CTRL+CLICK CAST #113

Fostering Diversity in Design Leadership with Timothy Bardlavens

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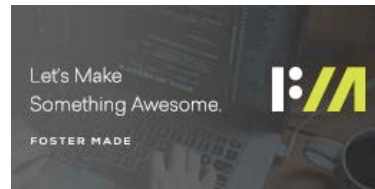
Preview: Access is the problem and no one has solved or tried to solve the problem of access. They just said, "Hey, here are some resources. Here's what we're doing. We're going to go and do these events and we're going to have these talks." But we're still not actually accessing the individuals who need it. Because sometimes the people who need it don't even know they need it at that time. They don't know that it exists, so you can't have impact on people who don't know you exist.

[Music]

Lea Alcantara: From Bright Umbrella, this is CTRL+CLICK CAST! We inspect the web for you! Today we have Tim Bardlavens joining the show to discuss how we can improve diversity in design leadership. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host:

Emily Lewis: Emily Lewis!

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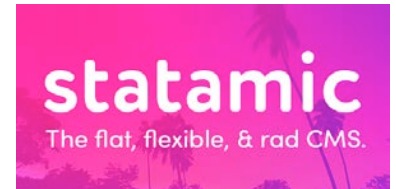
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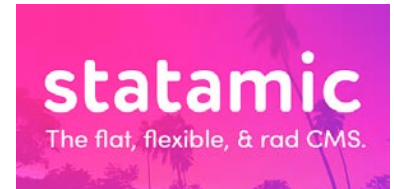
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Emily Lewis: We have discussed diversity on our show before. We talked with Faruk Ateş and Ashe Dryden about the challenges in the tech industry overall, and then we chatted with Jess D'Amico about the challenges of producing a conference that celebrates diversity and inclusion. And today we're turning our focus specifically to the design industry, and leadership in particular.

Joining us in today's talk is Timothy Bardlavens who has accomplished a lot since he started designing professionally five years ago. His design journey has taken him from coast to coast, and now he's at Microsoft helping lead product innovation and UX while also heading up their culture efforts to foster greater inclusion throughout the company. Welcome to the show, Tim!

Timothy Bardlavens: Hey.!

Lea Alcantara: Hey, thanks for joining us! Can you tell our listeners a bit more about yourself?

Timothy Bardlavens: Yeah. So I am from South Carolina where I studied undergrad and design. And I just found my way going through the country, to Texas working for Capital One in addition to

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smaller startups. And somehow I found my way appearing in Seattle working at Microsoft, and so I've been here for a little over a year now, and it's been a really interesting journey just getting ingrained into deeper into design, of course, but also deeper into the tech industry and how different design is and the tech industry versus like brand marketing or something of that nature.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so yeah, it's been an interesting journey I'm going through in developing private design, but also looking at organizational culture, and especially in a company this big with so much history, it's just been really fun. Outside of work, well, I have a role as Director of Creative Strategy for an organization called Provoc and really their main focus is around servicing change organizations. They're a creative agency that mainly works around nonprofits who have a focus on equity, environmental practices, health and human services, just things that make the world a better place. So I have a lot going on, it's pretty fun.

Emily Lewis: Before we get into today's episode, I'm curious how did you get into design in the first place back in South Carolina.

Timothy Bardlavens: I never want to be a designer. I actually want to be… [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Oh. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Oh. [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: Yeah, I actually wanted to be a writer.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Timothy Bardlavens: I'm actually a really, really great writer, and usually when I go back to visit the university, my old professors always ask if I'm still writing. But yeah, I was in my undergrad, I was an English Major, and I had this dream of being the chief editor of *JET Magazine*. This is the Blackest magazine I think that's outside of *Essence*. [Laughs]
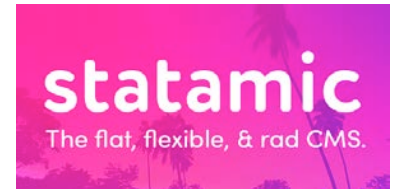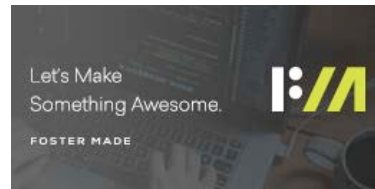
Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so I was like, "Okay, I need to learn layouts. I need to learn how to lay out design and photography and whatnot," and so it was my like second semester sophomore year that I jumped into design a bit, and I also started working for the Coastal Student Activities, and man, they're now my godmothers, but my two supervisors, these just wonderful women, they taught me so much about myself and told me like they helped me realize I guess my self-worth, and so they gave me an opportunity to start designing posters for events for the office, and then by the time I graduated from the university, I went to Coastal Carolina University, which is in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, by the time I graduated from Coastal Carolina, I was designing basically materials from the entire university.

Emily Lewis: Oh, wow.

Timothy Bardlavens: And I actually officially changed my major to Design in the second semester of my junior year, which is crazy, of course, in like two seconds from graduation.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: But it was great. It was probably one of the best decisions I ever made in my life. That was the first time I was ever engaged in something I really cared about and I was still at it at 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning just making stuff. I'd get back up at 7 o'clock to go to the office, like I was the only student worker who worked 40 hours a week.

Lea Alcantara: Oh wow, yeah.

Timothy Bardlavens: And it was amazing. I did that, plus I went to class, of course, plus I also had a second job, so it was really good for me.

Emily Lewis: Wow. So do you still get to do writing? Do you do writing for pleasure?
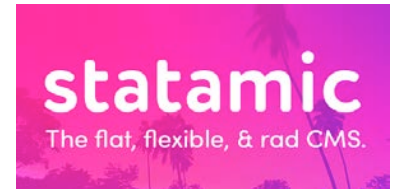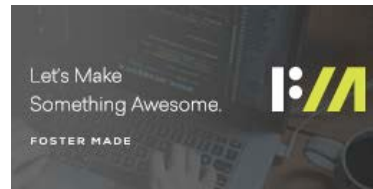
Timothy Bardlavens: No, because I'm really lazy. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Yeah. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs] I like it, yeah.

Timothy Bardlavens: I love to write, and I do a lot of writing internally, so like, for example, with my work with Provoc, a lot of the writing I do is around how do we start to tell really beautiful stories, so I think that's something that's always in my power, and I brought that over in design with me is I am I think is a masterful storyteller, and I know how to tell a great story. This is what has helped me be successful in product design, is being able to just create these very high level layouts, but the story behind it and selling that has been the thing that really propels me forward.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: I definitely think that storytelling also leads really well to our topic today, which is diversity and leadership because there's a journey to get there, but before we dive deep into that topic, let's start with the basics.

Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: What does diversity mean when it comes to the design industry? A basic definition.

Timothy Bardlavens: So typically I would say that it's about a difference in backgrounds and upbringings and experience, but specifically for design, it's hard for me to go that deep because at its surface, it's not diverse racially and it's not very diverse as it pertains to gender either, especially if you want to start moving up in leadership, and so honestly, I think I am firm believer of inclusive design and so I really do believe and am a believer in having a diverse background and diverse sets of experiences and how you bring that to the table. But racial diversity in design is so lacking. I thought that's like the baseline almost.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: Well, it almost makes you can only tell certain kinds of stories if you only have a certain set of storytellers at the table designing and writing and communicating.

Timothy Bardlavens: Right. And that's the thing, to understand that we are designers is to understand we are among the most powerful professions in the world because we speak to the world in a way that many can't, and with that being said, when you have a limited number of people being able to tell that story, that means that we're not reaching the world the way we need you to be truly serviceable designers.

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Lea Alcantara: And has that evolved since you started in design.

Timothy Bardlavens: Oh, god, no.

