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CTRL+CLICK CAST #22 Choosing a CMS With Stephanie Sullivan Rewis

[Music]

Lea Alcantara: You are listening to CTRL+CLICK CAST. We inspect the web for you! Today we're talking about choosing the right CMS with Stephanie Sullivan Rewis. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host:

Emily Lewis: Emily Lewis!

Lea Alcantara: This episode is sponsored by [Visual Chefs](#), web development focusing on content management system integration and custom web application development. To find out more, visit visualchefs.com.

Emily Lewis: CTRL+CLICK would also like to thank [Pixel & Tonic](#) for being our major sponsor.

[Music ends] Hey Lea, what's new?

Lea Alcantara: Summer!

Emily Lewis: Oh yeah. I guess you...

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: I feel like I always have summer all the time.

Lea Alcantara: Yes.

Emily Lewis: And you only have, what, three months of summer?

Lea Alcantara: Yes, when...

Emily Lewis: Right. [Laughs]



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Lea Alcantara: Yeah, but when the summer starts, it's the perfect summer.

Emily Lewis: Yeah. I've been in Seattle in June, and it is gorgeous. It really is.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, it usually kicks off ... like Seattle has this famous summer solstice parade that happens over the weekend.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: I didn't go this year, but I went last year, and it's basically like that naked bicycle ride thing. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And I just find it, it's so Seattle. Like, of course, there's a naked bicycle parade where people are in like full-on body paint and stuff, and they're like, of course. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] I don't think we have anything that eclectic here in Albuquerque.

Lea Alcantara: But the way to kick off the summer. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: What a way to celebrate a new season. Well, hell, if you're constantly in like kind of gray, misty-ness, I would celebrate summer too.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, for sure.

Emily Lewis: I take it for granted.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: I'm lucky. That's why I live here.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]



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Emily Lewis: But anyway, so let's get right to today's episode because we have a lot to talk about.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: So today we're talking about the process of evaluating and choosing the right content management system with Stephanie Sullivan Rewis. Stephanie is one of the industry's top front-end developers. She's a prolific speaker, coauthor of *Mastering CSS with Dreamweaver* books and currently works as a client-side developer for [Contatta](#). Many of you may know Stef as a CSS guru which she undoubtedly is, but she's joining us today to talk about her experiences in finding the right CMS solution of Contatta's public-facing site. Welcome to the show, Stef. We're so excited to have you on.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Thank you. I am very excited to be here with you, ladies.

Lea Alcantara: Awesome! Stephanie, can you tell our listeners a bit more about yourself?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes, I live in always summer.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I live in Phoenix, Arizona where our summer that's like your summer is actually the winter. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And we like to say here we have nine beautiful months and three months that are too close to the sun.



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Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But imagine your snowy time is being our miserable time where we have to stay in the pool and that's how it is.

Lea Alcantara: Oh, so bad. So sad.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Poor us. Yeah, it's pretty awesome, but my husband and I, my husband is developer/evangelist at Apigee, Greg Rewis, and we actually got together writing our book and found our brains melded so well that we planned a life together which we actually did on Twitter.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: We got engaged on Twitter, and later we got married on Twitter. As unromantic as some people think that it, I thought it was awesome.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Oh.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I know, and it's sweet, and Greg and I...

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis:



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Lea Alcantara: What's that?

Emily Lewis: Well, I was going to say I was watching it on Twitter, or yeah, watching the Twitter feed and I had tears. [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: Oh.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: You know a lot of people did, it was funny. Our very romantic wedding night was spent sitting in bed with our laptop in our lap reading the #tweetweb, which is what we used for the wedding, and it was so sweet. I mean, people from all over the world were just, "Oh, I'm getting a beer. I'm getting ready for the wedding, or I just woke up, I'm getting coffee or tea." It was really a fun, green way to do it. But Greg and I have discovered since we got together that both of us love sailing and had done it in various capacities when we were younger, and so we have a 34-foot catamaran out in San Diego.

Lea Alcantara: Oh wow!

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And her name is Border Radius, of course.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And we try to get over there about a week a month. We work from the boat, and so that gives us some little fun break from the heat in Phoenix. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: So as I mentioned when I said your bio, I wanted to first talk about your role at Contatta. You've been an independent developer for many, many years. Why did you give up self-employment to work for someone else?



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: It's odd, right? Yeah, I had had my own business for 12 years, and though I had started out building and managing full web projects, it had transformed into mostly working as a contractor for agencies and big companies and doing training for big companies, and companies that needed really performance front end work done, but they didn't have the devs that had the skill yet. This was two years ago, so HTML5 and responsive sites and that kind of thing were fairly new. So that's what I was doing when Contatta approached me, and I had coded sites for startups. I had done several, and I'd hand them the code and walk away.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: We all know what happens when you hand someone the code and walk away, right? [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But when Contatta approached me, Pat Sullivan is our CEO, and he was the founder of ACT!, which was back in the 80's and of Saleslogix in the 90's. And he sold both of those companies, and he wanted to do something kind of similar but more modern. And I was just really kind of turned on by what he had in mind to create.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And we were first talking about contracting, and to be honest, they couldn't afford me. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And over a period of a day I had that feeling in my gut like, “I think this is going to be a thing.” It’s the only way I can describe it, and I just decided to come on board full time – adding equity, which makes it possible to afford me – and I decided to work with them and take the gamble on the startup. So I’ve been really happy there.

