Welcome to The Uptake. This is a new show about all things, tech and community. I am an a choose your host, and I’ll be introducing you to people all around the world. Covering topics in the world of tech, personal stories of professional learning development, and community Building. We’re going to figure out the answer to the question together, “What is community?”

If you have ever helped someone with a question, learnt something new or shed something you’ve discovered? Well, guess what, you’re actually part of a community. My hope is that through The Uptake, you’ll make cool people in the world of tech histories and get inspired and be a part of a vast and expanding community in your area. And beyond in this episode, I’ll be talking with some friends at Microsoft, April Speight and Dona Sarkar. April is a senior cloud advocate at Microsoft working with the Spatial Computing team and recently spoke at Microsoft Build. I just saw her session on DIY tech with the amazing Chloe Condon. You can follow her on Twitter @VogueAndCode. If you want to learn more about extended reality, augmented reality, virtual reality. Welcome April.

Hello. Thank you for having me.

And my cohost for today is Dona. If you don’t know her well, you must be new to the community because everybody knows Dona. She is a Principal Cloud Advocate for the Power Platform at Microsoft, and she was one of the hosts at the 48-hour marathon, which was Microsoft Build with fellow cloud advocates, Seth Juarez. I definitely want to get all your tips because we’re planning for a very similar type of marathon from Microsoft and not this September, which will be a hundred percent digital. So welcome Dona Sarkar.

Ah, thank you. Thank you so much, Anna, for having me. Yay, April’s here. This is going to be amazing. And all of you out there listening. Thank you for joining us. This is a weird time and we really appreciate you taking the time to invest in not just yourself, but also the community. So, speaking of community, Anna.

Yeah, well, we it’s, it’s so interesting that we’re talking now. We had started planning for this podcast episode feels like two, three, four weeks ago. And that was during that time, it was really the global pandemic that was on everybody’s mind. But now there is so much more going on we’re seeing the resurgence of a very, very important movement, Black Lives Matter. We’re seeing on the news protests against the police, against police brutality, really lots of important calls for police reform and I, myself
along with many of my friends and family educating ourselves on what's going on having really good conversations with friends and family about systemic racism. And I think it's really important for us to address that today and give the community an opportunity to, to lean into this conversation. So, you know, April, I would just want to start with you. What would you say to anyone who is really unsure of what to do or say right now?

APRIL SPEIGHT  
Yes, I would highly suggest there's two things, actually. One, if you're in a position where you want to educate yourself more than definitely do so there, I would say within the past week, week, two weeks, if it's been so far, there has been so many folks that have posted resources for people to take a look at whether that's reading or writing or just tuning in, in conversations. Definitely take advantage of those. I, myself recently took part in a conversation with two of my friends from Twilio Nathaniel Okenwa and Corey Weathers for Nathaniel's “Baby Developer” Twitch show. And we had a conversation about color. So, there's conversations such as those, you can take a look at as well. So that's the first thing. The second thing I would say is in a moment where everyone's timing in with their opinion and then what they have to say, you have to be mindful of the fact that it is okay to, how do I say it is okay to address how you're feeling and what you're learning and not being necessarily afraid of making mistakes.

APRIL SPEIGHT  
That was the one thing that I touched upon in the conversation I had with Corey and Nathaniel was that there are some folks who, who, who are allies and they want to say something, but then they're afraid of saying the wrong thing or saying or saying something that might lead to just social media, overwhelming of just folks time timing in and giving into what has been termed as cancelled culture. And my response to that was that as a black woman and just, I would not that I can speak for every black person that's out there, but just in general, one thing that I do feel comfortable saying is that we spent so much of our lives just being mindful and fearful of not saying the right thing. So for someone that wants to consider themselves an ally, that's afraid of saying the thing in this one moment, it does not compare to what we've gone through our entire lives.

APRIL SPEIGHT  
So do not remain silent, definitely speak up, do show your solidarity and ensure I have a third thing ensure that you're also taking care of yourself. I know that everyone's doing everything that they can within their power right now to speak out and to be activists. And that's great at the same time. Do you ensure that you are taking breaks for yourself. I know myself. I took a few this past week, for example, and I'm sure I'll take another one on Thursday at the it's my birthday Thursday. So just make sure that you're taking care of yourself yeah, I would say that's, that's what I would say for anyone right now, trying to find the words or trying to find what actions they should take.

ANNA CHU  
Yeah. Thank you. I think it's really great to hear that people are given permission to really openly share and not be afraid of saying the wrong thing. I think right now we just need to have that open level of communication and, and be a lot more forgiving. I've heard the term grace being shed a lot more now which is really comforting so that people can feel like, hey, like I could still be involved in the conversation, I have permission to be here and to learn. So that's really awesome. And another thing I've
been hearing is that, you know, gosh, people of color, black people, they're just also feeling very tired of having to go back into these conversations and represent themselves. Like you must be feeling decades if not centuries of white, of injustice as well. So, you know, you must feel super tired of these conversations, but I really am thankful that you want to talk about it in this podcast with us today.

APRIL SPEIGHT

Oh, no problem. Yeah. I would say this is a conversation that many of us have been having for years, and these are issues that we've been speaking on for years. It's just super unfortunate that it's taken until this moment for people to actually listen. And so, it's, it definitely truly is. I would suggest as different orgs, different companies, if you will, as well, are looking to, to better align with being more inclusive and diverse that whatever steps they are taking, aren't taking aren't necessarily performative as there have been a lot of that going around recently as well, but ensure that it does come from a genuine place. And don't necessarily leave it up to us, us being black people, to be the ones to step out and put different guidelines and procedures and strategies in place. I feel like as adults, we're all capable of doing the research and if needed, definitely reach out if you have questions, but also don't necessarily explain don't, don't expect black people to just hand all the answers over.