Emily Lewis: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

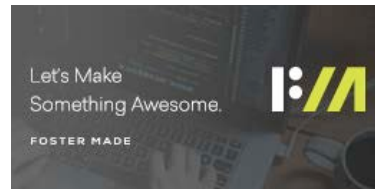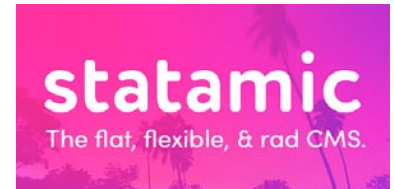**Timothy Bardlavens**: It's about the same, you know?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: Like I want to say that Coastal Carolina was a PWI or predominantly white institution, so I was the only black person in my class. Most roles I've had in my career, I've always been the only black person in design. It wasn't until actually into the new team I recently joined a few weeks ago where there are three or two other people who are blacks. One is from Nigeria and the other is from the Caribbean, and I can't remember the exact place, but she's from the Caribbean, and so like they're the only people who I've worked with that looked like me in a very long time, and if I look across the company wide how many black designers there are, there's still not many.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so it's a thing that like I don't think it's changed. I think we all understand the statistics behind it, but I don't know if we've actually worked to diversify the industry.

Emily Lewis: Well, just to speak on your personal experience, has that affected how you design, what your learning process was? And I don't know what it felt like to be on a team where you didn't see anyone like yourself.

Timothy Bardlavens: Well, when you start in your undergraduate career and see no one like you, especially with things, your major area, then it's not really a surprising thing. So I can't say it has affected me in a way that's it's obvious to me. It's more so it's just something I know and understand and have gotten used to.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: It's one of those things where for me personally, it means that I have to always be the best or if not, I won't say the best, I always have to be just be very good, like I'd have to almost represent those who should be hired after me and with me, you know?
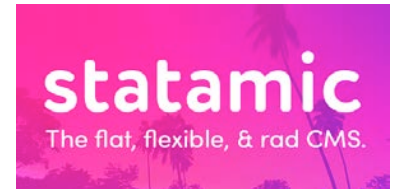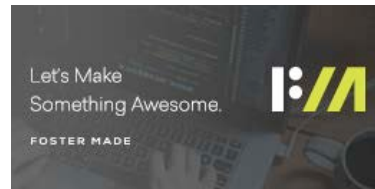
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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And I think many people, especially culturally, especially if you have a background that's not of the majority, you start to feel some of that pressure of like, "I have to represent more than just myself sometimes, and at the same token, I have to still be authentically myself." And so I have this juxtaposition in my brain in the sense of like, "How can I be authentically Timothy Bardlavens, but at the same token I represent a group of underserved individuals who would love to be in the same role that I'm in or even farther than me and make sure that I'm representative enough that someone gives that person a chance because they saw who their interactions with me."

Lea Alcantara: And then there's no room for error.

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Timothy Bardlavens: But I'm amazing, so I never had error.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: And that responsibility that you're talking about, is that something that you have embraced, or has it been difficult to feel that responsibility? Is it just assumed?

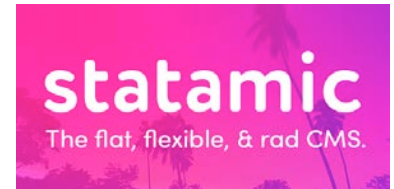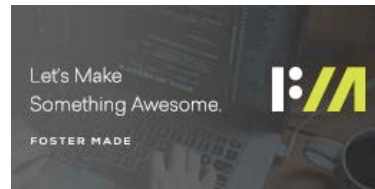**Timothy Bardlavens**: I just like to say that I'm amazing.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: And I do amazing things. Honestly, I come here with my authentic self.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And if I think about it, it's something that I intrinsically think about. It's not something that it's on my mind all the time. For me, I have a high set of goals. There is a certain thing that I want to do with my life and there are certain things I want to do with my career, and I push for those consistently and I ensure that in doing so, like I am creating a positive culture around them. I am creating a circle of greatness of it surrounded by people who really enjoy engaging with me, who enjoy working with me, who feel like they get the best of themselves when working with me.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so that's kind of what I care about and I think in doing so, that's how I hope to create those pathways.
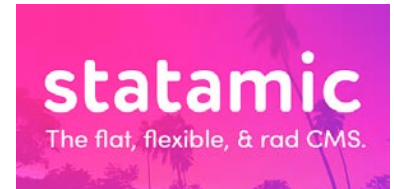
Lea Alcantara: That sounds a lot like lead by example, which is all about design leadership, but what do you believe design leadership is? What does it mean to you?

Timothy Bardlavens: Design leader is interesting because their role is almost twofold. It's to think of the folks in which, from a job standpoint, that person's team is impacting, like think of the user in a sense, but it's also to lead and inspire and to help grow and nurture ideas internally. But for me specially, it's this part of a certain rationale to it. It's this thing of you can be amazingly creative, but how we make it real, like what are your thoughts behind it.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And why did you make this decision? Is it just because you thought it was pretty or is there a firm thought process behind it, and help me understand those thought process, and so I think a really strong design leader is one who really works to get their team with people they lead to be thinkers, to be thoughtful and really to be consistent to really have consistency on what they do and why they do it, and most of all, to be empathetic, to have empathy for their user, empathy for their audience, empathy for the folks that work around them, empathy for other disciplines. Too many times, we as designers work across multiple different disciplines with many different people, and to have empathy with those that we work with is super important. God knows I've seen so many snobbish designers in my life, and God knows how many times I've deleted someone from Facebook or Instagram because they posted a picture of a menu and talked about how bad the design was, I'm like, "How elementary can you be?"

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]
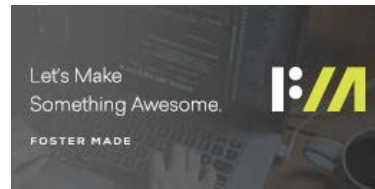
Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: A design leader doesn't stare at something to say, "Oh, how horrible is this." They say, "How can we make this better?" And they work towards doing that. You should be action takers not critique us all the time.

Emily Lewis: In your experience working as you were developing as a designer and coming up in your career working with people who are in those leadership roles, do they modeled this for you, or was that the norm, or was that the exception?
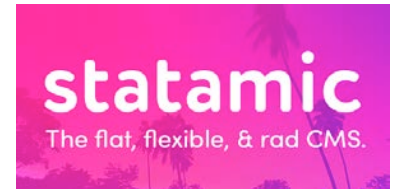
Timothy Bardlavens: Okay, this is going to sound really weird, but this is going to go deep for a second. So I haven't had the best relationship with my wife and with my father, and so what I learned from my father is not what he did, but what he didn't do and how filling those gaps where I said, "This is the type of person I'm going to be in regards to that." And so many of my leaders, I've taken that same approach of, "If you're not showing me what I need from you, you're not showing me what I think or what I feel like I expect from you as a leader, then I'll model my behavior and my thought processes on the opposite of what you've done or what you're doing."

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: I'm the youngest of three, and so being the youngest, I'm really good at looking at what my brothers and sisters did and say, "Okay, I'm not going to make those mistakes." [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]
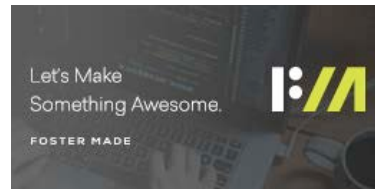
Timothy Bardlavens: And I guess that's how I've learned so far. I've actually rarely had a leader who truly embodied the things that I believe in, the things that I find are important.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so a lot of what I know and a lot of what I do is based off of just an amalgamation of inputs that I've pooled over the years of what I think works really well and what I believe is the right direction.

Lea Alcantara: So what do you believe is the right direction? What are these responsibilities?

