

Episode 7: Inclusive Product and Service Design

Nothing about us without us. What does that mean? Well, in the case of product and service design, it means that designers shouldn't be designing "for" the most marginalized but instead "with" them. Why do toy designers design "toys for girls" and "toys for boys"? Why are products that address the needs of people with disabilities an exception rather than the rule? Why are the most marginalized people not at the decision-making table when products and services are conceptualized and launched? In this episode, we ask product designers Reginé Gilbert, Jahan Mantin and Vanessa Raponi about what inclusive product, service and program design looks like.

Featured guests:

[Reginé Gilbert](#) is Industry Assistant Professor at New York University's Tandon School of Engineering. She is a user experience designer, educator, and author with over ten years of experience working in technology. She has a strong belief in making the world a more accessible place that starts and ends with the user. Reginé's areas of research focus are digital accessibility, inclusive design, and immersive experiences. And, she is author of *Inclusive Design for a Digital World: Designing with Accessibility in Mind*.

[Jahan Mantin](#) is the co-founder of Project Inkblot, a team of designers and futurists who equip people to become co-designers of an equitable world by creating and leading programs that center Black, Indigenous, and POC designers as well as leading transformative design education programs to equity-aspiring leaders in tech and media spaces. All of Inkblot's work is in service of activating a movement of people transforming who they are, what they design, and who they design with, through their trademarked proprietary framework – Inkblot Design.

[Vanessa Raponi](#) is a Senior Product Development Engineer at Spin Master — a Canadian founded, international toy company that created such brands as Paw Patrol and Hatchimals (meaning, she designs and creates toys for a living!). Vanessa is the Founder of EngiQueers Canada, a national non-profit that advocates for intersectional queer inclusion in the engineering profession which has brought her from coast-to-coast to present in panels, sessions, and talks as an expert in Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.

Moderator: [Sonia Kang](#) is GATE's new Academic Director and Professor of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management, Canada Research Chair in Identity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and University of Toronto Mississauga's Special Advisor on Anti-Racism and Equity. Her research explores the challenges and opportunities of diversity, including strategies for mitigating the far-reaching effects of stigma and harnessing the power of diversity for society and organizations alike.

Resources:

- [*Inclusive Design for a Digital World: Designing with Accessibility in Mind* by Reginé Gilbert](#)
- [Gender Analytics: Possibilities conference](#)

Gender Analytics is a way to analyze your products, services, processes and policies with a gender lens to uncover hidden opportunities for innovation and improved effectiveness by considering gender, race, Indigeneity, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other identities. Learn more here: <https://www.gendereconomy.org/gender-analytics-online/>

Want to hear more from the Institute for Gender and the Economy? Check out our signature podcast series, Busted, which busts prominent myths about gender and the economy!

Credits:

Produced by: Sarah Kaplan

Edited by: Ian Gormely

Transcript

Jahan Mantin: OK. I'll just say this. I'm so over making the case. I don't want to make any more cases. We've been talking about this for 7980 thousand years. What's there to make a case for? Like, just open your eyes. Look around. We've made the case. And I had felt so many times. I felt like it was demeaning making a business case.

Sarah Kaplan: Nothing about us without us. What does that mean? Well, in the case of product and service design, it means that designers shouldn't be designing for the most marginalized, but instead with them. Why do toy designers design toys for girls and toys for boys? Why are products that address the needs of people with disabilities and exception rather than the rule? Why are the most marginalized people not at the decision-making table when products and services are conceptualized and launched?

Welcome to this 7th and final episode of Designing for Everyone, a podcast by the Institute for Gender and the Economy (or GATE). I'm Sarah Kaplan (she/her pronouns), and a Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management and Founding Director of GATE and your podcast host. In this 7-part limited series, we're featuring a high-impact set of conversations we had in April 2023 at our Gender Analytics: Possibilities conference.

In this panel discussion, we ask product designers about inclusive product, service and program design and what it looks like.

Reginé Gilbert is Industry Assistant Professor at New York University's Tandon School of Engineering. She is a user experience designer, educator, and author with over ten years of experience working in technology. She has a strong belief in making the world a more accessible place that starts and ends with the user. Réginé's areas of research focus are digital accessibility, inclusive design, and immersive experiences. And, she is author of *Inclusive Design for a Digital World: Designing with Accessibility in Mind*.

Jahan Mantin is the co-founder of Project Inkblot, a team of designers and futurists who equip people to become co-designers of an equitable world by creating and leading programs that center Black, Indigenous, and POC designers as well as leading transformative design

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Vanessa Raponi is a Senior Product Development Engineer at Spin Master — a Canadian founded, international toy company that created such brands as Paw Patrol and Hatchimals (meaning, she designs and creates toys for a living, wouldn't we all love to do that!) Vanessa is the Founder of EngiQueers Canada, a national non-profit that advocates for intersectional queer inclusion in the engineering profession which has brought her from coast-to-coast to present in panels, sessions, and talks as an expert in Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.

Their conversation was moderated by GATE's new Academic Director, Sonia Kang, who is Professor of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management, Canada Research Chair in Identity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and University of Toronto Mississauga's Special Advisor on Anti-Racism and Equity. Her research explores the challenges and opportunities of diversity, including strategies for mitigating the far-reaching effects of stigma and harnessing the power of diversity for society and organizations alike.

They are going to be looking at designing with disabilities in mind, at queer inclusion, at racial biases in program design and how to change how we think about design in order to be more inclusive.

