



SEASON 4

EPISODE 14

[INTRO]

[0:00:05.8] ANNOUNCER: Welcome back to Happy Porch Radio, the digital agency podcast for progressive agency owners and web professionals.

Season Four is an exploration of diversity in our industry, especially gender diversity. This season your host, Barry O’Kane, is joined by some wonderful cohosts for conversations with agency leaders and diversity and inclusion experts.

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:32.9] BOK: Welcome to the final episode of Season Four of Happy Porch Radio. Yes, this is the end of another season and one of the things that for me made this season especially fun were the three wonderful cohosts who have joined me. In this final episode, all three join me to look back over the season, we touch on some of the ways various guests have impacted us and some of the things that we are taking away.

We hope you enjoyed this season as much as we did so please do get in touch to let us know what was good and what could have been better. Now, on with the show.

[EPISODE]

[0:01:08.2] BOK: Let’s start with meeting the three of you who have been so amazingly generous and kind with your time and taking part in this season and cohosting this season. Erica and Kelly, we kind of spoke a little bit to you in episode two or three or one of the season. Kate, can you just say hi and just tell us quickly about a little bit about who you are?

[0:01:26.3] KR: Yeah, absolutely, my name is Kate Rostance. I run Fat Free Media, which is a film and animation agency and we’re based in Nottingham in the UK.



[0:01:34.4] BOK: Tell me a little bit about the agency, we kind of got a little bit of chance to – we didn't get a chance to speak much about your background and what led you, why are you running an agency and where you are now?

[0:01:43.7] KR: All the way through my teenage years, I always thought that I'd wanted to work in marketing and with a slight kind of side step into watching too much Ally MacBeal and wanting to be a lawyer. Then, when I graduated, I started working in marketing agencies of different sizes and disciplines right at the bottom but always in kind of client services and project management and problem solving and working with people.

I kind of found my feet in a few different agencies. At the same time, my then boyfriend was a film maker and needed someone like me. We decided to join forces and a wedding, two kids later, here we are. We're now a team of nine or ten of us and we got specialisms across different styles of animation 2D, 3D, illustration and editing as well. In terms of how we split up.

The way that we run the agency, I run the business and the clients and oversee those relationships and the projects and the finances and HR. Neil runs the kind of creative, the ideas, the kind of client strategy so there's a clear division down the middle.

[0:02:49.1] BOK: Awesome, thank you so much. Thank you again so much for taking part in this whole season. Kelly. Hi Kelly.

[0:02:55.0] KM: Hi.

[0:02:56.6] BOK: Welcome back, can you just as well remind the listener from way back in episode one, a little bit about you?

[0:03:01.4] KM: Yeah, sure. I mean, I'm Kelly Molson, I'm the cofounder of Rubber Cheese. We're a web design and development agency based in Sawbridgeworth, which is about half an hour outside of London so we're right in the suburbs. We've been in business for 16 years now, which is slightly crazy but I'm the managing director so I do very similar roles to Kate really. I keep the team happy, liaise with the clients, I do a lot of sales meetings. My cofounder Paul is, he heads up the creative division and looks after any work coming in and out/



[0:03:35.8] BOK: Awesome, thank you as well so much for taking part in this conversation, it's quite fun.

[0:03:39.0] KM: You're welcome.

[0:03:41.0] BOK: Hi Erica.

[0:03:41.3] EQ: Hello,

[0:03:42.6] BOK: Like Kelly, we spoke to you or we sort of found out a little bit about your background in episode one but I would love to hear sort of a refresher on that.

[0:03:49.8] EQ: Sure, Erica Quessenberry I have worked in agencies previously and I am now a solopreneur as my mom likes to call me, for Red Designs. UXUI designer and I work with agencies and in house companies to fulfill any UXUI design needs.

[0:04:07.5] BOK: Awesome. Thank you so much. I'm really excited about this whole conversation because each of you have taken part and joined me cohosting and we've spoken to a bunch of different people and I wanted to focus this conversation on kind of reflecting on that and trying to pull that together.