ANNA CHU

Yeah. A hundred percent. Well, firstly thank you. But also, happy birthday to you, be you spend a lot of time with some self-care.

So, the reason why I invited both of you to this episode is because he burst share a passion for fashion. Hey, that rhymed. But you happen to work in tech April, before you got into tech. What I found really interesting about your story is that you were a men's wear stylist and a visual merchandiser. So how did you find yourself in tech from there?

00:08:55:00 AP R I L  S P E I G H T

Yeah, as I was getting ready to graduate from undergrad, I realized that working in fashion with regards to what I was doing in the industry was not necessarily going to give me the lifestyle that I wanted to live and have in my adulthood. And so, growing up, I got accustomed to things being a certain way. So then when I became an adult, my mom was more so of the, okay, you need to get a job. So I thought that if I wanted to continue that into my adulthood and continue to live in this way that I was, was raised and was used to, I needed to have the income to do so. And so, as I was graduating, I was taking a look at what I had done in my past years, working in fashion, as well as what I had done in school. And fortunately, I had done a program in business project management, where I learned the principles of project management.

APRIL SPEIGHT

And then all along while doing that, I was also working in retail as a menswear stylist, as you mentioned, and a visual merchandiser. So a lot of creating a lot of working with customers, one on one, and a lot of educating those that I worked with on different things like different merchandise that we had come into the store. So, as I was trying to figure out exactly what I wanted to do outside of the fashion industry, I started looking for roles related to project management. And at that point it wasn't even necessarily tech related. It was just project management. And what I found was that most of the roles that were available were for project managers and the IT industry. And I was confused because at no point in my program that our professors ever mentioned anything about having it experience. So that was definitely eye opening.

APRIL SPEIGHT

And I really had a moment where I just sat and thought to myself, how could I turn this around and show that I was capable of doing project management in terms of a role,
even though I had all this fashion on my background. So fortunately, I found an internship with the Consumer Electronics now before they were Consumer Electronics. Now there's Consumer Technology Association. They changed their name a couple of years ago, but they had an internship available for it, project management. So, like what were the odds that it was it and then project management. So, I applied and during my interview, I tied everything that I could from working in fashion to a more project management way of describing what I did. And I made sure to include different project management terminology, terminology into my interview. So that way it really provided me some credibility from the perspective of showing that I knew what it meant to be a project manager.

APRIL SPEIGHT

And for me, a lot of it was bringing in a lot of what I did when I was a stylist and the visual merchandiser, because there's so much planning that goes into that. And I think as consumers who are on the other side and not necessarily not necessarily working in the industry, it might look like all we do is just make store windows pretty and you make these nice displays and we just give people clothes, but there's so much more to it than that. And a lot of it comes from a lot of planning, a lot of really having good conversations and asking the right questions and, and ultimately providing some deliverable. And so when it came time to doing my role that I ended up getting with, with CTA as an intern, a lot of what I had did from a project management perspective in fashion, plus what I learned in school was used in my first job in tech.

APRIL SPEIGHT

So I made that transition over. I want to say two to three months into the internship, I had received a full time offer with the organization, which was great, but I will say when I interviewed, I made it very clear what my goals were. And I think for some folks that that step gets skipped. And I want to definitely emphasize that because when I interviewed, I did say that I wanted something permanent. And then once I got the internship itself, my manager and I, we worked together to put a put a type of a plan in place that would help me bring in from the areas that I still needed to strengthen in order to meet of our role there. And so that really, I would say also laid the land of how my internship went. And like I said, two to three months later, I had a job offer and that was my intro into the industry.

00:13:30:00 DONA SARKAR

That is so cool. That is so amazing. What I like about this is you grew a set of skills while doing men's merchandising. And a lot of people think, you know, I hear this all the time. I'm sure you hear this fashion tech, those two aren't related at all. Like actually they're quite related because you use the same set of skills to do both of them. And you were able to see at a quite young age that, oh, this set of skills can be applied anywhere. Whether it's doing a store window or running a project in an office, or setting up 3D worlds. You were able to put all these skills that you had learned early, early in your career doing fashion design into the work you're doing now in spatial. So I think that's fantastic and a good lesson for people that we live to be a hundred years old, you're going to reuse your skills for something else at some point, right. And nope, back in five years ago, advocates for spacial didn't even exist. Right. I think it's just a thing to remember that most of the things that we're training for now or studying for now will lead to jobs that do not exist today. So getting really hung up on what am I going to do when I grow up for the rest of
**APRIL SPEIGHT**

my life is a giant waste of everyone's time because we can't predict that future. We could not have predicted 2020, so there's no way, right, we could predict our future.

**DONA SARKAR**

That is confidence.

**APRIL SPEIGHT**

So you're right. It, it is very hard to, to look at where you are now and believe that the same jobs will be there because there will be so many more that don't exist. And this past year I was fortunate enough to, to mentor a high school student. And I told her exactly what you just said, that there will be jobs when she is ready to enter the market that do not exist today. So to keep your eyes open and be open as well, to what possibilities are available, that's, that's really important part.

**DONA SARKAR**

Seriously, just learn things that are interesting to you. You will use them.