Sonia Kang: First I want to start really broad and so really thinking about something that we heard earlier, which was that we can't design for the margins. We have to design with the margins and this is really a key theme as well in inclusive design, right? This idea of nothing about us, without us. So, I want to ask each of you. What this idea means to you and your work? What our audience should think about as they try to be more inclusive in their product and service design? So I'll ask each of you. I'll start with Jahan because you're so far away. So, we'll get to you and then we'll give each of you a chance to answer.

Jahan Mantin: OK, thank you. It's a much different view up here and I'm very used to the seat over there. Yeah, I think a few things about that. The first thing that came to my mind when you had asked this question was my mom. And my mom is like the best. She's a retired teacher. She's a very active senior citizen. I grew up in New York, from New York. And there I've noticed these new ads where...it's like these senior citizen ads, but now they're saying older adults. And my mom was like, what is this thing with older adults? I'm a senior. No one asked us. And I was like, well ma.... Yeah, that's true. And she loves requesting her senior citizen discount. You know, that's like her thing. And she doesn't want to be an older adult. She wants to be a senior and she's like no one asks us this at all. I just remember being struck by that when she said that. And the other thing that occurred to me is like sometimes you can become the "us". And I thought about my dad who died 12 years ago. He was sick. He was ill and in the kind of later stages, he had to use a cane. And he was very active, you know, he was a basketball player and really athletic. He was a gym teacher. And I remember one day he said to me, Jahan, I've never ever noticed how many people have canes in this city. And just like getting on the train and going up and down the stairs was becoming so cumbersome. So, he became "us". And the other thing I think of is like, even when you're part of the "us", you still mess up. Our work has

been around technology and racial equity and design, and we've made so many mistakes and we're the US. And so, I think that nothing about us without us is like 100% on, and it is totally the way. But there are all these other kind of nuances to it. And the very last thing I'll say is that I think it's really important to think about and shift to not just nothing about us without us, but also empowering the "us" to create things of our own. So, we don't actually need to be dependent on someone creating something for us, like we can just create from us, and design from us. I say that because we ran a program for Black, Indigenous and POC designers, technologists, creatives who are creating projects that benefited their community. Things like a tech-enabled agricultural app to provide land for like Black farmers. And it was so empowering to just have that expressed and have that coming out and have the space to be supported in that so. That's where I land on that.

Sonia Kang: Thank you for that. Beautiful. Thanks for the example of both of your parents too. I will say the older adult thing, I think, that's like an academic creep thing. So, I did my PhD in psychology. One of the things that I studied was older adults. And I feel like this happens a lot where, like, academics, invent these terms that no one uses. And then it gets into policy, and then it gets into, like, the ads in the bus stop or whatever it was, and then no one identifies with them so.

Jahan Mantin: I'm going to tell my mom. She's pissed.

Sonia Kang: This is like 2005, like it's taking a while, but the creep is real. Cool. OK. Reginé, go ahead.

Reginé Gilbert: Oh hi everybody. Hello. So, I get the pleasure of teaching a course called Looking Forward at NYU. It's a course where we teach students about assistive technologies that blind and low vision folks use. But I co-teach this class with Gus Chalkias. And Gus is blind. So I am a UX designer. I teach UX design, but I also teach assistive technologies. However, I can't teach assistive technologies that I don't use on a daily basis, because there's nothing like involving people who have lived experience. So when it comes to nothing about us without us, that's what it is. It's people with lived experience that you probably don't have. And so, we actually make a good balance for each other because I bring the UX design side, he brings the assistive tech side, specifically around blind and low vision. And our students always work with a real-life client. This semester they're working with a school called iHOPE in New York City that is a school specifically for disabled, not just children, but people from ages like 10 to 21. And we went to the school. The students got to see how the students of that school get around or don't get around because there's the necessity for navigation. I think, when you think about nothing about us, without us, I mean, we can all think about what this means in relation to our own work, I think we can all do that, right? I don't see any other way to work. Another thing is don't design for, don't do for people. Nobody likes that. Like, let's be real, When you make it so that it's with people, they feel included. There is no worse feeling than being left out. Every single person in this room has been left out of something. And we seem to keep repeating the same behaviour

over and over. We seem to keep leaving people out. Because we don't think about it, right. So it's really important that nothing about us without us, I hope that you all, if you take one thing today away, is that you remember that.

Sonia Kang: Thank you. Vanessa?

Vanessa Raponi: I love this concept so much because I think it's so relevant to the premise of representation. As a queer woman of color who's an engineer and a project manager, and a manager, having that opportunity to have the voice and seat at the table throughout the product development journey is so important. Because I work at a company where we make hundreds of products, and I've personally touched hundreds of products over the last several years. I love how much it was touched on the last panel about the realities of how quickly we are trying to move all the time and the impact of the economic drive behind it. So, I was so excited to have the opportunity to work on a product that was explicitly about equity, diversity and inclusion. It was actually created from local Toronto High school students who came up with this product idea. It was kind of like a coloring set that had these templates of genderqueer fashion designers and Indigenous artists and a Black astronaut. And like these kids had created this incredible concept. And we were able to actually bring it all the way to market and work directly with them through that journey. So, it was this phenomenal experience. And it was like this enable a team of the creators of this very inclusive design got to be involved in it. But as I said, I've worked on so many products like Rubik's Cube, Etch A Sketch, like things that we all know and see all the time, that are in the hundreds of thousands and millions of units globally, internationally. And the context of the different designs is really important because what was so great about what we were doing for that one project was that it was Canadian and it was local and that was really important to what we're doing. But most of the products that I work on is a completely different context and scale and we're actively trying to get them out to as many people as possible. So, we leverage a lot of focus groups and making sure that...because it's kids toys that I'm making...so making sure that kids are actually getting hands on the toys throughout the development. And then it was also mentioned a lot about multidisciplinary work. There's absolutely no way a product can go from a sketch to your shelf at home without like 100 different disciplines being involved throughout every different stage. So having those collaborations, like 90% of all of our jobs happen actually in a meeting together, because everything needs so much collaboration. It's so rare to have those moments of independent work and I think that's where you can really weave in that inclusive design throughout the journey.

