

Day as a Dev Episode Transcript - Hackathon and Hustle with Cassandra Goodby

Kevin Lesht: Welcome to the Day as a Dev podcast. I am your host Kevin Lesht and my guest on this episode is Cassandra Goodby. Cassandra is a designer and developer focused on everything from user experience design through front end development. She's the organizer of T9Hacks, a hackathon focused on the inclusion of women and non-binary individuals. This is an event I've mentored for a few years now and Cassandra recently took over as organizer. After a few conversations I knew we had to get her on the show, and did we record a good one. This episode covers all sorts of exciting topics. From organizing and facilitating a hackathon, through resume and portfolio building, to how you can leverage all of these things to land a job. In between it's omelette blogs and custom Snapchat filters. Now, my conversation with Cassandra Goodby.

Kevin Lesht: 86 degrees on this summer day in Boulder, Colorado. We're on Pearl Street, Flatirons in the backdrop, and Cassandra Goodby is my guest. Cassandra, welcome to the show.

Cassandra Goodby: Thank you for having me.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah. So excited that you were able to join and that we caught you before you head camping this weekend. Where are you headed?

Cassandra Goodby: I'm headed up to Nederland. It's right outside of Boulder, really lovely. Last weekend we actually went and there was torrential downpours the entire weekend so hoping it's a little better than last weekend.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah. I love the drive up canyon. If you're ever coming out to visit Boulder, Colorado, the drive up canyon to Nederland, I think one of the best ... That is worth just doing as a day trip just for the gorges, the scenery that you see on the way out there. Such an awesome just place to be, Colorado in general. So many outdoor activities going on. And yeah, I mean outside of all the outdoor activities going on, also plenty going on inside too. How about that segue by the way?

Cassandra Goodby: Classic.

Kevin Lesht: Yes. What we're going to roll into first is Brittany Ann Kos founded T9Hacks along with Aileen Pierce and a bunch of other helpful staff. And you have more recently taken over the reins and you are running T9Hacks these days. Such a fantastic and I think a hackathon with a really unique focus. I was hoping you could maybe just kick things off by giving our listeners an overview of just what the event is.

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah, of course. A hackathon is typically 24 to 48 hours that people get together and code. Basically the general scheme of it. One of the problems our founder had, Brittany, was a lot of these hackathons are very male dominated. Most typical about 26% women for hackathons. And so she created a hackathon called T9Hacks that's focused for women and nonbinary individuals. And

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newcomers to technology, so people who have never really experienced what it means to code or what it means to build apps or web development. And giving them an opportunity to spend 24 hours just to explore their curiosity. It's an amazing event that I've seen many people come out of it with portfolio builders, with a project, or with a new found passion.

Cassandra Goodby: Three years ago ... I guess four years ago now that I've just ran my last one. The first T9 hackathon, it was my first semester at CU Boulder and I decided to go because I didn't know anyone and I was new here and I never had built a website before. And I got together with three people. Never had met them. And we created Mentor Me, a website that you could connect with mentors in the local area of finding your passions and being able to communicate with them. And we built it on React and I believe Ruby on Rails. A long time ago that I built it. But it was my first taste of it and I knew in that moment that is exactly where I was meant to be. I was meant to be at CU Boulder. I was meant to be in the Atlas Institute. And I was meant to be just using my curiosity of technology. So I'm really thankful for T9Hacks and thankfully I was able to be the lead organizer this last year.

Kevin Lesht: I mean I am too. We'll talk about it in a little bit, but I have learned so much functioning as a mentor for these events. And granted that T9Hacks is my only exposure to hackathons in general too, but I think you hit on it. What I love about the event itself is it's just such a fun atmosphere to drop into. Whether you're coming in with a project idea or joining up with a team, everyone's available and helpful and working to just drive people towards the passion that is web development. Just such an awesome atmosphere going on. To put that atmosphere together, certainly a lot of planning I would have to imagine. What is also interesting about T9Hacks is it always seems so many tracks going on, so many workshops. I think across all the years I remember we've had Github workshops, we've had React, VueJS, other technical sessions. There's even been, I think, portfolio or resume building. And even there was a LinkedIn headshot session one year.

Kevin Lesht: So you as the organizer now, maybe you could take us through just what goes into kicking off a successful hackathon. If I'm someone at another university, I don't have hackathons on my campus, I want to produce one, maybe what does even the first meeting of the year look like when you're getting the ball rolling to kick off one of these events?