**ANNA CHU**

I still remember having conversations with young mentees who are just fresh out of college, and they're trying so hard to fit a mold. But the risk of that is that you become like everybody else, you do not stand out from the crowd. And in talking to my manager, when he looks at people to hire, he looks for people with the most interesting backgrounds. Like people who had, you know, a major in French or, you know, something else that was completely different. There's really a lot of value in seeing diversity of thought processes. The way you would tackle a certain problem, say in marketing or engineering, if you have that different perspective, a different way of thinking about a problem, it, it's adds so much value to the overall team and the people you work with. So to anyone listening on this call, if you feel like you need to fill out this cookie cutter profile, especially as you read those job descriptions, just to throw that out the window. Like I know after posting roles, like HR definitely copy paste those like qualifications that you need. That doesn't mean you have to check every single box in order to apply. I don't remember the stat and maybe Dona or April would remember, but it's like, especially women, women are trying to like make 60 or 80% of the criteria, whereas men just don’t. I can't remember where I saw that. It's just crazy to me. So, you know, it really embrace your diversity, went and put your name on the table because otherwise you just don't know how far you will go.

**DONA SARKAR**

So, I’m going through this right now, I’m hiring for a vendor position on my team. And I reach out to a young man in South Africa. He's fantastic. He's a student ambassador, really great. And I said, hey, I need you to apply for this job because you’re perfect for it. You know, you’ll go through the loop with some people. He's like, oh my God, I've never done project management with that third-party company that does learning tools before. And I’m like, who the hell has done that? Nobody, this is what you will be doing. Not what you must already know. Right? Most people have no idea what their job is going to be because that job is going to change within two weeks of you being there. I think, I think people forget is it's you plus the job that leads to success.

**DONA SARKAR**

It’s not just the manager is brilliant and has thought of everything that the person will be doing as a hiring manager. I’ve hired maybe like 2000 people in my career. I can tell you that not one of those 2000 people is doing exactly the thing I wrote down on a sheet of paper, because I do not know what next year looks like. I do not know what three months looks like. If it turns out they're going to lead the charge for, you know, third party relationships and content creation. I didn't even know that was the thing we
were going to work on until they brought it up. So, the thing we look for in industry are people who are vaguely entrepreneurial. So, people who are able to spot problems and say, there's a problem. I think I know how to solve it. Here's a potential solution. What do you think?

| DONA SARKAR | Way more important than, oh yeah, I have a PhD in solving that problem or, you know, 10 years of experience. So it's something for next generation to keep in mind. Like, just look at the job description as a, not as a list of things you have to do, but as a list, as a, as a challenge you want to tackle. Do I want to challenge, do I want to take on this challenge and do I want to learn things to solve this problem? Yes or no? If the answer is no, move on. If the answer is yes. Go for it. |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | Why would someone want to take on a role where there's no opportunity to learn? You know, it's, it then becomes a point where you're, you're just doing the same thing every single day. And then there's like nothing more to it. Whereas for me, I like to look for, for, for jobs where I know I can still learn even working in spatial. For example, what's really great about working in spatial. I will say compared to something like Python, which happens to be like my first real language that I gotten to know from a stronger perspective, for example. Where Python's is more stable, you don't see that many differences from different versions, if you will. |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | Whereas with spatial, it seems like there's always something changing. So when working in spatial, for example, you can't know everything because it's impossible to know everything and something new is always going to happen. And I think for me, that's why I really love what I'm doing now with, with cloud advocacy and the spatial computing team, because there's always something new that's popping up on the scene. And then as soon as it pops up, it's like, okay, who's going to tackle that and learn more about that. Or it just might be a matter of taking the initiative and learning more about that. And coming back to the team to let them know about it as well. And I truly, truly, truly love that. And like keep in mind also when it comes to all the requirements that are on a job descriptions, if, if a person and I've heard from a hiring manager, if a candidate meets every single thing on the list of requirements, they should probably not be hired. |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | Because then at that point they probably need a job that's going to be a little above more than what that position is. There'll be nothing for them to learn. So there's things that you don't necessarily know. That's cool. If the job descriptions are more so tailored in a way where it's like required skills, like yeah, you definitely want to ensure you have those skills. But for, for all the ones that are nice to haves, if you can hit a couple of them, that's great. I know coming over just in Microsoft, in general with my first role, which was with the docs team, I was very fortunate to have been in contact with someone that was already on the team. That's one thing I would also suggest as well is if you're finding jobs on different job boards, and you're curious about them, try to seek people who already work at the company or even better on that team because they themselves can give you a summary of what it's actually like on a day to day basis, doing whatever that job is, that way you have a better idea what to expect. And then also it can help you tailor your interview questions as well as you're preparing to interview because you have a better grip of what the job actually entails. So that's what I wanted to say. |
**THE UPTAKE web-podcast**  
**Episode 8: Fashion to Tech**  
**Transcript**  
**06.17.2020**

