One Knight in Product - E162 - Ronke Majekodunmi

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SPEAKERS

Jason Knight, Ronke Majekodunmi

Jason Knight   00:00

Why would George RR Martin make a bad product developer, because he always seems to have trouble finishing his stories. Luckily for us, tonight's guest has no such problem. Speaking of stories, if you want someone to be part of yours, or you want to be part of theirs, listen up. I've co founded a new free mentoring platform called My Mentor Path where Product Managers and product leaders can connect with each other and get the support they need to grow in their careers. We've just started running our matching algorithms. So if you want to be part of it, head over to https://www.mymentorpath.com where you can sign up to be a mentor and mentee or both. You can check out the show notes for more details. All right, so back to storytelling, which is a crucial part of any product managers toolset, and something that tonight's guest says is one of the best ways to promote collaboration and cross functional alignment. So let's all take our seats around the fire, blow the dust off the book and listen carefully to the tale of the chief storytelling officer... one Knight in Product in product.

Jason Knight   01:04

So my guest tonight is Ronke Majekodunmi Ronke's a product leader, writer, mentor and featured Product School speaker who says she loves the magic of creating products. wonky says the bravest thing she's ever done is go to London for a week. And she's currently reading eight books, hopefully not all at the same time. Wrong. He started out working at a makeup counter. But she's now trying our best to apply a strong foundation to product management practices, put filler in to smooth over the gaps between cross functional teams, hopefully not having to use too much concealer on her tech debt. Hi, bunkie. How are you tonight?

R   **Ronke Majekodunmi**   01:32

I'm great. How are you? Thank you for having me.

Jason Knight 01:35

No problem. It's good to have you here. And I do have to ask before we start what is so scary about London.

Ronke Majekodunmi 01:41

So London, it's not scary. London is a beautiful city. It's actually one of my favourite city in the world. So what happened was I wanted to go to London so badly and none of my friends could go with me around the time I wanted to go. So I decided I was going to wait for anybody. I was just going to go by myself. So I went to London for a whole week by myself. I flew in from Chicago, red eye, I took the train to Paddington Station, but myself, I asked her for directions. I was using an app. And I had the best time I stayed at a Doubletree near that faces the tower, the Tower Bridge, and I just went sightseeing by myself. I mean, it was great. Nobody bothered me. And I've done it since then I've done it again by myself. So it was it was just that idea of going to a place that you've never been to before a foreign city. And can you do by yourself? I even want to solve Broadway show, by the way while I was there by myself.

Jason Knight 02:42

Well, to be fair, I would have or I did feel exactly the same when I went to Chicago. But I'll also say, frankly, London has never bothered anyone. That's one of our most identifying characteristics. So you went to the right place for that. Anyway. So you are the Director of Product Management for Promevo. So what problem is Promevo solving for the world?

Ronke Majekodunmi 03:02

We are helping large, medium, small businesses and educators onboard everything from onboarding and off boarding their staff. So basically, we're helping them to manage and grow their business every day.

Jason Knight 03:16

So this is HR tech, is that is that the right bucket to put it in?

Ronke Majekodunmi 03:21

Yes, it's a platform for employees, for you to onboard your employees and upon your employees, but to apply policies, put them in a group, automate their onboarding, automate their off boarding and so forth. And with permission, we one of the things that makes us stand out is all the additional features that we have, which you won't find elsewhere. Like you can, you know, we have over 1000 permissions. So you can actually have one person who all they do is just onboard employees. And that's all they do within the system. Oh, there

Jason Knight 03:49

you go. I remember my time in HR tech. It's always tricky to get into HR decision makers, though and displace existing solution. So have you got a solution for that? But you're leading the product team there? Yes. And you came in? After a few years at PayPal? Yes. And obviously there's a temptation when you come from a an established tech company like PayPal to come in or idealistic my way or the highway? I know I'm doing I used to work at Pe power type vibe. Is that how you went into Promevo, or did you have to kind of slipstream in or was there kind of somewhere in between that you had to pitch yourself to actually start to be successful with Promevo?

