One of the greatest lessons I've learned from a mentor was that in your 20s is the time to learn in your third uses to time turn.

Hi, everyone, welcome to another episode of Studio bites. Today in the studio, we're welcoming Jordan yet. Jordan is a recent ish graduate 2020. So it's hasn't been too long. And he's currently working as a junior product designer at jostle and also runs a podcast too. So I'm really excited to have someone who is also into podcasting like I am. But without further ado, I'll let you kind of introduce yourself a little bit better than me.

Thank you for having me. It's definitely different to be back at a digital studio, rather than like an in person studio. The SIAT days.

Unfortunately, we're not in studio but that was like the plan. That was like the goal with this. I was like, take me back into studio. Together.

Studio B holds so many memories
Speaker 1 01:07
, all those days, like doing group projects and hours before crit.

Speaker 2 01:15
I know that's literally like, that's what everyone says. And I'm like, it's so I don't know. I feel like I liked it. Because it was like the only studio with Windows. So it's the only studio that gave like SIAT students actual perception of time.

Speaker 1 01:27
Yeah.

Speaker 2 01:28
So like, you're like late night. Anyways, kind of going really talking about our SIAT lives. But kind of starting with the beginning way back when, when you were a young student, kind of talk me through the process of how you kind of came into SIAT and what really interested you into this field.

Speaker 1 01:46
Yeah, so I actually came into SIAT in a very different way. So like I knew about SIAT in high school, but actually started as a few economics. And like, at the time, when I was still explaining what we want to do, so it was explained Beedie, I was explaining Comp Sci at the time. And actually, like I discovered, I looked into SIAT around summer 2013. And I took two electives, and actually took very different electives, and like what most non SIAT students do before coming to see it, so I actually took, IAT 110. But I also took IAT 167. As No, because I was, yeah, cuz I did my first Comp Sci course. So I'm like, maybe I want to explore like the SIAT side. I took that programming course, I'm like, this is kind of cool. So I thought about SIAT for another year. And then in my third year, I finally said, I want to do this. So I jumped into this year appointment and haven't looked back since.

Speaker 2 02:45
So you mentioned that you had done Comp Sci, and you kind of got interested in through like, the programming field. So was that kind of your trajectory? Or like, did it because you're working as a product designer, which is not very, like coding heavy. So kind of how did that transition happen?
Speaker 1 03:01
Yeah, so for me, like I was always interested in kind of the business side in terms of case studies. So I was super interested at the time and marketing case studies. But then I found that maybe it's not like getting I want to do is like I actually want to do kind of actual products. But that was always in the back of my head. I actually started doing video first. And I actually did a video Coop first. And then for the provincial government, and from there, I worked on BC's implementation of electronic healthcare records. And from there, like moving like from a paper based system to a digital based system was super cool in terms of this idea of digital transformation. And for me, that made me realize that I didn't want to be on site communicating it, I wanted to actually be doing this. And that's what really led me into UX at the end of the day.

Speaker 2 03:52
You obviously talk about your co op. So you started with the videography, Co op how many Co ops you end up doing? Three,

Speaker 1 03:59
I ended up doing three Co op. So two years of co op. So

Speaker 2 04:05
okay. Yeah, that's a long time to do. So, now, so you mentioned that the it was like the digital transformation that kind of led you into where you wanted to go forward. So you started as at Vancouver coastal health. And then I'll see what I can remember me working on your LinkedIn page. And then you did a ux. And then you mentioned you did a UX Co Op. And then what was your last Co Op?

Speaker 1 04:37
Yeah, so I did the UX Co op for four months at the City of Vancouver. And then I ended up doing a full 16 month internship at SAP as a UX design intern on analytics cloud.

Speaker 2 04:50
Very cool. And so then, I think at this point, you were at the end of your graduation.

Speaker 1 04:56
Yeah, so yeah, so like I pretty much started as an eight month coop at SAP, then they decided to extend me. So I spent another eight months to just as in a sense, like a contracted intern.
And so yeah.

Speaker 2 05:12
And how was that? Cause? I mean, SAP is like one of the, I guess the big names at SIAT. So can you tell us a little bit about your experience there? And how it felt like working with such a big corporation?