Timothy Bardlavens: Oh, it's always hard, right? I mean, it depends on what level you're talking about. If you mean from a just simple leading a team perspective, that's one thing.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: But if you talk about industry leadership, that's totally different.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: Because for me, leading a team, again, it bases on empathy, it bases on for me, especially in terms of the user, it's based on what are the user-intrinsic problems and how do we solve those problem in beautiful ways that's based on really caring about function of a form and saying, "Hey, this has worked really well in servicing a need. Now, let's make it beautiful versus let's make it beautiful, but it doesn't serve any need and doesn't serve anyone but ourselves." And so to break out of that mentality of self-serving design, but if you think about it from another level and of industry leadership, it's how can I be seen to be the voice of the problem and say, "Hey, this is what needs to change."
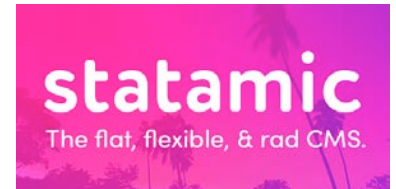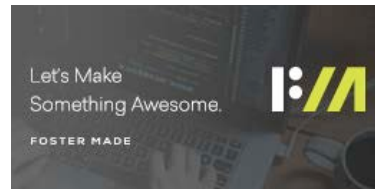
Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: But also being action takers and say, "Okay, so I know that this is a problem, how can I personally step up and help make that change? How can I do more than just go to conferences and say, 'Oh, well, only 6% of the design industry is black.'" Well, that means I can tell that and say that a million times, but I'm not providing tools or resources to those who want to step up and be in design. I'm not providing tools and resources to companies to help them increase their design talent pool. There are so many things that can be done outside of just speaking, and so I think that's the responsibility of the industry leader is to figure that part out.

Emily Lewis: And why is that important for these industry leaders at this industry level for them to be better representative for them to be not only talking about the statistics, but representing the opportunity for change?

Timothy Bardlavens: So if I'm not mistaken, there's a statistic or a factoid that says that by 2055, Caucasian or white people will be the minority in America, and so we realize that that's not very far away.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: That's within most of our lifetimes, and knowing that, if we are still communicating and representing a subset or we're making design decisions or we're creating an industry on which only focuses on specific areas and specific schools that also happens to be predominantly white institutions, then how are we setting ourselves up for the future, like how are we learning how to communicate now across cultures in a way that we can use that and leverage it in the future too for our children and our children's children?
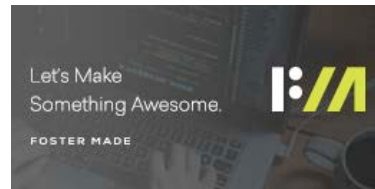
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And so like for me, that's like really important. It's not really about just right now, it's about this is the future. This is the way the world is going. Pretty soon, races will more and more become very diluted to the point where there's no black or white, there's no Asian versus African. There are just like cultural differences as far as location, but as far as actual skin color, that would start to even out, and when that happens, how do we start communicating with people at their core, which is their culture, which is their location, where they from, what they believe as opposed to from a very centric perspective of, "Oh, well, I'm only going to bring people in or I'm only going to hire people from RISD [Rhode Island School of Design] because they produce the best designers," as opposed to, "There is a state school in Mississippi who is an HBCU [historically black college university], but it has some really great design talent and we should really see what they're doing and how they're working on things."

And the same for HSIs [Hispanic-serving institution] or for Hispanic-based institutions or for Native American colleges and universities. There's a wonderful designer named Sadie Redwing, and she has been going across the country speaking about indigenous people and their design in America because there's this largely a section of our population that we don't know about that has really beautiful design language, and so how do we leverage those people and connect with them know because right now is like a nice to have in a sense, but soon it's going to be requirement.

Lea Alcantara: So let's talk about the how, what would be a first step?

Timothy Bardlavens: So I'll say first and foremost, I used to be a member of AIGA, and for those who don't know this, it's the American Institute of Graphic Artists, and I recently, in a very public way in a sense, left the organization and I think it made a maybe a slightly bigger splash than I expected only because I had been on the board of directors, I knew many of the people, I know the executive director and like a lot of people, and so there were interesting reactions back and forth, but one of the bases in which I left the organization was directly related to their Diversity Task Force, which it has been around for many years, and largely in my opinion had done little to nothing. I know they had the
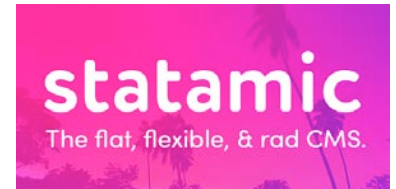
Women's Leadership Initiative, and I actually spoke to a woman, Leyla [Acaroglu] is her first name. She worked with AIGA to create the Women's Leadership kit, and she and I talked about some of the challenges with that and like how like she wanted it to be more, but because of just the organization, how things were done, it just didn't get the traction it needed to truly being a resource for women in design and how to help them become stronger, better, and more empowered leaders.

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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: The thing is that we have these great organizations who bring in millions of dollars from both membership as well as from donations and from other types of grants, and yet they don't turn around and say, "Okay, so instead of only having chapters in these areas, how about we work to create a chapter in Mississippi because one doesn't exist there."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: But Mississippi has many historically black universities. They have many universities in general. It has some really great universities, period, but there's no design culture there as far as AIGA is concerned. There's no chapter for them there. In South Carolina, we had one chapter, and it spans across two cities, Columbia, South Carolina and Charleston, South Carolina, and so they will meet in either of those cities. Within South Carolina, as far as I'm aware, I only two design agencies. One is The Brandon Agency, which is in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and the other in Columbia, which the name escapes me, and I actually was just talking about it recently.

But yeah, like those are the only two I know, but there's really no true design culture, and so I've heard stories of folks when I left the organization, they said, "Yeah, we've tried so hard to do more diversity events and to bring in more diverse speakers, but we get pushed back from people, 'Oh, this

person has never been heard of before. Who would come to see this person?' So they was like, 'So how do we actually let minorities know that there are people that looked like them in this industry or this industry even exist if we don't even feel like we can bring in speakers to talk about it because they're not well known across the world?'" We'll spend great amounts of money to bring in Aaron Draplins and all these other folks.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Timothy Bardlavens: But like what about these other lesser known people in the country who are doing little great things, and maybe not on a massive level, but at least on some level, they have some level of experience and they have strong background, and largely, I've seen when it came to at least AIGA, let's say ethnically diverse speakers that they do have, there are only a few of them and they put many of them on a pedestal, and so some of them are close friends of mine and they do amazing work, but it's the same people all the time, and it's like, "What about the lesser known folks? What about these people who no one knows about?"

And so I think that's kind of one issue I had was really these organizations who have the resources, but aren't doing the right kind of outreach, and they think they're doing the right thing by having a couple of events here and there and saying, "Hey, we have a task force. We're going to put these figures up or these specific people up all the time," but really it doesn't lead to the same thing.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so there's something around getting into the community early. Most people, like I didn't know about what design was until really I was in college. I've never knew there's a thing as graphic design. I never knew there's a person who created logos. If you hear some of the greatest designers today talk, they would speak about how when they were young they were looking at logos and stuff and inspired when they were four or five and six years old.

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Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: But we don't have that resource. The closest thing I've ever heard about design was gang design just because I remember a Full Sail commercial from when I was young, and so like so what else is out there? How do we teach the youth that design is a very viable industry in which they can make a lot of money and really do well for themselves? How do we touch some of them in high school to get them intuitive? How do we make sure they are supported in college?

Even when they graduate in college, the level of entry into design is so high because Mac is $2,000 and Adobe is a certain amount of money every month and then you have to pay for web hosting for your website because it's the only way people can see your work, and then you may have to get it printed into a print portfolio if you walk into an office, and you need all these things, like so it would cost you $5,000 to $10,000 to join in our industry, how do you expect someone who is in poverty, whose parents maybe make $5,000 in seven months, how can they actually help to afford to get into an industry so expensive?

How do we change the definition of design where it's just the traditional print and brand marketing, but user experience is really a part of it, it is a piece of design, it is the heart of design? What about those designers who create pamphlets for church or party posters or they create CD covers for local artists? Like we keep so many people out of the industry based on what we feel is true design versus not, then it's so hard to make impact.