Ronke Majekodunmi 04:25

I think you have to be in the middle as a product manager, right? As a product leader, no matter what organisation you go to, whether it's a large organisation, medium or small, even a startup, you have to be in the middle. You come in, you know, wanting to help make a difference. And that was always the thing for me, how do I make a difference? But also understand that there's already a culture and every other in every organisation right, you have to assimilate into that culture. And, you know, assimilate into that cultural understand the decisions that were made. Talk to the folks that were there because they have a historical context of the decisions that were made before you before you then say Oh, how about this, right? I can I think you kind of have to be in the middle.

Jason Knight 05:02

But they you start doing the How about this after a certain period of time? Or how does that go? Because you must have come with some pretty good ideas from paper. I like the scale of the company, the established practices that it had like that you must have had some things that you sort of sat down, you're like, Hi, now we could do that?

Ronke Majekodunmi 05:18

Oh, I did. I mean, I suggest ideas, right, as we kind of move on. But I also want to make sure that I understand. I'm one of those people who I just don't, should ideas just shouldn't provide ideas. I kind of want to understand what's going on first, and why those decisions were made. And then I'll might say, Oh, by the way, maybe we should consider this. So there you go. And that's sort of true for me in any organisation that I work at, that I go to work out, you really have to take the time to understand why certain decisions were made before you got there.

Jason Knight 05:49

Yeah, I think one of the things I've reflected on through my career is when you do turn up and you look at something, you go, well, that's not very good. And you start to maybe start to judge the people before you probably quite unfairly, because probably you would have done exactly

the same thing in their situation. And given the context and the situation and the circumstances that we're in, but it's just really easy to kind of walk in and just say, well, they the old team must have sat. And obviously, it's never quite as simple as that.

Ronke Majekodunmi 06:14

Right. But so and you're right, it's easy to do that, right. But one thing I always strive for is to provide a lot of evidence historical factor as to why I made certain decisions, why my product vision is what it is. Because I think as a product manager, you're you are privileged right to be in a role where you get to build products for your customers. So you that you have that opportunity for just a limited amount of time, right? You're a shephered, you're a shepherd to that product, but it's not forever. So I always ask myself, at the end of the day, what evidence Am I leaving for the next person who's going to come over and take over this role, so that that person at least understands my thinking, where it was headed, and then they can make their own decisions, right, because they will come in, they're going to change things around, but they should at least understand, okay, for that time when rocky magic and doomy was the product manager on this product, here is what she here's the parts that she dealt with. And here is the legacy that she left to me. Okay, great. I'm going to take any go to something else with it.

Jason Knight 07:11

Absolutely. And hopefully get your name off of any of the incriminating documents where anything went wrong as well.

Ronke Majekodunmi 07:18

You know what, I take it all I think, listen, the good and the bad. Because even though forget if the bad evil makes me a better person, it basically a better person, a better leader, a better product leader. So I say bring it on the good end?

Jason Knight 07:31

No, absolutely. But I was doing some background research. And obviously, you've worked in product at a few places in your career, including Pay Pal, as we just said, LexisNexis that we were talking about just before this call. But one thing I found curious was some information that you provided around one point in your career where you got offered a larger salary for a new role. You took it, didn't ask questions, and then ended up having a bad experience. And I'm gonna say that I've had buyer's remorse on job roles myself in the past, like, I know how that can be. But without lingering on the bad experience itself. What did that teach you about maybe some non negotiable questions or things that you had to find out before you took a job after that?