Speaker 1 05:25
Yeah, so I was very lucky to work on a product called analytics cloud, which is kind of a BI database platform. So think about like Microsoft Excel, but a higher scale, like for large companies and datasets. So we're super interesting working on for that company. And especially because SAP is such an engineering driven company that yeah, designer, but they're starting to embrace design. So it was super interesting to be kind of part of that embracing of designing UX. I think that it's interesting to work in a big company, even though like there are big processes that you have to follow. And of course, there are politics, it's a really good place to learn because you learn how to design at scale, because I think SIAT, we definitely like are designing at the smaller scale. But, of course, once customers are paying for software, you have to make sure that, hey, like this software has to work for people who have like 100 employees, or who have like, 10,000 employees. So it's definitely a challenge to design for.

Speaker 2 06:28
Yeah, my be talking to friends who are doing Co Op, and it's, they talk about the same thing. It's like, even though we're working in SIAT with like different companies and things like that, for projects, like once you go out there, and there's people actually like paying you and they're like expecting things from you, like on a bigger larger, like, I guess more of an impacted scale. It's a very, like, stressful and it really like either turns people into like, oh my god, this is so fun, and so excited or like,

Speaker 1 06:56
yeah.

Speaker 2 07:00
So I guess your current job site, as mentioned, is a junior product designer at Jostle. How did that go? Did that come about from another Co Op? Or was this just like you job searching after me graduated?

Speaker 1 07:14
Yeah. So this came up in a job search after graduation, I think actually found Jostle because one
of my former Co Op friends from SAP actually was a club at Jostle. I think that's initially how I found out about jostle and I'm like, Oh, cool. Congrats, dude, you got the job. And then I peaked on like the jostle page I'm like hey they're hiring a product designer.

Speaker 2 07:38
You're like Oh me too!

Speaker 1 07:39
Yeah, but the job search is definitely the job search was how I found jostle because I was applying for jobs since about January 2020. And then I landed my first interview around late May, early June.

Speaker 2 07:50
Oh, yeah. That's a hassle. So I guess, I mean, because you did graduate, like right at the beginning of lockdown, and all of that for the pandemic? Like, how was that do you wanna kind of like your, because I feel like the students now that are graduating are still feeling the impacts of that initial like, drop. So how was that for you?

Speaker 1 08:11
Yeah, it was tough. I was actually looking to still look for internships at the time, but a lot of internships ended up getting cancelled. So that's when I said I might as well just graduate. But it's it's a very tough market out there. Because a lot of designers did get laid off like right at the beginning of the pandemic. So of course, the companies that were hiring, they ended up scooping up those designers. And even to this day, there really is a lack of junior jobs out there. And I initially like this job for jostle, I think, was more so advertised at the intermediate level, because they were looking for someone with three years experience, and I only technically have almost just about a year and a half of UX experience. So thankfully, they did give me a chance. And I'm really thankful for that. Yeah, it's tough. Like when I interviewed for jobs, like for intermediate getting even I interviewed for some senior level positions, who like yeah, like, we like your experience, you just don't have enough experience. You know.

Speaker 2 09:12
We like your experience, but there's not enough of it.

Speaker 1 09:15
Exactly
The worst thing ever, especially like, once you've right out of graduation, like, this is why I'm here. I'm here to gather experience.

Exactly right. It's tough.

It's definitely tough. Um, so kind of talking about jostle and your journey here. So what do you exactly work on as a product designer at this company?

So I'm very lucky that we jostle is a startup and we are a smaller team. So I get to really, I get to focus on like, very specific areas of the product. And for me, I'm the sole designer in the sense in kind of determining the future of the features I designed so of course, just to get some context jostle is we are in a sense in employee intranet that does. We help leaders build connected organizations so that everyone can work, and unite and grow together. So we've even though jostle has been around for a bit, we've helped over 1000 organizations, and we help industry leading employee participation rates, it's a really interesting place to be because we're building an employee intranet that is different than your typical intranet, which is page based, we want to focus more so on what matters most to people in organizations. And it's really cool to kind of really build out that vision as, as a product designer.

Yeah, especially like, especially with startups, you have so much, say, and so much control of the future of how it's going to progress. So that's quite, that's it. Like, it's kind of scary almost to think about as it's like, like, I am making decisions like, yeah, that's the thing that really shocked me, like when I first got into the field, like as a UX and product designer, it's this idea that you are in essence responsible for the design at the end of the day, like you, in a sense have to make the final call. Sometimes you can like balancing product management, balancing engineering, and thinking about what really is the best practices for UX? And what is going to be the future of this feature? Because of course, you don't want to mess something up because you need the feature to scale up. At the end of the day.
Yeah, yes. Like, yeah, working on a scale. That doesn't mean like working to design for scale that doesn't exist yet. Is not a lot of future thinking. That's a little wrinkly brain work.

