POWERFUL LESSONS from UX SUPERHEROES

vol. 1

USER DEFENDERS
PODCAST

Inspiring interviews with UX superheroes.

When I started User Defenders podcast in 2015,

my motivation was to create something that would help fellow designers stay inspired in this challenging, and ever-evolving field.

I know personally how hard this can be, let alone wondering what to learn next amidst the thousands of possibilities before us at any given moment. Open Twitter and scroll for 5m and you'll see what I mean!

This little project, is a best-of takeaways from each of my inspiring superguests. I'll be tackling these a dozen at a time, meaning there will be more editions in the future.

It's been so enlightening for me to look back on where it all started, and be reminded of these invaluable lessons that I've been privileged to also learn alongside you dear Defender.

I hope you enjoy these powerful lessons, as much as I did putting them together!

Thanks for being a valued listener, and last but not least...

Fight on my friends!

Jason Ogle
Host of User Defenders podcast

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"Over time I think the word prototyping will fall out of use, and what we think of prototyping will just be design.

The lines between designer and developer are starting to blur, and that's what really excites me.

A lot of really amazing things have been done in the past that we haven't really learned from yet, and I'd like it if the industry matured beyond that.

If you fully understand the problem, the solution will be obvious to you. If the solution is not obvious, you don't know enough about the problem.

We should be balancing modern trends with an understanding of first principals: Psychology, animation, and things that aren't going to change with trends, so you can measure current trends against root truths that you know are not going to change over time."

002: **JOSHUA TUCKER**

UX Designer, Google

"INTERACTIONEER"

"Stay hungry and don't let anything get in the way of what you want to build.

Solve problems for your users and bring delight to their experiences.

Like a mad scientist, you get to test your work on people. You're not really mad if you're attempting to learn something from your experiments vs. being in your lab trying to blow stuff up.

I really want to know my users from a personal level and begin to understand their characteristics, mannerisms, and behaviors on the most granular level.

There were things that I did not know how to do, but I didn't compromise on the experience because I didn't know how to do it. I just chose to buckle down and spend any time required to learn what I needed to learn to make it right."

003: CRAIG MORRISON

UX Design Consultant

"VALIDATION MAN"

"Don't 'launch' anything...validate and test everything.

Slowly build and iterate and work with people. Do all the user research you need to do until you've built a product up that people want to use..

Don't think of your own ideas, look for an opportunity in a market that needs something, and give it to them.

In the future, what I think we'll see happen is more focus on each individual role within what makes up a UX Designer.

Don't get lost in getting angry about people not understanding UX. Be able to communicate the benefits of UX to stakeholders in a language they can understand."

004: CHRISTOPHER SCHMITT

Web Design Pioneer

userdefenders.com/004

"You can learn something from everyone. Keep your brain open.

Make things better than when you first saw them.

It's not what you say, but how you say it.

Be able to politely disagree, and show positivity whenever you can.

Have a strong portfolio online. Keep on blogging and sharing what you know."

005: ANDI GALPERN

UX Designer & Founder, Cascade SF

"ELLE FAYE"

"Surround yourself with people that reflect who you want to become.

The future of UX Design is making users feel more human.

The people who appear superheroes are just every day people. We're all the same, it's just that one person spent a little more time investing in an area that helped them get there.

Meet a mentor. Where do you want to be? Study and learn everything there is to know. Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty. Talk to as many people as possible, get involved in the community.

Those people who really do know what they're doing...study them, find people like them, pick their brains and use them as a model to get where you want to go."

006: CHLOË BREGMAN

Experience & Brand Designer

"CREATIVE JUGGERNAUT"

userdefenders.com/006

"Learn to let go of the things you can't control. Focus on the things you can.

When people feel safe to fail, they will take more risks and do more interesting things.

Be really careful about whether you think you want to be a UX Designer or not. Let go of the label and just go out there and see what kind of designer you want to be.

We all start somewhere. Study people, study sites. Pay attention to patterns, and just build something. In the process of building things you will learn so much more than you could from all your time reading books.

The most crippling thing when starting is lack of confidence. It's important to remember that nobody knows any more information than you do right now about the problem you're trying to solve. Your opinion and your ideas are just as good as theirs."

007: RAFAL TOMAL

VP of Design, Rainmaker Digital

"TYPOGRAPHY MAN"

"No matter what we think, it all comes back to typography.

Give the user less choices by design and they won't have to think as much about the important choices you want them to make.

My design superpower is mind-reading which is super-helpful when dealing with clients.