Emily Lewis: And what are you doing there?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, I’m actually working as Director of Web Strategy and Marketing Technology, which is fancy title, but it means I do anything and everything related to technology in the marketing department.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So I do the website and the blog and the support site. I have to implement all the organic SEO, the Schema.org, the OG markup, and I handle all the AB testing, all the analytics. I implement the marketing automation, which means I have to do something that I really, really dislike, which is doing things like build responsive HTML newsletters.

Lea Alcantara: Oh god.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, the bane of my existence, the tables and the landing pages. So basically, anything that touches tech, I’m doing, and involved in. And I will have minions at some point, but right now, it’s me. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: And so when did the CMS enter the picture, the idea of needing a CMS at Contatta?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, it was about a year ago that I did most of the research that we’re going to talk about, which in web years is light years ago, but it’s more me looking ahead. I mean,



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right now, really what I need is the ability for my creative and marketing people to be able to change pictures and words and not have to have me in the middle. That's really all we need right now.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But I also know that when we are successful, we will need a much larger site and this site will involve a marketplace for add-ons and extensions. Contatta is built completely on APIs, so it's going to be very, very extensible, so we're going to need a marketplace, so that's ecommerce. We're going to need probably more support options, internationalization, membership and login and user areas. That kind of thing.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So I'm more planning ahead. I'm actually building the site. We have a very long, big single page site right now, but I'm in the process of the final bit of building a full site right now, and then I will be implementing the CMS because too many things got in the middle of it between now and when I was doing my research.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Being the only person doing tech. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: But before Contatta, when you were working with different agencies and stuff, did you work with CMSs in any way?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Very little. Basically, I've worked with WordPress, you know?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: That was something that when I had my own clients doing full projects. When people wanted a blog, I always put it on WordPress. So I knew about theming WordPress, that



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kind of thing and adding a little bit of functionality maybe, but I am no CMS expert. I am full bore front-end, so tackling this project was a little bit overwhelming at first. And really I did learn lessons along the way with things I didn't even know to think about.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: They became very apparent. I don't know if you want to talk about that now or later. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Well, let's talk a little bit about that. I feel like there are two different answers to this depending on the project or the client or whatever, but did your clients or do you have to have a specific server configuration? Because I feel like that's usually where a lot of people start. Before you even look at what systems you're working on, do you already have like a specific server configuration, Windows server or LAMP?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right. I actually did reselling when I had my own company. I resold hosting.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And the reason I did that originally many, many, many, many years ago was basically so that I could get my own hosting free back when I started. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But it turned out to be a really wonderful thing because I know how that company's servers are set up.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And so every client that would come to me, there was no question. I just said, "Okay, here is how we're going to do your hosting or whatever." So I was used to that, and it was on servers that I could use PHP.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And that's what I'm used to when I have to do things that touch the back end. PHP is my preference. With Contatta, we are hosted at AWS, Amazon Web Services.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And I have guys that handle the things that I need them to do, and that's awesome because I really don't like server stuff at all.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: So you're not stuck to anything then? I mean, I think when you have the ability to tell people what you need... I feel this way kind of about Arcustech.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: It's that when it comes to servers, I'm pretty clueless, so when there's something I need I can turn to them to ask them before I make any kind of decisions. Or having a company that you're comfortable with, they have a server configuration that you can work with easily regardless of what the situation is. But I've never worked on a Windows CMS.

Lea Alcantara: Windows, yeah, me neither.

Emily Lewis: I mean, I themed a DotNetNuke site, but it was just the theme.



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes.

Emily Lewis: It was just front-end.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes, and I don't love DotNet at all, and when I was making my list of what do I know and what do I know I don't want, DotNet was absolutely on the don't want.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But I did have to work with it a couple of times for clients, and oh man, there are too much, and you see, being a front-end developer, what is so important to me is performance and freedom to build what I want.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And then make the CMS behave with what I have built. That's really it. I don't want to get locked into these components that are going to be what they are because they come with the CMS. I really don't want that. So DotNet I ruled out from the beginning. It used to be very ugly. I don't know what it looks like these days, but it used to be very ugly.

Lea Alcantara: Well, what's interesting about that is it sounds like you *did* have like kind of the to-do list or a list of requirements, what you like and don't like.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes, basic ones.

Lea Alcantara: So how did you define the requirements for the CMS? What did you need?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, I basically sat down and said, "Okay, we're a little site and here's what I know we need right now. This is what I would need to get us into right now." Which is really like I said, having words, images, galleries, scrollers, pop-ups, videos, all those things editable by my



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creative team, and having a way for them to add to a news and a PR section and our company blog, which right now is on WordPress, but I intend to move to whatever we move to, or having our trial sign-up area so that they can handle words on that.

But like I said, in the future, I listed out the things I know we definitely can and will need with the ecommerce and logins and things like that. I need to be able to set permissions for different users to be able to do more or less. So I knew basic things like that, and I knew that there were some systems I didn't want to use. Two of them being Drupal and Joomla. I just did not want to get into the complexity of those systems. I have too many dev friends that have worked with them, and I've heard too many things, and I didn't want to go there. So that was on my No list to start, although I did read about them as I was evaluating. I didn't say, "Oh, I know everything, I'm ruling them out."

So I kind of made a list of what we needed, but not really understanding all the things I needed to evaluate at that point, and then I made a list of things I've heard of. Like ExpressionEngine was one I always felt that just from friends talking, that if I ever needed to do a CMS, it would very possibly be EE, that I just had that in the back of my head, but I hadn't really evaluated it in any depth.

So I made that list and then I just started what I do with everything that I do, which I just started researching on the web. And I always make my research ... do you know how Google lets you set a time frame? I always set it within a year at the least, sometimes a month if I'm looking for some new CSS information, and I get really irritated when sites think that they're being smart to outsmart Google and they don't date their articles. That irritates me more than anything, and I'll close the window because I need fresh information. I don't need 2009's list of what are the best CMS products. We change too fast.