Sonia Kang: Thanks. I'm going to stick with you for a sec, because I really think each of you on this panel, one of the things that really informs your design is that engagement and advocacy for the groups that you're working with. So really like getting into the logistics of your design process, how does that engagement inform what you are designing and then how does the design influence your engagement? Like what's that cycle like? And I like how you're talking about the method piece, right, because people are always asking, how do we do this? You talked about the focus groups, the specifics of your process.

Vanessa Raponi: Yeah. With toys, really what we're trying to do, especially at my company, is that we're trying to innovate and do things that have never been done before. But also within the constraints of, it's a kids toy, probably has to sell for about \$20.00 or less. It probably is going to have like a one-to-two-year life cycle before we're expected to have the next trend or the next big thing. So, you have all these constraints that you're working with. But at the beginning of the design process, we have inputs from all over the place, whether it's inventors externally, internal designers. And then they'll come with these different ideas for the toys that can fit into our businesses, our business units, and our brands, and how we can again innovate and play in the space. And then throughout that process, you go from the sketch to the 3D render, to the physical prototype. At every single point, there's always leadership alignment. You have to really present and pitch where you're at internally throughout. So, at every single one of those moments, you're getting tons of feedback through consumer insights, through the play testing you're doing. And those are where all the opportunities to make changes to the design at the upfront before we've gotten to the point where—we work a lot in plastics—the injection molding tool moment when you've actually solidified the design. It's really iterative. So I think, going back to the multiple people at the table. Like my engineering team, for instance, has a lot of female leadership and we're constantly encouraged to speak up in any meeting regardless of who's there. It doesn't matter if the founder of the company is there. Like, voice your opinion, vocalize your concerns. I think because there's so many moments and opportunities to reflect on the design. I think that's why those voices are so important because it's the moments to really reflect on that.

Sonia Kang: Thanks. So what do those moments look like for you, Reginé?

Reginé Gilbert: I teach students...I'll just give an example. This semester I'm doing a proof of concept to have a small group of students, small teams, work with a co-designer who is disabled. My research is in inclusion and accessibility in the extended reality space. So that's looking at inclusion and accessibility in augmented reality and virtual reality and what does that look like. So I was thinking, the best way to involve my students in understanding what is best, is to have them work with a co-designer with disabilities. So, the way that I started, though, was teaching students about what accessibility is. What does it mean specifically around augmented reality? What does it mean for virtual reality? Teaching my students about ableism, which I wish I would have heard more of today along with the word disabled. We have ableism in our society in every aspect of it, and everything that we do, we see it all the time. And so it was important for me to inform the students of ableism so that they understand what their bias is when they're going in and speaking with this co-designer. So those were two really big pieces of training people on accessibility, training them on ableism and disability etiquette. Because, frankly, I feel like a lot of people don't actually know how to interact with people with disabilities, and they act a fool. I mean I don't know how else to say it except look up #AbleDsAreWeird. Because you'll find a bunch of things that people end up doing and saying that are highly inappropriate. And so those things were very important to me. Just yesterday, actually, one of the co-designers came in to try VR. He had never tried VR before. He has some mobility issues, but it was great to see

how the students worked with him because they had that prior training. So, I think it's very important to have that up front.

Sonia Kang: Thanks. Jahan. Do you want to add?

Jahan Mantin: Yeah, I'll add that... So, our company had created a framework called Inkblot Design and I love what you all said because it's almost like a framework for how to start to bring these types of inquiries into your design process. So, the framework is divided up into three portions. It's not like a linear thing, but. It's basically like, Who are you? One. Like, who are you and who's on your team? And how are all these identities influencing what you're designing? Because they are. We just embed ourselves into the design and we're going to do it because we're humans and that's what we do. So, actually taking time to start to get a sense of who is on your team and what's happening there is so critical to what you're designing. And the second piece is around, well, what are you designing? And then the third piece is who are you designing with? And that was our tagline for better word, like design with, not for. And within that, we have a set of inquiries. And this is not the exact quote, but there's this Einstein quote like if I had an hour to solve a problem, I would spend the first 55 minutes picking out the question. And that's so profound. Our framework is not a methodology. It's not really answer. It's not an end to it. It's just a way to start to inquire within it. So, some of those questions are, who are you excluding? Just right from the gate. Who are you excluding? Are you censoring we say misrepresented, people in your design decisions? What's the worst possible outcome of this project or this idea, this technology? And on which communities? And it's really fascinating to see people, these teams starting to delve into these questions. Sometimes, most of the time, you ended up with more questions. But it led to totally different types of conversations. Even in the 'who are you' conversation, there were people that were like, I worked with Dan in marketing for five years and I've never had a real conversation with him. And in the last 20 minutes, I've gotten to know him more than I ever had. So, I think, even with all the tools and the practices, you can have all of those things, but it's actually the relational piece that starts to move things forward.

Sonia Kang: I like how all of you talked about sharing and connecting based on your own experiences. Given though that we live in an ableist, racist, colonial space that people are coming into, how do you or how have you created safe spaces for people to share their unique views? So even working in STEM, right, it's hard for people who don't fit this prototype of masculinity to share in those spaces. So how do you open it up so that people feel safe to share?