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<td>ANNA CHU</td>
<td>Yeah. I, I cannot agree with you more, April. I would never recommend anyone to apply for a role unless I really believed in that team, unless I believed there was a lot of room for them to develop and grow and that that manager was fricking awesome. I would hate to recommend a friend to a place that was toxic or even anything close to that. That is not what I would feel comfortable doing it all. So yeah, highly recommend you, anyone who's thinking about going to a new company, find someone that you might know who you can trust. But of course not everyone has the luxury of doing that. April, I want to ask you, because you know, when you were in that space where you are a men's wear stylist and a visual merchandiser, and you are starting to think, okay, I want to get into this project management space and you're looking at your first group of job descriptions to, to apply for. What, what, what tips would you give to someone who's looking at their next career, Career 2.0, if you will and, and preparing for that, like what's, what skills should they be thinking about? What, how should they take that inventory to figure out how to, how to apply?</td>
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<td>APRIL SPEIGHT</td>
<td>Yeah. So starting off to the point you made about your inventory of the skills that you do have, you definitely want to take that into account because nine times out of ten, you have skills that will be transferable to other roles. And on the surface, it might not sound like it. But when you really sit down and think about it, there are some skills that can transfer from one industry to the other. I think some folks can get really into their own heads and just assume that they must start from scratch. And then they must go get this degree or must go do that boot camp, and they must hang around these circles and so on and so forth. And honestly, that's not necessarily the only path you could take. I mean, if you want to take that route by all means do it, but that's not the only way to get into the industry.</td>
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<td>APRIL SPEIGHT</td>
<td>When I came into the industry, it was, I had no leads. I had no network, but in the tech industry. So, it was really all just me seeking whatever I could find. And I believe when I found that internship, I think that was back when it was okay to find jobs on Craigslist and that's where it was posted. [laugh] But, but, but really, really being mindful of the skills that you already have. And then once you have an idea of what you're, what you're capable of doing, start to, start to get an idea of what seems interesting to you, not necessarily something that you want to do for the rest of your life. Because I started off as a project manager, I then went to becoming like a systems analyst, and then I became a program manager and now I'm a crowd advocate. So there's, there's been so many different mini careers in tech where project management, long story short, wasn't my only career.</td>
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<td>APRIL SPEIGHT</td>
<td>So, I say that because don't necessarily feel obligated to treating your very first role you're looking for in tech to be your lifelong career, you're, you're what you do basically for your career, because it can change. And that's totally cool if it does change as well. I think sometimes people feel guilty when their mind does change. Once they started doing something, especially when you are leaving from one industry to another. It, there, there, there may be some folks who really highly praise you in the industry that you're coming from, and they're just not understanding why you would ever want to leave. And so don't necessarily feel that pressure and obligation to stay when it's, when you want to go do something else, if you truly want to move on and move forward, do so, but do so strategically. I, at one point after I came into tech from fashion, actually</td>
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left tech for a little bit to go back into fashion, and then I came back into tech. And while that's okay to do, I did not have a proper plan in place when I did that.

**APRIL SPEIGHT**

Usually those who are the most, the more successful of the bunch had a plan in motion to have things work. So, make sure that you are being strategic about it. But in general, take inventory at the skills you have and see what can transfer, find something that seems interesting than necessarily something that's your forever job, but something that seems interesting if you're ready to move on to a different industry, don't feel obligated to stay in your prior one. Because other folks are trying to make you say, if you're ready to move on, definitely move on. And then the last point was to be strategic about the moves that you're making.

**DONA SARKAR**

I couldn't agree more with you April on those, especially that last one. I would say there's three things that I wish people would do more of when, especially when they're changing jobs or changing roles. One is when you take inventory of your skills, ask someone else. Because we're actually really bad at knowing ourselves. There's things we take for granted. They're like, oh yeah, I speak all the time. I'm not that good of a speaker. People are like, it is amazing that you can go say random words about nothing for 45 minutes. And, you know, we may not think that's a particular skill, but lots of people think it is for example, right. Or being highly organized or all sorts of things that we take for granted, because we are, we've lived it and grown it for so long. So, ask someone else, who's not your mother, okay.

**DONA SARKAR**

Sorry moms, including my own. You're not a good gauge of skills. Ask someone who you used to work with. Like, what do you, what would you call on me for, right? There's an emergency. What is the thing you’d call on me for? And they'll give you some things you may not even know. The second thing is April. Like you're saying, when you vacate a position to go somewhere else, even though people want you to stay, there's that guilt. But there's also an opportunity for someone else who might be eyeing your spot. And you're suddenly creating the space where they know it's possible. And you, you leave, and you've provided this wonderful benefit to someone who wants it more than you. And the third thing is when you change jobs, you're in a position of power and stay in a position of power. So that's why I think what you said that third point is so important, like be strategic.

**DONA SARKAR**

And that means while you're employed, seek your next job, because you will give off a vibe of power because you have a job it's highly paid or it's paid. You're good at it. You're appreciated at it. So, when you go into a job, an interview, you come at it from a position of non-desperation, not “hire me I can start tomorrow.” Not yet. "I'll do whatever you guys want me to do.” It's a matter of, no, I'm here to interview you company to see if this is better than what I've got. What I've got is pretty damn sweet. And if this is not way better, this is not worth my even time or conversation. So going into it from a position of power, I feel is so important, especially for women and minorities who often feel like, oh, I'll just take what I can get. Cause I'm so lucky to be here. And I'm like F-that, no.

**APRIL SPEIGHT**

Yup. And I can say and you've probably also witnessed it yourself, Dona, but even from the hiring side, it's obvious when someone's desperate and that's not always the, the, the, the, the best candidate for the role. And I've, I've, I've shared with people. Sometimes I get it. Sometimes you just need something so you can make ends meet.
And I totally understand that, but then sometimes you also really want to think if I got stuck in this role, will I still be happy? I know for some folks, sometimes they take jobs as a, as a, as just something to just fill in a space until they're ready for the next thing and what we really have to understand. And I believe Dona touched upon this earlier, because it still applies to this is that we cannot predict the future. You might start this job under the impression that you'll just try it out for three months and then you'll head over to another company. But then next thing you know, something happens in your personal life. Whereas if you went to any other job, you don't have the same flexibility anymore. So now you can't take care of whoever's at home that you need to tend to, for example, and now you're stuck in this job that was supposed to be temporary, that you really don't like. So you you've really, you really want to be strategic about choosing where you even apply and your final decision on who you decide to accept an offer from. It's really important.

