. There was another one that I heard on a call this morning, which was what was it? FONLPE, which is fear of not looking productive enough, is another big part of that. I think that what I would tell you to do for managers like that is to really just sort of have a conversation with the team if you can about how do we work, what are the things that we need a meeting for, what are the things that we can do asynchronously? What are the things that need a presentation? We'd like, you know, when, how do we use emails? If I send you an email, get back to me today. If I send you a Slack, get back to me to get back to your desk. If I texted you, that's like the bat signal, right? Like I said that before. But I think it really is that sort of thing of just getting them to understand that that's sort of micromanagement actually is not productive. It's going to slow us down. Nobody, no creative wants to work for that and that that really is like, again going to be an issue. But I think again, it's just sort of building that trust and figuring out how do you find the balance between giving her enough so that she feels comfortable, but again, giving you enough space so that you can operate.

Q: From Katie - How do you navigate the, this is always on sentiment at 120 year old institution while you aren't in a leadership position but are a one to one on your creative inhouse team among marketers who have all been there longer than you? Why do I as the only designer / creative on my in house team always have to do the explaining when I share a sketch or share a design slash pushback on a request?

But the people requesting from me do not have to explain to me why that's the best way to do it, when it's not. How do you build trust to not have to not have to have these sorts of conversations?

A: Yeah. Would say for that one and look, I know some of these answers would get over simplified and if this answers that, great, if it doesn't reach out to me on social media and we can talk more. The biggest thing that I would say the areas just to try to pull those people into the process. I think whenever it's just everybody presenting at each other, whatever, it's that war of who is right or do what I say or do things like that. No creativity, no great work ever tends to come out of that for me and in many cases there's just that shift of, you know, people will support what they're a part of. So it we're able to be able to work through those things. And for me that ability to put work in front of consumers or your end customer is a huge equalizer because then it's not as my idea better or is your idea better? It's just what do the customers want? And I think, again, if it's just that constant, like, do what I say it commoditizes you, it really makes it hard. And so again, those are some of those sort of things that in many cases, again, if you're able to make it a conversation, not a presentation, generally that works. But again, I know that's a very nuanced question.

Q: From Sarah - You said in the past that team leaders should push their employees into leadership or their careers will stall. What if you don't want to be a leader, is there a place where quite introverted workers in the workplace?

A: I may have said that in the past, but I certainly have evolved that opinion since then. Because I, I think, you know, again, I've done episodes on introverted creators, creatives on introverted leadership, on, you know, again, individual contributor paths and different things like that. I think that it varies dated way of thinking that again, you're only going to advance if you are leading or leading people. And I think that, you know, it really was one of those things. One is how do you try to find a team or educate your existing team on, you know, what do more introverted people, how do they work, why is it different and why is that okay? I think that's definitely a big trend that we're seeing. But I think that in many cases it is just sort of having a discussion with them to be able to say, look, you know, is there an individual contributor path here? Is there a different way for me to be able to do this? Then sort of doing the traditional route to be able to do that sort of thing. But again, you know, these are a little bit more complicated.

Q: From Jessica from the Children's Hospital in Los Angeles - Do you have any tips for brainstorming remotely?

A: I absolutely do. My two biggest ones would be use some sort of an online tool. I know, I mean freehand is one of the ones that we have at [InVision](). You can put hundreds of people into an online whiteboard. I think the more you can level the playing field and get everybody the same tool, that's a really big one. And also you like create some rules for actually doing a brainstorm. I did a whole episode on this in the [podcast](). Feel free to go back and check that out. There are seven rules that I always use, but I think if you're able to level the playing field and to be able to sort of do those sorts of things, then you're able to do it really effectively. And I actually love running remote brainstorms maybe more than in person, just cause you can sort of see the people and work with them a little bit differently.

Q: From Sherry - How would you suggest trying to pin down overloaded managers to have these conversations? My team still isn't the best at communication.