Vanessa Raponi: That's a great question. For me personally, as a queer woman of color in engineering, when I first got to engineering school, there was just a dramatic lack of queer representation in my undergrad. I felt like I was one of a handful of people who were out. Even though you hear all these things like everyone experiments in college and I'm like, where? So, it was just like a very straight environment. But that's when I created EngiQueers on my campus.

And then seeing where it's come over the last decade, we hosted our first national conference earlier this year and getting to see like a room of 200 people at the Gallo. We had a drag queen come into a professional engineering space and it was the greatest moment of my life. So just getting to see these students from all over Canada connecting about being queer engineers and all these different intersectional identities, like the communities and the employment resource groups and the formal spaces, I think, are coming and getting created over time and becoming a bigger focus for lots of different environments. Especially something like stem which is chronically underrepresented in all the different spaces. But then I think, like, more in the day-to-day, it's just finding people who are supportive of your causes and the things that you care about, even if you're in an environment, where maybe people who look like you are not necessarily there, if they're advocating for the same thing that you're advocating for, it's kind of like finding your allies fundamentally, because then you can work together to help make the change that you need to see. I always say decisions are made at every table and every e-mail. All the micro things really, really build up to what ends up getting into product, what ends up getting into design, what ends up as the final decision. So, the more that you can collaborate together and insert that narrative throughout all of these things, I think the better end result you can really get.

Reginé Gilbert: I'm going to reiterate something that I've heard throughout the day today. With my previous experience in industry and my experience as an educator, I tell people who I used to work with and people that are now my students, that you need to know yourself. This is something that we've heard all throughout the day. I say, the best designers I know, know themselves very well. And that is something I say from the very beginning of working with anybody, because you need to understand who you are and what your bias are. Because that influences the way that you design. Another thing that I've incorporated actually into my classes, I was talking about this last night, is self-care, which we don't talk about enough. Especially when we are working with marginalized groups or we are an advocate or we are advocating for certain groups, or we're the ones who are doing the research that is heavy, there is somebody that we need to take care of and that's ourselves, right? And that's something that I've started to incorporate and I think is an important piece for people feeling like they're doing good work, right. You have to know yourself. But you also have to take care of yourself.

Jahan Mantin: Yeah, that's...we had a whole conversation about. So true. Well, when COVID happened, our work was in person, then COVID happens and it's goes virtual. And I was like, there's no way this is going to work. These conversations are hard in person, now we're supposed to do it virtually. And be facilitating virtually.... I was like, we're not going to be able to create intimacy or connection. I was wrong. And I mean, nothing is the same as in person. But I was wrong. I was proven wrong, and we learned a lot of tips and tricks and ways to create warmth in a zoom room, and open up these conversations. And people really, really opened up more than I anticipated. I think one of the things we did to answer your question, Sonia, was, we just created the space for however you showed up was fine. You could just be how you want to be. I don't want to pretend. They don't want to pretend. We're on Zoom. It's already tiring. You need to be off camera? Fine. You want to go make some steak while you're in the Zoom room? That's fine. I don't care. You want to lie down, like, have your head on the pillow? That's perfectly fine. The thing when you work in any kind of equity, the hard part is then trying to be

equitable. Because then you see where you're not. And even for folks who are more introverted, use the chat. It's fine. Or calling on folks, even when they were quiet and giving them the option. You can just say pass. You don't have to. I learned that a lot of times introverts are just processing. If you pick me, I'll just start rambling. That's like my MO because I'm just more extroverted. You know what I mean? But like introverts will be... and I learned from that. It was like, yeah, you're just processing. That's cool. Just process. I'll come back to you... or not. It's fine. So, I think making that space made a huge difference and it was just a learning.

Sonia Kang: And I think that's that, we hear this all the time, meeting people where they are. But I think it's so important to create that space where you can also see where you have not been meeting people where you are, right. I think that's like one of the biggest challenges in this work is seeing your own bias as well.

Jahan Mantin: Totally

Sonia Kang: What about other types of barriers that you've encountered? Like, if people are trying to get into bringing inclusive design into their work, what are some challenges that you've had and how have you overcome them?

Vanessa Raponi: I think there's just so many systems in place that exist today and so much structure that it can be an uphill battle to make change sometimes. For one example for me, I remember I just finished out of university and I had this vision of...ohh, I'm going to come into the toy industry and shatter all these gender norms and do all these things. I was so excited. And at the time when I started, the way we literally structured toy, is the boys category and the girls category. Like literally, the team is called girls and boys, and the products are girls and boys. And I was like what is happening... But myself and a few people who were really passionate about equity, diversity and inclusion were able to help escalate to leadership about why that needs to change internally before we can even begin to start looking at the dolls and how are we making them more inclusive and looking at the cars and changing them. So, we actually, just about a year or two ago, were able to formally change the names to now be Wheels & Action and Dolls & Interactive. [audience clapping] So like yeah... it was a huge thing. Because if we're already using our language like that, how are we even going to be able to talk about the product? And I remember I used to sit in meetings where it was like, how do we make this girlier? Because you're trying to appeal to your target audience and you're making hundreds of products. This is intended for a four-year-old girl. So how specifically will a parent of a four-year-old girl know to buy this exact product? I get the philosophy behind it. But it can be really soul crushing when you're like, well, a four-year-old girl looks very different all across the world. Especially one thing I'm always really frustrated by is the type of skill sets that are embedded into what a kid is going to learn from a girl toy versus a boy toy and how early that's getting integrated into all of society. But I digress. So, I think that it's important to look at the systems and you've got start somewhere. I witnessed that change over multiple years and it was a lot of conversations behind the scenes and the senior leaders who were on board had to go through

different...like, there was a financial implication to our reporting, ...there's so many things in what already exists. So I think, this is where it's about making the amount of change that you're capable of making within your own sphere and letting that influence bubble up and change. Because now, as our designers are coming forward with what's the best wheels and action product, they don't necessarily need to be like what's the product for the boy. So it starts somewhere.

