Article 19 – Neurodiversity Part 2
Speakers: Marty Molloy, Harper Yatvin, Bill Danbury, James Boatwright, Devon Pirestani, Wally Zielinski

Voiceover:
Expression is one of the most powerful tools we have. A voice, a pen, a keyboard. The real change, which must give to people throughout the world their human rights, must come about in the hearts of people. We must want our fellow human beings to have rights and freedoms, which give them dignity. Article 19 is the voice in the room.

Marty:
Hello, and welcome to Article 19. My name is Marty Molloy, president at Tamman, and I am the host for our conversation today. I am joined by a slew of my esteemed and supremely talented software engineers here at Tamman today. We are gonna get to know them, talk a little bit about development, accessibility, and more. Before I go any further, I also want to bring in my cohost for today, Harper Yatvin. Harper, do you want to say hi to everybody?

Harper:
Hello everyone. It's so great to be here today. Very happy to be cohosting the podcast. It's a privilege and a pleasure.

Marty:
So, today we have four of our software engineers with us. Bill Danbury, who is the team lead, and he is joined by Wally Zielinski, James Boatwright, and Devon Pirestani . Fake fact about this team. They regularly host a Friday afternoon demo where they discuss projects they've been working on in that sprint, all while singing and dancing in unison, Temptations style.

Bill:
Listen, ain't too proud to beg.

Marty:
I am definitely not.

James:
I don't recall agreeing to that being our fake fact.

Marty:
You have no say here, sir. So, to set the stage for any of our new listeners, before our conversation gets going, this podcast, Article 19, is borne from a decision at Tamman to state clearly and plainly that access to information is a human right. The developers and designers at Tamman work hard to make sure that no matter what use constraint a user may have, be it due to a temporary, situational, episodic, or permanent condition or disability that they will be able

to access the information designed and built by Tamman. This podcast is a call for others to join us in a larger conversation. We're working to build the inclusive web every day, but to do that, we need all of us working together and learning together. Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to Article 19, so let's get this conversation started today. Gentlemen, I would love to open things up with a fairly easy question in a round robin format. So, I'm gonna start with you, Devon. If you could, what is one personal accommodation that you make for yourself in your professional setting?

Devon:
When it comes to personal accommodations, I've actually recently adopted a kind of modified Pomodoro Technique, if anyone's familiar with that, but working sessions are much longer and the breaks are much shorter, so I can kind of get in the flow and stay in the flow without getting interrupted as much.

Marty:
That is super cool. I am not very familiar with the Pomodoro effect. Can you give us like a 10-second version of what the heck that is?

Devon:
Yeah. Pomodoro Technique, you essentially just set a timer for—I think it's 25 or 30 minutes, and you just focus 100% in your work for those 25 to 30 minutes, and then when the timer runs out, I think you take like a 15-minute break, and then you just keep repeating that over and over again for getting work done.

00:03:02

Marty:
That's pretty great. So your times are a little bit longer, a little bit—like what are the times that you use?

Devon:
Yeah, I've been using like an hour to two hours, depending on the task, because I find that like 30 minutes, especially when being like a developer, it interrupts the focus that I'm in for some of those longer projects, so I usually extend that to like an hour or two.

Marty:
James, what about you? What's a personal accommodation you have for yourself?

James:
This one's a little bit more common, and I'm not actually wearing them now, but I have a little bit of nearsightedness, so I use my glasses. I'm fortunate enough that I can get by day to day when I'm not driving and I don't need them, so I'm not wearing them now, but there are some times where feeling a little tired or early in the morning or something, and it's nice to have that,

and it also has the blue screen tint too, which I don't know if I've ever personally observed the differences, but I'm told it's great for helping your eyes.

Marty:
That's wonderful. How about you, Wally? What's something that you do for yourself?