Ronke Majekodunmi 08:11

Oh, for starters, that has really stopped me to run to an opportunity and not run from one. So

On, for starters, that has really stopped me to run to an opportunity and not run from one. So that job, before I took that job, I actually had a really great opportunity. I was I was working, I was a manager, I had five direct reports, I had a supportive team around me, my job was on Jeopardy was actually making a difference. But I decided to run to this job for the wrong reasons, you know, for the money. And I should have stopped, I should have asked questions. And so what I always tell aspiring product managers is, even if someone is offering you three times what you make four times what you make, it doesn't matter. Always think at the end of the day, will I be happy there? Will I be able to make a difference there? Will my voice truly be heard there will be muted in my case, my voice was muted and didn't really have, I couldn't make decisions that I should be able to make as a product leader. So those are the questions to ask. But one fundamental thing for me, at any organisation I go to is a product lead or is an engineering lead. There's a difference, right? Yeah, if it's product lead, it's a win win for me because it means the customer can be the centre of every single decision that we make. If it's an engineering lead, well, product customer, the customer is at the centre right of every decision made. It could be for the product leader doesn't have a say, my voice is not the one I'm not the voice of the customer. So that's a deal breaker for me, really, for any organisation I go to since I learned that lesson, it has to be product lead, because then I can kind of represent the customer.

Jason Knight 09:38

But no one's gonna sit there in an interview and say, Hey Ronke, we suck at that stuff. And the engineers are in control. Like yeah, Lord of the Flies or something like that. And yeah, we've no one gets to do anything. And it's a feature factory, and everything's different to how you'd want it. Like no one's gonna say that in an interview. So they're kind of proxy questions or hints and kind of little Things that you try to find out during an interview process to make sure that they are actually what you want.

R Ronke Majekodunmi 10:05

Yes. So I'm a firm believer in the box methodolgy, the box methodology, which is designer tech, lead and product, I like collaborating in that box environment. And one of the things I like to do is I like to make sure that when we do customer interviews, even if it's just a day in the life of a customer, where we understand how a customer uses our product, I always like to make sure my partners are in the room with me, which is engineering and my tech lead. I mean, my tech leader, my designer, what I will say is this, if I work in an organisation, and the box is not feasible, and my tech leader, my designer can't come to a meeting. That's your, that's a sign right there. Right. And the reason you need that you need the the in that same point, because like I'll give an example, an iPhone, right? The way I use an iPhone is going to be different culturally than the way you're gonna use your an iPhone, there's cultural impact and how I use my iPhone, the only person that's going to know that is the designer, right? My Tech Lead needs to be able to ask questions of the customer questions that I haven't asked so that he can truly understand the what is the jobs to be done that they're trying to accomplish? Why are they logging into our platform to do this job? How can we make an impact in their day, and the only way he's going to be able to do that is to be in the room, he has to be in the room. And most importantly, empathy, empathy, I can't make you feel for the customer if you're not in the room, right? So if I so that's one of the things I asked him interview questions is about the box methodology. And also, I own asked to talk to them to my tech lead, I always ask to me with my engineering tech lead, so I can kind of understand, is that person want to be in the room with a

customer? Or do they just, you know, are they gonna say to me no recording, and I'll listen to it later, right? Yeah, those are signs, right? Because, and why that's so important is because if then engineers in the room with a customer, no wonder they have empathy, they become changed, right? They get to see what that customer deals with every single day. And I no longer need to get their buy in anymore. They're with me. They'll galvanise they understand why we must fix this problem.

Jason Knight 12:10

Now absolutely big fan of getting everyone in the room and breaking silos and all that good stuff. And I know we're talking about that a bit in a minute in the context of storytelling as well. But on storytelling, I mean, you talked or we talked before this about the importance of storytelling in your product career, weaving a narrative and having that travel easily through cross functional team members. And obviously, I agree with the concept, but not to say that not everyone's a natural storyteller. And before digging into that, I guess the question is, have you yourself always been a natural storyteller? Was that some skill that you had to learn?

Ronke Majekodunmi 12:44

That's a skill I had to learn. I had a designer that I worked with a long time ago, my career. He literally looked at my presentation one day and said, I hate your presentation.