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So I look for very recent information, articles, reviews, round-ups and started the list and made little notes to myself about what they said was good and bad about them. And then I actually Googled for negative reviews about the products, because sometimes it's good to know, is the negative thing just negative? Did somebody give it three stars because of something that wouldn't bother me at all, or did they give it three stars because that thing is not going to work? It's a deal-breaker and would be a deal breaker for me? So I do that with anything that I'm looking at on the web. I look for the positives and then I look for the negatives as well.

Then I just started talking to friends and friends that are developers and got their opinions. I asked questions on Twitter, where I have a pretty decent following of tech people. So I threw out some questions to get feedback from people that are using things, and then I went to the sites of the companies that I had developed on the short list, and I looked at their documentation to see how good that is because what I know is I'm going to need a lot of documentation. I'm going to have a lot to learn, and I looked around in their forums to see what their user community was like, to see how active things were, to see are they answering questions, are there really sharp people there answering questions, or do things get asked and they just sort of sit there, because that's really frustrating to me.

When I started my business, when I was learning the web way back in 1999 or 2000, I went to a forum that did web development, and I drove those people crazy. I asked so many questions because if you don't ask, you don't know, and I was reading and I was learning, and I was doing tutorials, but I asked a zillion questions, and then I stayed there. As I could answer the more beginner questions, I started helping the people that were just coming in and I was asking more advanced questions. I sort of believe that a good community works that way. If you ask when you're a newbie, a lot of people then just leave, but I believe you need to give back and you need to help out



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the people that are just coming in because that's always happening and get help from people that are still above you. So I looked for community, and I think that's super important when I need to learn something. Then when I got to a top three, I talked to some people that I knew that were using those CMSs, and so that was kind of my process of narrowing down what am I going to try or where do I think I'm going.

Emily Lewis: So here's an interesting question because I think your answer obviously is relevant to the fact that you work with an employer and the people who will be entering content are your co-workers, as opposed to if you were contracted out and it was a client who have their own in-house people...

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right.

Emily Lewis: But at any point did you have to talk to or even factor in how your creative people need to use the system, not just what they needed to do? I mean, I don't know how to say this ... it's going to come across wrong, but I'll just say it anyways. Sometimes, marketing people aren't the most technically savvy.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Absolutely true. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: They may not be comfortable working with certain things, so did that have any kind of ranking or priority when you were gathering sort of all your research?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, I definitely wanted to come up with a system that would just allow them to go into an area and edit it and not have to worry about blowing anything up, you know?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]



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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Because we've got our Creative Director and the guy that kind of works right with him. The two of them are kind of a team that handles our story and our words and all of that, and they are amazingly talented, but neither of them are very technical at all. My designer is a really great designer, and he's actually getting into the [Web] Inspector a little bit as we work together because our site we're building is responsive and so we'll talk about what should happen here or there. The other day he sent me a screenshot and he had the Inspector open, and he's like, "I think this would look better if it's..." I was like, "Oh Jamie, you're in the Inspector, I'm so proud." [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But he doesn't have confidence in his technical ability, but way back in the day, he built some sites with tables. So he gets it a little bit, but he doesn't want to get it. He doesn't want to have to deal with that. He deals with making things beautiful.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And then our lead gen guy and our main marketing guy, neither of them, I mean, they don't want it. They would prefer to not have to deal with that. So honestly, I mean, all I did was brainstorm with them about what we believe our site will be down the way, and then I did not involve them in the process of the decision making because basically they'll use whatever I tell them. [Laughs]

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Lea Alcantara: Sure.



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And so to me, it was really important that I wanted the freedom to build a highly performant site and a CMS that didn't dictate to me how to do it. And that I could give them the freedom to edit without fear.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Have no fear of editing.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I feel like part of that is actually the ability to almost hide or remove features from the CMS.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes.

Lea Alcantara: Because I feel like ... I haven't developed with Drupal or Joomla, but I feel like part of the negative thing about them, especially for smaller sites is that it's just too much, it's too much. And then it's just "I need to have a title field and a body field and the post button". [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right, right.

Lea Alcantara: And only one form. For example, if that marketing person just needs to update the news, but doesn't need to update every single page on the site, having a CMS where it allows you to say, "Only people from this group, or only this person can edit this form, and nothing else."

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yeah, agreed. Yes, absolutely true. Absolutely true. The simpler the better.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, it's part of the user experience of the CMS.

Lea Alcantara: Yes.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes, exactly, and that was on my list of things to evaluate, how is the admin built? What's the administration flow for users? How do they work in there? How were the



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permissions for users handled? Those were important, and those were on my list of stuff that matters. “Stuff That Matters.” That’s the name of the list.

Lea Alcantara: Speaking of that particular list, I just want to know exactly how you document this. So you mentioned Google a little bit, but did you have spreadsheets? Did you have some form or did you have just pen and paper, checklist on the notebook.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I would love to say that I am a highly organized person like Emily Lewis.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Emily ... I always look at Emily and I’m like, “Oh, she’s so organized.”