It is.

I guess I will, I'm really curious about is, so you're working at jostle. And you have so my startup, it's very like hands on, you're kind of have your foot in different. I don't know what the euphemism is, but you kind of doing everything. But then you also came off a year and a half at SAP, which is super, like company based. And there's a strict order to everything, you're kind of confined to the role that you're playing. So I guess, if you have really unique experiences, like do you have, like, can you kind of speak to what it's like to work for two different types of like, company setups.

So my analogy is always this idea of a pie. So in a big company, you're a small piece of a big pie, and then nope sorry in a large company, you're a small piece of a big pie, but a small company, you're a big piece of a small pie. So for me, it's this idea of like, you get to create more impact at the end of the day, usually at a smaller company, because you get to really work on robust features, and kind of areas of the product that are beginning to grow at scale. So to me, that's definitely why I gravitated towards I wanted to try working my feel free startup right after graduation, because I had that kind of big, I got to work for the big company. But I never worked for a small company. Difference. The biggest difference I found between like big companies like SAP and small companies like jostle is that the pacing of product design, if so, at a big company, like SAP, sometimes design moves a bit slower at the end of the day. So like when I was designing features at SAP, I would have the designs ready. But sometimes there wasn't a development team ready to take it on yet. Or in the case, like when I worked in on like different teams, sometimes you have to wait for the technical resources to become available. So for example, you need API's, like from, like one area of the product to communicate with the API's of another area of the product. So there is kind of that bigger delay in a bigger company. Something that was super refreshing, at jostle in a small company, which I really like is that if I can propose a design, like the design is pretty much almost ready to go into development, and could even go into development. Like next week, like the feature I'm designing right now like today, or yesterday presented on it's going into kind of it's going to be engineered starting next week. So that's a super refreshing change that I really like about kind of smaller startups. And also like the big advantage to me, but a startup is that you do have more of a voice at the end of the day. So I get to really help impact product decisions. And I actually work directly with the CEO who's the product manager of the company. So that was scary at first directly into the CEO of the company, as a junior product designer, but But yeah, it's it's super refreshing because I really like this idea of like how, as a designer, I can really make a significant impact at the end of the day to the product, which is a refreshing change.
Speaker 2 14:54
Yeah, I think that's something I mean, oh, well first off you like According to the CEO, or like I heard about that, I was like, oh my god, I can feel your stress. Just imagine like a small little like was like hi. And that's I think that's the main thing I've heard the most is, it's you, I feel with like bigger companies. Yeah, they're super cool to work at. But you don't get to really see or feel like where that all that work that you're doing, where it's kind of going. But with the startup, you have so much impact, as you mentioned, that like any small little like idea that you make gets immediately like, oh, let's talk about this more of, oh, how can we expand on this? So you get to really feel that like, oh, I actually have a lot of impact and growth here.

Speaker 1 15:45
And also, I think it's important to realize like also like that, yes, like startups do pay less than big companies. And I think compensation, like does attract, like, some people want bigger compensation at the end of the day, which is totally understandable. One of the greatest lessons I learned from my mentor was that in your 20s is the time to learn in in your 30s, this time to earn. And I really took that to heart because like I did, like bringing my job process, I didn't interview for bigger companies who were of course can offer like higher compensation. But to me, like I found that I didn't sometimes resonate as well, with the big companies. And to me, like, I've never worked for a startup before. And I'm like, I might as well try that when I'm still in my 20s. And kind of really explore to see if that's what I want in the future.

Speaker 2 16:33
So yeah, I think that's such a good, I've never heard of that. And I don't know why. Because it's the 20s is your time to learn and 30s is the time to earn because I feel like soon as we graduate, we have this weird expectation of get a job to become immediately become financially stable, and then like live out the rest of your life like this. When in reality, I think they're everyone that I've talked to has been like, yeah, like switched three jobs. I'm doing like completely different from what I started out with. Because it's the reality is that you're not gonna find what you immediately love, are really passionate about right away.