Just as a kind of opening question to the floor so to speak, what were their – was there anything in particular that any of you picked out that was particularly interesting or useful and specifically valuable that you've actually taken away from taking part in this conversations and maybe impacted in your work or your agencies.

[0:04:36.8] KR: Gosh, I mean, there were so many things and there still are so many things, I feel like I need to go back and re-listen to a lot of the episodes because there's so many things that I can take from them but I think one of the biggest things when we first started this podcast series. I had a real kind of interest in what we could do as an agency to build a more diverse team. Where we're located, it is particularly difficult to hire developers and I think that is a country wide challenge at the moment.



But it does seem particularly difficult here. We'd never had any CV's or applicants from female women developers, which really is not great. I think for me, it was, how can we change that, you know? How can we make that different? Listening to the interview that you did with Elizabeth Gibbons was absolutely brilliant. That episode was so spot on for me Erica and Barry, I took so much away from it.

I think the biggest thing that I took away from is that – I mean, Elizabeth runs an organization called Zero Seven and she really wanted to hire women developers. But she realized that she couldn't just let that happen, she couldn't be kind of reactive about that, she needed to be proactive. I really loved what she did about putting herself where she could find them.

You know, going out to meetups, making it actively known that she was looking for women to apply to these rows. Then putting the things in place that would make that easier for them, she became more proactive about calling people quicker when those CV's did come through and making sure that she was having those conversations quickly and putting people at ease that this was going to be the right place for them to come and work.

That for me was the biggest take away from that episode. You have to be proactive about getting people to come and work for you rather than just waiting for them to apply.

[0:06:28.7] BOK: Yeah, Elizabeth, I think is a really interesting and that she's really strong and really opinionated about that so she was driven to make some of that happen. What's interesting to me is that it doesn't take their sort of, the amazingness of somebody like Elizabeth to make little things like that, that actually make a difference, hopefully over time.

Have you actually done, have you actually changed anything or done anything that's impacted from that conversation?

[0:06:51.4] KR: It's interesting because we're not currently hiring officially but because it's so difficult to hire here, I'm always on the lookout. What I have done is made sure that I've spoken to the right people who are in those kind of circles. I haven't been to many meetups specifically for women developers this year.



But I have spoken to organizations like there's an organization called SyncdevelopHer in Norwich who are big supporters of women in tech. I've made connections with people in those organizations so that they know that we are actively looking for women to apply and they would be the first place that I can go to and ask them to kind of help me spread the word because they've got that network already.

[0:07:32.9] BOK: One of the things that I reflected on with that conversation is Elizabeth and maybe Erica, you have an opinion on this as well. Is there a cultural difference in some of those nuances? Elizabeth obviously is in Queensland in Australia. You're obviously living in the US and the rest of us are in the UK. But Erica, you and I have met Elizabeth at a conference in Brisbane. Is there any differences culturally there that you know, might impact about how we look at some of those things?

[0:08:00.9] EQ: I don't think I know the Australian culture well enough but I'm sure there are subtle differences. From my experiences in Australia, obviously I grew up in the US, they are, I don't know, I think there are similarities, I think they definitely still run on the patriarchal societal work model from what I can see but I also think that there's a laid back-ness there that's not necessarily present in the states.

Maybe a little on the west coast more so than the rest of it but yeah, that's a good question. I'm sure there are but I don't know that I could articulate what they are.

[0:08:35.4] BOK: Yeah, I'm particularly interested in that question as my team, we've got lots of different nationalities represented. Is that something that Kelly or Kate that you have observed or anything around the sort of cultural impacts because we spoke to several people from a couple of different places this season.

[0:08:50.4] KM: I don't know Barry, to be honest. I don't know, I mean, again, I'm very similar to Erica, I don't really know what the culture is particularly like in Australia or in the US really. I guess I mean, one of the things that Elizabeth did talk about is that she had to work really hard to define what the culture of the agency was to make it more appealing for women to actually apply.