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, this is so bad, I have aTextEdit page, and when I was going back to my notes to talk to you guys since it’s been a year, refresh my memory, I literally jot notes, and then, “Oh, here’s another section about this, down here is another, put a line in, here’s another section about this. Oh, here are my notes that I got out of this article. No, this one is now ruled out.” Then sometimes I gray things out, so I use color very creatively. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I gray things out. In fact, on my to do list, I gray things out when they’re done so that I can still see them and there’s no way to do a checkmark, right? [Laughs]



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Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I have my own weird little system. Right now, I use Sublime to code, and right now as we're kind of finishing this big site, I started realizing, "Okay, I've got this list of things that I can't quite get to yet, but still has to be done." And I just put a text file in Sublime, like I'm just using Sublime. I'll leave it open, I jot notes.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: It's really technical. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Actually, like that reminds me of a [past episode we had with Erik Reagan on documentation](#).

Emily Lewis: Oh, right. It's the same thing.

Lea Alcantara: He does the same thing.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Because he said, especially when you're a developer, you already have the text editor open.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: That's true.

Lea Alcantara: So even though you could have like complicated ways to document ... it's basically: document how you feel comfortable, as long as you document.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes.



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Lea Alcantara: And the way he said his team does it is they just open Sublime or their text editor and they use like Markdown to make sure that they know what a headline looks like, right? [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: But yeah, they said like just document while you develop.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes, I so agree because I don't know about you, but if I go back to code that I built three months ago, I start questioning, "Whoa, what was I doing there?" You know?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And I'll figure it out, but why should I need to take the time to figure out, "Oh, I did that because of the way it interacts with this."

Lea Alcantara: Something you already did, yeah.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Because we all know there are 15 ways you could code the same thing, but what you need it to do and what it's interacting with affects the method you're going to use. So a lot of times you end up coding and you're under deadline and you're like, "Oh, I'll remember that." Well, this particular time that I've been doing this, I've had a little more support with letting me do it the right way. And I know this is not our subject, but letting me build my object-oriented CSS library and really build things in components the way I want to build. And I am taking that opportunity to document.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And so I document right in my code.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And then when I compile my Sass with CodeKit, when I finally compile the small version, it rips all that out. But I still have it in mind. So what is this code used for, and how sometimes even – and this idea came from Harry Roberts – just putting a big code block right before this particular module and show even the markup in that comment.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Reis: The markup should look like this, you know?

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So yeah, I'm a strong believer.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, we had Jina Bolton on recently and she discussed something along those lines including your markup with your selectors.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes.

Emily Lewis: But yeah, I definitely think, if you're a front-end developer – any kind of developer – really having a text editor open just totally makes sense to use that for your note taking.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right.

Emily Lewis: I'll just throw something out there. For me, when I'm doing research, I use Evernote, and it's just so I can go back and forth between my computers more easily.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh yeah, yeah. I only have one computer and I have it set up so that I have a big screen at my desk and I take it with me to the office the days I work at the office and I sit on the couch sometimes, but always with the same laptop so I generally have everything I need.

Emily Lewis: Now, especially since you were just recently going through these notes, did you see any way areas where you prioritized or ranked things? For example, you discussed that you know



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what you need now and you're speculating on what you need in the future, but did you need to prioritize any of those kind of like you make with any project? Sometimes you have to prioritize features in terms of what's realistic to get out when.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, kind of sort of. Like I said, being a front-end developer, the exploration process was actually teaching me some things that I didn't even know that I needed to think about. At first, I wasn't really thinking so much how was the admin built. I just thought I'm going to build something so they can edit things or apply. But it's silly, and I wasn't thinking about things like how is internationalization handled, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: How can I do that? What is the method of templating? I knew that I wanted freedom, and that's why EE was so attractive to me. I knew that I wanted freedom. I have worked with systems, but not really recently because usually I just code in straight HTML, CSS and JavaScript, hand it off and they integrate it into their system.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And sometimes when I see how it's integrated, I cry. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] I know what you mean.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: That's what happened with the last big project. I had coded a startup and it was going on to DotNet. And the company was in New York, I was in Phoenix and the developers were in Israel, so we were really spread out. So I did the whole front end and I tried to componentize because I knew DotNet was very ... funky, let's just call it that. And so I tried to build in little modular components that they could hopefully drop in to their DotNet system. But oh my gosh,



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some of the stuff that when I started seeing the site as it went live, I was just like, “Oh tears, tears.”

[Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Because as a coder, you don't end up with much of a portfolio because once you hand the site off, I don't necessarily want to tell people I did that code, you know? [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Right.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Because it usually gets mangled in time, but I think back to what I was thinking about, I think that as I went through the process, I was thinking about it more and more. I didn't even know at the beginning. I just knew that I wanted it the look, feel and the ability to optimize for performance. So what's actually important on my list too that the system that I choose be very performant. Some systems can be sluggish, and then of course you have to know how to do it so that they're not, and some of them just are ... Like I don't know about you, but I've got a good WordPress host, but I still find WordPress to be somewhat sluggish.

Emily Lewis: Bloated.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yeah. It's just a little bloated, yeah, and so that was very important.

Lea Alcantara: So it sounds like you added more to your requirements as you went through your research. So I kind of want to talk about how you eventually narrowed it down to your top three, like what were the things that basically made those top three shine? Like what were the features where you're like, “Okay, out of all, this is the reason why we're going to start testing with these guys”?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, I guess basically after kind of making the list of everything I had learned, I just started balancing things out. Like, A, number one, the most important thing had to be the flexible, customizable bit. But also not being a back-end developer, I also highly prioritized the



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community around the system, and how many add-ons and extensions were available, how active does it look like the CMSs itself. Has it not been updated in several years? Does it look like maybe it's dying? Or is it really looked like a system that's starting? Even though maybe it's not used by a ton of people, is it getting legs and people really seemed to love it?