ANNA CHU
Yeah. I really love those points. I think, you know, being going in with the strategy is really important, but also being super informed about yourself. Yes, like if I asked my mother for her opinion of me, she'll basically just like, praise me to the moon, but it's talking to people who actually have worked with me in the past. They will, they will talk about different things that my parents wouldn't have perspective on, like about my skills with communication or stakeholder management or whatever it might be. Right. And you may be pleasantly surprised. We are always our own worst enemies. Right. We're very self-critical. We like to think about all of our flaws more than we do about our strengths. And so yeah, like find someone that you trust, maybe even find someone who's maybe on the slightly out of edge of your circle, or just get a point of view. I mean, some people might not feel comfortable with sharing, but, hey, like, you know, that's, that's really up to them ultimately, and, and hopefully your, your ego won't be too wounded, but it also gives you an opportunity to figure out what you need to work on too. Right. so yeah, I think that’s, that's really important. I really, I'm really glad you brought that up, Dona.

DONA SARKAR
What I like is to do this where if there's a job that sounds interesting. I will take the JD forward to a friend and say, what do you think about this for me? And that friend will either be one of two things and it's always gone like this. It's obviously you're a moron. Why would you not think this is perfect? Go apply at once, right? You need those friends, the ones who are not that nice to you, like extremely direct and to the point, or you could have done this job 12 years ago. Why are you even looking at this need to hear these things, right? Because if we go for the things we can do, and we almost need someone in our lives to say, yeah, you could have done this 12 years ago, you need to aim higher. And those are the people you need in your life. You know, your textable tribe, your people who will honestly kick your ass out of your comfort zone because you didn't need it all imposter. Right. We all have imposter syndrome sometimes like, Oh, I've never had a director level job. So can I apply for a director level job? Like genius, no one was born a director.

DONA SARKAR
You know what I mean? You need that friend. And that's how I realized so much on just getting an outsider's perspective on things, because we, in our head, we're psychotic. We're like schizophrenia, squirrels, the way we talk to ourselves, it’s not helpful. So just having a third party weigh in and just say, what are you thinking? Go, yes, go do this. Or
| ANNA CHU | Yeah. And what April said earlier about being in your own head sometimes is exactly that. And I know John, or you talk about imposter syndrome and what you talk about it, you've done sessions on that banishing spell as well. I like I've had so many conversations with people as to who's just basically talk themselves out of a role. So yeah, I, Dona and April, like what are your tips for someone who had, who had those thoughts in their head and don't know where to go next? |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | I would say when it comes to imposter syndrome in general, really have to find where the source of it's coming from. And I think since we're currently at a time where so many people are on the internet and social media, if you sit on there all day and you tune into what's happening in the developer community, for example, it can look and appear as though so many folks are exceptionally well knowledgeable and more knowledgeable than yourself. And some folks might know more. That's just how life is. But at the same time, you can't let that get to you because we all learn at different speeds. We all have different ways of how we learn some of the folks who are more active in the community. For example, they have been doing this for years. I've met folks. That's been doing this since, before I was born, for example, you know, and you, you, you would expect them to know more. That just makes sense in my head. |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | But then there are also folks that are just starting out and it might seem as though they're just breezing through everything and they get everything, and everything makes sense. And there are cases where that happens, but sometimes most of us, I would say we fall somewhere in the middle of that spectrum of knowing a lot and starting to learn and learning and super-duper fast. But then there's those that just takes a bit more time and understand and realize it's that your own journey is your own journey. You shouldn't compare it to anyone else that you see because you don't necessarily know what other background that individual had while learning, especially if you want to think about taking inventory of their skills, for example. |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | I know for me, I don't have a tech background, but I had a linguistics background. So, for me, I'm learning syntax just became more natural because I spent so much time doing it while, while working within the area of linguistics and undergrad. So, they're like, you just never really know what people have in their own little toolkit that's, that's helping them become more comfortable with what they're learning. In addition to that, when it comes to imposter syndrome, the point was made that you can talk yourself out of something. And what really sucks is when you see someone else do it, and then you sit back and think, oh man, if I didn't talk myself out of it, that could have been me. Or, I could have been further than that now. Or, I could have been as successful in my career and so on and so forth. |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | But it's all because you sat there and talked yourself out of it. So, do you understand and realize that a lot of the, the self-doubt that you're giving yourself at the end of the day, it's really just hurting you. And if there's something that you really want to try out, just go do it. I recently was I took part of a, of a stream with you mentioned Chloe earlier. It was Chloe. And it was talking about just my background as well and my transition. And one thing that her cohost, she had said to me after the end of the stream, she said, April, you have this, this thing with you where you very nonchalantly... |
**APRIL SPEIGHT**

**06.17.2020**

| 00:38:30:00 | APRIL SPEIGHT | Why don’t people just see things that they want to do? And then they just go do it. And even if you don’t have access to like the, all the resources that you need, there are ways around it. I mean, when I got started working with extended reality, for example I didn’t have a device, you know, like in itself, devices are hard to get. And so I didn’t let the fact that I didn’t have a device stop me because there were still so many more learning opportunities online without having the device that I was able to take part of. So when it came time for that day where I was able to actually get a advice, guess who was ready to use the device, because I spent so much time learning everything else that I could. And so I feel that for some folks, when they want to learn something, they just get so caught up trying to, trying to figure out what they’re capable of doing it. 

| 00:38:30:00 | APRIL SPEIGHT | And that can really slow down the progress that you can be making. If there’s something that you really want to pursue and try out, go do it. And worst case scenario, you might not like it after you do it, but at least you can say you tried it out and, you know, for a fact that it might not be for you. And then there’s also some instances where you do try it out and it’s taking a little longer for you to get it. And it doesn’t mean that you should quit. But I think at that point, you, you, you do need to think to yourself, is this something I want to keep trying to pursue and get better at? Or should I pivot and try something else instead? 