I guess it does make a huge difference and again, it's just not – it's something that you've got to be really proactive about making sure that it is the right culture or fit for women to apply, I guess.

[0:09:24.7] KR: Yeah, absolutely. I think there's been lots of advice relating to recruitments specifically in this season that I found really useful. Like you Kelly, we're not actively recruiting at the minute so I'm like, yeah, I'm going to put my job descriptions through text and I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that. But these things haven't quite come into fruition just yet. I think that one of the really big things that I've taken from this season is I came into it with my eyes open and ready to kind of have those conversations.

That's also how I'm leaving it, I've got such a greater awareness in my day to day life. My biases and the fact that everybody has biases and I think Dan's episode did some great work with normalizing the fact that we're all bias in different ways and being aware of those and being able to see them out in the wild as well that just having that level of awareness is as really kind of changed my approach and made me think more critically about the workplace environment and culture that we establish and we continue to establish and how we want to be in the world as well.

[0:10:26.0] KM: I think that's so true, the whole awareness thing, just being able to talk to so many different people from different walks of life like I got to talk with Molly White who is registered deaf, blind. That was a whole eye opening thing to me about all the different groups of accessibility type things for web work and just things that I never would have thought off.

Then talking with Chris Howard and the whole LGBT community is just – it's not, this whole gender discussion is so much bigger than I think that I thought it was going into the season. Just hearing from these different people from different walks of life has just been fantastic to me.

[0:11:05.9] KR: What I also really refreshing about this too, especially for myself and for you Kelly as an agency owner and you Barry is that we can change the rules and that we can, we're not in a big organization that we have to kind of go against policy and campaign for change. We can be the change and we can decide how we want to be different and intentional in the way that we run our agencies to be more inclusive and to be more aware of how these issues affect us?



[0:11:37.6] KM: Yeah, I could not agree more Kate, the idea of having a smaller agency where we can be a lot more flexible about what we're doing is so much more appealing, having been part of this podcast series, just even the small things like you said, about texting you, I've written that down this morning, this one of my notes but you know, being able to do that and not having to run it past 10 billion people to make sure that I can do that is just so refreshing.

[0:12:01.5] BOK: That's something that I really took away as well and also that it doesn't have to be I need to solve, we have a magic wand and solve this whole problem or be perfect or anything, that there are some small things of just doing the work kind of. I think both Chris and Dan and a few other people who talked about not trying to address the better problem but actually trying to just do some small things within like within recruitment or within the team or within the agency and conversations, which as you say in a small team, that's the reason I have run and work in a small team is that kind of flexibility and wanting to be able to work within that team and for us to create something rather than to be a small cog in something.

One of the other things that really stood out for me, I don't know if this is something that anybody else even – if it stood out as much but that little exercise that Chris talked about with the kind of describe what you were doing, you know, without using pronouns or even not just because of that specific exercise but the idea or that something simple can allow you to kind of understand and emphasize and start a conversation within a team or within a small group of how to be more aware of success building, inclusion issues and therefore how to be more aware of being a better team mate and therefore stronger team?

What else stood out or what else would you have liked to have talked about more?

[0:13:25.0] EQ: I have not listened to all the episodes yet. Maybe it was covered, I don't know. I come from the other side of things where I don't run an agency, I am stepping into cultures so for me, I guess I feel like I have more of a unique challenge of how to deal with things when I step into a more toxic culture, I'm not always the most diplomatic person. Something I work on regularly.

Yeah, I guess that I would just love to know how to be a better advocate for women when I don't necessarily have the power to change anything when I'm stepping in and out of situations.



[0:14:07.5] KM: That was one of the major things that I took is I think from the beginning, I thought that diversity and inclusion was largely like I don't know, centered around gender and race and sexuality but actually, this season has really opened my eyes into it being about so much more than that, you know?

I hadn't considered, although I am on the receiving end of it like how my status is apparent, how people are discriminated against as parents in the workplace and I thought that the section on trying to use LinkedIn with the screen reader and how frustrating that is that it literally never crossed my mind as an abled body person.