A: For me, I think often the time, oftentimes managers who are always too busy, it's a defense mechanism and it's just them. I guess candidly hiding because I think it's just easier to say like I'm always

busy, I'm always busy, I'm always busy. I think as you look at the trend of things like service leadership and things like that, I think that in many cases it's letting them know the importance of this conversation. It's letting them know why this needs to happen. Committing to a time, just putting a time on their calendar, walking into their office, doing something and I think if they continue to resist that conversation, it's sort of giving them the or else of like what is going to happen if we don't have this conversation, the team is going to fall apart, the work is going to get worse. I am going to leave like something so that they understand because I think that you know, the worst part of leadership is and where the leaders make it all about them and wherever. It's just about what makes it easy for them. What do they need to do? I think there was a lot of things that we're seeing there that is, you know, really tough. But I think that it really is one of those things where they start to understand that they need to be there for everyone else. And what are the implications if they don't? Sometimes that helps.

Q: From Frank - How do you stay motivated to do great design while being on a such a time crunch? You know, I think that for me it's, it's a tough question, I think to some hands on how bad the time crunch is. I think for me, I've always tried to work with it by just really knowing what is my process, so how do I create quickly? But I think it's also being very clear about what am I able to produce in one timeframe. If I am committing to five days worth of work and I only have one day to do it, then again, that that's an outcome that I'm never going to win. So a lot of it for me is either pushing back or having the conversation around what is realistic in that timeframe. So it's not telling people no, but it's just simply saying, for what's going on here, this is the sort of thing that we're going to be able to get out of it. And again, if that's not okay, then we need to discuss a different timeframe.

Q: From Sydney in higher education - How can we make sure that our pushes aren't feeling like cheap pressure, struggling with the balance of communications and enrollment?

A: Yeah, I think that it makes us, for me, there's always, if you can communicate the value, if we can meet, communicate why people need it or want it or what the human truth is that then I think that it doesn't feel like cheap pressure. I think if you're cashing in on, if you're trying to cash in on the pandemic, if you're trying to do things that are cheap, then they tend to feel cheap. I think if you're able to say, you know, that this is what we're doing and this is what the benefit is, and then you let people decide, then it feels like that is, that's something that does really work well. So again, I think it just, as long as it's authentic and there's a core to human truth there it really it really works well.

Q: From Dan: - Off topic, the animation in your slide deck creates an engaging rhythm that's easy to digest. How did you create it?

A: Dan, go subscribe to my YouTube channel. I have entire videos that I've created just because I get that question every single time about how to do that stuff. So I am sharing all that stuff out there. So go for free to subscribe to that and there'll be a bunch more there.

Q: From Carmella - I found out that our team has been much more productive and communicative remotely, but management is really pushing us to come back to the office as quickly as possible. How to translate this into going back into the office.

A: I think this is the challenge where there's a few too many leaders where the shelter and police orders seem to have extended to their brain. I think what I would tell you to do is just look at what's working. You know, what are the things of, if you're being more communicative, if you're being more productive, either document it and show them that sort of thing so they understand the benefits there or being able to do those sort of things. Or if they do force you back into the office, just look at what you've been

doing and say, how do we keep doing that? How is this different? How do we keep that spirit alive? How do we sort of translate that back through this sort of stuff to seeing, keep the really good stuff.

Q: From Samantha - I'm really grateful to have a job at this time, but I'm really worried about going back into work. I'm a graphic designer and my bosses have the mentality that design isn't important. (Welcome to the club. That was not part of what she wrote). Anyone can do it. And we are just production people. All designers have nothing to do with marketing and communication. Because we don't inform people or tell stories. I voice my concerns and try to explain my role, but it falls on deaf ears. Any suggestions on what else I can do?

A: The short answer for me is find a new job and I know that sounds incredibly flippant, but I just think, you know, if people are one of those ones where they don't understand the value of design or creativity or what that sort of stuff is, there is probably little you're going to be able to do to change their mind. But I wouldn't say that it definitely is one of those things where, you know, look, if you can try to have those conversations again, it just feels like if you're making progress, if you feel like somebody is listening and it's going somewhere, then it probably is worth staying and fighting. If you are just sort of running up that hill and running into a wall every day and it seems like there's no hope of change, then again, I think, you know, that's really going to be the tough thing.