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah, of course. I think T9Hacks is lucky because we have such a specific goal. We're not just doing a hackathon, we're doing it for women and non-binary, the underrepresented groups in technology and also for a lot of newcomers. So all of what we do is focused on that. We're trying to make it the best possible weekend for them. One of the first things you have to figure out is when to have it, which is honestly one of the hardest questions, especially for a college because everyone has midterms, every different department has midterms on different weeks. So thankfully we're able to do it kind of early in the semester.

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The spring semester typically. And you're never going to feel like you have enough time, but you kind of just got to choose a date and go with it. And thankfully we're doing it in Boulder, which Boulder, like I said, feels so spoiled for the outdoors, for the technology around us, for the people. Everyone is super willing to help. The sponsors for T9Hacks are super willing to put their boots on the ground and be at the event and give us the help that we need to put on the best event. And everyone, I think, can agree that helping women and non-binary individuals find out what technology is is a really important goal.

Cassandra Goodby: And nobody can figure out one solution to it, but I think T9Hacks really hits the mark of just allowing a place for curiosity to explore. Another thing is just figuring out mentors. Figuring out the workshops, finding people is really difficult. So thankfully I was able to have a really good team to help me out and I think that's one of the main things you need to have as lead organizer is just people surrounding you who are going to A, push you to put on the best event that you can, and to be able to help you. You shouldn't be just doing everything. It doesn't need to be a one person team. You should rely on the community around you. Anybody is going to help if they can so just relying on the team and the people surrounding you.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah. So many threads to unpack there. The two things that really jumped out that maybe we could hit on more for a second were, I think a really cool thing about T9Hacks too is you mentioned curiosity. Really allowing students to follow whatever project that they want to pursue. It doesn't have to be a website or a piece of software. Remembering back, I remember groups that have done hardware projects, there was a VR project that was super interesting. Just all sorts of different disciplines coming together. And then as far as leveraging a team too, I think what's really cool about that is it just parallels what's actually going on at the event itself. I think even last year there were teams just coming together to help each other that were working on their own independent projects, but maybe they overheard some conversation.

Kevin Lesht: I remember two groups working on Python and they were sort of bouncing ideas back and forth off each other just to try to forward each others' project. So yeah, it's such a collaborative atmosphere. And I think that plays into as well just what makes for a successful participant. Coming in with that open attitude, that willingness to help and to forward not only your own team, but everyone at the event. So with you as the organizer, sort of a twofold question, would be curious what your day when the hackathon begins ... Like if maybe we play into ... Humor me hear ... the namesake of the show Day as a Dev, what does a day as a hackathon organizer look like? Maybe you could take us through just the event. What's your role focusing on as the event is playing out?

Cassandra Goodby: First off I spend the entire night before working on things, making sure, triple checking, printing off badges, grabbing food from Costco, doing everything, and hopefully I'll get to bed at an early time, but that's not going to happen. And even if I do I'm running through checklists in my head making sure did I talk to

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this person, did I make sure this person's coming? So even though I'm going to be staying up for 24 hours the next day, still not getting any sleep the night before. I started my day at about 6 a.m. Getting to Atlas, getting my team there and just running through what does everyone need to be working on? What do we need to set up? We couldn't set up the day before because it is a college, things are happening, things are shaking and moving.

Kevin Lesht: Classes going on, yeah.

Cassandra Goodby: So we wake up early, we just got to commit to doing everything that morning before the participants get there at 9 a.m. So getting last minute ice, printing off signs, putting tampons in the bathroom. Like there's such small specific details that you just kind of have to be very detail oriented to be a lead organizer and making sure your team is excited and at 9 a.m. people start showing up. The sponsors are showing up. You got to help them figure out where to place their table. And mentors come in, they're not really sure what to do. You got to get them on Slack, help them figure out what's the best approach. Participants start showing up, checking them in. And then we always have an opening ceremony that we have that gets everyone excited. Tells them how to get on the Slack, where's food going to be, the number one thing that everyone's always asking.

Kevin Lesht: Absolutely, yeah.

Cassandra Goodby: How much energy drinks are there going to be? And figuring out where everyone's going to go and then helping ... Especially people who are coming in very new who have never used technology before. Get on a team, figure out who's going to be there, who's going to help them. So just doing all of that and then as soon as the kickoff happens with the hackers going into their rooms and just starting to go, honestly I didn't have much to do after that. I was kind of stir crazy. My team kind of just ran everything. We had a checkout table for hardware that they could checkout. There was Roombas, Arduinos. Just a ton of different things. So we had somebody running that. Making sure that the food showed up on time and I actually surprisingly got sleep that night. I was able to go home after who knows how many hours and get a little bit of a catnap in. The next morning I showed up and got to see what all the progress was overnight. Found people sleeping in the weirdest places on campus.