Emily Lewis: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: Wow. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Yeah. It is. So I get that feeling too. I've worked for a Fortune 500 company. I know all about like the lip service that they can spin about where they're putting money to do good based on whatever the PR mission is at the time, and it does start to feel like some of these like diversity programs or task force or whatever commitment to hiring XYZ by a certain year, they do, they feel like PR versus actual making a difference that is meaningful and lasting and can spread.

Timothy Bardlavens: Right.

Emily Lewis: And is it a money thing or is it really just this sort of [laughs], "We have a task force. Let's part ourselves in the back. That's all we need to think about it."
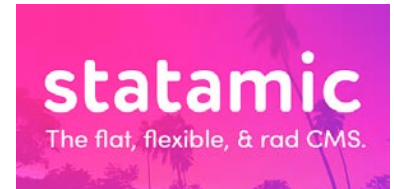
Timothy Bardlavens: That's a really great question. I think money and really even speaking, it all equates to one thing, which is access. How do we provide access to the access-less?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so, for example, you have someone, a person of color or a woman or whoever, some type of intersectionality in which they go to a conference and speak and the people who were at the conference gets so inspired, but the people who were at the conference could afford to get to the conference. They could afford the entry to get into the conference. They can afford the flight and the hotel.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Timothy Bardlavens: So what about that person who can't afford those things who's inspired and so they have to hopefully try to find someone on TED Talks, "Oh, but wait, you have to a member just to

access these videos after the event." Or if they didn't do it on like a TED Talk or something, there is no access to it because you missed it because those contents were specifically for that event.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so we've now put ourselves into a bubble in which we can't even diversify from a messaging perspective. It's all hidden behind the wall and you have to get over that wall just to get to that information to get inspired by those people who you've never heard of before. It's one of those things where access is the problem and no one has solved or tried to solve the problem of access. They just said, "Hey, here are some resources. Here's what we're doing. We're going to go and do these events and we're going to have these talks." But we're still not actually accessing the individuals who need it. Because sometimes the people who need it don't even know they need it at that time.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Timothy Bardlavens: They don't know that it exists, so you can't have impact on people who don't know you exist.

Lea Alcantara: Right. That reminds me of an article. It's not necessarily related to the web or design industry, but it was when Trevor Noah took the helm of *The Daily Show* and he was trying to hire his writing staff and all that fun stuff, and he noticed that the majority of applicants were all white.

Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then so obviously, he is half-black, he has a community of friends of diverse backgrounds, he personally asked them like, "Hey, open positions, why didn't you apply?"

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Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And then the person staring at said, "I didn't know about it. My agent doesn't know about it."

Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Or they don't have an agent because they are a person of color, and it's just much more difficult to get certain representation even for an agency to get these like scripts and to get these particular opportunities even on their table. So both Trevor Noah and Samantha Bee had to do outreach outside of their regular circles in order to diversify their staff because it was important to them.

Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: I think that was like an interesting point that's also true here in our web industry, in our design industry as that outreach is necessary.

Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And that it's necessary and it's also work, because I think that all the things that you're mentioning to me resonates and it's also very relevant like in tech conferences as well, and a common complaint is that, "We did do the outreach and then no one got back to us, or oh, it's so hard, or I don't know certain people," and it's just again putting the burden on the disenfranchised to fix the problem as opposed to a person of privilege and resources to just do the extra dang work. Just do the work, people.

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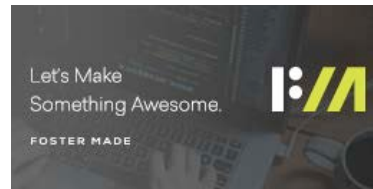
Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: You know, that's… [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: Well, and the mentality around that, right?

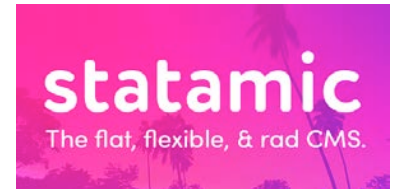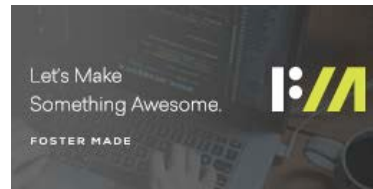**Lea Alcantara**: Right.

Timothy Bardlavens: It's sometimes, "Well, I have to work hard. You're going to have to work hard, too." I mean, let's be honest, if you think about politics or anything else, that's kind of what it boils down to when people think about entitlement, it's, "Oh, we had to work hard for our money and you should too. You shouldn't be giving you these handouts, so you should have to go work for it just like everyone else." And so…

Emily Lewis: Well, to hit on that point because that really connects with me because the opportunities that I've gotten in my career as a female leader in the web have come to me because someone did outreach to me.

Lea Alcantara: Yes, ditto.

Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And as a result, that is my mentality. I don't have some mentality of "Oh, I had to work hard so now you do too." I'm like, "Oh, that's how I got this so I'm going to try and do that for other people." So if you bring in more people and you create opportunities, you may be fostering that

mindset and then that kind of the whole cliché "pay it forward" kind of thing, the opposite of what you're describing.

Timothy Bardlavens: You see, the other interesting thing is if you think about industry from like, okay, who gets the opportunity and how, I'll say that it's slightly related, but not, but it is.
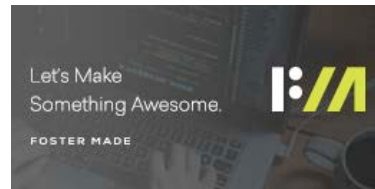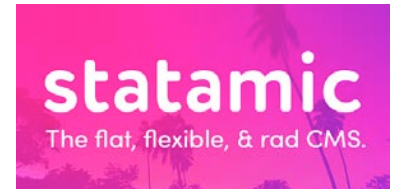
Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: So in The Seattle Times, there was the article about a woman who said working at Microsoft was probably one of the most lonely years of her life.

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Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And it's just really a person's perspective on working for Microsoft, and of course, our company is really big on like making sure we diversify. There's like there's a new culture there that we're really trying to push forward and whatnot, unless you have all been troubled for it. But our leadership sent out an email to us basically saying like, "Hey, we read this article and we kind of just want to talk about it." But the tone shifted almost immediately, it was like, "A lot of this information was dated, and here are all the numbers that prove that we're doing really well with women," and so I actually emailed the leadership. So this was all of our senior leaders, including Satya [Nadella] and I said, "This email is the proof that there is a separation between what leadership believes and per people's actual experiences."

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: But I also said that, "If you look at people's experiences, you will understand that if you look at the majority, and in this case, this is white men and Asian men inside of Microsoft, they are hired and promoted based off of their potential. They did a previous work and so because they're showing potential, they're hired and promoted, whereas if you're a woman or a minority of any sort, then you are hired and promoted based on your experience, what have you done, what can you prove, have you proven yourself.
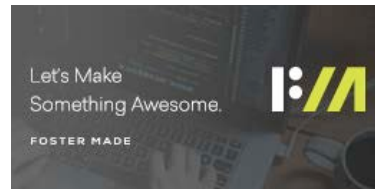
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: So like even personally, I have run into this where for a year I led major projects like I owned the core UX for Microsoft Edge, which is the entire look and feel. It's how people navigate through the app, and so in the sense, I own the thing that people have and charge with every day. So I had support from people who were two, three, four levels above me. I had all this really great support, but I was told, "Give it six more months, we have to prove it will continue the same trajectory before you get a promotion."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And so for me, it's this question of, "Am I getting that because I'm a black man or because I actually have to just prove myself?" But I can't actually talk if I want to complain to anyone about it because I'm not sure which it is, like I'm not sure is it because I'm black or is it's just because they just need me to prove myself a bit more, but then I look around and say, "Oh, well, this person was promoted because he did pretty well with this thing. It was about six months they worked on it and they were given this, I guess, because they have a potential to do more."
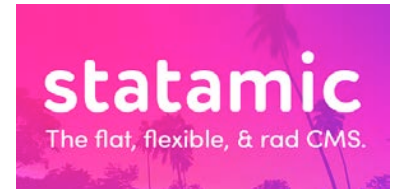
And so this is an interesting thing that you have to deal with as a person of color, at least from my perspective of "I am consistently having to prove myself worthy" as opposed to being hired based off of my potential or promoted based off of my potential, and it also depends on the person. But that's like the same thing if you think about like with the design industry with these people who are trying to prove they're just good enough. It's like, "Yes, I do have creative chops. I do have visual chops. I can do X, Y, and Z," as opposed to, "I've done these things and I would love to learn and do more. Can you hire me based off of some of my experience and enough of my drive and ability to want to do more?"