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Those kinds of things, believe it or not, over some other things, were super important to me because I know that I have got a learning curve, and I am one person that's going to be doing this. I don't have the ability right now to have a back-end developer and say, "Hey, go put this on a CMS." So those things. And then I got down to about four of them, and then I just looked at the pros and cons that I had listed out, and kind of narrowed it down. And here's the funny thing, I narrowed it down ... I don't even really wanted to tell you the name of the one that I actually did narrow it down and tried, because I don't want to say anything bad about them because it could just be my stupidity that caused the difference. But you know what I mean ...

But I had narrowed it down to four and I had decided to try, to start implementing and experimenting with one. It was not ExpressionEngine. It was a newer one, and everybody said it's got good SEO and social built in. It's easy to customize. You've got good control over your content types. They had just upgraded to a new version. It was a substantial change as in the type of thing where plugins don't work on the new version and have to be updated – I know EE did that recently. And the community... I will say this when I was asking questions on Twitter, when I kind of was narrowing it down to the top three or four: the community really reached out to me on Twitter above any of the other ones. In fact, one of the ones that was on my top four, I didn't get a single person that responded that used that system or cared about it.

Emily Lewis: Wow.



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And that's honestly what knocked that one off the list because I thought if there is no community at all so much so that in almost 9,000 followers – not a single person can say anything about it – and maybe that's not something I want to be involved in.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But this one community really reached out, and I thought, "Okay, well, let me experiment." And I started reading and learning and setting it up and got it all set up, and then I learned a very important lesson, and that was you need to look at your workflow. If you have a workflow, like for me, we use Git, and we push to a staging server and then everything is done and tested and taken through its paces and that's after I've done it locally. I push it in staging and everybody runs it through its paces, and then we push to production.

Well, this particular CMS, and I was too naïve to know to even look at this, it put a ton of the functionality in the database, so my workflow did not work at all. And so I went into the forum to talk to some people about like, "Okay, what can I do to make this work?" Nobody could answer that question and there were three of us in there asking the same thing, "What in the world can we do? Like who doesn't use a staging server? Come on, people." If you're doing anything serious, you should be using a staging server.

So there was one guy that was, "Okay, I'm going to figure this out." Well, that's great, but when this is one of my three that I'm looking at, how much time do I want to invest in learning and experimenting and trying to force this to work with my methodologies and with no support around that workflow, or am I just going to move on to the next one?" Do you know what I mean?

Emily Lewis: Right.



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So I kind of waited and in about a week, he came back to the forum and he said, "Okay, I've figured it out. It's a little complicated, but I figured it out." We said, "Okay, how do you do it?" He goes, "I'm going to write up a blog post soon." And he never did. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Oh no.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And I just said, "You know, okay. The company had no desire to assist us with figuring out how you could use this CMS with a staging server. The one guy that figured it out didn't have time." And I get that he didn't have time to spoon-feed us his research, and I dumped that one for that very reason. It was just like I don't have hours and hours and hours because I already know I'm going to spend hours learning. I don't have hours to then find out it can't even do it. So that was quite the lesson. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: So since that sounded like a hands-on learning lesson, did you also get to experiment with the other two CMSs that were on your shortlist?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I did not. One of them I actually ruled out when I got in and started looking at how it worked.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Because it uses something called in-context editing which allows people to edit right in the page, in the browser.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: In fact, Adobe just did that with Muse and Adobe bought a company that developed in-context editing, so I'm very familiar with it. We could do it in Dreamweaver years and years and years ago. However, honestly, it doesn't make me comfortable. There is something about it. It gives me creepy feelings with security. I don't know why. It could be totally unfounded. It's just



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one of those gut things, like I don't like the fact that there's a way to edit right there in the page. I want someone logging into an admin. I want to feel like I can really secure my system. So one of them got ruled out because once I started really getting into it and realized that's how it worked, I was like, "No, I'm not interested."

So what I had kind of before I got moved in another direction and couldn't implement it, I had actually ended back at EE again. There was one other that I was very interested in, but was afraid at that time to do which was Craft, because Craft was just about to come out of beta and it looked really interesting. But knowing that, A, I don't know how well it's going to do, how its user community is going to be, a lot of stuff is not yet developed in the community to support things I might need to do without me having to do by hand. So I was fearful of taking something that was almost out of beta and putting my corporate site on it.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So I was really sent back to EE. But now that it's been a year and I'm almost ready to go back to this again and try to actually get it implemented I do have a couple on the list that I'm going to revisit, Craft being one of them, and just make sure that EE is the one I want to use, but see if the other two are able to do the things I need.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So the process is not over. [Laughs] And it's really hard to do the experimenting part because there's a certain amount you have to understand to be able to experiment.

Emily Lewis: Right.



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: It's not like experimenting with a new text editor or some app on your phone. It's a system that works different than other systems, and so for me, the experimenting part is extremely time consuming because I've got to learn as I experiment. So I'm looking for things that already kind of make sense to me, you know? [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And so that's the troublesome area I guess.

Lea Alcantara: So in regards to that, what is the thing that you're really familiar with that you think, "Okay, I know that I need to set custom fields up or something like that." I feel like that's something very common for most CMSs. Is that something that you're like "okay"?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, you see, Lea, it is common for CMSs, but having only worked with WordPress as a blog... [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Right! They took forever to even have that as a feature.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right. And I'll say like at this point, as I'm working with the Genesis Framework in WordPress for our blog, and my designer in our new design that hopefully will be launched within the next month came up with some very beautiful, but very different than the functionality we have currently. And so I've had to really dig in and learn so much more about WordPress than I ever knew before because I'm about to change to something else. I'm like, "Damn it, I'm actually starting to feel like I'm kind of starting to get it outside of just making a theme and putting it into that."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So yeah, you and Emily do a lot with CMSs, so you have some understanding when you're evaluating another CMS like, "Okay, well, I'll experiment with how our



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content type is created, or whatever. What is my freedom in that area? How difficult is that?" But I'm literally going to have to learn.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I'm going to have to ... and I talked to my boss about what I think I would like to do because whichever one I decide on, whether it's EE or not, I think I would like to take some sort of a class, whether it's video.

