

Marty:

Hello and welcome to Article 19. My name is Marty Molloy. I am the president of Tamman and our host for a quick little mini pod that we're doing with my colleague Tobias Morrison. I'm so glad that you're here, Tobias. Thank you for hopping on for me and with a very busy day and a very busy schedule.

Tobias:

Thank you for having me on today, Marty. It's exciting to get back into radio and broadcast, a blast from my past.

Marty:

Woohoo. Well, we're gonna get into you being a speaker at the upcoming MacAdmins Conference, but before we get to that main topic, can you tell everybody just a little bit about yourself and your professional journey, kind of where you started and how you got here?

Tobias:

Yeah. I'm a real Gen X shapeshifter. So, I've had many careers throughout my life. I have a degree in film history, theory, and production, which made me an obvious candidate to become a MacAdmin. Honestly, so many of us come out of the creative arts. We go into these studios, end up seeing Mac workstations and something breaks and we have the curiosity and we fix it and someone says, oh, you fixed that. Can you maintain this whole fleet and kind of slide right in there?

I also worked in retail for a while, which is kind of where I got into both management and Apple. So, I was doing some Apple management and went to work at Apple Retail, ran their business sales. So, I actually kicked that off. They were like, here's a laptop, good luck, figure it out, and we did.

I spent five years in that program and built it up and did a lot of work in that area and then moved off into consulting. And consulting there is where I really got to dig in and figure out how to do Macs in a business, actually execute that, and really got into user experience. So I really focused my career on creating great experiences first in sort of that obvious one-to-one aspect, teaching people how to use the system.

But then, once I got into administration, taking those lessons of how people approach using the computer. So instead of focusing on creating a hardened system, that is what we expect, I work to create a loose system where I could guide people towards here are your tools. Here are sort of the difference between what Apple expects, I say a consumer user to have, and what a business user would want to experience.

Throughout that, I also dealt with managing teams. So, through a couple of consultancies, I sort of just led people along. In fact, one consultancy, two of the consultancies basically helped the owner pull him through how to run a business and how to manage your team. So did some managing from below. I think that is how it's termed.

Marty:

Did you ever receive any formal training in managing people, or did you just sort of figure it out as you went and acted like, I'm going to treat you like a normal human being, and we're going to learn together?

Tobias:

I've always wanted to have a mentor, and I've never found myself in a position of really having a great mentor. Although I did meet one store manager, not my store manager, through Apple Retail that taught me a lot of great lessons, and that was a good start. But otherwise, I just did a lot of reading and a lot of interacting, and I think I have a little bit of natural aptitude. Even when I was a youngster, people tended to collect around me and say, OK, what's next? And I would have an idea and just had the wherewithal to say, yeah, let's just do this. You know, why not?

Marty:

That's great. We're talking about the Penn State University MacAdmins conference. This is not your first time attending. You were telling me a little before when we started, you've been to a lot of these, right?

Tobias:

I only missed one public version of it. So, they started out as a first year I think was 2011 was PSU employees only word got out about it, and everyone was like, invite us. So, in 2012 it became public. I missed that one. I came in 2013 all the way through 2019. I attended every one of those, and I attended their campfire sessions which were remote during our pandemic years here. And I spoke at 2018 and 2019.

Marty:

That's fantastic. You're part of this conference. This conference is a part of you, which I think is really, really great. What did you speak about in those previous conferences? What were the topics there?

Tobias:

So, in 2018 I talked about that user experience, and that was about deployment techniques. So talking to admins about how to create a great first run experience for your users, getting them the tools, putting some desktop shortcuts there, giving them some training materials on the machines, but also encouraging people not to over-manage the experience for people, giving them some clues on what we think are best practices and what helped them do their job but leaving it flexible enough for them to make it a personal experience.

The next year, 2019, I decided to have a little bit more fun. So, I talked about MDM. I went through a little bit of a history of MDM, what Apple promised us, what Apple delivered, poked some fun at Apple about how they're not delivering what we had expected, made some predictions for the future and what we might want to see. And I had told you I think it would be fun perhaps to come back in the future and revisit that topic and see where we are now.

Marty:

Sure. You might get some people if they listen to this coming up to you at the conference this year. So this year's topic, let's get to that. So, your topic this year and what you're gonna be speaking on is from engineer to manager, the journey from doing to delegating. This is something that is very difficult, I think, for a lot of people. This transition and you were talking about always wanting a mentor and things like that. Can you talk to us a little bit about how you came up with that topic and what you're hoping to truly convey with it at the session?