Jason Knight 12:55

He had good empathy skills as well!

Ronke Majekodunmi 12:57

Hey, you know, he liked I listen, I appreciate anybody that tells me the truth, right? Think about it. How many people tell you the truth, right? Because they're afraid of hurting your feelings? No, he literally told me, he's like, I hate your presentation. And he helped me tell a better story. And so that's when I started to realise that product leaders are chief storytellers. That's our job, right? Our job is to tell a story to move you into an action, right? Especially internally, but our job is to tell the story where the customer is using our product to solve a problem in their organisation, and especially in the b2b world. And that's what we win if we can make our customers the hero in their company. That's where we went. Yeah.

Jason Knight 13:45

And again, I completely agree with that philosophy. But some people might sit there and say, Well, you know, if we just want to get people aligned, we can just send out emails at the end of the week, you know, red, amber green status reports and just do the bare minimum just because everyone's busy and who's got time to write a story of anyone who's got time to read

the story? And I'm obviously going to assume that you're not going to say that, but how do you kind of persuade people that maybe having more of a narrative around stuff rather than just facts and figures is something that's helpful for them?

R Ronke Majekodunmi 14:19

No, that's a good question. So number one, I always tell people this, you can throw all the numbers you want at me. I will now remember, I won't remember it right? But if I'm in a room in you can walk me through the pain my customer feels that stays with me. Yeah, right. So I'll give you an example. The way I like to tell stories, again, that remember that three in a box designer pack, right, is we saw in some of the organisations I've worked at any experience that we've already done, we're ready to build right we'll bring it to our leadership. But the way we tell the story goes like this, I will kick off the meeting. And I will remind everybody the core value of our organisation right core value of organisation is the thing that aligns all of us, right? The reason why we want to work for this company, but it's also it's important because that's where the love of our product comes from. So kind of start with that. I talk about the customer value. And then I talk about the business value, why would a customer care about this, what is the business value, but then I kit and then I pass it to our designer, and then our designer, was going to introduce the personas. This is Ronke, this is Ronke is an admin here at this company. This is what her day to day looks like. Here's the job she's trying to do when she logs into our platform. And then he walks through the current experience. This is rankings journey, when she logs into a platform, she's going to come to our dashboard, she's going to click on this, she's going to click on this, she's going to click on this, she's going to click on that, Oh, damn, now she has a report, he tells that story. This is the current journey, then he then says "Okay, now this is what we are recommending". And then we walk through the new experience. And we tell that story for all, you know, it could be five personas, it could be four personas, but we tell that story, why they are coming into our platform, what is it that they're trying to do, and then we pass it on to our engineer, and our engineer will then bring up the MVP, or in sometimes you may not even be an MVP, it may literally BB b one thing, which is minimum lovable, and he'll bring it up. And he'll talk about how what it's going to take to build this. If he asked to incur technical debt, no problem, he'll walk through what that technical debt will cost us. And when we can resolve that technical debt, probably at the end of the year when we have moratorium. And then sometimes I bring in a data scientist who will help talk about our KPIs. How are we going to measure our success. But one thing I want to mention is all four of us, including that data scientist is in the room. I've already met before the meeting, we've already gone through that experience and our story. And there's no daylight in our storytelling, right. So now when we present it to our leaders, well, we've done we've done three things. One was transform them from rankings world where she is right now to what the world she could be in, if we were to build that experience. And we've aligned with them, that we this is important, right? And thirdly, we've inspired with them, that we are trying to solve real problems for our customers. And so even if we can build a Northstar, we have the support of our leaders in that they'll go okay, what are your resources do you need, but when they leave that room, they leave that room changed and transformed. And that is how you tell the story.