Sonia Kang: Yeah, I think that patience part is really important because change does take such a long time and it can be really discouraging. And so, I think that's where your self-care piece is super important as well. I'll turn it back to you, Reginé.

Reginé Gilbert: So in my past life before I was a professor, I was an entrepreneur. I had my own consulting business where I would work with different companies who had typically been sued around accessibility, and I would come in and make plans for them and do training. And what I found was that a lot of times people just wanted the easy way out, right? They wanted the quickest way to get out of the trouble they were in. And I would give them a plan that was like three years long to fix the things that they should have done in the first place. Because when you try to retrofit accessibility...oh my goodness...yes, it's tough and it's a lot of money and.... Yeah. Start with inclusion from the start everybody. But it's not always possible. So, one of the things that I would do is a workshop where I would have folks designed for their future selves. Because one of the things that... I started doing this when I was doing the workshops and now I ask my students and I'll ask everybody in this room is... Who do you think about the most? Myself. That's right. So, the truth is, we do think about ourselves the most. There's nothing wrong with that. However, when we are trying to do for others, it's hard. It is very difficult for us to think about other people. So because of that, when you're working in an organization, it's a lot of individuals thinking about themselves and not thinking about their customer, the end user. And so that becomes a problem, right, because that could be anyone. And so, I would have them think that...If you sit all day and your back is hurting, what does that mean? How are those knees? Do you wear glasses now? Do you think your vision is going to magically improve? How's that hearing? Are you wearing earbuds all the time? Right. So all these things. And I would ask them, like, what happens as you age? And they would list all these negative things as they age. And then I say well, what about you? And then all of a sudden, they became positive, right? Like it was hilarious. So that would be my way of getting them to start thinking about the fact that each and every single one of us is going to experience disability at one point or another, for sure, 100% it's going to happen. And so why aren't we making products and experiences that are accessible? It just blows my mind that we don't. If not for whoever is out there, for our future selves. So that's one of the things that I've done in the past.

Jahan Mantin: I love that...Challenges? How much time?...Ok. I don't want to go down a depressing long road of challenges. So I'll just like name a couple with companies. The sense of urgency is beyond and that's not just with tech companies. It's just like the pressure to produce and produce at the rate there's like no space for slow design and for being intentional and taking a breather. And that creates a lot of other problems. And fortunately, or not, depending on who you're talking, our programs were really for the most part, they were not mandatory. So the

people that were coming were the people that really wanted to see things shift and they were like, we've got to do something. And they would get so energized. It's like we were injecting them with this energy. And they're like, whoa, change. And then it's like they get whack a mole, then you get stopped. Because maybe not all of leadership is on board. Or maybe you really want to start taking more time with user research and you really want to, but there's not really funded. And those things get stopped. And so I'll say that. And then I think there's a big challenge around history. Like people not knowing the history of things. We used to do a whole case study on Kodak. I don't know if you all know about Kodak and the Shirley card. But the technology behind Kodak is racially biased. That's how it started. The model they used to create the technology was based on a white woman named Shirley. And every time they updated the model was always a white woman. So the tones meant that black folks, folks with melanin, didn't show up the same way in photos. And it wasn't until chocolate makers and furniture makers started complaining that the photos were not rendering correctly that they were like, oh, we have to change the technology. This is deep. It's insidious. And it has to be known. So even in sessions there are tech folks that were like, wait, what? What? Thankfully, we have things like Google Pixel and real tone technology that's correcting that. But I think if we spend our whole life trying to collect something, it's a lot of energy. I'm really interested in like, what can we create that's new? What can we generate? And the final thing I'll say, just to bring it back to the self-care thing, is just be really frank, our company kind of closed the chapter on that part of our business in March, not part of, that business. We're creating something new. And part of it became that the energy behind trying to convince and defend, it has a certain type of flavor. And after a while, it took a toll. We had to be, is this where we want to put all our energies right now? And so now we shift into something new and it's exciting. We'll always be centering misrepresented folks in our work. It's like my reason for being. But there are many ways to support. There are many ways to do that. And it's not to poo poo folks who are working with orgs or companies, it has to happen. It's so critical. But I think that, in this field, I've met a lot of people working in equity and et cetera. There are a lot of folks, ya'll honestly, that are unwell. They're not well, They are burned out. They're stressed. They're anxious. And they need so much support. And, if companies are serious about it, they've got to really do it. And there's actually so much stuff that they can do. So it's like, are you going to do it or are you not going to do it? If you're not going to do it, why are we here?

Sonia Kang: I think also that's part of the sustainability piece as well, right? Like if we're going to do the work, then you have to put in the time to make it sustainable. And I think, Reginé, your advice about thinking about the future is part of that sustainability piece as well. Like you're going to have to do this stuff for a long time, like generations. Like how long have we been talking about this issue, gender equity, like forever. So it's literally generations. And you have to be willing to design in a way and switch things up when they're not working. I have two questions that are related to each other here, which I think is really cool. So I'm gonna ask them together. So the first part of the question is asking about the role of governments. And let's just say for broader term to link these questions together, just like regulations and inclusive design. And then the secondary part of this is, what advice do you have for new designers or companies who want to go beyond that. So we know like the regulations are going to be pretty basic. So how do you get those basic guidelines in place with the role of the government there? But then what's your advice for pushing beyond that? How do you push people to go beyond the minimum?