Kevin Lesht: Oh yeah. I wanted to ask too if that's ... One thing you mentioned earlier too was just like yeah, adding those comfort products or just to make people's ... They do have the option of staying there all the way through over night. And yeah, I honestly would not ... I was very impressed too, you know, going into like the men's room, there's deodorant, there's toothbrushes. There's all sorts of things that I honestly ... Like if I was organizing, I feel like a very easy thing to overlook. But then as far as the ... So awesome that those things are provided. And then the question that I wanted to ask that I was very curious about is yeah ... So there was one group that I was pairing with, we got very carried away and I was there until maybe like 3 a.m. And walking around, walking out of the

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building, there were people. There was one room I think lights out and people were curled up under desks and stuff. And I was wondering if that was planned at all. Like were there dedicated ... Obviously students wanted to stay there and keep cranking on their projects and maybe just found the most comfortable place that worked.

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah there was sleeping suggested areas, but nothing really ... It was kind of, if somebody's sleeping just be respectful and don't be super loud and people kind of just found their own place. I know my first hackathon I slept underneath a stadium seat.

Kevin Lesht: That's great.

Cassandra Goodby: For like two hours, because I was like I just need ... And I remember it being like extremely cold. I don't know if they turned off the heating or something in the middle of January, but I was shivering under a stadium seat and then the next morning my alarm went off at 5 a.m., I woke up and I started working on my project to get it solidified and done.

Kevin Lesht: It may have been too ... Whenever I look back on these events, there's some nostalgia that comes along with this one hackathon in particular. I think it was maybe two years ago. It was in February. As you mentioned these events always happen in the early spring semester. And it was a blizzard outside and the Atlas building for those listening, at CU it is where the technology arts and media program is hosted. And it's got this café built in that has big very tall high ceilings and floor to ceiling windows. And I just remember a lot of groups had set up in there. I think just because it was such a cool space to just take in the view. Because outside there's this blizzard going on and then you've got all these students just hacking away at projects and then yeah, like staying through the night and crashing.

Cassandra Goodby: I remember one of my hackathons, I was in the basement and I walked upstairs and I was like, it's snowing and it's nighttime? Hadn't realize seven hours had passed since the last time I went upstairs.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah, it is very easy to get carried away. Because I think yeah, everything we've talked about, I mean they're just such fun events.

Cassandra Goodby: It's so easy to just be like, one more line of code. One more line of code. And then, oh my God, it's 5 a.m.

Kevin Lesht: Absolutely. So when it does get to be later in the event, 5 a.m., projects are closing up and students are scrambling to get their deadlines hit, the projects in. As far as successful project goes, you know maybe to best set up students listening that are thinking about attending T9Hacks or any other hackathon, what have you seen make for successful participants, successful groups and eventual successful projects?

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Cassandra Goodby: I think one of the big things like I've hit on before is curiosity.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah.

Cassandra Goodby: You just got to have that passion, you got to have that curiosity. Wanting to figure out the solution to problems and figuring out how to use technology to do it. I don't think you necessarily need to come into any hackathon with a previous set idea of, this is what I'm going to work on. I think, honestly the best groups are when people get together. Maybe you come with a few friends but you add somebody from the sidelines. You just talk. What are you guys good at? What do you want to learn about? You give everyone a voice at the table and allow them to speak about what their truth is, what they are really passionate about. And maybe you find a connection. Maybe you think of some crazy idea. Last year we had a cyber security Roomba that would go through the rooms and bounce IP off of your phone and check if you were supposed to be there. And I think those are the ones that really just ... You get an idea. It may be crazy, but just brain dump at the beginning. Find something that kind of excites you and just run full force at it and maybe it won't be completed in 24 hours, but the skills you build in those 24 hours and the fun you're going to have is so worth it.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah, I think having a project that you are genuinely excited about is so important. And then paralleling that against actually trying to then drive that into some tangible thing. Sort of as you mentioned yeah, it might not be completed. And I think that's totally okay too. And what I have seen really help in that area, is the groups that tend to have ... And certainly as mentors, it's important to instill this kind of focus, but a more iterative focus. In that, start with just an MVP, a minimum viable product. Like what is the core thing you're trying to build? And then, that might take you all the way through. Because it is surprising how in depth the littlest things can sometime evolve to. But then if you get that done then yeah, layer on more features. Maybe imagine up some other things, some niceties that could improve the project. But yeah, I think pairing just genuine passion with trying to deliver some very core product is as a mentor what I have seen the really fun projects evolve from.

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah, definitely.