Q: From Dara - If your company is addressing all of your points pretty successfully, can we broadcast our culture to an external audience to attract talent who may be looking for a better home? How can we use our culture to recruit?

A: Great question. Dara I would say just tell the story because I think too many companies fail at that where they're doing something that's really good and they don't advertise it, they don't talk about it, they don't put it in their job descriptions. They don't let people know what is actually going on. So I think that's the biggest thing to me is just to find ways of telling your story, of what you're doing, of your success stories of being able to do that. Again, I think you see that with a lot of big teams that are able to attract talent. They give you a glimpse of what it's going to be like whenever you actually work there. So I think that that is a big sort of piece of that.

Q: From Grant - I have a new employee that started the first week of working from home. Any tips on onboarding?

A: I would just say try to help them understand what normal is. Help them understand what expectations are and help them understand how you work. Check in with them. I think probably a little more often than you normally would, especially in those early days. Just cause again, we know it's easy to suffer in silence, but I, I would just say try to do those things or just have the conversations, what's working, what's not, you know, what can we do? Cause I think there's also, there will probably be a lot of power in their opinion coming through the door, but what do they think is working and what isn't? But just that sort of basic communication and letting them know what is normal. I think it's going to go a long way.

Q: From Susanna - I'm on the quest to connect with companies that are emotionally intelligent like you explained and get hired for the kind of work that matters. What recommendations can you give to spot those places like InVision?

A: I would just say honestly I think you can get it out of the interview. I think you can ask them what their values are. You can ask them again, what are the promotion? What are the criteria that they use for promotions? What are the things that matter? How often do they meet, what do they do for culture? Any of those sorts of things I think can go a really long way because I think the same thing that whenever they're interviewing you, you should interview them and I think as you, you're going to be able to tell them those values, like which ones are more production focused and which ones are more actually focused on their people. Because also remember like these are the moments that again, this is a company on their best behavior, so remember that and if that's the best they're going to behave and they're behaving very well, it probably is a warning sign.

Q: From Tracy - We had a major reorg at the same time that we started working from home. My new management is not familiar with my line of work. My old manager is trying to deliver and get credit for a year-long project. How do I talk to my new management about this?

A: I mean, I would say that hopefully the simplest way would be to just go and do a, here's what I do, presentation. Being able to just kind of say, Hey look, here's my team. Here's what I do to be able to do those things. I think it is frustrating and disappointing and a lot of other things that whenever there are power shifts or money or other things that are involved as suddenly, you know, people really start to turn into someone else but would just say, you know, look, I think that these are those moments where you have to be your own PT Barnum and you need to try to reach out and to be able to tell your story. Because I think if you don't, someone else will. And then they often then define your role, which is something that you usually never want. But that's what I would say. It's more complicated like that. Again, reach out, reach out on any of these questions. I'm happy to clarify.

Q: From Kristen - What are some steps to show you have slash develop emotional trust with your team? Especially if you're a middle management and a company where a lot of things come down from above.

A: I think that, you know, for me, it may sound weird, I think you either have emotional trust or you don't either. You know, people really are able to trust you. I think if you try to force it or to try to do things like that. I think that you, in many cases what I would do is that if you, I tend to like to invest in this, especially in large companies because so much is out of your control. There are so many things that are decisions that are made, things that come down from above that that's why I think emotional trust in your particular team becomes so important because just there are things that you can't control. But I think that private for me, like I said, is one, it's just one of those things where you kinda can't fake the funk and you need to be able to lean into people and ask them what's going on and to really develop that. But I think if you're able to do it, then many times you're able to share that out with the rest of the company to talk about your culture, your team, stuff like that.

Q: From Katie - What is one the positive side effect you believe that has come out from the changes brought about by this crisis that you hope continues after life gets back to normal?