Jason Knight 17:28

It's interesting, as you were saying, I was thinking that there's kind of two ways to look at it. Obviously, one of which is the story itself is almost the the game changer there like something that you can use to spread stuff around and get people aligned. But at the same time, to some

degree almost, it's the creation of the story, cross functionally, which also then helps to drive that alignment as well. So do you feel that it kind of gives you two for the price of one there, like, you're getting the benefit of both? Because as a team, you're building this stuff together. But then you've got something that you can then inspire people with afterwards?

R Ronke Majekodunmi 18:01

Absolutely. An assignment, is that right? Because then you know what else happens? My designer is going to go into a meeting on a Thursday and meet with other designers in his org. And he's going to share that experience. And I'm going to ask him questions. I don't need to be in the room. The story is travelling, you see that? Yep, my engineering lead, he's gonna go have a one on one with his manager at some point during the week, I don't have to be in the room to story travels, right. And then same thing with my data scientists. Now I also wanted to mention if I also have other instructional partners, right, like risk policy, legal, if they're in the room, I don't have to be there when they talk to their leadership and their teams. You see how the story travels, or with that experience? And I just provide it to them at the end? So in terms of cross collaboration, yeah, absolutely. There's a lot, there's a lot of cross collaboration, then it helps to tell our story together. And now we know okay, what problems we're solving for the customer? But most importantly, how does it tie to the core value and the mission and vision of our organisation? And we're all aligned?

Jason Knight 19:04

Yeah, I think that mission and vision thing is interesting, actually, because one exercise I like to do when I go into companies is, or at least to try to get them to do is sort of start from the CEO and go all the way down through the organisation to like the lowest person on the notional corporate ladder and try and find out how many different stories there are like how many different opinions that there are of what the company does or what the company is for what the strategy is, and all of that stuff. And obviously, even in pretty small companies, you can find quite a lot of disconnects and people thinking that the story is different. So it kind of sounds is that what you're trying to do is, to some extent, address that as well. Right to make sure that basically the entire company can rally around something which is obviously I agree with you like this chief storytelling officer type thing, something that all PMS should strive for?

R Ronke Majekodunmi 19:48

Absolutely. It shouldn't matter by the way who you are, if you're in tech support, yep. If your customer success, account management, you should be able to tell that story. Exactly. You should be able to exactly you should be able to See no customer? Are these new features coming out? Here's our differentiators for the market. Oh, by the way, we have a focus group, we have a customer advisory board. We've done a day in the life. We know what you're trying to do, we got you covered, but you should be able to tell that story. So I'm a big fan of galvanising, the whole entire organisation is storytelling.

Jason Knight 20:19

Absolutely. But a lot of product managers love frameworks, or canvases, all these other sort of

Absolutely. But a lot of product managers love frameworks, or canvases, all these other sort of jumping off points or ways to get them started. And some people might sit there and sniff canvases and say, Well, you know, that's just a lazy person's way of doing product management, and it's not going to do all your work for you. And other people were going to say, as I often do, that they have a good starting point to get you thinking and asking the right questions. But when it comes to then building those stories, aside from the kind of cross functional collaboration that you've just been talking about, are there any approaches or kind of frameworks that you do use for that? Or was it literally just you and all of your friends sitting around a typewriter? Typing there once upon a time? and off you go?

R Ronke Majekodunmi 20:59
No, I totally Oh, good question. So um, I love Jira,

Jason Knight 21:04
You're the only one! You must be the only person!

R Ronke Majekodunmi 21:07
I do love JIRA. Asana is really great. Also, by the way, I just want to make give it give a shot. So some of the listening to this. No sign is also really good. I just want to give a shout out there. But what I was gonna mention is what the way I write stories I like Jira by Atlassian. Atlassian has a Medium article that they put out a long time ago, that recommends how you should write a story. And I actually prefer to write it from the personas point of view. So usually, a story would go something like this, as a admin, I want to be able to change the phone number of my secondary of my of my employee, right. And then you write your success criteria, it is complete, when I can change the the you know, I can log into the system go to the profile, pull up the profile of my employee, and it is complete when I can change the name. It is complete when there's a report that meant that provides me details as to the time and date that I change the employee's name, it is complete when you know Bla bla bla, bla, bla, and on and on. And you know, for the engineering team, it is complete when there was instrumentation to track this stuff. I actually prefer to write it in the personas for now personas point of view, because what it also drives is empathy for the engineer that's working on the story. No, absolutely.