| 00:38:30:00 | APRIL SPEIGHT | Really great example. When I was younger, I was a tap dancer amongst other forms of dance as well. And there was there, I think they were drawbacks. I could not get drawbacks in class to save my life. And the girls in class, they were laughing and making fun of me because I couldn't do it. And so I went home and for that week, from one class to the next, I literally sat there in the kitchen, practicing drawbacks until I finally got it. And then by the time I went to my dance class, I had it. And so, I say that because I could have very easily just said, I can’t do this one move, forget, tap dancing. I'm done with dancing. However, I, I put the time and effort forward to ensure that I had enough time to practice and just to get it and understand it. And I think that's really important. And, and that's the same concept that I, well, the same approach that I take even now in my adult life, when it comes to learning all these different technical things, especially working in the area of, of space facial, because there are a lot of concepts that are brand new to me that I have never heard of a day in my life and on the outside, it can look overwhelming. 

| 00:38:30:00 | APRIL SPEIGHT | And then when I see so many other folks in the industry share all their projects that they've made and such, yeah, it can be, it can be kind of like disheartening to just feel that you aren't capable of doing that. But then when you break down the different projects and ideas that they share, and you have a chance to actually look at where those gaps are in your own learning, then you can truly see that, Oh, if I go and learn X, Y, Z, that'll then make sense for this part. And then I'll be able to understand how they did this and how they did that. And so it's, it's really a matter of, of, of just not letting everything get to you. And I, I feel that it can be a very natural feeling for some folks. And I get it. But don't let what everyone else is doing. 

| 00:38:30:00 | APRIL SPEIGHT | Make a negative impact towards whatever it is that you want to pursue, whatever you want to do. And one final point on imposter syndrome. I knew coming into my role that say that you saw this thing you wanted to do and you just tried it and then you did it. And I'm like, well, yeah, why don't people just do that?
| 06.17.2020 | there would be opportunities to speak to, like audiences, for example, especially on this technology that I just started learning last summer, for example. So, talk about imposter syndrome in itself. And I just started learning this last year. But, coming up soon, I'll be doing a talk on something that I created a mixed reality. So it's amazing to see that progress that I've made plus more important, feeling comfortable doing it, because if you would ask me months ago to give a talk on a mixed reality topic, I would have said, well, maybe not this time, let's let someone else do it, but now, like I'm confident, I'm excited for what I'm going to talk about. |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | And I’m going into it feeling that even if there are folks that may try to stump me during like the Q and A, I know the parts that I do know, and it’s okay to say that you don’t know something. So that’s my thoughts on imposter, my mini thoughts on imposter syndrome. |
| DONA SARKAR | So I have a question. When is your talk exactly, because I want to go. |
| APRIL SPEIGHT | Yes, so, it’s going to be June 22nd in AltSpaceVR @AltSpaceVR. And if you do not have a device that’s okay, because you can also join via desktop as well through the AltSpace desktop app. So, it’s, it’s a really cool project that I’m sharing. I like to have my projects focus on education. And so it’s an educational experience that I created for, in my case, it was it’s with HoloLens, but essentially you don’t need the HoloLens to do it, but I’m using the HoloLens so. |
| ANNA CHU | [Laugh] Nice. |
| DONA SARKAR | I love it. That’s awesome. So that’s something everyone should check out because you know, that’s going to be cool. What I really love about what you said about learning to learn is we all have our own ways that we learn things, right? You and I share a way, which is you just got to go do the thing. I don't learn by reading or by observing others. I have no idea how people can learn by doing those things. I have to mess up. I have to get in, I have to mess up. And only once I mess up, do I actually understand what I'm even trying to do? And, but others learn a very different way than some learn by emulating the masters. Others learn by reading and watching a hundred videos. Others learn by observing, going away for a while and thinking deeply about it. |
| DONA SARKAR | But your learning style is what you already know what it is. It's the thing you've used to learn to do anything, whether it’s, you know, fourth grade math or some coding thing or whatever it is, you use the same freaking style and you've refined it through, through a time. So just use that same style to learn things. And the other thing I'll say is there are so many people looking for a step one. So, I am a huge fan of beginner things because the beginner way today is not the beginner way a month ago. Right? They're just different because there's new shit now. Right? And I felt this with Power Platform. I'm like what? There's already a bunch of experts. I don't need to create beginner content, my most widely read and shared content, I'm not kidding, is building your first Power App from an Excel spreadsheet. |
| 00:44:10:00 | That's it, just like people have done this a hundred times. People are like, yeah, but we actually, there's more people in the world who don't know what that is than there are, that do know what it is. Just the sheer number of people who are beginners just by numbers. it's in the millions. And the people who are experts is in the thousands or hundreds or something like that. So, beginner content is always, probably the most |
read for a reason. And it's the most appreciated by people. So, I highly encourage people, go start your thing, whatever your learning style is and document, this is my learning style and here’s what I’m doing with it. And here’s what my beginner journey looks like. Because first you’re relatable, everyone likes you. And second, you get to relate to more people who learn like you. And the fact that you’re not afraid of looking stupid shows a tremendous sense of power and their sense of confidence. So, I have no issue looking like a moron. I’m like, oh, I’m going to build a business card reader. I don’t know how to do that. I’m going to figure it out on camera in front of 250 people.

ANNA CHU
It's fine. Everyone starts from the incident anywhere. Right. And everyone should begin from, from day one. Right? So if that documentation is out there, that video is out there, someone's going to look for it.