Vanessa Raponi: Yeah, I think in the context of what I do, it's always always, always safety first. So, I think, as long as you know a child is going to be safe using this product, then that's kind of our baseline. And for us, the context of safety is typically measured in terms of chemical safety mechanical, physical. How much psychological safety analysis do we do? I don't know. So that's probably maybe an interesting discussion to have. But again, we also work a lot in the innovative space. A lot of our products are trying to be break framed or things that haven't happened before in the history of different toy making. So, I think in that space that's where we have the privilege of a large corporation is that you have a team of lawyers to analyze and go through intellectual property and a whole quality assurance team who can work with these different regulators and governments to discuss the proposals and things like that. So I think in a smaller scale like a startup or in individual product design, I think my advice there would be to try to consult experts where you can. But as long as there's, from my perspective, consideration to safety and a lot of work on that side specifically, then I think that's where you can push back on the rest of it because you're focused on the most important part of well-being.

Reginé Gilbert: I'm going to give the classic answer for anything design. It depends. Really. Truly does. Because the question was in regards to government. So with government, if you're in Canada or the United States, they have OK laws around accessibility. However, if you're dealing with things on a global scale where maybe the country does not have any accessibility laws, it's a little bit different. I think that training is always good and important thing to have for people. But not just once. Because it's like if you work out once a year, you're not in shape, right? So, you cannot do that with your learning around inclusion and accessibility. You have to have it ongoing. So I know of an organization that actually does monthly trainings, a big company, and they do monthly trainings on accessibility, which is good, right? Bring in a different guest speaker every month. Have somebody learn something new every month. Because the truth is it is an ongoing learning thing, right? You don't just do it once. You have to keep going. And it does depend on what your team has the capability of doing. Some people know a lot. Some people know a little. Some people don't have the time. So, what can you do within the context of your situation? But ongoing training and learning, I think, is key.

Jahan Mantin: I don't know how to answer this question. I just read government and I thought of the United States and I was like it's a hot mess. It's just a mess. But you know what? I am about regulation when I think about AI. And I appreciate it, Allison, what you said. And I'm all in it with the regulation. I guess the thing I would say is... I don't know if you all know about like a bunch of thought leaders and AI folks who sent out this like an op-ed piece and they were like calling for a pause with ChatGPT and like we need to stop, we need to pause, because it's going to get out of control. And one of the questions they had spoken to folks who are developing AI and asked what percentage do you think that there's a chance of AI, not necessarily destroying humans, but severely debilitating our way of life? Anyway, they landed on 10%. I'm like that feels high. And, so the question was, if you were going to get on an airplane and they were like the 10% chance of crashing, would you get on that plane? I don't think I would. So I think that already is pretty indicative that something needs to be done. I don't know how to approach that

animal, especially like the legality of it. It just moves so fast. But I'm just kind of terrified but also fascinated by AI development and all that it entails.

Sonia Kang: OK, so this segue is really nicely into this question and anyone can answer it. We don't have to like go in a row.

Jahan Mantin: OK, good.

Sonia Kang: So you aren't always last. So, this question is specifically about this issue of taking a pause. Someone asked how do we create a business case for slow and intentional design? And how do you bring folks on board to intentional program and service design when you know that there is a financial cost?

Vanessa Raponi: It's really tough. I worked on some products for a period of time that were some of the slowest development cycles. Our product development cycles range from about eight months is the shortest timeline, but the maximum we ever typically touch on is close to two years. I've been a part of some of those two-year timelines. And I watched the most senior folks, interdisciplinary, join these weekly meetings as we went through all these tests, and all these experiments, and all these trials and validations and things we've never done, for a year. And it just got cut and that product never made it to market and that technology is not out there now. So, it's so tricky because the amount of money we probably put into that. And it's a risk-reward situation, because had it happened and had it been great and worked well, there would have been a big reward at the end. So, I think this one is particularly tricky. I don't have a perfect answer. I think what comes to mind is, if there's micro deliverables that are possible to help justify, if the business case is really strong for the end result and what's possible and what's capable and helping to articulate everything that's needed and why, I think can help support. But my personal experience is that the reality is that it's an uphill battle. You're going to at least need something in the short term to justify it. It would be my best guess.

Reginé Gilbert: Do you want to go next?

Jahan Mantin: OK. I'll just say this. I'm so over making a case. I don't want to make any more cases. We've been talking about this for 7980 thousand years. What's going to make a case for? Like, just open your eyes. Look around. We've made the case. And I had felt so many times. I felt like it was demeaning making a business case, and after a while, I was like I'm not doing that anymore. I'm not doing it. If you don't know why, don't work with us. Just don't. So, that's what I got to say.

Vanessa Raponi: Just to speak on that, I respect that so much. I run our sustainability committee and I'll present these like recycled resin options. I'll be like look, we can save hundreds of thousands of pounds of plastic. And they're just like, I don't know, though, I'm like, come on, really? You can get so distracted by money. I've never had the courage to just be like it's climate change. Is that the business case? Like it's tough. It's so exhausting. It really is.

Reginé Gilbert: Plus one to that. When I was a senior manager of user experience design, I had a lot of work to do in terms of getting a website in order and app in order. And so the way that I approached it was small wins, right? I mean the truth is people work for companies and these companies need to make money. This is the real world we live in and there are deadlines and there are things that we have to get done. And so what are those small wins that you can get along the way? They don't have to be really big things. It could be just like a small thing. We fix this thing. It's improving the search engine optimization on this. So those little small things could be really, really helpful. I think, if you have the really long, years plan, what are those small wins throughout that you can take and then present, right. Even though it may not be a huge money maker, eventually it will be, right. So it's like, try your best. It's tough.