Kevin Lesht: So on mentorship too, I wanted to relay to you ... I don't know if I ever told you this story, but had to put it out there. So I have learned just so much from these events too. And yeah, I'm so thankful of just the opportunity to participate as a mentor on these things. And so the first year I had some experience behind me, but in my professional career, the teams I had been on to date I was the junior member of the team. I was not in a position of mentorship. I had some very strong team members around me that I could sort of learn from to drive from, but it's very different when you actually flip the table and then put that to practice. Putting myself out there. What I wanted to say that is going to sound ridiculous, but there is a lesson that I at least learned from this. So the first year,

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first hackathon I came to, I'm thinking back on the team members that I had worked with and they all seemed magical, all knowing. And I thought that I had to have that same kind of knowledge.

Kevin Lesht: So whenever a student, a participant would ask me a question, I thought I had to have the answer. And these students that come out to these hackathons, they're sharp, they're going to ask you some very challenging questions. And I did not have anything close to these answers. And so what I was doing that first year was, I was giving them some thread, anything that I could somewhat relate to forward the problem they were working on. But then I thought I had to give them more. I thought I had to complete the problem. And so what I was doing was I was saying, "Okay why don't you run with that and I've actually got to run to the bathroom and then I'll join up with you in a little bit." And what I was doing was I was escaping into the hall. I was googling around on my phone to try to get more info. And I'm not kidding, these participants must have thought I was violently ill that weekend because this was happening continuously.

Cassandra Goodby: You're like, I'll be right back, right back, oh my God.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah, and then it's like you come back and they've got another question and it's like oh geeze.

Cassandra Goodby: Oh be right back.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah. But yeah. So that was like the whole first year I was there and I don't think I was a great mentor at all that year. But then matured a little bit, came back the next year. And I feel like what I brought back that I now try to carry forward just not only at the hackathons but working with junior developers in general and the advice I would offer to other mentors is it's not about solving the problem or getting to the solution at all. It's more so about just showing how you produce the work. The tactics, the methodologies that you can demonstrate to get to that solution to that problem, are going to be so much more valuable and widely applicable to someone who's trying to learn than just giving them the end solution. And so as part of that too, what I've really tried to embody is just someone who doesn't even bring a computer along. I think it's very easy to retreat into independent study and what that might mean is just googling around or searching through your past projects to find some similar pattern.

Kevin Lesht: But even doing that in isolation, there's value to be demonstrated there for junior developers, just to see how you go about searching for things. You know, what do search terms look like? What is it exactly? What's your train of thought when you're trying to get to these things? So yeah I guess the short answer to this now long response is, for those mentors out there, stumble around, don't worry. You solve the probably together collaboratively. You don't have to have just the end all answer at your fingertips there.

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- Cassandra Goodby: You're making me think a lot of ... I always like to say that first off, my greatest skill is knowing how to google.
- Kevin Lesht: Yeah. Oh I think ... Yeah.
- Cassandra Goodby: People are like, "Oh you know so much about technology." I'm like, "I know how to type words into a search engine to figure out the solution."
- Kevin Lesht: Absolutely.
- Cassandra Goodby: And I also think one of the greatest skills is just learning how to learn. You just have to have that curiosity of figuring things out and that's one of the things. As a mentor, you don't have to be this all knowing being of like, oh let me just give you a solution. But being able to put yourself basically as one of the members of the team, putting your own stake hold into the project, that's one of the greatest parts I've seen for like ... Especially you at the last. Just sitting with them, getting excited about their project and figuring out how to figure out these solutions with them, and maybe helping them out with a couple problems on the way. That's the best case scenario.
- Kevin Lesht: Yeah. It was for me, such a tough thing to learn. But yeah, I think both whether it's the person on the learning end or the person on the teaching end, everyone's going to benefit from that kind of conversation and just effort. Yeah, such a great experience for both sides. So as far as the experience goes, love T9Hacks, love T9Hacks and other hackathons because I think they really offer up just an opportunity for getting real projects under your belt. And I know we were talking a little bit about before we opened the show, whether it's a career changer or a junior developer, how they can essentially flesh out a resume. I mean I know for me especially, it was a little anxiety inducing when going after my first internship. I had my education block on there and then near nothing else. And then it really took some good thought to stretch myself and try to figure out like how I can just put a page together that is a resume and then put a portfolio together so that I would have practical pieces of work to show off to prospective jobs that I was trying to apply for.
- Kevin Lesht: And I think yeah, T9Hacks really offers an opportunity there in that, if you're on a team you come away with a project. That's something you can list on your resume that you can put into your portfolio. And I'd be curious to hear your thoughts. I looked at your portfolio. I think you did a really awesome job in writing your case studies and in fleshing out a whole bunch of projects. I would love to learn about just your process and what you thought about going after your first job trying to put together a resume, to put together a portfolio?
- Cassandra Goodby: Yeah. So I really struggled with the portfolio. It was my to do list for three whole years. I made 100 different ideas. I always got into the thick of it, of like, well what color am I, what represents me, what projects do I want to work on, who