Jason Knight 22:20
Speaking of stories, you shared some stories before this call about your career. And this is maybe a slightly less aspirational one. And to paraphrase, you had some senior stakeholders in a previous job who ignored your advice, cheated you out your bonus and told you to air quotes, dress like an executive. And then later you said, I guess after the fact that you had proof that this was also racially motivated, which obviously adds an additional layer of horror to the will that situation, and it has inspired you to again, in your words, run your race on your terms. Now, obviously, I don't want to trigger your PTSD and go through all of the awful parts of that situation. But in the spirit of positivity, what does running your race on your own terms translate to in practical terms?

Ronke Majekodunmi 23:02

Sure. So I just want to correct one thing, he told me that that I dress too nice, and that I gotta just like an executive in a rather right now do that this doesn't clarify that...

Jason Knight 23:10

Oh, we want you NOT to dress like an executive?

Ronke Majekodunmi 23:12

That I dressed too nice. I know. So for me, running my own race means means that I am going to be myself. I'm going to be my authentic self. my authentic self means when I wake up every single morning, I there's the alarm clock test for me of what I'm going to be today part of somebody's story today, Jason and part of your story, right? You're part of my story? What is that going to be like? There is the mirror test that night, right before I go to bed? Did I make a difference today in somebody's life? Did I make a difference in the world today to a perfect stranger, right? That's what I mean, by running my story. I'm just going to be my authentic self. And hopefully, hopefully, I am by doing what I do with my product talks, my blogs, I am able to make a difference in someone's life. And that's fine product manager out there who can see me and see that woman of personal colour, like me can be a product manager or can be as Chief Product Officer and shatter the glass ceiling at the end of the day. If I can just, you know, impart a little bit of knowledge there and help somebody in their journey. My job is done. So that's what I mean by running my my own race.

Jason Knight 24:24

But it's interesting though, because obviously I got the story wrong. Marginally. But when you're talking about being yourself, and obviously, you know, running your own race your own way. Like actually a lot of situations being yourself is kind of seen as tricky because you, you go in and people expect you to talk or look or act a certain way. And if you answer back or you know, there's obviously all these cliches and horror stories you see of like, for example, black people in the workplace getting especially black women in the workplace, getting called out for being pushy or whatever and being judged. In ways that white men like me don't get judged. Like, do you feel in general that being yourself, when you are yourself is something that sometimes get some of those prejudiced reactions that maybe you encountered in the past? And and obviously, are gonna then best limit you but at worst offend you and insult you?

Ronke Majekodunmi 25:19

So that's a really good question. In my experience, I think it's I think it's definitely leadership, if the leadership wants to create an environment where there's equality, but also, there's diversity inclusion. And then the key recipe for that is belonging. It doesn't matter if you have diversity or inclusion, right. But if I don't feel like I belong there, I'm not going to stay right, I'm going to leave, right. So to me that starts from the top from the top, and then kind of flows