Sonia Kang: I really echo that...oh sorry, go ahead.

Jahan Mantin: I'm just going to say that there's also so much evidence. I think it is Sylvia up here earlier with like the investing and it was like \$15 trillion... stats like this... This is pretty evident. This is a money maker. You know what I mean? If that's all you're focused on. So, at what point, is it...because the thing is it just goes like this...It's out of style then it's in style, then you're back having the same combo. Then it goes out of style, then it's in style. It's just going to keep coming back anyway, you know? So when is it like? No. We have to actually fundamentally at the root shift.

Sonia Kang: Hmm, it was going to echo as well the small wins. So in academia we're very used to our work taking a very long time and sometimes going literally nowhere. So, the small wins are definitely a good thing. And often you don't even notice them. I think that they're so much emphasis put on things that are going wrong, that sometimes you even can't even recognize when something is going well. And so, I think that's where it's helpful to have a community where someone can say like, hey, Vanessa, that was really cool that you did. You need that kind of support as part of your self-care as well. What about the endpoint? So how do you know when a product or service is inclusive? Like how do you measure that success? How do you evaluate it?

Reginé Gilbert: When my friends with disabilities can use it. I mean to be honest, that's how I get a lot of feedback with things. For example, a few weeks ago, a friend of mine, who does audio descriptions—very amazing audio descriptions, by the way, if anybody watches the J Lo on Netflix, she did the audio descriptions for it. Yeah. She was awesome—We were on Zoom

and she was trying to do something. It was a great example for my students to see when websites are designed badly and the hierarchy doesn't make sense and someone is using a screen reader, how unusable it is. In my book, Chapter 3 is called If is not accessible...it's annoying, if it's not accessible... If it's...I can't remember it, right now, because I'm on the stage. But if it's annoying, people can't use it, right? If it's annoying for you, it's impossible for people with disabilities. It will say that. And so my students got to see, and they're going...oh no...and I said, yeah...This is why you all need to learn this stuff, so you don't do this, so people don't get frustrated, and again, don't get left out of things. So that's, for me, how I learn is through friends with lived experience.

Vanessa Raponi: Yeah, I think that that feedback loop is really important at the end. For us, it's consumer reviews. We have tools on Amazon and things like that to show us, in the scale of the hundreds of thousands of products we're taking out, we can actually analyze the data of the reviews that we're coming back and what is the feedback. I think that this drives the types of products that we're creating moving forward because we can then take those analytics and reintegrate them in. But I think in the context of trying to make sure that the design is as most inclusive as possible, I think as we're sprinting to create all these products, it's like even remembering to do that and doing that feedback loop, making sure that there is time in the development cycle, in the product development lens, to actually do that work. Because it's really easy to overlook and to just go go go. So, carving out that space, whether it's even like a parallel path, so that you're getting it done at the same time, is really valuable.

Jahan Mantin: I was going to give a client example.

Sonia Kang: Do it.

Jahan Mantin: But I'm not. I'm not. I'm gonna give another example. Because we were talking about it last night. It's fresh in my mind and I'm really proud of it. When I mentioned earlier, when you're doing this work, you're like, Ohh...I'm not equitable here. I'm here. I'm hoarding here. I'm this here, and you start to see it. And it's tough to see, but it's like necessary, because you have to practice what you're talking about. And we were hiring a program manager for this program we were running. We redesigned our hiring process like, well, how could we make this equitable? Well, let's look at what we know. Well, we know that, women, women identifying folks, people of color, etc, will often like we won't apply for jobs, because we're not qualified. We don't have this and that. So on the job description, we specifically... we're like... if you are called to this position, you should apply. You know the stats show that you won't because blah blah blah. Let us make that decision. Don't worry about that. Still apply. And you know, we got so much feedback like, oh, I was really scared to apply, but you said I could, so I'm applying. And I'm just sifting through so many applications... we were like ohh so no, but it was like so beautiful. And we just started doing these small experiments. We're also super transparent throughout the process. We had a mishap during one of the stages of the process like we had a total...something we did not see... and we got called out very gracefully by someone who

applied. And then I reached out to everyone like we are redesigning the second-half of this process because one of you called us out. Thank you so much. We are going to change it. And then we compensated folks who made it to the final round for the amount of time it would have taken them. Like just to prep for the interview, to be at the interview, and we compensated them at the hourly rate that they would have been paid. And we got so much incredible feedback and it really didn't take that much. It really didn't. And like the response was so affirming. And then then like tracking that process, being able to share it with folks, sharing our cover letter with people who asked us because they wanted to model it using our own language, was so liberating. It was so liberating. So I want to share that.

Sonia Kang: I have to say this is the second time today that I've heard of this. And I wonder if it's your work, but someone on the applicant side just was telling me about seeing that statement and how powerful it was to see the statement that said that. We know that women and minorities typically need more evidence to reply, let us make that decision. So, it's having an effect out there. There you go. Do either of you want to add?

Reginé and Vanessa: We're good.

Sonia Kang: OK. So going back to kind of like the education thread, which everyone has touched on here, really thinking about how do we center our inclusivity in what we're teaching in terms of design? Because I think we do teach design early without calling it design. Like, my son is in grade 2, he'll bring home things. It's design, but it's not formally called design. But there's no mention of who's going to be using it. It's just like for fun. Let's invent this thing, right. By the way, you have my son's dream job of being a toy inventor. So just as an FYI. So how do we create that mindset in the education space?