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And that doesn't really happen.

Lea Alcantara: I would say this reminds me of another article I read specific about women in business in that statistically women will only apply for a job if they have 100% of all the requirements checked off in the box and they're less likely to apply if they're even lacking in one or two. In comparison, men, specifically white men, will be like, "Hmm, 70%, I will apply."

Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: And that just really resonates with me like the experience that you're explaining is quite similar in that a lot of minorities and women, it's a constant prove, prove, prove, prove, and then go beyond that as well.

Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: And on top of it, that extra effort of proving isn't even valued.

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Timothy Bardlavens: Yes.

Emily Lewis: Do you know what I mean?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: Yes.

Emily Lewis: Like it's just, "Well, that's what you've got to do. That's not considered." Well, they did the extra hard work by proving. Do you know what I mean?
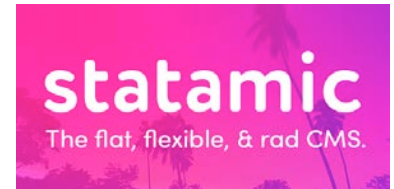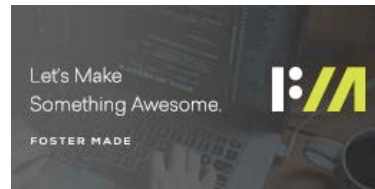
Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Like it's not valued the same way.

Timothy Bardlavens: You know, what I found, and actually, I'm not sure if it is because it's me or what, but I've forced myself to flip my mentality on it a lot of that stuff in the sense I've forced myself to operate as if I'm a white man and not from the fact of like losing who I am because I'm at work, like when I first was hired in Microsoft, my intro email to the organization, the very first thing it says I'm the black guy. When I went to my interview, it was I'm the black guy.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: In fact, it was funny because actually I made some uncomfortable because I was walking by them and I said, "I was only hired because of Affirmative Action. I was just a diversity

hire," and it was a joke, it's a self-deprecating joke, but it made them uncomfortable to a point they went back and told the person how I made them uncomfortable as opposed to approaching me.

Lea Alcantara: Wow.

Timothy Bardlavens: But to show it, like that's just me though, like I am unapologetically black and it's completely fun, and either you're comfortable with it or you're not, and many people aren't and it's fun, but the folks who are comes to you, "I really enjoyed that," and they feel like they have a sense of openness and ability to communicate with me on a very human level as opposed to trying to understand who I am or where I stand, it's like I'm very open about that.

 But in the sense of I operate as a white man is where some people, they work crazy hours and whatnot to try to get things done to prove that they have the time and they can do it and get it done. I have a very strict schedule. For the most part, I don't stay at work after 4 p.m. Typically on Fridays, not after 3, and I don't check emails at night or on the weekend or at least I don't respond to them. I'm very firm about that because I set down rules because it's just what I have to do for my wife.

When I apply for roles, I always apply for a role based off if I see I can do the thing, then I'll apply for it. There were so many roles I have applied to and I've actually interviewed for director-level positions, head of design positions, and I replied and gotten fairly far and wide with those application process, and some of them went nowhere because of the fact that I knew I could do the job, I just wanted someone to get an opportunity to do it, and so every time I'm looking for something new, I'm always looking one, two, three and four levels above me because I know that there's someone who's going to say yes. When they do, I'm going to rock it out and they're going to love the fact that I did it.

Design is the easy part. Once you learn design, it's really about kind of honing in your skills and playing with different techniques, but for the most part, it's the easy thing. The hard part is the strategy. The hard part is the politics that come with working in corporate life and with the selling

yourself and selling the work and to telling stories and stuff, that's the really nitty-gritty part of design, and so when I understood that personally, I was like, "Okay, this is how I'm going to operate from now on," and that's how I continue to operate and so far it's kept me successful and it's kept my shoe collection very large. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: That actually reminds me of our episode with Vanessa Dewey about _Design Thinking to Smash Workplace Inequality_ and she said a similar thing as in like, "Think and behave like a white guy."

Timothy Bardlavens: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: And that helps bring certain opportunities that you may be hesitant personally to try to pursue normally.

Timothy Bardlavens: Right.

Lea Alcantara: But I want to take a step back and talk a bit more about something that you kind of touched on about you're really open about what you're thinking and open to other people about yourself, and that leads me to something that I read that you wrote about radical transparency as a way to improve diversity and design and work, et cetera and so forth. Can you talk a little bit more about that on why it's important?

Timothy Bardlavens: There is a very human thing about being transparent, about saying, "We're not good enough yet, but we're trying, and here are the things we're doing to actually get there."
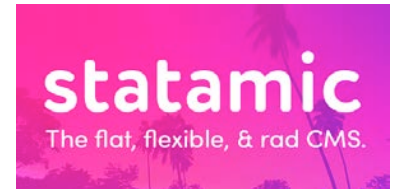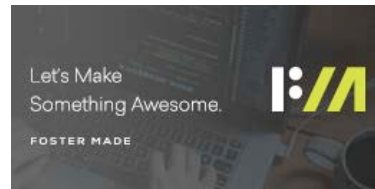
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: Because with transparency, it also hopefully leads or follows strategy, and so it's saying that, "Here's everything we're trying to do in every single way. Here are the touch points we're making. Here's some of the stuff that we're actually even thinking about, like this isn't solid yet, but we're thinking about it." Because what happens is that it inspires other people to help put into that. It's really a vehicle in which we say that, "This is everything that's on our minds. Come to us with your thoughts as well. How can we make this better? How can we do this together?"

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: So it's a play of inclusiveness that really plays here. It's like things shouldn't be done in a silo especially, and so I think with that one, I wrote it specifically around with the AIGA in the fact that I had no idea what they were doing internally unless I was either on a task force or I was friends with the executive board, and so I thought in my mind, I'm like, "How can I help with this, how can I help push this forward, how can I be a part of this and help it grow if I don't even know what's going on? How can I be effective in my own personal life or as a part of this organization if I don't know anything?"

And so that's where the transparency comes in, it's we as people don't need the perfect pitcher. For some reason, executives have it in their mind that they have to have a perfectly laid out plan for people to understand. You have to have the field laid out with the greens and everything so people can just see the beautiful prairie with all the flowers already there as opposed to the ugly field that's torn up with trash and then saying, "Hey, this is the claim for the field. Let's all work on getting it together together," and so that's what I mean by the radical transparency. It's how can we really

democratize the strategy around increasing diversity and design, like how can we democratize that strategy in a way that people feel like they're invested in and there's actually work being done.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: Because it's one thing to say, "Hey, we're doing this stuff, but it's not really actually a thing going on." It's another thing to say, "Here's this stuff. Here's everything we've done so far. Here's the next initiative if you want to take a part of it." And then we see, "Oh, there's action being done. This isn't just pretty words. These are kinetic words. They're moving. They're doing things. They have actions to it." And so that's really what I mean when I say radical transparency. It's just the thought of letting people have insight into it and then having the door open for them to join in.
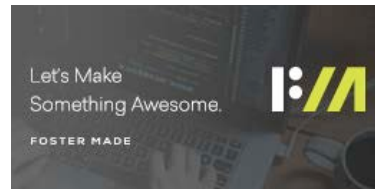
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Lea Alcantara: Right. I think this also reminds me that leadership should be the ones that are radically transparent and communicating this on a regular basis.