A: Dammit. If that isn't maybe the best question yet. You know, what I hope comes out of this honestly is, I hope a couple of things, I hope one, companies start to understand the importance of trust. I think that, you know, I hope companies start to understand that the power needs to be cascaded down through their org chart. That work life balance is important. That caring about people, not just resources are important. That a lot of the sort of things that are really come to light here are important. That I think we just got lazy or glossed over or something because we were all in person and that, you know, those are the things that again, cause that's why I hope we don't go back to quote unquote normal

because there was a lot of stuff that was broken and F'd up in normal. And so I think those are the sorts of things that I hope are the things that carry on from those sort of from this place.

Q: From Tony - Do you have any other book recommendations or podcasts on the topic of building trust? A: You know, I don't think I do. Let me go back and look and see if I do. I just think that the biggest part of this is I think sort of like creativity, leadership, you know, any of these sort of things, trust, they tend to be very individualized and, and in many cases I think, you know, doing things like being vulnerable, being honest, trying to do those sorts of things are how you build trust with people. I think it's the same way. If you think about how you become friends with people, other things like that, there is a common purpose, there is a common set of goals, there is vulnerability, there is honesty, there are those sorts of things. And so again, I think, you know, those are all the things that tend to become important. But I think this is why we're going to write books about all these topics for forever because there's not an easy answer.

Q: From Vassily - I'm an in house designer and we are starting to get to a small backlog of tasks. My first thought is that management probably thinks my production level and efficiency is down due to working from home. What are some tips to convince them to be a little more patient? Great presentation by the way.

A: I think that for me, if you have a backlog or if you have those sorts of things, try to publish it. Try to make it transparent, try to let people know, you know, what are you doing? How long is it taking? Again, I think to be able to advertise some of those things cause I think those are the challenges in this moment is communication is that again, knowing that people are like, if I can't see you, I don't know that you're working. But I would just try to find ways of being able to communicate that out. Or like I said on the previous question, just get clear about how long the things take. And I think also I would sort of say, don't apologize, you're also protecting yourself or some of your time because again, I think it's very easy. The dark side of the, I can't see you to know that you're working is also that since I don't see you getting there early or staying up late, I don't understand the consequence or the amount of work that you're doing. So I think that that also is kind of a downside to some of this stuff. So I think the more that you're able to be more transparent to give people that sort of insight, then hopefully the better that will be.

Q: From Amanda - Speaking of expectations of being green or always active during our 8 to 5:00 PM, how do you think leaders should express their expectations of when they need to be to be showing they're active?

A: I, so for me I think the premise of this, I would maybe say the bit of, I don't think you need to show that you're active. I think that, you know, we need to have expectations. We need to know that people are working. I think it is good to have core business hours. Like for us at InVision, 10 to 4 Eastern is our core business hours. Those are the hours we ask everyone to be available. It's a global team that is probably the best window we able to come up with. But I think that again, if we're getting trapped in, because I think this goes back to this really common trap that existed before were too many people are spending too much of their effort trying to keep their job instead of doing their job. And I think that that sort of comes through here a little bit where, you know, if we're just trying to show that we're working and trying to get people to understand as opposed to actually working that that is really hard. And so for me, I think it's a little bit more about, again, having a conversation around trust around, you know, if cause as far as I'm concerned with my teams, if we give you something to do and again, what are we

expecting at the end of it? And you do it, I don't really care how or when you do it, that is not my deal. That's just not something I'm terribly caught up in.

Q: From Brian - How do you separate work time from personal time?

A: Good question. What I, what I do honestly is to try to make sure that I do a few things. One is to have a start and an end to the day. The same way that it would happen if I was in the office that I show up here. I leave here that there are like every day from 12:30 to 1 I have a meeting that's called eat. I have three blocks of time in my calendar per week that say work. And again, I think it's just, you know, too, I'm very clear and I know I advise a lot of other leaders to say like look from 5 to 9 every night go dark. Like those are, that is the family time that is not to be booked over. So I think if you're deliberate and do that, cause the problem is if you don't have those sort of rules, the water will always fill the container and people are always going to take up your time. So that's always going to be a problem. So I think the more you're able to put boundaries on that and prioritize it, because I think the more you keep giving, the more people keep taking. So just think about, you know, how do you delineate that stuff.

