

Interview with Genesis Ting — Roadmapping

[00:00:12] **Adriana Lacy** And we're back with Part Two with Genesis King. In this model, we're talking a ton about product vision and product roadmapping. Genesis, could you kind of walk us through the first steps of how a product is born? Just thinking about what are the things you include in the process and who do you share with us.

[00:00:30] **Genesis King** So at times of perfect products could manifest itself. It can almost feel like kismet. But more often than not, you are starting from ground zero and working your way up. From there, a lot of ideas get spun from subsequent brainstorming. So with my work at the innovation lab, a lot of the products that we created started from casual conversations within the newsroom. We ended up building some really solid partnerships with folks from the food team, the investigative journalism team, Adriana and the audience engagement team as well. And we worked closely with them to build some of these products out. From there, you want to clearly understand what the constraints are, a general idea of the timeline, who you need to buy-in from to make it a reality and some steps for how to get there. That can take the shape of a product roadmap or product requirements doc, which should be considered living documents, which just means you can continue to edit and change as time goes on. It's really up to you to be diligent about updating as you go on, or if you want to use it more as a resource or schedule. Everyone works in really different ways, so you just have to figure out what works for you and your team. Generally, it can be pretty free form once you have those basic building blocks. So when I was managing our innovation lab intern cohorts on a programmatic level, we generally started the week off with a backlog review of tasks just to kind of table set, see if anyone has any blockers and then create and update the project milestones from there. We also created one goal for each week to accomplish since we were all juggling multiple projects at once, we had to make sure we prioritized properly. Yeah, so that's how I would kind of classify those first few steps of creating a product.

[00:02:19] **Genesis King** What are some challenges that you might encounter when you're creating a product?

[00:02:24] **Genesis King** Yeah, the first thing that comes to mind is just being open to changing directions halfway in between. Design and products are inherently iterative processes which should be honored through every step of the process. The second one is being able to balance contradictory stakeholder feedback. There could be instances in which several parties don't agree with one another, and it can get a little bit tricky to bring everyone back to center stage. That requires some more specific communication from all parties to understand where the others are coming from. And lastly, I think there's a misconception that the newsroom knows exactly what readers want and need. But in reality and you have to speak to those readers and they could want something completely different, but you wouldn't know if you didn't talk to them. So it's important to be responsible when building journalism products while also protecting the valuable insights you can source from readers.

[00:03:22] **Adriana Lacy** Absolutely, and I know you've worked on a ton of products at the L.A. Times. So what's one of your favorite products you've worked on there?

[00:03:29] **Genesis King** Yeah, there's been a bunch. But I think one of the most interesting ones I got to work on was an internal tool for the investigative journalism team called Insight NLP. Essentially it's a platform that helps journalists uncover key insights through FOIA documents and other things that they need to scan quickly through natural

language processing and machine learning. There's a couple of different plugins that we built that work great separately, but even better when you use them in tandem with each other. It was super cool to work on it with our three cohorts of interns and collaborate really closely with these journalists who would ultimately be using it. Pretty often I hear they're still using it, which is really awesome to hear.

[00:04:13] **Adriana Lacy** Before you go, there's been a ton of chatter about all the various platforms and productivity tools that are out there, such as Airtable, could you share some of your favorite workflow and design tools?

[00:04:25] **Genesia King** So right now, my tech sector, as they say, is just primarily design tools like Theama, Sketch, Mirro. And then I rely on the Google Suite a lot as well. These typically get the job done for me, but I've also played around with tools like Airtable, Trello and Notion.so.

[00:04:42] **Adriana Lacy** Do you still use Notion? I do. I love Notion is definitely when I go to.

[00:04:48] **Genesia King** On the product team at L.A. Times, we used Duret and Confluence for product notes and tech tracking.

[00:04:54] **Adriana Lacy** Awesome. Thank you so much for chatting with us.

[00:04:57] **Genesia King** Yeah, thank you so much. It's so good to chat with you again,.

[00:05:01] **Adriana Lacy** Thanks.