Speaker 1 17:10
Exactly, yeah. And even like, when people like when you when students could do co op searching, I encourage students not to be picky about, like two to two companies, you first, like for your first step in the door, I think it's more so important that you do begin to build up that experience from like your co op days. And then as you graduate, like even like when you work for as a junior product designer, it's okay to kind of take a pay cut in compensation for kind of what will you gain in experience in terms of driving products, not the ability? Yeah,

Speaker 2 17:45
I think that's what like, I mean, we were talking earlier about how companies are like, I want three to five years of experience. And you're like, Oh, but I think that's exactly it, like kind of with that mentality where you take the time right now to really like, get that experience. And
with that mentality, where you take the time right now to really like, get that experience. And it's not just like one type of experience, like any job that you do, you'll learn so much, you'll gain so many outcomes from it, like an opportunities that that will really like, aid you in the future. I don't think there's any job that really will hinder you. As you go forward. If you're able to like walk me through your day to day

**Speaker 1 18:23**

tasks. Yeah, so pretty much my day to day is a bunch of stand ups. So I work on different areas of the product. So we have stand ups, which is a place where like the engineers and product management usually get together. Let's talk about what they're doing for the week. And then from there, I usually do kind of one on ones with my manager every two weeks. So kind of talking about how I want to grow at the company. And then I also do a lot of individual one on ones with developers as I'm designing features. Because as a product designer, you need to really think about feasibility at the end of the day, along with scalability. And this is technically possible. So making sure that I do those things with my developer with the developers I work with and product managers to really think about how can we scale up a product because when it comes to a design review, when you get all the stakeholders in a room to either give it the green light, the red light, you need to really have all your use cases, very robust, and everything pretty much well in place like even like before, this recording today just came out of a design review like a feature I was working on for about a month and a half.

**Speaker 2 19:32**

I'm so sorry. I didn't really want to get you stressed today.

**Speaker 1 19:38**

no no no no worries It was it was a design. It was a really fun design review so

**Speaker 2 19:42**

I'm glad, so you are very new, you're still kind of you know, fresh out and school and still are kind of like working your way out. So I guess for you just personally, um, where are you? Do you see yourself going? I mean, like, not just company wise, but more like personal development and kind of the roles you want to play in the future. Because, as I mentioned, you do also do podcasting. And so this is obviously like an interest of yours. So, yeah, where do you see yourself like, I guess, personally developing in the career field? That makes sense?

**Speaker 1 20:20**

Yeah. So I really still would like to be like, maybe a senior product designer, maybe five years from now, or design, lead, I really like this How, how challenging product design is because you are solving a puzzle, in a sense. But a digital has online, it's super cool to really be in a sense on the forefront of pushing out software that 1000s of people could use at the end of the
day, or, in the case of SAP millions of people use even potentially. So to me, even like I'm thinking about product management in the future and taking product management courses, because what's what I found with product design is that you need to both kind of have this knowledge of in a sense how engineering works, think about how the scalability of your design is going to work, but also the product management side. So thinking about what is the business aspect of this? How are customers going to use this? How can this scale in like five years from now for customers, so it's important to not only understand the business side, the technical side, and also the design side, it's important that you understand all alternatives in the sense this idea of the design unicorn, except that's what you really need to do to succeed in product design.

Speaker 2 21:40
Which is the design what is the design unicorn

Speaker 1 21:43
design unicorn is this is like this is like mystical idea that the ideal product designer is someone who can code someone who can design and someone who has this knowledge in SIAT

Speaker 2 22:01
as someone who's kind of fresh in their career, but you've also done a lot in during your time in SIAT and kind of your degree, what would be and you also came from a background of like, like economics and Comp Sci and like so you really have gone through a journey to kind of get to where you are. So what would be like, what advice would you give to kind of students right now? Who, I mean, I guess they're almost like their final year, like, what advice would you give to them, as they kind of step forward into the real, quote unquote, real world?

Speaker 1 22:36
Yes. So I highly, highly recommend that students do Co Op. And I would also recommend that students be very open to trying small companies, medium companies, large companies, or even like different kind of areas like government, for example, I find that a lot of students when they start Co Op, they immediately they want to go like the Google Facebook like fangirl companies like SAP. Like, that's great, but it's very like for me, like when I work so when I applied to work at SAP, I actually, over the past since 2016, I applied like, multiple times, I got rejected already twice from two different teams that SAP beforehand over the past like three years. And then like my third time I applied to SAP like with the interview, I finally landed the job. And I think it's important that students do explore other areas because the government working government taught me so much. Working at a startup has taught me different lessons. And working in SAP has taught me different lessons. And I really like to have a diversified set of experiences before I decide, like where you want to land, my final final final career by the end of the year.
So they've applied to a bunch of jobs now they're in that job interview process. What advice would you give to students at that process?