ANNA CHU
And good luck to them if they can continue the journey, but they always have to start from the very beginning. Right. I'm sorry. That's how it goes. One thing that I find really interesting is that, you know, for us, we all work at Microsoft and we're all pretty active in the community. And I think right now, especially with current times, we're all feeling a lot of support in the community. And we're very encouraged by the conversation that's being had with the black community, people who are indigenous and, and people of color. One thing that I really loved, I was just trolling through your Twitter, Dona, and I saw that you would talking to a conference organizer and you asked if you could add a speaker to that lineup. And they said the lineup was full. And you said, well great, can they have my spot then? And so they were like, Oh yeah, yeah, we'll make some room. Which is amazing. So I want to pivot the conversation more about how can we be better supporters of the community? How can we give back? And you close that tweet with, you know, everyone can create a bigger table. So yeah, let's start with donor and then we can go to April, but I'd love to talk a little bit more about that.

00:46:35:00 DONA SARKAR
So, I fully believe people don't realize their power. I'm a firm believer that nobody, including the three of us understand how much power we have in this world. And everyone assumes that the people around them are more powerful. And when everyone assumes that no one knows how much power they have, right? So, everyone assumes everyone around them has a whole arsenal of swords and knives that they use to fight battles in their garage. And in fact, none of us do. Or in fact, all of us do. So it's one of those things where even the most early career person can be such a strong ally right now, because we can raise our hand and say, let's open a door for someone who deserves it. Right? And I think one thing, and this is for all of you allies, co-conspirators and friends of minorities, and especially black people, own your power to help others.

DONA SARKAR
And you have more than you think and stop offering to mentor people. It's a giant waste of time. Everyone knows what they're supposed to be doing. It's not a secret. What they need are opportunities. So that's all people want is our opportunities. So, my entire mission is to create opportunities and I can create opportunities all day. And so, can you, so this was an opportunity I created, no, one's like, oh, we have an open spot. Dona, do you know someone who can take it now? It's saying, going out of the way and saying, oh, there's a conference, it's virtual. Why can't we add another session? And I'm going to ask this woman of color to be a speaker there because I don't believe we have enough women of color at this conference, but there's so many people
<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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<th>who can do that, right? Nominate a black person onto your board recommend a black person to go apply for that job.</th>
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<td>00:00:00</td>
<td>I won't share the individual's name, but it's a person that is widely known and our community. And we had a chat recently, whereas this individual had mentioned that someone had said to them that what they say holds a lot of weight. So therefore if they could, if they could, if they could mention different, different folks or like minorities, for example, in these conversations that actually holds a lot of weight. And that individual day, they admitted that they weren't aware of just like how powerful their own voice was or is. And so they agreed to ensure that they, they were able to mention people's names and conversations, and to also to also share what their experience is like working with that individual. Because I think for some of us use myself, for example, let's say that let's say we had an intern, this is completely top of my head.</td>
<td>Have someone, you know, write a really good recommendation. Open doors, right? I'm such an advocate of open doors allies. That's the best thing we can do right now. And you can open doors for the high school kid like April, you were saying, you know, high school kids, middle school kids, college kids have helped a high school kid write a college essay, help a middle school kid, right. A high school. I say, there's so many things we can do, but we just have to understand how powerful we are. And, and please always remember everybody. It takes so much more strength to lift someone up and to push them down. So the most powerful people in the world spend all their power lifting people up. So, go do that.</td>
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<td>00:51:00</td>
<td>APRIL SPEIGHT</td>
<td>I think it's really important to ensure that I would say from my, from my perspective, once you make it to a certain point in your career to always reach back and bring other folks along, I think for some folks, when they reach a certain part of their career, they feel well, the tables, fool, I can't bring anyone else with me. And if I do, there'll be competition and that's not necessarily how things should work. I feel that we should not view those who are not in the same position. Career wise as us to be up. We shouldn't view, we shouldn't be those individuals as our competition, if anything, adding them onto the workforce and our projects and what we're working on is only going to make it stronger. It'll make it better. And so I think it's really, really important to, to be able to feel comfortable bringing folks on board and not feeling like they're there to take your job.</td>
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then everything was great internship ended. And then that was it for the conversation. And then, and then this individual they're trying to look for, they're trying to get a job, but no one was there to support them. So now it really puts a blocker. Whereas myself worked with this individual in a sense, I want to say, we should feel obligated to highlight the success of those that we've worked with, especially if they are in terms of levels below us and said, since at Microsoft, we have levels that they are below us. It is great to ensure that their managers know what work they've worked that they've done. I hate to say it, but unfortunately, we, we, we live and work in a society where it's not always a matter of me just speaking to my accomplishments.

APRIL SPEIGHT

We really have to quantify everything, or we really have to have someone else say that, oh yeah, that person is good. So, you should also hire them. And is it right? No, it's not right. That there are times where folks just don't believe us, but we have to say, but that's also why it's just as important as allies to ensure that if we have these really great working opportunities with folks, or we know the type of work that they're doing in the community, let people know amplify that. Don't just keep that to yourself and just brush it off as just someone else doing this other thing in tech, like share that, talk about it, because it really holds a lot of weight and very important conversations. And then once, typically I would say once that individual does get to that level where they've been onboarded, for example, more than likely they're bringing other folks with them.

APRIL SPEIGHT

And then that cycle continues. And that's how we're able to create a more diverse workforce, especially here in this tech industry. And one thing I will say is that as you are helping folks out and as you are when it comes to being allies and such, yes, it's great to, to, to share where you stand on those matters, but not everything has to be not everything has to be, how do I say promote it on social media that I did this great thing for this person. And I did this other great thing for that other person. I know for me personally, if I can curse for one second, I do a lot of shit behind the scenes for folks, you know, and I just don't spend all day on my social media feed talking about it, because for me what's more important is that this person was able to get to where they needed to go versus me, patting myself on my back to show folks that I'm helping out other people. So if you are helping, helping people out, don't do it just for applause to show that you're a good ally, do it from a place of being very genuine and wanting to help folks out. And I can promise you it'll be that much more rewarding when you are doing it from a place of being sincere and genuine.