Timothy Bardlavens: Yes.

Lea Alcantara: I think one criticism that some people say is like, "Well, why didn't you ask me what was going on?"

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: So again, putting the impetus on marginalized people to always do the outreach, to always do particular work as opposed to leadership actually explaining, which is what leaders are supposed to be doing.

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Timothy Bardlavens: The interesting thing with that is people try to hinge on this thing of grassroots efforts.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Timothy Bardlavens: Grassroots efforts are unsuccessful without a leader.
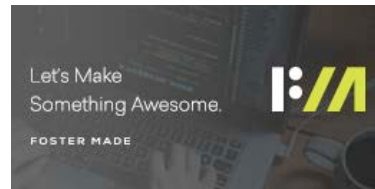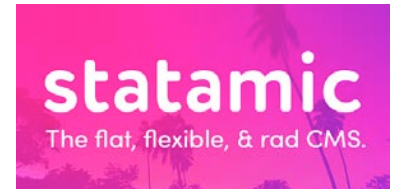
Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: There is no way for the community to get behind a cause and to get other people to get behind a cause without a leader to help push it forward to give the idea to like pushed from a higher level. So if I think about my work here at Microsoft on culture, especially it was within our Microsoft Studios about telling people, the biggest problem we had was originally it was a bunch of ICs or individual contributors who were trying to make this cultural change, and it wasn't working and it wasn't pervasive because we did not have a leadership on board.

Typically where you need change is basically you make a change sandwich. You have leadership pushing from the top and you have the individual contributors or the people themselves pushing up from the bottom and then those folks in the middle are basically pushed in and collapsed in between, and so you have this thing of, "Okay, the leadership believes in it, the people believe in it, and we all believe in it. It's a thing." And so that was one of the biggest problems, it's how do we get leadership to get buy in on this? How do we tell them that positive culture equates to business innovation and product innovation?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: Like how do we sell that story in a way that they get on board and they realize that having a set of values for our organization is important. How do we help them understand all these different things that they need to know to work with us and to be proponents of the message we're trying to push forward and make pervasive throughout the whole organization? And the same goes for everything else, like the same goes for industry changes and everything in between is how do we create this grassroots effort that's led by someone.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And they can't be led by someone who's currently at the bottom with the rest of the group. It has to be someone of power because without that personal power, then things won't change.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: So do you have any thoughts about how to get those people in power, those leaders to be actual people of color to be the people who not only can drive the small change, but be representative of the change actually having happened by reaching a position of leadership?

Timothy Bardlavens: So that's the hard part, right? It's hard mainly because if I think of this from an industry wide, there's a group of people and they have a group of friends in which they typically recommend or promote or whatever to be in that role with them or to take over after them, and so it's really hard to say, "Hey, this is how you get to the top," because honestly, it's something that I'm scratching and scraping for myself, like every conversation I have, every job I apply for, every job that's recommended to me, every recruiter who reaches out, like I'm looking for the next step to move up and I'm pushing on it myself because I just have the mindset that I'll do it myself before I wait on someone to do it for me, but it's been hard.
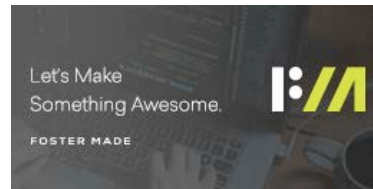
Like I'll use myself as an example again, we always have organizational changes. I know right about now, everyone in America knows that Terry Myerson left the company and so like there's a shift and things that are happening, and so for those who don't know Terry Myerson, he was basically the Windows guy. He owned all of Windows. He was I think one of the makers of the Windows Phone, or they say it happened under his leadership, but when he left, we didn't bring in the new person to take over him that we potentially had a diverse background. We just shifted leaders around.

In my old organization, when one of our leaders left the company, we didn't bring in a new leader from outside. We didn't bring in a leader of color or anything like that. We shifted a guy from one organization to another, and even though he says he cares about culture, he's passionate about it, he has his mindset on it, and these are the things he's been thinking about for the past eight or ten years, he's still a white male.
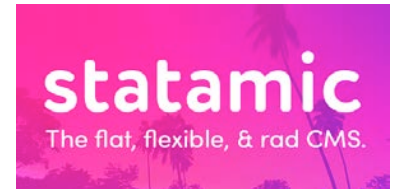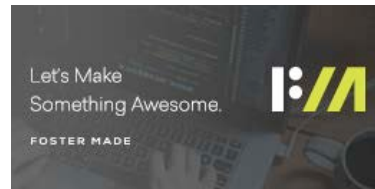
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And he can try his best to promote up other people who look different, but there's consistently this thing of, "There are people I know and there are people I don't know, and the people I don't know, I'm not willing to take chances on, especially in executive-level positions. I prefer to take chances on the people I do know because at least I have a rapport with them, I have worked with them, and I also know their ability." And so the really hard part is, how do you get executives to change their minds?   How do you get executives who hire people and promote people who are completely different, who don't fit into the norm of that role who may have a very diverse or different background?

Emily Lewis: It's almost like your point about access.

Timothy Bardlavens: Right.

Emily Lewis: Like how do leaders get access to people who don't even know that design could be something they do.

Timothy Bardlavens: Right. And the flipside is, how do you get leaders to understand that design isn't about just making pretty pictures?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: I'll use myself as an example mainly because I feel as though it can be a tribute to many industries because also because it's my reality right now, and one of the things I ask some folks who have been here far longer than I, I ask them, "Are there any senior leaders who have a design background who are not only into design organization?" It's because we have design leaders who lead the design organizations, but we don't have, for example, a person with a background in design who is the senior vice president of Windows.
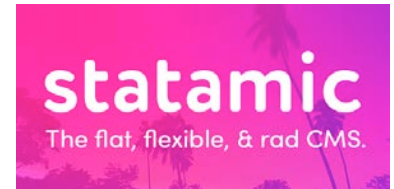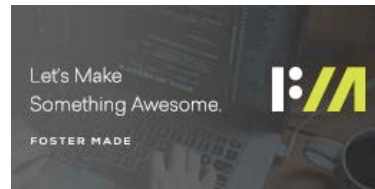
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: It's a person who has a project management or a program management background.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: It's a person who has maybe a developer background, but there's no one in design in those roles, and yet our job is to synthesize business, user expectations and tech feasibility to create products, and so if our job is to synthesize those things, wouldn't we be great leaders over a product as opposed to just design?

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

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Timothy Bardlavens: But that's just not the reality we live in. How do we change that mindset? I don't know. Well, sometimes some people in design, they're like it's good enough that there's a design organization, "Good job, you did it. We have a sit at the table." But the seat at the table doesn't actually mean that we're leading the product.
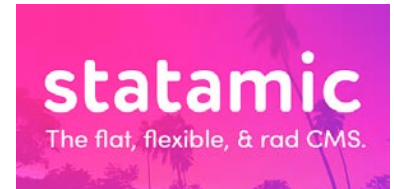
Emily Lewis: In terms of your experience with AIGA because you did get into a leadership position, was that something that, again, you just fought for or was there outreach to encourage that?

Timothy Bardlavens: Neither.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: It's actually relatively easy to get on the board for the most part. It's kind of there are some open roles and you can apply. Sometimes there's the interview process. Sometimes there's not. When you get on the board, it's not rigorous, and that was actually one of the other reasons why I left the organization because there's no national oversight to how the chapters operate, and so yeah, it really wasn't hard, but the thing I realized was I expect the AIGA to propel me and my career and to give me access to the things that I didn't normally have access to.