down. I've been in those situations where just asserting myself, or being assertive, because I'm a woman of colour, it's seen as being angry. You know, yeah, you know, that's the code, right? But you're an angry black woman. Or, you know, or you're, you're, you know, you're an angry black woman, or you're the D word, right? Yeah. But what I also find in organisations where those things aren't allowed, it starts from the top. It really does. It starts from the top, from the tone, from the get go. I've been lucky that I've worked in organisations where the CEO, there's one particular organisation I worked out with the CEO literally starts every single townhall talking about diversity, inclusion and belonging. Right, every single conversation, he starts with that, and then I've been in organisations where it's not even talked about, right? So but I think one thing I drive home is this, okay? If you're building a product, for an emerging demographic, there's 8 billion people in the world, that demographic is changing every single day, right? The way you're going to meet the will to meet them where they are to find out what they need is unique people in your organisation that looks like diverse there are just diverse, they need to have that they need to be diverse in gender, they need to be diverse and lived experiences, they need to be diverse in circumstances, they need to just come from diverse environments, because they have diverse perspectives that you will need to build a product for an emerging demographic, right? Yeah. So and also that emergent demographic is more inclusion are focused every day, they are looking at the people that are building their products and going to look like me, right? So from a revenue aspect, your teams and your cross functional teams should be diverse, because that's how you're going to build innovative products, not just for today, but for tomorrow. Right? So if you know that then diversity, inclusion, belonging equality should be like part of your core value, right? And those are all ideas of a woman of colour speaking up. And, you know, and explaining her thoughts should not be oh my god, she's an angry black woman, a man of colour should be able to speak his mind without, you know, oh, my god is being aggressive and angry. Don't forget, there's also that side too, right? With a man of colour. Yeah, we're men of colour, how to be really calm when they expect someone explain something at work, because, you know, might be seen as oh my god, they're angry. All those old ideas, the ideas of a woman being too powerful, right? Oh, my God, you know, yeah, all those good ideas, it really starts from the top. I'm just gonna give an example of one company that I really liked what they're doing. Salesforce Salesforce had as a Business Insider article that they that they were in not too long ago, were part of their KPIs for everybody in their organisation, which includes the CEO, Bernie is the must hire, retain and promote from marginalised communities hire, retain, and promote, because they understand that and when I'm in an interview, if I see people who look like me, I'm gonna want to work there. They know that when I start there, if I see people who look like me and their executive level, I'm gonna want to work there. So baby steps, but again, it starts from the top.

Jason Knight 29:08

Yeah, no, absolutely. And I've certainly seen some bad examples that are top, which maybe I'll tell you offline. But you also talked about imposter syndrome and how that intersects with race. And that really reminds me of a chat I had a few months back with the author of a book about impostor syndrome, finished Rocky, who herself is a woman of colour and said, imposter syndrome is bad enough when it's coming from within the internal imposter syndrome that a lot of people have, to a certain extent, but the underrepresented people are also being in many cases almost explicitly told that they are imposters and that they don't belong by obviously, the prejudiced society in which we live in. And is that something that resonates with your experience and any impostor syndrome that you've experienced in your career?

Ronke Majekodunmi 29:53

So thankfully, I've never had anybody look at me and say I didn't belong, where I was. Thankfully, I haven't had that. My imposter syndrome was more about when I first started out as a product manager, doing all these resources, I cannot figure everything out myself. I didn't even listen, my first job as a PM, I was even afraid to make decisions. I was also free to make decisions. And so that was sort of where my imposter syndrome came from, is that sense of why am I in this room? I'm not smart enough to be in this room, right? Yeah, that's sort of where was for me was and then it took me some time. To figure out I honestly had to work on my own SWOT analysis, right strength, weakness, opportunities and threats to figure out what it is, that made me feel that way and kind of deal with it. But at the end of the day, what I realised was it was also about transparency, I needed to be able to share with my course functional teams, all these things that went into my decision making so that they can then I can galvanise them, and they can support me, for one most important thing I always tell us, right, in product manager, it is a week job, it is a week job. It's a job about humans, if you have transparency equals trust, right? Yeah. So that meant for me taking my sales pipeline, showing with the engineering team and say, These are the prospects that didn't pick us. Here's why didn't pick us because we didn't have these features. Taking the retention pipeline, these are the customers who resigned with us, these are the customers that didn't resign with us, because we didn't have a certain feature, right? So now that offering that transparency, then now goes into them understanding why the roadmap looks the way that it does. Right? So now I'm building credibility, you see what I'm saying? So that says, I don't belong here. Oh, my God, I'm a fake starts to go away, because I'm sharing everything I know. And also, I'm, I'm inviting them into my world to help me make some of those decisions, right. So my engineering team might say to me, you know, what, Rocky, let's do a bug bash. When we do a bug bash, can you create stories, those stories, those five, three stories or whatever? And we'll knock them out as part of bug bash. But you see how now the narrative has changed? Right?