Q: From Frank - With freelance design hitting a brick wall lately, how can we adapt if it doesn't bounce back as quickly as we think?

Q: You know, it's a good question. It's interesting because I do see a lot of companies actually have been transitioning into freelance just because it's easier for them to flex or I think where they're not hiring full time head count, they're going to go into a freelance head count. You know I think again, the more, the more you can work on your brand, on what you do, the more you can network, the more you can get it out there, the more you can try to create opportunities and do things like that. I know those are always very, those are very cliched and very easy answers. But I just think, you know, part of it is we're going to have to wait and see. But the thing I would tell you to do is like reach out to companies directly as much as you can. I think. Don't sort of wait for them to come floating along. I know that for me, whenever I was leading a team, I want to work with people that are passionate. I want to work with people who care about this stuff. I want to work with people who show an interest. So I think if you're doing those things, it would hopefully help increase your chances.

Q: From Linda - I'm a graphic designer and I've noticed the last couple of years I'm valued less and less because management pretty much lets anyone be a quote unquote designer. I think social media has come into play very frustrating because of the quality of our work has gone downhill. Any thoughts?

A: Yeah, I think, you know, I think that a lot of people have seen this. I think this goes back to desktop publishing. I think writers have seen it since social media came in and everybody seems to think that they're a writer. I sort of arrogantly joke that like I don't think Tiger Woods gets nervous if I pick up a golf club and you know, again, I think other people can design. I think that for me the problem really comes into when it's not valued or understood whenever it's just sort of like, Oh, anybody can do it. And it's just, it is viewed and talked about as a commodity. I think for the companies or the places that tend to struggle the most have this opinion whenever you go into the companies that everybody loves, this is not a discussion nobody is discussing what is the value of the impact of design. They just simply get it. I think again, as to previous questions and again I think hopefully you've heard you're not alone. If these were these sort of situations and there isn't that ability to change there. I think, you know, again, trying to see if there's a way to be able to change your circumstance, find someplace else, find something. Because you know, in many cases it's just leadership. There is running on too antiquated of a model and that that line of thinking is going to need to die out before it's going to be able to change.

But I think that anytime for me, anytime you're viewed purely as a commodity, as in you make it pretty, you're told what to do, anybody can do what you do. That is not a good situation to be able to stay in. So yeah, that's sort of the tough recommendation there.

Q: From Jared - How do you direct your thoughts about where you / your organization need to go? How do you balance immediate needs like production with bigger ones, important things like culture and vision. I hope that makes sense.

A: No, it did make sense. I think that for me there's always you need to be the balance of an insider and an outsider at the same time because you know, what you really need to be able to do is you need to be the insider who is looking at the short term picture. You need to understand what the team is going through. You need to understand what you're working on, you need to do those things. But I think then you need to be the outsider because you need to have the longer view of where you and the team going. If you are just one of those, it doesn't work right? Like if you're just the insider, your team becomes a production resource. It doesn't evolve anywhere. And if you're just the outsider, you're just all big picture and you don't get anything done. So I think that for me there is that, okay look, you know, what are the day to day battles but also sort of what are the two or three bigger things that you need to work on to keep things moving, to keep focused on that, to keep doing that, to keep moving towards that. So again, that you're sure that you understand what's going on and that you have the balance of both. But, for me with everything I do, that's constantly what I'm trying to do is to balance those two is to be able to be sure that I have both of those working because, whenever I've got both of those, then I know that I'm in a really good spot. So that oftentimes is the best way to do that.

Q: From Christine - Any suggestions on the best way to ask / explain we be included sooner in the process so we're not always putting out fires for projects at the last minute?

A: I think, I mean this goes back to, and I've talked about this on stage, I talk about on the podcast eight ton about shifting your value of being, of going from being known for design, which tends to be executional to be known for being creative, which is problem solving and the things that happen in the front of this sort of process. I think that I did a whole episode on design versus creativity. I'd tell you to go listen to that. But I think that that's what, this isn't a process problem, this is a perception problem. And so again, I think if you are able to be viewed and be included and work in ways that is more about solving problems, you will get pulled up into the first part of that process more than if it's just simply about, okay. Like make it pretty. Because that's what tends to happen is whenever you're just known for that, then you're usually pushed to the back of the process.