Vanessa Raponi: I think that's a great question. There's so many different strategies to approach this. I'm glad that you brought up kids, because in the diversity and engineering space, we often are talking about the leaky pipeline. Because, if you're unfamiliar with the stats, we're not even at 20% women in engineering in Canada right now. So the issue of women is significant in engineering and we have this 30 by 30 goal that by 2030 will have 30% of newly licensed professional engineers to be women. So that's kind of what we're tracking towards in the profession of engineering right now. And when we think about the leaky pipeline, it's as young as I think they say like grade four or five is when girls start thinking they're not good at math, and that it's lame, and all these things. So, it's really important for that education piece to happen as young as elementary school, high school, university, professional. There are so many different moments for that to come in. And we've mentioned a few different strategies, things like lunch-and-learns. We had an inclusive product design lunch-and-learn specifically that all of our designers and engineers attended. It was folks talking about ableism and design. And really, you could see all the designers lighting up. Because it's not always so explicitly talked about exactly as you're saying. And then, the mention about how computer scientists don't always have an ethics course. In engineering, we do have strong ethics courses

throughout our degree. And I think that really helps promote this premise of technological stewardship. If you've not heard of it, it's the idea that as engineers, we are stewards of technology. And we are so interwoven into the technology that we're helping to create and design. It's really thinking about that complex lens. And today, people are talking about this premise of technological stewardship so much more. So, I have seen a lot of improvements over time. And again, you need the systems to change a little bit. You need the innovation to come out that's promoting that business case and things like that so that we can continue to move these things forward. And more folks of color, and queer folks, and women, in leadership and getting that diversity to help the decision makers have those additional lenses. So, I'm hopeful that things are going into the right direction to get that education piece throughout more.

Reginé Gilbert: I would say making your presentations accessible. I think that's an important piece, a lot of people do not do. They'll be like, look at that thing on the screen. I'm way back there, I can't see what that thing is. Or I'm blind. I can't see what that thing is. So, could you describe it? So, one of the things, I think that is important is, that people can, if possible, describe what's on the screen. Don't just say that thing. Or if you have graphs, make sure there's a detailed explanation or you're detailing it. Making sure that there's captions on your video, right. That there's transcripts available later, if people want to watch it later. Making your presentations accessible is something everybody in this room can do. It is something that takes practice. I want to say this real quick because I know we're running out of time. It takes practice to be inclusive and it's OK, if you mess up. I mess up all the time. But how do you learn? Right. So, practice inclusion, practice accessibility, practice making your presentations more accessible, because you never know who is watching it. I was on a Zoom a while back and I was presenting. But I described everything on my slides. At the very end, someone said, thank you for describing that. I'm blind. I had no idea who was on. You don't know. So, I'll just say that.

Jahan Mantin: When I think about inclusivity and design, actually I don't have a design background. I didn't go to design school or anything like that. But I got the chance to be an adjunct teacher at NYU to share our framework. And I will say that, they were seniors, and when the course ended, they were pissed. They were like, why are just talking about this now? Why are we learning these things now? Why are we learning that seatbelts were not made for folks who are pregnant or have breast? Like why? Like all we talk about is creating and technology and design and we should have been learning about this in our freshman year. So I'm hopeful that, I think, it should just be like core foundational education right from the get go.

Sonia Kang: So we have only a couple of minutes left. Just each of you, if you were giving people advice on, you know, we have a lot of people here who probably want to incorporate inclusive design into whatever products and services they have. What do you think are the most important things to think about in terms of implementation? Literally 30 seconds each.

Vanessa Raponi: Do your best would be my number one piece of advice. If you are doing any amount of effort or intentional thinking about this at all, you're already doing better than other

folks. So, just try not to be hard on yourself about doing it perfectly. Anything is better than nothing, and perfection is probably unattainable anyways. So yeah, that's my snippet.

Reginé Gilbert: Mine is include people with disabilities and pay them.

Sonia Kang: Nice.

Jahan Mantin: Mine is, this work is hard, so also make sure that you are joyful and do things that bring you joy. And I would just say, with very little seconds left, Reginé and I found out that we were both attending the Beyoncé concert in London on the same day. OK. That's joy. OK. So you know. Bring that into that too. It's actually critical for doing this work, You have to do it. Or you will burn out.

Sarah Kaplan: So, now we know more about what “nothing about us without us” means. That principle was underlined in all of panels at our Gender Analytics: Possibilities conference. Designing for Everyone means assuring deep engagement with all communities, in particular the most marginalized ones. It makes me think of the “curb cut effect.” When the Disability Act required cities to create cuts in curbs so that wheelchairs could get down from sidewalks to be able to cross streets, it turns out that wheelchair users weren't the only ones to benefit. If you were pulling rollaboard luggage down the sidewalk, you benefitted. If you were a parent pushing a stroller, you benefitted. If you were a worker pushing a delivery trolley, you benefitted. So, the effort to be more inclusive for people with disabilities made the city more inclusive for everyone.

That's what Designing for Everyone is all about.

Thank you for listening to this limited-edition GATE Audio production podcast. If you haven't listened to them already, I hope you will check out the other 6 episodes in this series and other GATE Audio podcasts, including our signature podcast, BUSTED, where we bust common myths about gender and other forms of inequality. Just search for “Institute for Gender and the Economy” where you get your podcasts. Of course, you can help us get the word out by liking and following the podcast and telling your friends. We are nowhere without our community of listeners. If you want to keep learning, head to our website at GenderAnalytics.Org where you can discover our online course offerings and much more.

This podcast was produced by me, Sarah Kaplan, and edited by Ian Gormley. We are grateful for support from the Rotman School's TD Management and Data Analytics Lab who co-hosted the Gender Analytics: Possibilities conference with GATE.

Thanks for listening.