It's about so much more than and I've really got that better awareness of it and I felt that the season was quite well rounded in that respects in terms of lots of different ideas and lots of different focuses as well.

[0:14:58.3] KR: One of the things that I've taken away is an understanding of things that I would like to be more involved in as well because of interviews that I've heard. Speaking to Kelly McKenzie, White Bear studios about her shape initiative. I mean, I think what that initiative is doing to get more school children into design and the creative subjects is so vital at this point and it's something that we'd like to be involved in as an organization going forward but just that something that you know, I'd love to see her kind of take nationwide as well.

I think that you know, if that initial conversation sparks something in us to be able to do that, I'd really hope that it spark that in the listeners as well.

[0:15:42.4] BOK: yeah, that would be wonderful to think that we've done, planted some little seeds. Part of the broader conversation as well and at the start of the season, one of my concerns was wanting to very much be part of a conversation rather than sort of trying to get people involved, thinking that we're preaching or that I know what I'm talking about.

I think it's really cool that we had so many people on who did know what they were talking about and who were very down to earth and real, rather than you know, rather than preaching or attacking and just talking about some very actionable things. Doing things like that, that shape initiative and a couple of the other things like in a more nascent fashion, Harry's, CarersInTech,



which is literally just traces trying to put something together very small. That for me was very inspiring.

[0:16:29.9] KM: Kate, the interview that you did with Asad really struck really struck a cord with me as well.

[0:16:34.6] KR: Yeah, he was a really fascinating guy.

[0:16:38.3] KM: I've met him a few weeks ago at an agency collective event and really loved speaking to him. It was really interesting, the conversations that you had around whether he would choose to work with a certain agency or not based on how diverse they were and that really struck a huge cord with me and made me look at the people and how we operate as an agency and how we could improve that.

To think that other agencies or other people would be looking at that and considering whether they would work with you or not was a huge eye opener.

[0:17:07.7] KR: Yeah, it's one I really struggled with in my past when I was a student, I worked in law firms as a legal secretary and a lot of large law firms have their clients impose on them like an ethnic diversity quota and you have to have a certain proportion of your workforce that falls into a BME category. I didn't like it, I didn't like that kind of quota element of it. It was a tough one because the tendency, when I asked that question, I was looking at my team, we're going, okay, I get a point for that and I get a point for that and I don't want to look at the team in terms of a quota.

I would never want somebody to look at me and go well, you're a female agency owner, therefore, you didn't get here on your merit, you got here on something else and like Dan Robertson said in his interview, positive discrimination doesn't work. Equally, diversity is a great thing and bringing together people of different backgrounds, different experiences, different cultures is going to provide a richer and wider experience part for you to do what you do best as an agency.

But at the same time, it's about fostering that without making it about quotas and I still don't know what the answer to that is but it was yeah, it was interesting to talk about with Asad.

[0:18:27.3] KM: Yeah, definitely. I don't know what the answer I either and I would hate to look at the agency and think that you'd have to have quotas that is just an awful way of building a team. I mean, ultimately, it's not diverse is it? It's forced. That just would not work for me and make me feel very uncomfortable. Don't know what the answer is there.

[0:18:45.8] KR: One of the other things I found really interesting that I found out about these seasons was about Project Implicits, which is a Harvard research program that you can do online and you can do these little quizzes and it basically tells you how biased you are against different groups and I sat and flicked through the first one, which was around gender.

I was really surprised as a female myself and as a strong advocate for other females that the results came out that I was a little bit discriminatory towards women. I thought the whole concept of bias and the different types of bias that you can have, you know, as someone who sits here and thinks that they must be quite enlightened and you know, not part of the wider problem. It was really refreshing to look at that and think, actually, I do have my own biases and that everybody does and actually part of the bigger picture is doing the work and finding out what your biases are and being aware of them and in order that you can observe your behavior from a kind of third party perspective to make sure that your actions aren't being intrinsically biased against women in my example.