What I didn't realize is that AIGA is very much an organization onto itself. The access is to other people or all kinds of people around the country, but all of them really are still AIGA members. They're still kind of in their same bubble; they're doing the same thing. To use the phrase, "Drinking the Kool-Aid," and very much so, they do that, and I mean, I love meeting people who are still members, so as not to disparage the organization, but it's the fact that it didn't diversify my experiences the way I expect it to. It gave me a great community of people to work with and to talk to. It's beautiful for the sense of community, but having it on my resume didn't increase the chances of me getting a job. Having it on my resume didn't start any interesting conversation with other people.

And so that's the thing, it was a great role, it's a great way to volunteer your time and to do something within the design industry, but it almost felt as though it wasn't the design industry as a whole, it was the design industry as it relates to AIGA.

Emily Lewis: So in the situation like that, in my mind, I'm thinking, and I'm not a designer, I've never been to any AIGA meeting or anything like that, but I'm thinking that something that sounds like it has a somewhat low bar of entry to get into a position where you can hopefully develop some leadership skills, like it sounds like, oh, maybe that's a good thing for women, people of color to get involved and sort of cut their teeth on something like that.
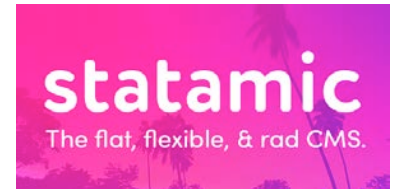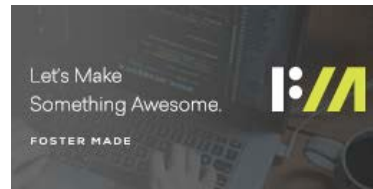
Timothy Bardlavens: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: But at the same time, that if it's really just where you're getting some skills, but it's really not going to help you beyond that, then is that the kind of thing that designers, young designers who want to find themselves in leadership positions someday, is this something that they should be looking to getting into these sort of trade associations or local community groups like that?

Timothy Bardlavens: So I will say, and I'll definitely clarify this, is every chapter is different, every chapter has its own level of entry, its own way of how they're recruiting board members versus people who work on committees, and so I can't speak for every chapter in the United States because there are many of them. I think the difference is how many people know about AIGA because you have to have a chapter in your city or you have to have attended an event or you have to have had a chapter in your university or something along those lines, like there are certain ways in which you have to do, that you learn about AIGA, and so to have heard about it is kind of the hard part.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

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Timothy Bardlavens: And so what I found is that I've had many peers who have never heard of the AIGA and they've been in the industry for ten or fifteen years. I've known people who are completely like AIGA has changed their life and has set them on a career direction they've never heard of or they've never thought was possible because it just so happened they got a scholarship through AIGA to take a design course or something like that. And so like the experiences vary and I can't really, and I guess it would be a fallacy of generalization if I were to just say across the board that this is the organization, but I think that's kind of the hard part about this organization and many organizations like AIGA is because there's no true consistency across every chapter, you'll never really know what you'd get into when you get into it.
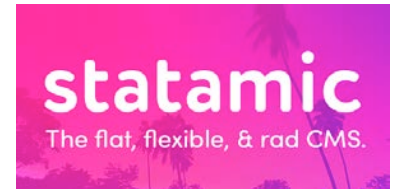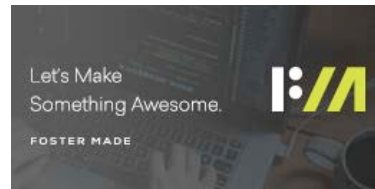
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: So you may find that you joined a chapter, like the DC chapter is amazing. They do great work. It has a very diverse board and they just are great, like I love every person and every bit of work they do in DC, but then I've heard of other chapters like I would just say like in West Michigan where I've heard of them pushing back on anything that has to do with diversity and design as a program unless they want to put forward. I've heard it's been really hard for them to even start or jumpstarting any type of diversity initiative, and so because there's a mixed bag, because there are no real requirements outside of some financial and membership requirements, it's hard.

And so I think you want to find an organization that's consistent, that you can consistently get the same type of experience and that we're servicing the same or we're providing the same type of experience across the board, but it's just like joining a fraternity or sorority, right?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: Every place is going to be different, their initiations maybe different, and who's picked and how can be different.

Emily Lewis: Is there a path yet that a designer, a black designer can follow to achieve that kind of leadership, I mean, if you're pursuing it? I mean, is there a path or are you literally carving it as you go along?

**Timothy Bardlavens**: Yeah, I mean, the path is to make one yourself.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: So sometimes there are designers who, if they get lucky, they get the right types of blessings at the right time that it pushes them forward. Other designers, they never really see that trajectory jumpstart the way they want it to. I think that also is true across the board, but again, it just depends on access, but yeah, it's one of those things where at least how I've seen it or at least how I've operated in my career.

No one is opening a path or creating a path for me so I'm making conscious decisions to create paths for myself, so like if you look at the fact that I've gone from South Carolina to North Carolina, North Carolina to Dallas, Dallas to or Texas and Texas to Washington, it's because I had to chase the opportunity. People weren't jumping over a fence to try to get to me. I had to figure out where to go next. I had to cast a wide net and see what's out there, find what makes sense for me professionally and personally, and then I just go for it.

Lea Alcantara: Is that what you mean by the "ugly work" or is that mostly for or both for other people of color or other people in leadership positions?

Timothy Bardlavens: So the "ugly work" was specifically around leaders who try to tell a pretty story and they say, "Hey, here's all the things we're doing," but they actually aren't doing the real work to make change in the industry.
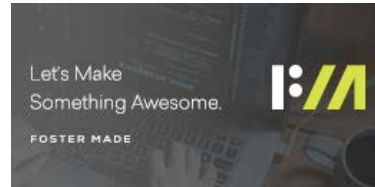
Lea Alcantara: Right.

Timothy Bardlavens: That was very specific to that. But that said, I guess on some level, knowing that as a person who I have more access now. Part of it, I can attribute to AIGA. Others, it's just based off of what I've tried to do. I've actually probably gotten more access since I've left AIGA because of the response from it than while I was in it, but yeah, like some of the access I have now, I've kind of had to develop on my own. I've had to figure out pathways to get to it, and the thing is for me, it's like I know there's someone who can be way more successful than me because honestly, I'm a very introverted person. I'm not really great with humans. I'm horrible with small talks. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: So if…

Lea Alcantara: You're doing pretty good right now. [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: Right. Well, I mean, actually, I don't see anyone around. [Laughs]
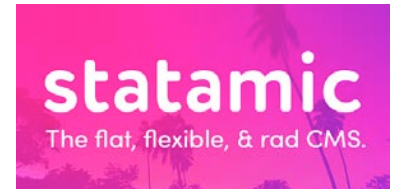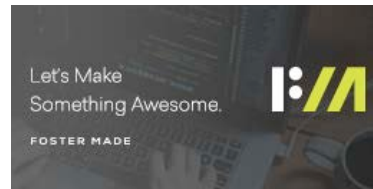
Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: I'm the same way. [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: Yeah, so like if someone who is more charismatic, more extroverted than me who can tell even better stories than I can, there are people out there who are doing really great work

and who are pushing forward who may not be in the limelight, but they're setting a path to a place where they can eventually be in that light and be a guide for someone else. I think they definitely have opportunities to do it. I'm going to try my best, but I feel like I'm a bit of a radical person, so I'm always going to rock the boat a little bit, and some people will love it, and some people will hate that, and that's completely fine. I'm comfortable with being that person.

Emily Lewis: So as we wrap up, are there any resources that you've come across throughout your career that you feel helped you, especially as it pertains to you pursuing opportunities to lead teams or to lead community or to create leadership opportunities for yourself or for other people of color?