Emily Lewis: Absolutely.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But get myself like up to speed, and that's why documentation is so important to me.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Because I know I'm going to be reading and learning, and clear documentation, not crappy documentation. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Yeah, that was....

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Documentation is so important.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, I think I had built one thing in EE stupidly without referencing anything and hated it every step of the way. [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right.

Emily Lewis: And then I got some tutorials that ... Lea, do you remember Boyink's church tutorials?

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: They were free online.



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Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: When I actually built something in-context and it was like that's when the synapses, the connection started happening about what was going on.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right, right, and for me, I think I really need to understand the basics. I really need to build on a strong foundation.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I want all of the blocks to be in place and then I want to add to them and then I want to add to them so that they don't fall over. And when I was starting out learning CSS back in like – I don't know – 2002 or something, I never once just sucked down a site and tried to change it and turn it into a client site or whatever. And I know a lot of people do that. But I think the real problem with that is they're not learning the basics, and many times when I'm helping someone on a forum, the problem is they don't understand positioning even. Do you know what I mean?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Like they didn't learn the basics. And so I've been really happy that I forced myself to step-by-step learn things and add another thing to the next site and learn another thing for the next site, and I intend to do the same thing as I get into whichever CMS it is. I really want to learn the basics so I don't just feel like things are swimming in my head and I have to beg for help constantly. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: So you're talking about documentation, and I'm going to assume that you meant like text documentation, but do you find video tutorials helpful at all?



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: It's funny a lot of people love video. I don't like it very much. I prefer to do the kind of tutorials where I'm doing it while I'm reading it, and once in a while I'll watch a video, but I'm a really fast reader and so I prefer to be able to scan through. For some reason too, the way my brain works, I kind of remember where something is on the page when I need it again.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I do the same thing in a book. [Laughs] Oh, that was on the right top about this far through the book or whatever, and so for me, my modality is I prefer to read and do, absolutely, and do, not just read.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: So while you were researching and even the few situations where you had a chance to actually look at the CMS in detail or experiment with it, was there anything that surprised you in a good way or anything that surprised you in a bad way just about the CMSs in general, how they're sold, how they give information out, how easy it is to research, anything?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: What surprised me was that it was way more complex than I expected. [Laughs] Just the whole system of the requirements that I kept adding as I went, you know?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Like at first, I wasn't thinking about really security and admin and like I was just thinking how can I people edit their stuff, and so even things that Lea said earlier that, "Oh, did you look at how easy it is to make different types of content," I have never even thought about it, you know?



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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I didn't think of that until I started researching and then it was like, "Oh, oh, some of these systems are not very flexible and others are very flexible. Well, that's kind of important to me." As a developer, I despise being locked into having to do something in a way that I don't want to do it.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And so that I know that that kind of flexibility is going to be important to me. In our marketing automation system, sometimes somebody will say, "Okay, let's set the flow up this way and let's send this email and let's do this and whatever," and then I get in there and I'm like, "Oh crap, we can't really do it like that guys. We're going to have to do this."

Emily Lewis: Right.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And I don't want to have to change what I need to do to fit a system. I want a system that fits what I need to do.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So yeah, the complexity was surprising to me, though. I did not realize how complex this whole thing is, and how many things I need to have on my list.

Emily Lewis: If you were going to talk ... like right now you're talking to our listeners about this process. Is there any resource that you could recommend to someone who is looking to evaluate two or more CMSs against each other?



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, interestingly, I don't know anything about what this site is. There's a site called CMSWire. I don't know if it's just one of those sites where they're just trying to make money and not very helpful, but I found a lot of reviews on there that are quite exhaustive, you know?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: In fact, I just read the new EE one to see kind of what the new stuff was in the last week, and I don't feel like they're slanting towards anything, which I like, which is very important to me. I don't want to read PR. I want to read an actual review. So I don't know, but they seem to have information on lots and lots of them. But outside of that, I really did just Google for the most recent stuff. There are also ... I found usage statistics to be very interesting, you know?

Lea Alcantara: Ahhh.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: It's sites that show how many people are using this, that and the other.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I think that's kind of important. It lets you know ... But I wouldn't base a decision on that, because something could be new and up and coming and amazing, and that's really low usage because they're new, you know?

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: Right, right.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But I did take those things into account. I love to do research as weird as that sounds. So for me, it's like I'm taking as much information as I can and I let it wash over me, and then it all starts to settle out. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I do the same thing with recipes. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Yeah, I feel like I'm the same way. I'll make a note of something that I want to look into and then I have to spend a lot of time looking into it before I decide if it's something I'm going to use. Like I need to use it first.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right, right.

Emily Lewis: And then see if it's actually going to be something that sticks around with me.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And I tend to be a bit skeptical. So everything I read, I read as in, "Does this person have an agenda paid for by somebody? Do they really know what they're talking about, or did they want to do the "Top 10 CMSs" to get traffic?"

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, sure. So something we haven't asked yet, but one of our listeners Tristan Bailey asked on Twitter, is about the money involved with choosing a CMS, and the specific question was, "How do you cost the lifetime of a CMS?"