Wally:
I've come on this podcast before, and I think when you asked me this the first time, I said it was like my ergonomic mouse that I have that's sort of like a trackball mouse, which is still the case. I still use it. I still really like it. But another one I would say—I mean, I really care about productivity, not in the sense of like I want to get everything done that I can. It's like I want to have my work be as frictionless as possible, so even just before this, I noticed that I had to keep muting and unmuting myself in Zoom, and I was like, wait, there's an easier way to do this, and I went and I remapped the button on my mouse to mute and unmute me in Zoom specifically so that when I need to do that I don't have to like frantically move the mouse around and find the mute button and do all that. I can just press this button that's always in the same spot, so I like doing things like that, like I have a paced history plugin on my thing because I'm always copying and pasting things, and sometimes I need more than one thing from that history, so I use that a lot, so anything that helps me make my day a little bit more streamlined I'm all about.

Marty:
Bill Danberry [ph], what about you?

Bill:
My biggest accommodation recently has been taking standing breaks away from the keyboard. I injured my back a couple of weeks ago, and so if I'm sitting too long, things will get really stiff and have to move things up, so if I put a concentrated effort into getting up and moving around, it helps keep things moving throughout the day so I'm not getting up from my desk at five o'clock and just being absolutely stiff as a board.

Marty:
Was that a difficult habit to get into?

Bill:
Oh my gosh, yes, because I'm so used to being heads down and just getting everything going from one to the next and just going for biology breaks, and trying to have to stop and make sure you're making these very distinct actions for the betterment of your future self as opposed to what you need in the exact moment.

Marty:
For sure. I am not as good as I would like to be. There were so many things that I wanted to start doing at the beginning of the pandemic when we went remote, and I don't think I do any of them consistently, so I admire your discipline. I'm gonna work out while I'm at work, and

none of those things actually work, for me anyway, but I dream. So, before we go too much deeper into our conversation, I'd love to give listeners a chance to get to know each of you a little bit better, get a little bit of background on all of you, and for this, Bill, I'm gonna start back with you. Can you tell folks how long you've been with Tamman, a little bit about your expertise, like where you really feel like your niche lies, and then one thing that you thoroughly despise about the work that you do, and one thing that brings you immense joy?

00:06:16

Bill:
I've been with Tamman for four and a half years. I have been in the field since [inaudible 00:06:22], which for those who are captioning this, that's gonna be something with a 19 in the front. I'm not gonna give the other numbers. But there was always something in college that I wanted to get involved with this thing called the internet that was just coming up, and I found a way to do it, so there you go. Dot, dot, dot, profit. I've been doing full stack work for the majority of my career. I do mostly front here, some backend as well, and of course now I'm managing this fine group of individuals plus the QA team as well, and it just gets better every day. The one thing I despise is having to rush and not being able to get a full—just because of the timing of a task, to have to timebox something and to have to only be able to give it an 80 or a 90% look as opposed to the full thing just for time, which is why the thing I enjoy is that I've got this great group of people here that I work with that's able to catch up the other percent, that can guarantee that if I drop something or if something else—that they will have not given me that extra bit, or they will catch it, or they'll step in and be able to resolve those issues.

Marty:
James, let's go to you next. Tell us how long you've been with Tamman, a little bit about your expertise in terms of niche or something that makes it a little bit special for you, and then something you love, something you don't.

James:
Hey, I'm James. Just a minute short of being here four years. It should be in January when the rollover happens, I believe. Something I really like is coming up with a solution that isn't maybe something that's on the existing path. For the most part, I feel like with work with web accessibility, I think one danger is you would maybe start thinking you need to reinvent something when you really don't, because like this has already been done. Don't be too clever. But every once in a while you get to get something that you haven't really worked on, which you haven't really seen a use case for and you can kind of work through that problem, and it feels good to be able to do that. As far as something that's frustrating, just want to second what Bill's saying. Sometimes scheduling, time, lack of resources, you have to kind of put something in the backlog or circle back to it, and that ends up being a frustrating thing to just kind of create that [inaudible 00:08:21].

Marty:

For sure. How about you, Wally? Tell us a little bit about yourself. You're one of the newer members of this team.