You can be successful working for someone else. If you find your way and work hard, the company can make you successful over time. Don't be afraid to work for someone else.

Focus more on the users and how your design can solve their problems instead of the final visual outcome and how many likes you get on Dribbble. We want to show off our work and get a bunch of likes, but we shouldn't let that define us or be the only thing that helps us feel good about ourselves as designers."

008: BEN CALLAHAN

President, Sparkbox

"MR. MIDDLEMAN"

"There's a lot of opportunity out there for those who are willing to take some risks.

I fell in love with the idea of that intersection between the code that we write, and the people that use it.

Before the day begins, before email, before Twitter, I try to just take a moment and just pause and think about what's really important in life to me, and what's important for that day.

Write…even though it's not going to be perfect. You (and others) will learn a tremendous amount when you write.

Don't be afraid to make stuff and put it out there. You only get better by trying. Without the possibility of failure, there's no possibility for real success. You can't just do the same old things. You have to push yourself to do something new. You have to try something that's outside of your comfort zone. So try stuff, get out there, and put it out for the world to see and be ready to let your skin get thick. It'll be painful too, but it will make you better."
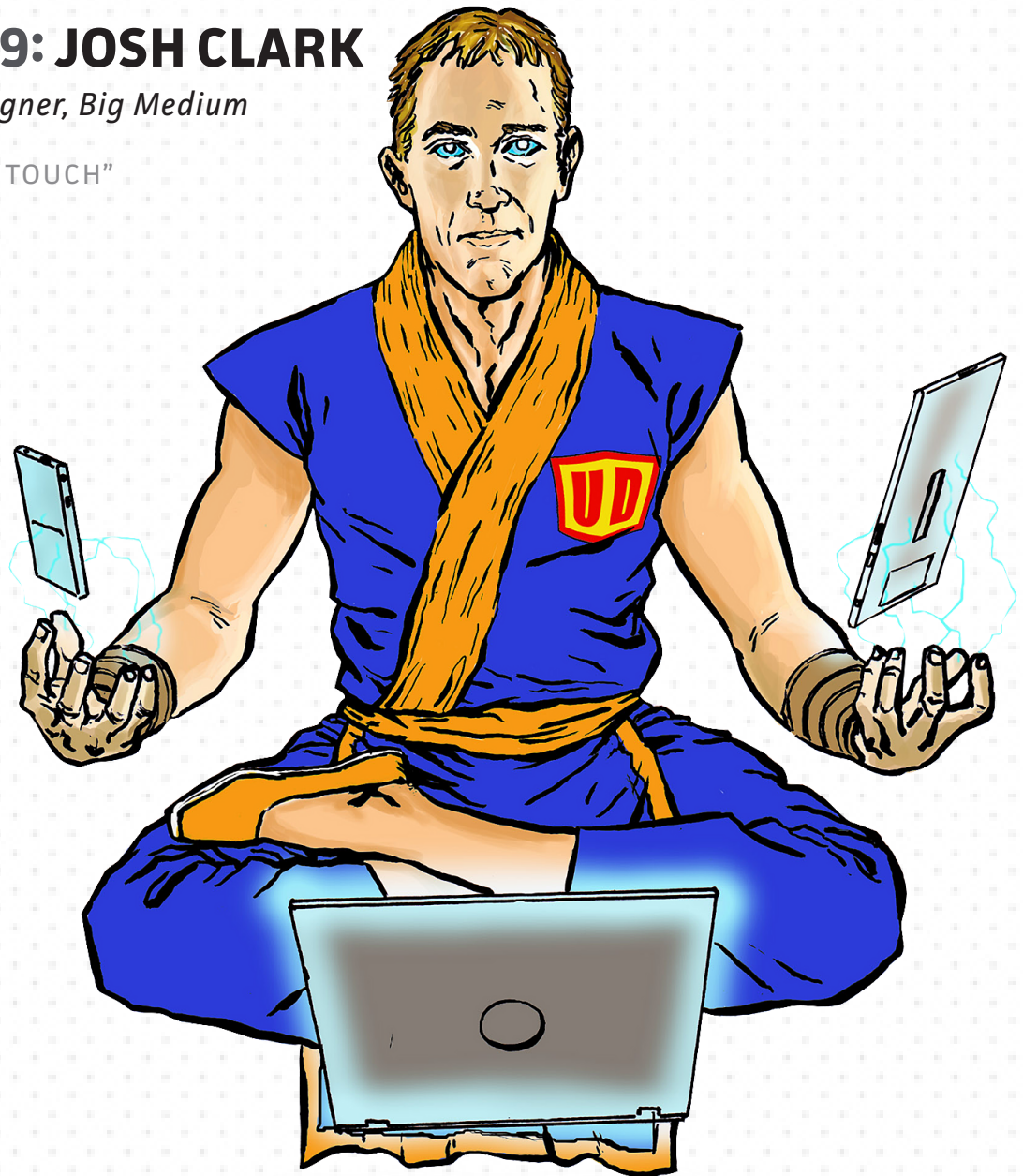
009: **JOSH CLARK**

Designer, Big Medium

"DR. TOUCH"

"Rather than imposing our story on people, we should find out their story and tuck our technology into that.