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do I want to be? This is like my whole defining features, this one portfolio. And that's not true. It's just, put it out there. Having one, is the most important part. You get to show yourself and show what you're passionate about and what you want to work on. And I always hear from people, "I don't have any projects that I've worked on." Really? You've been in school for how long and you don't have a single project that you have worked on? Yeah it's really hard, especially in college when you're rapidly getting better and gaining skills and growing as an individual.

Cassandra Goodby: When you look back on a project from a year ago, even like a couple of weeks ago, you're going to think it's not good enough. But just put it out there. People aren't going to nitpick and judge. They just want to see that this is what you're passionate and this is what you want to work on. And even if you do not have projects, if you're trying to come into a new field or you're trying to just define who you are, work on passion projects. You do not have to get paid. That's one of the greatest things is because you aren't getting paid. You get to say, I just did this for the purpose of doing it and then hopefully down the line, somebody will want to pay you for your passion of what you're going to do. I know for myself I spent, I want to say like a month or two and I just made a project every singly day. I put no emphasis on how big it had to be. I had no emphasis about how much time I had to do on it. Some days I would build a whole website. Some days I would draw on a piece of paper. It's just about doing it and that's the most important thing.

Cassandra Goodby: And also, I'm just learning this, post your work. Just A, mainly for yourself. For yourself to see your growth and development, you're going to get better and you're going to look back on your projects and probably be embarrassed by them. That's okay, I am too.

Kevin Lesht: Oh yeah.

Cassandra Goodby: My first websites I'm like, why did you make this?

Kevin Lesht: Plenty of things to circle back on there, but to hit on that really quickly. It's like a funny bell curve in that, you hit this point at the top where you're like, yeah maybe super embarrassed. But then that sort of wanes and you get to a different point where you're then like sort of showing it off as like, maybe look how far I've come or look how hilarious this was. There's some reminiscing there. So yeah, I think you hit on it. Just putting stuff out there. I did not do that. I got a few projects out there early, but I had so many more. Even my TAM projects at CU, my, technology, arts and media program projects, I wish I could dig those up. I imagine it would just be fun to reflect back on those. So getting work out there, I think just super valuable and I think just good too for just getting reps in and exposure. As a developer you're going to ... Especially if you're targeting a front end kind of design job, you're probably going to have to have some body of work out there. So just getting comfortable with posting

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things for others to look at is a trained thing that you sort of need to practice towards.

Cassandra Goodby: It's really hard. And I think one of the big differences is, I struggled with nothing ever being good enough for my portfolio. I'm a recovering perfectionist as I put it. I strongly believe no project's ever done. I'm never going to get to a point where I'm happy with it. But you just got to put it out there. So I suggest that everyone has their top three projects that you're most proud of on a portfolio. Just add those. And then have somewhere else to post. I have a professional Instagram that I have started using where I just post when I make something. If I make something in a day I'll post it, see what happens. Just throw it out there. Or if you're a developer or just more on the code side of things, post it onto Github. Just join a community. It's so hard to get over this nothing's ever going to be good enough. But just going through the practice of just posting it and saying okay, I have done this, complete, and putting it somewhere is just so fundamental and a really good skill to have.

Kevin Lesht: Yes. Yeah. We'll have to get some of your micro projects, the Instagram, anything else that you have and drop those in the show notes. Because what that made me think of too is ... And I hope I get her name right here, but Una Kravets, she's I think now a developer advocate for Material design at Google. But she's such an inspiring person. Also has a bunch of what I would call ... Well, micro projects is probably not doing them the service that they are, but just these offshoots. What triggered the thought there, she has an Instagram. I think it's called Dev Doodles, where she's very into watercolor but is also a programmer and so will pair those two skills together to try to just illustrate these usually complex things in watercolor. In very easy to digest receivables. And having those kinds of, I think just outlets outside of just fostering creativity are just good for building up your online persona. Yeah.

Cassandra Goodby: I find it really hard because I have this insane curiosity. I just want to make things and I want to do things and I'm so interdisciplinary where I'm halfway between development and I'm halfway between business and user experience design. I'm like I never fit into a box. I just get really passionate about projects and I see them through. This month I have made a Snapchat filter, an augmented reality filter. I've posted a GIF challenge on Instagram. I created custom GIFs for user experience. I just do things. And I just see them through. I have an entire note on my iPhone that's pages and pages and pages long where if an idea pops in my head, write it down. Maybe someday you have a couple hours, see what you can make.