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Hmm, that's a great question. If I were doing this for a client that I was going to implement and then half the time never have to do anything with again once I set it up, it would be a different thing.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But for me, being the marketing technologist in a single company, I look at the cost, but I'm not as concerned. It's not as much of a factor, like I know a lot of people when I was reading information there like, "Well, EE costs money. Oh, how dare they?" You know?

[Laughs]



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Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yeah, nobody should be paid for their work. It's ridiculous. And that doesn't bother me at all, but EE costs money to start out to get going and to keep going.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I'm not bothered by that, and so long as it's not some exorbitant thing with hidden costs that you're constantly being hit with, that's not a major concern that I had to think about.

Lea Alcantara: So you mentioned like the community was one of the most overwhelming decisions over deciding what CMS, especially because you're like a newbie trying to figure out that particular CMS.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes.

Lea Alcantara: Do you also think about the costs of the availability of these people?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, that's kind of why I look at the forums to see how active they were, and like on my Genesis Framework site, they have a very active forum and it's funny because there's this one or two people that are just in there all the time answering practically everything, you know? [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And while that could be dangerous if that dude decides to not be there anymore, it is nice to see activity like that.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And to be honest, the other day, I was really fighting. I had figured out so much functionality in WordPress, but there was this one bug that the way I had done something, I had created this double first title and I had no way to troubleshoot it. I didn't even know where to start, and I went to the forum and asked questions and nobody really had any real help, and there's one guy who started asking me questions. Well, in the end, we ended up taking it off offline. I paid him \$35. He's like, "Okay, I'll spend a little time on this." And I said, "Okay, I'll give you some money and you'll give me my solution." That's worthwhile to me. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: For me not to have to spend hours trying to figure out what in the world happened is worthwhile. So there are sometimes some costs. I don't mind paying people beer money when they're helping people a lot.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But your initial question was about cost of help or what?

Emily Lewis: Well, yeah, I think it was. This was also from our listener, Tristan Bailey, he was asking about I think more in the context of how Lea and I are operating right now where our clients or prospects are trying to evaluate us. I think it's a bad idea when clients come to you and they already know what CMS they want.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yes.

Emily Lewis: Because that's not really what their area of expertise is. Their expertise is in their business. But it happens. And I think sometimes they may make decisions based on the costs of the people who know how to use it because maybe they've been burned in the past and so they're going to sign with an agency to build it, but they're not confident they'll still be with that agency.



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right.

Emily Lewis: So they wanted to know that there are other people out there that could do this if they needed it done.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right. I think that is what he's thinking.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Absolutely. That's a Lea and Emily question. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Because I don't have to think about anything related to costs really.

Emily Lewis: I mean, if I were to answer that question, I'm not a client so I can't say, but I would discourage a client from going into something already looking for help from someone else, but I do think the resources like – what is it – Director-ee? That's...

Lea Alcantara: That's the EE professional listing.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Right.

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Emily Lewis: That's something that if a client has that in their RFP and they want to know what it costs or what the community is like, that referencing directory is a pretty simple way of doing it saying there's a ton of people out there using this system. Here are their professional profiles.



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, that was actually on my list of things when I talked about community and whatever. I do want to know that there is an active development community that I can turn to if I need to.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Because I am one person and I can't just spend two weeks on some little something when there's 97 other things that I've got to handle.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So I have no problem outsourcing pieces that would take me longer to learn than to let someone else build.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: So we've been talking a lot about all these CMS things, and you've learned a lot and you're still learning, but do you have any final best advice for someone who has to go through this particular process?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Hire someone else. No... [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, I don't know. I think you've really got to start with what you understand that you need.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: You've really got to start from that place. And then really a useful thing is to lean on other developers that have more experience than you do. I have heavily done that, and I have developers that I trust and that I trust the opinions of, and that can shortcut some things for you.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: It's kind of like "why create an API when somebody already has one that you can use," you know?

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So utilize your community to help you even start with where do we need to go from here, but you've got to know your own requirements, and then you've got to be flexible. You've got to know in your gut what are the important things. Some people may not care about theming and front-end development. They may just want a community that provides a lot of templates that they can slightly change or things like that.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So everybody is different, and you just really got to be real with yourself.

Lea Alcantara: All right. So before we finish up, we've got our rapidfire 10 Questions so our listeners can get to know you a bit better.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh dear.

Lea Alcantara: So are you ready, Stef?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I'm ready.

Lea Alcantara: Okay. First question, Mac OS or Windows?



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Mac forever, baby. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] What's your favorite mobile app?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: My favorite mobile app, well, right now, of course, that changes from week to week, but right now, Greg and I are really enjoying Glympse.

Lea Alcantara: Glympse.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: G-L-Y-M-P-S-E. We just found it a couple of weeks ago, and it is really cool. Like he can send me a Glympse even when he's on the plane, he travels a lot, and when he's on the plane, he can send me a Glympse and I click it and then it shows me where he is, how fast he's going, when he's estimated to arrive.

Lea Alcantara: Wow!

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And then when he gets in over to come home, I can see where he is so I can have his martini ready for him when he walks in the door. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And then I send him a Glympse when I'm leaving work so he doesn't even have to say, "Hey, how's the traffic? When are you going to be here?" Because he generally makes dinner so it's a really cool way to share with somebody. When we went over to some friend's house on Saturday night for dinner, and we were running late so we sent them a Glympse, and we were like, "We are here," and he was like, "That is so cool! Should I have your margaritas ready?"