ANNA CHU

I've certainly learned that you cannot burn bridges. Everyone remembers everything. Everyone talks about each other, and that just facts. It's not meant to be a criticism of anything. And I don't think this is just stereotypical of just Microsoft. I'm sure it is with other corporations too, but people remember when you've lifted them up. People remember if you've pushed them down. And you're thinking about, you know, that table as well, again, to, to the earlier point about competition, if you are there to enable other people and empowering them, they will remember, and you will have them as allies for life too, right. As they will also take from your example, and also to mentor others or lift others up, we'll give them opportunities.

ANNA CHU

It's all, maybe I'm a bit Pollyanna about this, but I really feel this is a very cyclical thing. If you put really good, positive vibes out there and lead by example, others are totally
So, you know, this happens in corporations and companies and organizations and communities. So, I really liked seeing that. Sadly, you know, you do remember the bad apples and it's because they are somehow lacking awareness of the effect that their behavior is having on others. But the same also applies to positive behaviors to encouraging behaviors. People remember everything. So, I don't know if that's a word of warning, but certainly it's a lesson that I've learned over the course of the years. And I've applied it to everything I do now.

APRIL SPEIGHT

So true.

ANNA CHU

Well, I know we've talked a lot and we're totally over time. So, I really want to thank April and Dona for having this conversation today. I've borrowed, this tradition from donor is to give homework to our listeners. April, do you have anything that you'd recommend our listeners do after listening to this episode?

00:57:00:00 APRIL SPEIGHT

Yes. I would say with regards to transitioning career, my homework for you would be to go spend time seeing what X type of person does in X role. Because I feel that we get so caught up reading job descriptions of what a role entails, but you really don't know what it's like until you speak with someone that's either done it or until you do it yourself. And so, if you're in the middle of transitioning, then you probably haven't done it yourself. So, the next best thing is to speak with people who have done those roles. And I feel right now, we're at a time where it seems a little easier to get in contact with folks because most of us are at home. So if you have a chance to reach out to people who have jobs that you think you might like, or even ones that you're just a little bit into maybe not check those out too, because it might be, it might end up being something that you actually love and do you want to try out. But the homework I would say is, go talk to folks who are already doing the jobs that you want to do and get a feel for what their day to day is like, and that'll hopefully bring a bit more clarity to you for which path you should set out on with regards to transitioning careers.

ANNA CHU

Love it. What about you, Dona?

DONA SARKAR

I like that one because it's go talk to a human, don't go watch YouTube videos, but go talk to a real person about the real job. So, my homework is specifically for people who claim to be allies or for people who are afraid to be allies, it's actually fairly straightforward. You treat someone else as you would a very, very good friend or your own brother's sister. So what you do, it's really three steps ready, or you write this down. One, identify the person who you'd like to help to go talk to them and see what is a challenge they're facing. Do they want to change jobs? Do they want a speaking gig? Do they want to write for the New York Times, do they want to get promoted? What is their specific challenge? And three, if you can open a door for them. So that means amplifying their ask for a new job. I'm writing a nice mail to their manager, helping them find a speaking gig, re-Tweeting their voice. If they've written a book or done anything of the sort amplify the book, go get the book and write a review. That kind of thing. Do exactly what you do for a good friend or your sibling. Be a fan. Forget being an ally, be a fan. What would you do for someone, your fan, you know, fan-girling or fanboying about be a fan? It's the best thing we can do for our community because everyone needs more fans. No one needs more, you know, non-fans.
| ANNA CHU CTA: | Perfect. Well, I appreciate you both so much. Thank you so much for this great conversation. I learned a lot. And on behalf of all our listeners, thank you for sharing your experiences and perspectives. Even though you both have a connection and fashion, I know we learnt a lot about learning about allyship L that community and that switching careers is not impossible. It can be done, and many have done that impossible seemingly impossible task. So yes, I highly encourage you all our listeners to follow April on Twitter [@vogueandcode] and Dona [@DonaSarkar]. And they mentioned a lot of different resources do the homework and you certainly will benefit from all of that. You can find the blog for this episode on the Microsoft Tech Community at [techcommunity.microsoft.com](http://techcommunity.microsoft.com). The Tech Community is really close to hitting half a million members. So, if you haven't joined already, please take a look. |
| ANNA CHU | You’ll find a whole bunch of community hubs ranging from Azure to Humans of IT, to Windows. And there’s a lot of different resources to help you potentially your next career journey, including blogs and Microsoft Learning Paths. You could also find community events. So, and so many are happening right now. So, start registering, registering, and please attend, but doing a lot of work in the community. So, make sure you prioritize that. |
| OUTRO THEME | [MUSIC] |
| ANNA CHU CTA: | The Uptake is also on Twitter. Our handle is [@TheUptakePod](http://TheUptakePod). You can also follow me on Twitter [@_achu](http://_achu). Please subscribe to this show. You can find us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and more. We also post a video of The Uptake on YouTube. And if you've enjoyed this episode, please give us a review. It really helps us spread the word and the community you love. On behalf of the Microsoft Tech Community, thank you for spending time with us today. I’m Anna Chu and I will see you next time. |

01:01:45:00 APRIL / DONA | Bye. Do the thing! Thank you. Thank you, everyone! |
| 01:04:43:00 | [END INTERVIEW] |
| 01:05:31:00– 01:05:57:00 | [ROOM TONE] |