My advice is really determine what do you scan for as a designer? I think that design is important because you need to have a voice in design, like what do you want to do as a designer to impact the products you design at the end of the day? So for me, like my ethos is I want to be able to build products that can help people be better at the end of the day. So to me that resonated like with the City of Vancouver because I wanted to help people vote. At the end of the day, I wanted to help people to guide them to see information. Like when I was at SAP, I want to be able to help businesses make better business decisions at the end of the day, whether they're a big company or a small company, because even like with the product redesign, it was actually used by a hospital in the US to help track COVID patients and like COVID Bed units and ICU I think and then even today a jostle like we're helping organizations at the end of the build better. So to me, that's what really I think is important is like, Who do you what do you stand for as designer because there's lots of Bootcamp grads there. Now, there's tons of CS grads, and everyone's applying for the same jobs. So what's gonna make you stand out at the end of the day? And to me, that's just your stance as a designer?

So kind of going into, like saying, on your job search, what do you think one thing that you did, that really helped you kind of, I guess, especially during, like, you know, job search, really, like, differentiate you and really help you to become a bit more, I guess, ready for industry.

For me, it's about reflecting into projects. So for me, I redesigned two academic projects in the past. So I redesigned my IAT 334 project. And they also get a small mini redesign to one of my eyes for two year projects as I got feedback to the, to the months after my project finished. And I think that it's super important that you can reflect on what you've done in the past. Because usually, like in a big product organization, like I SAP and even at jostle like you're working on existing products, you're not sometimes designing something brand new from scratch, you need to think about kind of what were problematic areas that we that we implemented in the past, and how can that be fixed for the future. So to me, those exercises really helped me actually get my foot in the door, because even like for even like doing side projects, as well, because my first Co Op, I got the job, because I did side projects for like videography. And then for the City of Vancouver, they really liked the redesign I did for my IAT 334 app, and that's ultimately how I got the job. So I think it's important that you can, in a sense, redesign areas of your projects that you've done in the past. And also it works really well in interviews, because then they can see very specific areas that you design, because one big problems that with group projects is sometimes employers question. Okay, what aspects Do you specifically work on? So if you're able to kind of redesign areas of the product with very sound reasoning, then that kind of showcases my case, I did, like this is my redesign that I did. So yeah, it's definitely
Speaker 2 27:15
showing you what you're capable of not just what you're like groupmates. So

Speaker 1 27:22
yeah, cuz like usually, like, once you get into like a big product organization, you're sometimes you're on your own with the design and responsible for it. So there's not always like group work and like big organization, like, organization, sometimes, like you do collaborate on projects, but there are projects for kind of you are the sole designer responsible.

Speaker 2 27:40
We're coming to an end, I usually like to ask a very thought provoking question towards the end. So my question is, what inanimate object would you eliminate from existence? If there's this one random object that you're like, This doesn't need to exist? What would that be?

Speaker 1 28:02
That's a very good question. Sometimes I wish I could eliminate my phone. To be honest, I feel like even though like I work in a digital field, or something like that, like we're, I'm so connected in at the end of the day, and especially like during remote work and kind of hybrid work, sometimes I just want to shut off. So if I could just like eliminate my phone, sometimes I think that would be something that I would like to do.

Speaker 2 28:32
Yeah, I feel like they really need to bring back like flip phones, with limited capabilities. They get they get done what they need to do. And then you're just like, you know, you flip it over and you're shut out.

Speaker 1 28:48
Yeah, I miss like, I've never I haven't used the flipphone ages. But like, I kind of wish I could do the factory. I don't like this like this.

Speaker 2 28:59
Thank you so much for coming into my studio. I really appreciate you taking the time today to come and talk about I mean, the varied experience that you have and you had some really good insights into especially into like current students and helping them progress into the future. So thank you so much.
No problem. Senior students definitely helped me out when I was young and young and been as a SIAT student. Thanks for joining us in the studio for another episode of Studio bytes. If you enjoyed the episode, please let us know by following us on Spotify or reaching out to us on our Instagram at SIAT SFU. Other than that, we'll catch you in the studio next time.