Tobias:

So I understand that the title might be a little deceiving because if we were listening just now, yeah, I started management quite a long time ago in retail, and it's kind of been ebbs and flows as to whether or not my title indicated that I was a manager. But what I've experienced here in joining this team, I think, is the journey that I am speaking about, which is that I came in expecting to be an engineer on this team and the team needed.

Marty:

No, I can vouch for that.

Tobias:

What we discovered the team really needed was a leader. So I don't necessarily have a title that indicates that I'm a manager. I have a title that puts me as a contemporary with every other really genius that's on this team. The fantastic amount of talent where I tend to shine in this team is providing guidance. So I wanted to speak about how I moved into a role where I'm supporting people dealing with the day-to-day problems and challenges that people run into running meetings.

This tended to be a very quiet team that needed a little bit of motivation to bring out their best selves and to present all of their concerns. And great work that I know is hiding in there. So, I wanted to speak about that because working with people can be challenging, especially as an engineer. You have an engineer mind. There's a problem, I want to fix it. People are not like computer problems. They're very picky. They're very emotional. Computers aren't emotional; ones and zeros don't have emotions, right? You just make them move.

People get stuck in their various ways. So I wanted to speak a little bit about how I approach those problems. And when I'm doing a talk, I really am looking at a problem that I'm facing. And part of what happens when I'm developing the talk is that I'm just trying to figure out how to approach this problem that I'm having, and as I learn along the way, just take that and bring that information to people, so in a very practical way. So take the theory by making this a talk; it's motivating me to be better at this particular thing.

Marty:

Articulate what's happening around you or what has happened, putting it out there and sort of bringing people into your world with you and say, "Hey, here's what I've learned. What about you?" And take what you can and discard the rest, or whatever. And I personally love that approach.

I think that makes it very resonant for the person giving the talk, but will then resonate for the people hearing the talk. And I think that's really, really true. So, as we talked about, you're a MacAdmin conference pro, is there anything else that you are really looking forward to when it comes to attending the conference as a participant?

Tobias:

So this conference has- it's really the biggest one of its kind. It has 50 regular sessions, and then I think there's five or six workshops. So whole day workshops, and I say five or six because I know there's one that's split. There's two half-day workshops that become your one day. So there's plenty of choice. There's plenty of room for you to go to things that are really focused on what you are working on, and the best MacAdmins and the best speakers show up there.

But if you ask people who have attended a lot like myself, they'll say the best part of this conference is the hallway track, right? Being able to meet these people face-to-face one-on-one, and they really do support that. They've created spaces within the conference center to encourage that. And sometimes you'll find it hard to join the sessions that you wanted to join because that hallway track is so important and so useful, and you learn so much from it.

Marty:

That's awesome. I absolutely love that. And I think that speaks to the power of going back over and over again, building connections, building relationships that you can continue to evolve and grow and revisit over year, over year, over year. So that's great. Well, Tobias, let me give you the last word. Is there anything that I didn't ask you in this quick little short interview that you were hoping that I would ask you?

Tobias:

No, I didn't come with an agenda as such. I do wanna say that eventually, we, as regulars, and I'm making the air quotes there as regulars at the conference, we started talking about it as our summer camp, right? This is our big summer camp, and we're so excited to get to this sleepaway camp, and the hosts eventually cued into that, and they've started to incorporate some of that there. But I'm just so excited to get back to camp and to see all of my old friends again and engage that community because it's been a long time since I've seen so many of these people, and I know they're coming, and we're super, super excited and just can't wait to get to it.

Tobias:

That's awesome. I absolutely I'm so excited. I want to echo what you said about the current team that you have, both folks that might be part of Tamman and folks that I know who are not formally part of Tamman, but are just geniuses and brilliant and a number of our team are going up. But then there's this larger community that you just get to just bathe yourself in brilliance. And that's a really fun and

laughter, hopefully a lot of laughter, fun experience as you go. Well, I wish you luck. I wish you luck on your talk.

I'm so excited to hear how it goes. And I know that we'll be bringing you back to talk more about Mac engineering, predictions you make, and holding you to account on those over time. But also, just I wanna welcome you back to Article 19 whenever you wanna come back. So, thank you, Tobias, and good luck with your talk at the PSU MacAdmins Conference this year.

Tobias:

Marty, thanks so much for having me. I'd love to come back. This was such a pleasure. You have a wonderful day.

Marty:

You too. Thanks Tobias.

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