Cassandra Goodby: I just really like the idea of pursuing your creativity and pursuing your passion. It doesn't have to have an angle. It doesn't have to be I'm doing this to put it on my portfolio, I'm doing this to see what can happen. My Snapchat filter, I'll frequently go onto stories and see my Snapchat filter that people are using and I'm like, wow, that's really cool that I just kind of did that. And that's why I recommend you don't have to do things to get paid for it. You can just do things

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that you're excited about and it's really exciting to see how those can come to be. My friends don't even know it's my Snapchat filter and I'll be like, "Oh yeah, I made that." And they're like, "What do you mean you made that?" And I'm like, "Oh, I just put it up there. I was bored one day." And people think it's really weird, but I personally get really excited and nerd out about these things.

Kevin Lesht: Hey, the weird projects are the best ones. We're going to have to get all of these into the show notes. But I think what I really liked there is not having to have an end goal. Understanding that yeah, not everything makes it into a portfolio or really has to have the purpose of getting there. Wouldn't be an episode if I didn't self promote a little bit. I've got plenty of weird projects out there too. I've got an omelette blog. I eat quite a few omelettes and so every time I eat an omelette I will take a picture, post it up to the photo blog. And that's not going in my portfolio, but it's out there. For Halloween one year I built a random jack-o-lantern generator. Another thing that it's such a one off kind of thing. I'm probably not going to use it to promote myself, outside of just on the podcast here.

Kevin Lesht: But yeah, all these things, they're just fun outlets and I'm sure with each one of these things maybe you branch out a little bit, maybe you dig into some technology that you don't usually work with day to day but that's been on your radar. You can use these things to just forward yourself in all sorts of different ways that aren't necessary to broadcast in a portfolio.

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah. And I really struggle sometimes with the, am I wasting my time on this, could I be doing something that's correct and pushing me towards my career goal? But if you're having fun and you're passionate, eventually your career goals will match up with what you're excited about. If you just continue to do things and continue ... I hate the word hustle because it's gone to this point where it's like you can't relax, you can't have work life balance, but sometimes you got to hustle. You got to just do what you have inside your head, especially if you're creative. Just see it through. Just throw it out there. The world's too boring to always do the correct or right thing.

Kevin Lesht: Yes. I love that quote. The world is too boring to always do the correct or right thing. Because I think as part of that too, with any of these micro projects, at least how I look at them, is all as experiments. Some I might get really invested in, have long running passion for that I still work to forward-

Cassandra Goodby: Like omelettes.

Kevin Lesht: Like omelettes. Yes. Eating almost an omelette every single day. My sister who's an RD has some concerns there, but I'm still doing it. But other projects you might start with a passion and then find that it's just not for you. And I think, as you said, it's okay to drop off on those things. I think you have to sort of take a very wide approach until you really find what you're after out there.

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Cassandra Goodby: Yeah. One of the things I'm always scared of is I'm like, what if I don't find my one thing? I'm like, but maybe there isn't a one thing out there. Maybe everything in these micro projects and just being excited and passionate about technology and different avenues, maybe that's your thing.

Kevin Lesht: Maybe a good segue there too as far as when you do find those big projects, those highlight pieces. I want to pull up here ... I did a little digging. You're very active on LinkedIn. What I think is great is I'm not the best LinkedIn user, but when I do scroll through the feed, a lot of times you just see people dropping very, very short comments like of only a few words. But you produce a lot of comments of substance out there and one I read recently that I really enjoyed, going to read it back. See if you remember this one that plays into our conversation here.

Kevin Lesht: "Your portfolio is the hardest problem you will face as a UX designer, but the most important. How do you want to show yourself? What is your process? You get total control to define and be transparent about who you are as a UX designer." So playing back into all we've talked about, when you do find these highlight pieces, these passion projects, what are when you're writing a case study around them, when you're trying to build out a portfolio, any tactics, formulas, just things to consider that you have found success with that others might be able to leverage in their own case studies?

Cassandra Goodby: I think one of the big things is people are always wanting to be perfect and everything is perfect in their portfolio, but that's not the piece of substance. At the pixel perfection, yeah it looks great and proves you have the hard skills, but what about the soft skills? What about who you are, why you decided to do this, what are your passions? And that's the big thing, why. Your portfolio's your place to just explain, brain dump, tell your truth and tell your story. Why did you do this project? Who did you do it with? If it's a solo project, why did you decide on this exact project? And did you change in between? Why did you change in between? Did it fail? That's also a really good learning opportunity. I've definitely had projects that failed. Some people don't agree with me that I failed on them, but as a perfectionist I think I did.