Jason Knight 32:09

Absolutely. Well, it's good to know that you've not been excluded explicitly anyway. Because you know, that's something I think that happens to far too many people. That obviously doesn't help when you already feel that you're not necessarily smart enough to be in a room.

Ronke Majekodunmi 32:22

Exactly. So yeah.

Jason Knight 32:25

o yeah, sounds good. motivation for people. And I guess ultimately, we try need to help everyone understand that they probably should be in a room. They wouldn't be anywhere near the room if they shouldn't be in a room. Right?

Ronke Majekodunmi 32:35

Exactly. But also, we need them in the room. Because guess what, that's how we're going to

Exactly. But also, we need them in the room. Because guess what, that's how we're going to build innovative products that are going to continue to change the world. We need everybody's ideas, right? We do. You know, I can build it all by myself. Right?

Jason Knight 32:48
So that's your imposter syndrome talking again.

Ronke Majekodunmi 32:50
Exactly. I can do it all myself, right. I mean, look at COVID. Look at COVID, for instance, right? But do you can you imagine one thing that that just, I was so taken aback by it was, I would go get my size. Whenever you went to go get your Pfizer shot, or Madonna, they were handing you a card, a physical card, right? And they come on, we're like, I'm like you're telling me no private sector could have created an app. Right. And app that could was the only answer to a scan the bottle and you have all that information, including the lot number. Right now, in my wallet, I still have a card that has all my shots and the days that I took them. Now imagine if the private sector, Sony created an app, that app via API would have fed into my American Airline app so that when I was going to Europe, they would know I was fascinated. Oh, yeah. God forbid, something happened to me while I was in Europe, the doctor would see all the shots I've had. And I just thought, wow, how did no one come up with that? So anyway, so we need ideas.

Jason Knight 33:50
Next sprint, next sprint...

Ronke Majekodunmi 33:52
Next sprint. Right, exactly. Hopefully not before the next pandemic. But anyway, no, but yeah, but we need we need ideas. We need innovative ideas.

Jason Knight 34:03
So no, absolutely. So that's where all the good stuff comes from. But where can people find you after this? If they want to share some ideas with you or chat with you about storytelling or the magic of product management or see if they can get any makeup tips from your days back in the store?

Ronke Majekodunmi 34:20
I can't I still can't remember that. Yes, everybody. I my first corporate job was actually working at Macy's putting makeup on people are gonna say

Jason Knight 34:29

That, that doesn't sound like my kind of job, but I'm sure it was fun.

Ronke Majekodunmi 34:34

It was the job I was doing before I could find my real pm job. So anyway, there you go. I am on ranky pm.com. That's https://ronkepm.com. I am on LinkedIn. On the site. You'll find my LinkedIn information. My Instagram is through information, of course my Twitter and Facebook as well. But yes, yeah. And also you can also send me a message via my website as well.

Jason Knight 35:00

You're very accessible. Well, I'll make sure to link that all into the show notes. And yeah, hopefully you get a few people heading your direction and trying to find out more. Well, that's been a fantastic chat. So obviously you really glad you could spend some time and share some stories with us. Hopefully we stay in touch but yes for now. Thanks for taking the time.

Ronke Majekodunmi 35:15

It's been so lovely. Thank you so much for having me.

Jason Knight 35:20

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to hop over to https://www.oneknightinproduct.com, check out some of my other fantastic guests. Sign up to the misters Skype on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share your friends so you will make never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest but as for now, thanks and good night.