We talk a lot about having empathy for the user which is important, but we also need to have empathy for the people we're working for.

Our technologies are really distracting and designed for addiction. Let's find the stories of peoples lives where technology can dip in just as it's needed and get out of the way just as quickly.

Think about what kind of world do you wanna make, because we are shaping the interface to information and to one another in ways that are going to be increasingly intimate. Be thoughtful about the values you want to embed in your systems.

Think about the people you're designing for. What are their needs? The best way to find out is to talk to and observe them. They may not be able to articulate what they need, but by watching them in their lives, you'll see where they have problems that need to be solved."
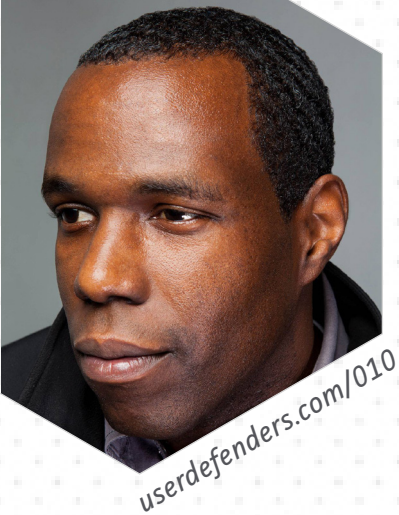
010: JEFF BARNABY

Creative Director, Brandhorse

"INCOGNITO"

userdefenders.com/010

"Pay attention to the unseen.

Simplify, then oversimplify.

You can go a long way with zeal and fervor in your work, especially starting out. Take advantage of that hunger and unrelentingly consume everything related to the work you're setting out to do.

Information and content informs how and why you design something a particular way. Without the proper set of information structure, jumping into any design is really a setup for failure.

Understand that less is more. Only give the user the necessary options they need at any given moment. Let them choose where they end up being in your system. Then gain insight on their decisions, and take action on those insights to improve."

011: GOLDEN KRISHNA

UX Designer, Google

"PLATINUM JESUS"

userdefenders.com/011

"Good experience design goes far beyond screens.

Don't fear being provocative if it pushes the field forward.

There's so much of what we make in tech that tries to get people addicted to use it more. When we're manipulating people to do that, we're having this large effect on the world, and not actually solving things in the most elegant ways possible.

Odds are you're not gonna land that dream job right out of school, and if you're able to get that job right away, you're not thinking big enough. If you have something in mind of where you want to go, go after the things that will get you there.

Your stuff isn't good enough, and it never will be. As designers, I think we're always striving to make things better. You should take pride in your work so that you have confidence to move onto your next project. You should always be trying to push yourself forward. This isn't perfect, and it's never really going to be, but as long as you're pushing it forward, that's what you should be doing."

012: KAL MICHAEL

Indie Digital Designer

"KAL"

userdefenders.com/012

"You can only keep what you have if you're willing to give it away.

We grow by our willingness to rectify errors and convert them into assets.

Don't let your ego get the best of you. Nobody benefits from it, and it will hold you back from success. Fear is the number one enemy to confidence. Don't do anything blindly. Don't follow trends for the sake of trends.

Own your skill sets. If you're somebody who really loves production work or measuring out pixels, etc…own it. Market yourself around it. Nobody's perfect at everything. Painting any other picture is boring because it's not sincere. If you're not happy with what you do, is it really worth it?

Everybody's in charge of the UX. If you're making a product, and you're part of a team, you are establishing that user experience. Those who align with a specific strategy and who are able to properly articulate and practice their skillsets are the ones who are going to be left."

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These "**Powerful Lessons**" book series are collections of the greatest takeaways from inspiring **User Defenders podcast** episodes selected by host, Jason Ogle.

Vol. 1 covers the first **12 episodes** that include mighty superguests like **Golden Krishna**, **Josh Clark**, and **Andi Galpern**.

Be sure to collect them all!