Cassandra Goodby: One of them actually that I'm thinking about is my senior TAM capstone project. You have a semester to work on any project you want. And at that time I was really into web development so I decided to make a beer discovery genealogy app that showed how the different breakdowns of beers around you and figuring out how you could ... I personally only like beers with low IBU so figuring out an interface to discover these beers. It's really funny actually. I worked on it for about a month and a half. It was pretty solid. Making my way. Making it through. And my API shut down. Fully shut down. They were like, "We're not doing it anymore. We just closed it." So I'm panicking, freaking out, like, okay. So I lean on my friends who were more backend than me. I was like, "I just don't know what to do." And they were like, "Okay, we got to create a data scraper

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and figure it out on our own." So data scraped, figure it out, made my own database of all the information for beer, and then two weeks later I had emergency surgery for my appendectomy.

Kevin Lesht: Really?

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah. And this was ... It was due the next week. My entire project. And not only is my API shut down, I'm trying my hardest to grind through this, I have an emergency surgery thrown on top of it. And I was just like, what am I supposed to do? So thankfully the emergency surgery, they were like, "Its a really quick turnaround. No big deal." I was like, "Cool. I'll be up and running by the end of the week."

Kevin Lesht: Of course.

Cassandra Goodby: In their head quick turnaround was two to three weeks. And I said, "I'm graduating in two weeks."

Kevin Lesht: The semester is ending.

Cassandra Goodby: I don't have that kind of time. So I laid down on my bed for two days. Next week, pulled it together. I pulled three all nighters that week and had my senior showcase, showed up, said this is my project. And people were like, "Yeah, it's really cool." And I hated it. I hated that project because everything had gone wrong. And it's funny now that it's not on my portfolio because I don't think it's the best, but I learned so much from it. Mainly, I don't like backend development and I don't want to do that in the future. But that opportunity taught me a lot and how to deal with these things that go wrong. Sometimes things just don't work out.

Kevin Lesht: I feel like well, holy cow. You'd think that-

Cassandra Goodby: It's a story.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah. I guess yeah, if semester is ending, couldn't find the flexibility to ... You'd think emergency surgery would give you some room to work.

Cassandra Goodby: Oh all my teachers were like, "You can submit everything after graduation." And I was like, "No. I'm not walking across the stage and then finishing."

Kevin Lesht: And having something outstanding?

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah. That is wild. I think that demonstrates though such a real lesson and highlights exactly what maybe these case studies should be focused on in that, yeah, in real world projects nothing is going to be A to B straightforward, end to

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end, no problems in between. You're going to have hiccups. Whether it's an API shutdown or an appendectomy.

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah. Or even if it's just as small as, "I changed this." Why did you change it? Why did it work out? It doesn't have to be life altering surgery. But you have reasons and figuring out A, for yourself what are your reasons and being self reflective, especially after a project, is really important. And being able to convey those because A, it's a really important skill just in life.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah, there's a ... I'm blanking on the person's name, but he is a business coach. But he had this quote that is, "The only experience that is valuable is experience that you've reflected upon." Whether it's a loss or a win, you need to do some reflection there and really try to identify what those learnings are so that you can best set yourself up for your next project, your next endeavor.

Cassandra Goodby: I think that perfectly sums up a portfolio. Just reflect on what you did and why.

Kevin Lesht: Yeah, absolutely. So maybe to even extend off that, once you have the portfolio how can you I guess just best leverage it to then try to get that first job, to get that first internship. If you are, whether it be a student or a career changer.

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah. I think one of the big things is nobody's going to hand you a job. They are doing their own thing. They're in their own work. You got to put yourself out there. My first job, it was my first semester after transferring to CU Boulder from Colorado School of Mines. I decided to really put my head in the books and then when I looked up summer was two weeks away and I had zero plans. And at that same time I got an email that was last minute career fair. And I was like, "Oh my god. This was made for me." So I printed off 40 resumes. I got done with my 9 a.m. class and I walked over to the UMC and went to every single booth. I went and did my elevator pitch. I said, "Hi. I'm Cassandra Goodby. This is what I do. Do you have a job this summer?" And every single one said, "No. We've already hired our summer interns. It's two weeks away, but we would love to talk to you about next summer." And I took their business card and was like, "I'm not currently looking for those opportunities, but I would love to talk in the future."