Timothy Bardlavens: Oh, resources, I will say that I'm working with some folks who are doing the Design + Diversity Conference, and so one of the things I'm doing with or I'm helping them on is we're creating a fellowship, and so that fellowship is for emerging designers who are juniors and seniors in college or at three years out of or no more than three years out of college to apply for a fellowship to basically come to the conference for free and then we'll also give them some free resources to help them out, whether it's a year's subscription to Adobe. Adobe is the premiere sponsor or other resources to be able to start their career or jumpstart their career.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: So that's designplusdiversity.com, and then outside of that honestly, most of the things that I do in the way that I operate, I've Googled the heck out of everything. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]
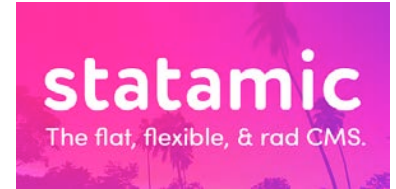
Timothy Bardlavens: Like I just use Bing technically, but I would just search. Every time I have a question, every time I'm curious of something, I just look for things. I've leveraged LinkedIn a good bit in like I would just reach out to leaders who are in positions, who are above me, and I would say, "Hey, I'm not looking for a job or anything, I just would love to have coffee with you just to like learn about your journey, like I just want to hear about your journey, where you got where you are today."

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: And that's agnostic of race. I've done it for male, females, black, white and anything in between it, and again I really am not great with people.
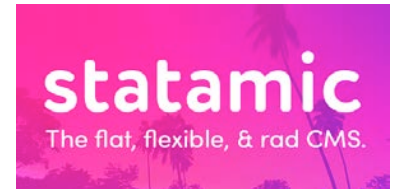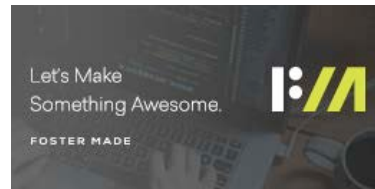
Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: But I at least try to do that here and there, and then every now and then I try to reach them back whenever I can. If someone says, "Hey, I know someone who's looking for something or they need some help with some things," I always try to reach them back if I can. There's a wonderful young lady who actually went to RISD. She's a woman of color and she was so lost. She's like, "I don't know what to do. I graduated from the school. It's technically the best design school in the world and I don't know if my work is good enough and I don't know what's the next step for me," and I just kind of gave her some advice based off of my own personal experience, and I mean, I do that really with anyone, black, white, male, female, it doesn't matter. So it's kind of my thing.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Timothy Bardlavens: I'm not sure if that's helpful for anyone else, but at least it's a good start, like just start Googling the heck out of it and look for patterns. One of the things about being a designer, especially empathetic design is you look for patterns and you build hypotheses based off of that. So

if you have a question, look for patterns and see if you can find it, and usually that's the right answer if you see the same answer coming up multiple times from multiple sources.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: Very cool. I mean, this was such an important discussion, but that's all the time we have for today.

Timothy Bardlavens: Oh.

Lea Alcantara: But before we finish up, we've got our rapid fire ten questions so our listeners can get to know you a bit better.

Timothy Bardlavens: Oh-oh.

Lea Alcantara: Are you ready?
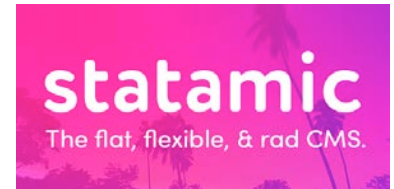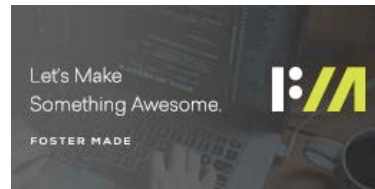
Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: I'll try.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Okay. First question, what's your go-to karaoke song?

Timothy Bardlavens: I don't do karaoke. I've never done karaoke in my life. It's true story.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: Oh, no, that's not true. I just did it last week. Oh. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: It made an impression. [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: But I don't recall. I mean, I'll do anything that's like old school, because like in my mind, I'm old head, so bring me some old school R&B anytime.

Emily Lewis: All right, what advice would you give your younger self?

Timothy Bardlavens: Keep going, have patience, have more fun, travel more. I didn't travel enough when I was in college and younger. Like just go places and experience the world more. Don't wait.

Lea Alcantara: What's your favorite PG-rated curse word?

Timothy Bardlavens: I always say, "Oh, sugar. Oh, sugar." [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Who is your favorite superhero?

Timothy Bardlavens: Black Panther, duh.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Oh, you and Lea got to see that together, right?

Timothy Bardlavens: Yes, it was great.

Lea Alcantara: Yes, it was the best. [Laughs]

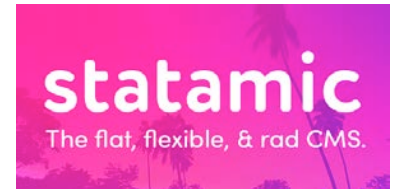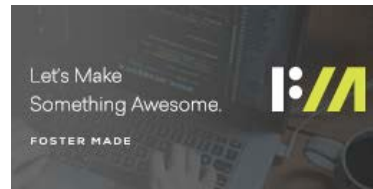**Timothy Bardlavens**: It was the best. I made her husband get an asthma attack. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, he was laughing so hard, yeah. [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: What is your favorite time of the year?

Timothy Bardlavens: Oh, I love equinoxes, but also, yeah, I love equinoxes because I can wear my sweatshirts and stuff, so it's like just cool enough to look sexy because really I love winter fashion, but still warm enough that I don't like damned cold.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, I call that hoodie weather. [Laughs]

Timothy Bardlavens: Yes.

Emily Lewis: If you can change one thing about the web, what it would be?

Timothy Bardlavens: How confusing it can be for people, like when it comes to like trusting the web.

Lea Alcantara: What are three words that describe you?

Timothy Bardlavens: The black guy. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: What are three words that describe your work?

Timothy Bardlavens: Rational, empathetic, and straight-forward. That's the hyphenated word so it counts.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

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Lea Alcantara: What's your favorite meal of the day?

Timothy Bardlavens: Yes. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: No wonder you and Lea are friends.

Timothy Bardlavens: Exactly.

Emily Lewis: All right, last question, Tim, coffee or tea?

Timothy Bardlavens: Neither technically, but I'll do a green tea. I'm not a coffee drinker. I'll probably drink green tea before I do a coffee.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: All right, so that's all the time we have for today. Thanks for joining the show, Tim.

Timothy Bardlavens: Thank you.

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

[Music starts]

Timothy Bardlavens: Super simple, honestly, I'll just tell you to just Google my name, Timothy Bardlavens. All my everything will show up from there just because I'm one of two Timothy Bardlavenses in the world as far as I know, and the other is my father, and I don't think he has any kind of digital footprint so you should be fine.

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: All right, this was awesome. Thanks again for joining us, Tim.

Timothy Bardlavens: Thank you.

Lea Alcantara: CTRL+CLICK is produced by Bright Umbrella, a web services agency invested in education and social good. Today's podcast would not be possible without the support of this episode's sponsors! Many thanks to Foster Made and Statamic!

Emily Lewis: We'd also like to thank our hosting partner, Arcustech.

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. And if you liked this episode, consider donating to the show, then give us a review on Stitcher or Apple Podcasts or both! Links are in our show notes and on our site.

Emily Lewis: Don't forget to tune in to our next episode when Alex Mejias joins us to talk about business development for digital agencies. Be sure to check out ctrlclickcast.com/schedule for more upcoming topics.

Lea Alcantara: This is Lea Alcantara …
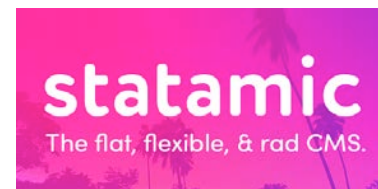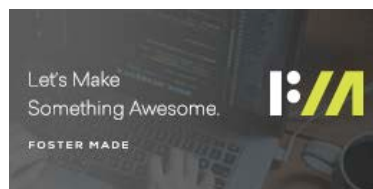
Emily Lewis: And Emily Lewis …

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

Emily Lewis: Cheers!

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