[0:19:53.7] KM: I've made a note to go and take those tests, you will need to do that.

[0:19:56.4] KR: Yes, I have as well.

[0:19:59.9] BOK: Yeah like the same, ditto and I think that is another great example of something that is actually relatively low investment in terms of effort to go and do but it could be even if you've got to take or I would want to take the results with a pinch of salt, how much can they tell about me after a 15 minute online test but at the same time to be able to take that. You are being open enough to take that onboard and then reflect on it and see if there are ways.

So that might change the way I should be, basically. Erica, I wanted to go back to something that you said a few minutes ago about going into teams and is there anything that you think is relevant to talk about more that might be an interesting area to explore from the point of view of



a team who is some people as an agency team periodically we get free lancers and people coming and joining the team for projects or whatever, is there something that you can say that there is some things that this team does better when I am joining them versus something with this other team?

[0:20:54.5] EQ: That is an interesting question. I have never really thought about it before. I think there are some teams that I struggle more on because I feel like they won't let me do my job and I can't necessarily attribute that to gender per say. Maybe they are just micro managers maybe they are controlling, they can't let go of the projects, I don't know but they are definitely teams I have stepped into that I have had more success with than others that are more fun to work with and I feel like they value that decade plus of experience I bring to the table, does that answer your question? I lost track of the question.

[0:21:30.1] BOK: Yeah, I think it does because the part that is interesting to me about that is in this season, we talked a lot about recruitment and there was some conversations in one area, which in retrospect would love to explore a bit more was after recruitment, which is very similar to what you are talking about, when somebody joins the team or when the team changes. Kelly was it you that we are talking about where the impact or the changing, the potential impact of hiring people and the impact that might have on changing the team?

[0:21:57.2] KM: Yes, I was actually. When we first started speaking, we had a couple of people move on and then a couple of new people join and I guess I was interested to see how that would change the culture, interested to see how – the whole onboarding process of building an agency and bringing new people on it is quite interesting and I just – yeah I guess I was looking at how that was going to change things here and the best ways of doing that and I guess Erica, you're doing that all the time because you are going in and out of digital organizations.

[0:22:30.7] EQ: Yeah, I mean I would like to think that I chose the team for the better but it is hard to know and I try to ask in our projects and get feedback like good things about working with me, what can I work on, what did you find frustrating, what can I do better the next time around. Sometimes people are candid with me, sometimes they don't answer me. It is hard to know.



[0:22:54.2] KR: And Erica, when you go into different organizations kind of comparing your best experience with your worst experience, what do the companies that you enjoy working in best from a culture perspective, how do what they bring differ to everybody else?

[0:23:09.7] EQ: I guess it's when they come with an open mind and they come with the willingness to collaborate and let me be part of the team rather than dictate to me. I am very flexible in how I work. I am very willing to step into people's workflows and their processes and use their tools and things like that. I feel really disrespected when I step into teams that want me to just be the hands of the project instead of the created brain behind the project.

So I guess it's that openness and that willingness to allow me to be a part of the team instead of just the hands that complete the work for them is the biggest thing that I feel.

[0:23:53.0] BOK: So another topic that I wasn't expecting to come up in this season but actually has quite a big impact on the way I think or maybe with something I wasn't consciously aware of and that's Carol's conversation when we talked about I guess background as in social economic background and how that impacts your opportunities and how that as well is not – I was thinking about that as a globally spread conversation. You know working with somebody in one part of the world versus somebody who is here but actually there is quite a big difference even within one city for example.

[0:24:28.6] EQ: I thought that was an interesting conversation as well and I love Carol. I have known her for a couple of years now and I don't look at her and see a person who grew up in a lower socio economic class. I guess that never crossed my mind about her but it made me realize how privilege I grew up I guess and both my parents are in the medical field or they were in the medical field and had higher degrees and basically encouraged them and enabled me to do whatever I wanted to do.