Cassandra Goodby: Went to the next booth. Went to the next booth. I went through almost every single booth in there and I was feeling very depleted. I was like, okay, I'm just not going to get an internship. That's okay. And I was like, okay, I've already printed off my resumes. I might as well see it through. There's a couple more booths. Everyone's wrapping up. And I ended up going to the National Institute of Standards in Technology. And I was like ... A national institute. Like I'm going to get a job there as a sophomore doing design and development, not fitting into a box. I went and talked to the guy and I said, "Hi. This is who I am. This is what I do." And he said, "Wow, that's really crazy. My coworker was saying how he was looking for somebody who has a technical background in design earlier

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today. Could you come in for an interview at 8 a.m. tomorrow?" And I said, "Yeah. Sure. Of course. Why not?"

Cassandra Goodby: I went into the interview. I sat a table with two people and then slowly throughout the interview 10 more people joined in on my interview. I fully blacked out.

Kevin Lesht: This is like you're in the door, this is your interview to get the job you're talking about?

Cassandra Goodby: Yes. This is my interview to get the job. This is the one and only.

Kevin Lesht: 10 people.

Cassandra Goodby: 10 people looking at me. I'm a sophomore in college, brand new to the industry that I'm interested in.

Kevin Lesht: That's not intimidating at all.

Cassandra Goodby: No. No, not at all. And I blacked out, I walked away, and then a couple days later they said, "Yeah, we would love for you to start Monday."

Kevin Lesht: That is great.

Cassandra Goodby: So I'm a big advocate of yeah, it's really awkward to put yourself out there, but practice your elevator speech first off. Be able to explain who you are. If you can't explain who you are, nobody's going to know what you do. That's as simple as it is. Figure out A, what you want to do. What is it that you want to do? And be able to explain it to people. And then just put yourself out there. Try to network. Try to talk to people. I could email a lot of people and just say, "Hey, you want to grab coffee?" I did it with somebody very high up at a company that's very well known and got turned down, but she was really nice about it and my friends were like, "Why did you do that? That's so embarrassing." I was like, "Well, the worst she's going to say is no." And I feel like that's the big thing. I've always played in my head, the worst they are going to say is no. They're not going to hate you. They're not going to ...

Cassandra Goodby: You have so much anxiety leading up to it, but once it's over either you network and you get to make a connection and maybe it's a future job, maybe it's just a really cool person to and get to know or have a really awesome in depth conversation about something that you both are passionate about. Or not and you don't really take a loss on it.

Kevin Lesht: Gosh, that is an amazing perspective to have and I feel like follows just the ... Maybe the theme of our entire conversation here is putting yourself out there. Whether it be the omelette blogs, the Snapchat filters, the micro projects, whatever they might be. Just firing work out there. And also just having a

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passion and persistence along with that. Following the things that you genuinely are interested in and also just being ... Going back to what you talked about at the job fair. You said you had a stack of about 40 resumes. Got to be a little discouraging after the first few. Would have been very easy to just drop off, maybe think that it's not going to happen this summer, I'll target next summer. So just having, whether it be taking projects and bringing them online, or just cold calling, cold emailing, having that persistence to go after what you're looking for is just such a valuable asset.

Cassandra Goodby: Yeah, definitely.

Kevin Lesht: All right Cassandra, we're going to need to get another session on the books because we could absolutely keep talking and you have to get to boxing. You're going to box. So camping, boxing. You're all over the place. Any parting thoughts for our listeners out there before we close out the episode?

Cassandra Goodby: I feel like really it took me a while to learn, but just figure out how to make your passions work for you. If you're passionate about it, somebody somewhere is going to be the same and you can vibe on it and kind of live in the sense of I love technology and I love design and I didn't even know there was an area out there for me and I found it and I'm really excited about it. And I think it shows that I'm really excited about it. And people feel when I talk. I've been told so many times, "You are really excited about this." And I am and if everyone can find where they're really excited about, I think the world would just be honestly a better place.

Kevin Lesht: Yes. I feel like so much to even dig into there. But we have to close this one out.

Cassandra Goodby: Got to go to boxing.

Kevin Lesht: Yes. Thank you Cassandra. We'll get you back on again in a future episode. Appreciate your time. Thank you for joining.

Cassandra Goodby: Thank you.

Kevin Lesht: For show notes and more on this episode, head on up to the site. That's dayasadev.com. While you're there, check out our release notes. This is a short newsletter that we send out about once a week. It includes updates along with all sorts of other goodies packaged up for your inbox.

Kevin Lesht: Thanks for listening. For the Day as a Dev podcast, I'm Kevin Lesht.