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: We're like, "Yes." [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: All right, so what's your least favorite thing about social media?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, I can tell you that easily.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I adored Twitter back in 2006 to '08 to '09. It was such a fun place. We talked about what we ate. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I got a lot of developer chitchat and whatever, and it just feels like high school now.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: It's like so much bickering and cliquish and in-fighting and shaming and "let's take this person down because they said something we don't like." Oh, so yeah, the mob rule thing on social media has really gotten a bit out of control. I don't have time for that kind of action, thinking or whatever. I didn't like that in high school and I don't like it now. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: All right, what profession other than yours would you like to attempt?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, since this is my fifth profession. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]



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Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I have done everything from nursing to being a travel agent, to being an image consultant and model, and this is the fifth thing, and honestly, I love what I do so much that it would be something within the tech realm, I believe.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But otherwise, Greg and I intend to take off in about five years and circumnavigate, and while we're doing that, we may have to stop and bartender. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So you know what I mean, I'm open to whatever keeps me moving around the world if I don't have enough cash to do it when I leave. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: So the opposite, what profession would you not ever do?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, that I would not ever do, I don't ever want to go back to nursing. I got really tired of spit.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And the other word that's similar.

Lea Alcantara: Yes, yes, okay.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, I loved the helping part of the profession, I did not love the secretions of the profession.

Emily Lewis: All right, Stef, who's the web professional you admire the most?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Wow! There are so many I have had. Molly Holzschlag was a big mentor to me as I was starting out.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And Eric Meyer was, and oh my gosh, I have admired Eric's journey through this horrible, horrible thing with his daughter.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Just his openness, and he's such a sharing person when it comes to code and his work in the industry to begin with. I learned CSS because he shared his experiments, but just the way he shared such, I mean it makes me tear up to even talk about it, but the way he shared that with people was just unbelievable.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And I would have to say a current non-mentor type person is Chris Coyier.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I love Chris so much, and he is that personality. He's so real and he shares so much with the community. I just think he's amazing.

Lea Alcantara: So what music do you like to code to?



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh yeah, baby.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: It's 80's new wave punk rock. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: That or what they're calling now, new folk.

Emily Lewis: New folk?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I don't know if that's really a word.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But on Spotify, it is. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Okay. [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: I found that a lot of stuff that I was enjoying, and you know, I've gotten in the bad habit of turning Spotify on and going to an artist's song I like or whatever and saying, "Make a radio station out of this." Well, then, it plays things, and I don't know the names of the artists or the songs that I like, but I did learn that one of the styles that I've really enjoyed, they called new folk. [Laughs] But I can always turn on some 80's new wave and be happy as a clam.

Emily Lewis: What's your secret talent?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, secret talent. I'm not very secret about anything, and I'm a horrible workaholic ... So I used to play beach volleyball before I came to Phoenix where it's all sand and no beach volleyball, go figure.



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Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Well, okay, I have a secret talent. I am not a good communicator in that like I'm so great with words, but I am emotive. I'm the person that if I work in a group of people, I'm the oil on the water that just makes everybody get along and I can say the hard things to people without offending.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: So I don't know what you would call that, but I'm maybe a facilitator. I don't know, it's just something that comes natural to me, and when I'm groups, it seems to be utilized when people realized it, they'll be like, "Hey, I need you to do this. Can you talk to this person?"
[Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And I can usually say things without offending, but I think a lot of that comes from beta testing for so many years.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: And learning how to talk to engineers and tell them that this thing isn't good without telling them they aren't good. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: You know?



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Emily Lewis: You have tact. [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Yeah, maybe. Yeah, I don't like to hurt. I don't like to hurt feelings.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: That's why I hate the Twitter high school thing.

Lea Alcantara: So what's the most recent book you've read?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, I mainly right now, almost everything I'm reading are sailing books. Real life, going around the world, people's experiences, and I have them on my Kindle, and I read them every night. I can't remember the name of the one I just finished, but I'll tell you one that's awesome, whether you like sailing or not. It is called *Love with a Chance of Drowning*, and I read that one about a year ago. The best book I've read in forever. She is the funniest, funniest writer. She's so good, and it's a love story too, and it involves sailing, but it's just a great book for anybody.

Emily Lewis: All right, last up, *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*?

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: *Blade Runner*. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Awesome!

Emily Lewis: I like that.

Lea Alcantara: So that's all the time we have for today. Thanks for joining us!

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, thank you so much for having me. You guys are great!

Emily Lewis: In case our listeners want to follow up with you, where can they find you online?



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Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Oh, my very old website is [w3conversions](#). Please don't look at the code. It was done like eight years ago.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: But I'm [@stefsull](#). That's my most active place. Yeah, that's definitely the place.

Emily Lewis: All right, great. Thanks Stef. It's always awesome to talk with you.

Stephanie Sullivan Rewis: Good to talk to you.

[Music starts]

Lea Alcantara: We'd now like to thank the sponsors for this podcast, [Visual Chefs](#) and [Pixel & Tonic](#).

Emily Lewis: We also want to thank our partners, [Arcustech](#), [Devot:ee](#) and [EE Insider](#).

Lea Alcantara: And thanks to our listeners for tuning in! If you want to know more about CTRL+CLICK, make sure you follow us on Twitter [@ctrlclickcast](#) or visit our website, [ctrlclickcast.com](#).

Emily Lewis: Don't forget to tune in to our next episode when Chris Harrison is joining us to talk about "embracing the suck." You'll have to tune in to see what we're talking about. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Be sure to check out our schedule on our site, [ctrlclickcast.com/schedule](#) for more upcoming topics.

Lea Alcantara: This is Lea Alcantara ...

Emily Lewis: And Emily Lewis ...



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Lea Alcantara: Signing off for CTRL+CLICK CAST. See you next time!

Emily Lewis: Cheers!

[Music stops]

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