And I didn't consider tech and that wasn't in my radar initially but because they were in the medical field, I set my sights high for whatever I wanted to do. So it was an interesting conversation that somebody in your own town could have such a different experience and feel very differently about education and job opportunities.



[0:25:20.7] BOK: And there was one other conversation, which again in the same way kind of was slightly different to always very parallel to the main thrust of the season and that was the conversation with Peter. I had about events and diversity of people attending events and opportunities and things for speakers. Erica I know that you have spoken at a couple of events, is that something that you have noticed in terms of attending events or opportunities to speak?

[0:25:46.5] EQ: Well I think you have to want it. At least when I started I definitely had to pursue it myself and I hate public speaking but I also like to torture myself I guess. So it is something that I'd strived for and I reached out for and at least in my development circles now, they're starting to get better about reaching out to women and trying to balance that more but I also see a lot of women who have been encouraged by seeing other women speak and they're more willing to put themselves out there now too. I think it's that – it's the same with when women are looking for jobs when they look at your about page if they see other women, it's kind of like the snowball effect. I can fit in here, I can do this.

I think it's starting to come more to play, again, at least in my circles, I don't know about the broader tech industry at large, I actually don't normally see a lot of women speakers on the rosters and for conferences I look at but I'm hoping it's starting to gain some momentum.

[0:26:41.6] KR: We have a really great event in Nottingham called Women in Tech and one of the things that they do is have lightning round talks so this is to encourage women in the local area to give it a go to give public speaking a go into maybe not stand up and speak for 45 minutes on a subject they're very passionate about but instead, stand up for five or 10 minutes and give a brief overview about it.

I thought that that was a wonderful idea to encourage and to make it a less daunting task. I'm not great at public speaking and things like joining you guys for the podcast is part of my efforts this year to get more confident about putting myself in the public sphere. I think that it's a muscle that you need to exercise so I think those kind of – the lightning talks are a great way of taking that first step and starting to exercise that muscle.

[0:27:34.8] KM: Yeah, absolutely Kate. I mean, Barry, I know that you've done a lot of podcast for this series but there's definitely – there's so many people that I could recommend that we could speak to. I don't know if anyone knows Lauren Currie. She's Redjotter on twitter.



Absolutely incredible woman, she's founded something called Upfront Global and it's really interesting, it's the upfront global is all about improving confidence. It's elevating and encouraging new voices on an off public stages all around the world.

She encourages public speakers to share the stage so for instance, Kate, if you were going to stand up and do public speaking, if you ran that event as an UpFront event you would have maybe three or four other people on the stage with you. Not necessarily speaking but just sitting and being on that stage and it's all about just putting yourself where the action is.

Putting yourself in front of that audience just to build that level of confidence about being there and that's kind of the first step of public speaking isn't it? You know, it's a huge fear being in front of all of those eyes watching you.

[0:28:38.9] KR: I love it, what a great idea.

[0:28:40.6] KM: It's so good, really good.

[0:28:42.6] BOK: You are right there when you say that one bunch off conversations is barely scratching the surface of so many different parts here. This unfortunately is the end of the season and I wonder if I should look at another one in the future and similar topics.

[0:28:56.4] KM: Yeah.

[0:28:56.4] KR: Yeah, go for it.

[0:28:59.3] BOK: Awesome, thank you so much. I really do appreciate all three of you giving up your time to take part in this, I think it's made the season far and away my favorite of the one I've done to the podcast. Unfortunately we run out of time now so thank you so much again, we'll put links to everybody's agencies and profiles on happyporchradio.com and for the listeners, please do message us, let us know, get in touch about what you enjoyed about this season, I really would appreciate the feedback. Thank you so much.

[0:29:23.0] EQ: Thank you.



[0:29:23.9] KM: Thank you so much for inviting us Barry, it's been great.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:29:32.7] BOK: You can get all the links and notes from this episode on happyporchradio.com where you can also find out how to send us questions, feedback and get involved in the conversation about this series.

If you enjoyed the show, please share with anyone else who might enjoy it too. Thanks for listening.

[END]