Q: From Luis - How to incentive emotional trust and in general, behavioral change from the bottom up. In most cases if a desire for change came from the bottom up, it's labeled as being rebellious or a lack of a cultural fit in any experience or comments on that?

A: Yeah, I think that, you know, for me this, this really is, for me, this really is sort of the core of the problem, right? Because I think these are people where leadership tends to be threatened by what is going on and tends to be doing those sort of things and anything, the questions that is marked as disruptive, rebellious, a lot of those sorts of things. But I think that for me, the more you can band together with other people, the more you can make about make the change about the good of the company. The more that you can try to show the value of it. And it's not just change for change sake, it's not being different for the sake of just being different, that there's a real reason and a purpose behind why you're doing this. I think if we're able to do that and sort of position it, then it tends to be done the

right way. I think, you know, even if you're doing that and it's still being seen as disruptive, those are the different types of things that definitely happen with all of that.

Q: From Jill - How would you explain to management that designers are more than changing colors and graphics? Does anybody sense a theme here?

A: I think that that's what I've said before, that this really is about the fundamental shift from being seen, from design to creative. And like I said, I think there's a lot of that sort of stuff. I talked to us about this autonomy cause this is one of the number one biggest things, but it really is shifting the perception of what you do from being executional, to being more creative and around more ideation. It's very simple to do. But yeah, I think that it definitely would be good for that.

Q: From Nikki - What's the best way to get people to realize that there is a new quote unquote normal, any different normal is okay. How do you excite people about looking for opportunities and change?

A: This is where, so in my office I used to have a huge poster that said comfort is the enemy of greatness for that exact reason. And, and I think that, you know, that's the sort of thing with that where you know, people, people are afraid of change, people are uncertain about what to do. That's sort of, you know, questioning and things like that causes a lot of anxiety. I think that it really is just about, it's not change for change's sake, but it is the thing of knowing we all need to have an entrepreneurial mindset knowing we need to evolve that we need to change because obviously everything around us is changing. So that's why those sorts of things become important. And like I said, it's about how do you, how do you lead that conversation? How do you try to be able to do those, those sorts of things to be able to, to do that sort of stuff. And, and I think, you know, once you're able to do that, to create the space for the conversation, to be the first one to run up the hill. I mean, look, in the beginning, everybody will make fun of you and tell you that you're crazy and that sort of stuff. But you know, I really think that it, it really is an important thing because once you're able to show any success, everybody who made fun of you will seek you out for those exact same, the reasons.

Q: From Dan - So to be able to talk about networking and how to work on networking?

A: I did recently did a YouTube video about this for this very reason. For me, I think networking is about relationships, not about connections. I think like you can go on LinkedIn, you can go on Twitter, you can follow people, you can get them to accept your LinkedIn invitation. And again, I would argue that doesn't mean anything that I think too many people, if they're looking for work or they're doing other things like that or if they think they're networking, it's like I've got a bunch of connections and that means something. I don't think that's the case. I think that's why for me, I worked very hard on building personal relationships, on connecting with people, have actual conversations and again, I think, you know, the best way for me to do networking is joined meetups, join, you know, these sort of different things where you're able to get in, have a conversation, build real connections, have real conversations, reach out to people who again, you find interesting, asked to talk to them, interview them, get advice.

And again, Amy had mentioned it at the beginning, but that Amazing Design People List, that was a big part of what we built in there was very purposeful. There was an entire mentor section in there because I think we want to be able to help people to get feedback, to build their network, to get to know new people. But I think that it does require some amount of investment in risk to be able to do that. And I think if you're able to do that, then that's whenever you're really able to network and do that. And I think that's the most important thing. But again, you know that everybody now has the time, has the

ability to do it. So I think if you show up, show some passion, so some insight that works really well. So somehow it feels perfect.

.