00:08:28

Wally:
I am. I'm on the other side of the spectrum. My name is Wally. I've been on the team I think about four months, maybe four and a half. Started around August. I'm much newer to the team than some of these guys are, but I'm getting up to speed. My expertise an background is definitely in the frontend side of engineering, very much focused on your bread and butter HTML, CSS, JavaScript. I did mostly marketing-type websites, not a lot of like appy-type development, and got into accessibility as part of my work on the frontend of the internet. One thing I despise is—it's gonna make me sound bad—I'm gonna sound like a bad engineer—I hate devops, like build process, management, all of the stuff that goes into like making a website. This is gonna make me sound super old too and crochety, but I remember the days of just like here's my HTML file and JavaScript file and my CSS file, and now there's like a million different ways you can go about building a site, and you need like 15 build tools, you need a post-CSS processor, you need Babel to transpile to your JavaScript. You need all of these tools, and sometimes they break or you try to pull up a project that's like two years too old for you to actually run it anymore, so then you gotta troubleshoot that. That stuff is the bane of my existence. I hate it. Not my happy place. But on the flipside, the other side of that coin is like one thing I really love is when I actually figure something out, when I'm able to implement something, it's sort of like the dark souls [ph] effect, like when you beat something that is so hard, that is giving you so much trouble and you've spent so much time on, then you finally succeed and make something that is usable and nice and it just works, that's the best feeling. That's probably the thing that has kept me going as an engineer for my career is that feeling.

Marty: That's so excellent. For the podcast though, we're gonna have you rerecord the what you don't like, but could you do it in like an old, elderly voice, like—and add in, "Back in my day, we only have HTML." If you could add something like that. I'm just joking with you.

James:
Make sure you also explain the dark souls reference too.

Marty:
Yeah. I'm just assuming it's a really hard video game.

Bill:
I was absolutely about to jump in explain that. Dark souls is a video game series known for being extremely difficult for players on purpose. The game is about it being difficult and overcoming that.

Wally:
Which is why I don't play it.

Bill:
I agree.

Marty:
It sounds like baseball. Baseball's just a game of failure at the end of the day, and you just have to have this mental fortitude. OK, Mr. Devon. What about you? How long you been in Tamman? If you could put it in some sort of multiple of four, since we have four years, four months, that would be great. And a little bit about your expertise, and what do you really love, and what do you just thoroughly despise?

00:11:07

Devon:
I've been here for I think it's coming on two years now. I don't know. I'm not gonna do math right now, but some number of—multiple of months of four or whatever. My expertise, I would say just like React in general, I feel like that's probably my favorite thing. I just love reading the docs, I love learning, I love supplementing my knowledge when it comes to that specific library. It's just like my comfortable space. As for things that I despise, this is, if anybody's a fan of Tom Scott, it's working with dates in JavaScript. On the surface, it's like simple and easy. OK, you get the date and, you know, you have a unix timestamp and all that stuff, but once you get any lower than that, any deeper than that abstraction is just like you wanna rip your hair out. There's time zones, there's daylight savings, there's GMT. It's insane, and we're working with a lot of times now, so I'm just kind of realizing every time I start that that I have to look this up and it's just really annoying. Something that I really enjoy, kind of similar to what Wally said where if there's like an issue and I see the issue and I know exactly what to do to fix that issue or how to solve that issue without—because there's so much uncertainty, like in this field, and there's so many things that you don't know, when you come across that one thing that you do know, immediately it just kind of reaffirms like I belong here and I know what I'm doing and my skill level is where I'm at and it just feels really good.

00:12:17

Marty:
That's excellent. Gives you the Sally Field moments of you like me, you really like me.

Devon:
Yeah.

Marty:
That's delightful. And while you were talking about the date, I thoroughly enjoyed watching Wally just full on amen you through all of that.

Wally:

Yeah, I love the Tom Scott reference. I know who that is. He's a great YouTuber and just person. I think I remember watching his video about dates just being the most irritating thing you could possibly have to work around, and like just the fact that it's all tied to like—kind of like made up stuff, like people make up time zones, and like laws change, like people get rid of daylight savings, and then people will start to observe daylight savings, and like other parts of the world have totally different calendars altogether than the one that we use in the U.S., so it's a nightmare, so big plus one to everything you said.

James:
I wasn't familiar with him, so I just did a quick Google search, and the second video listed under him is the U.S. government is giving out free wasps, and I'm so curious. I want to click on that link, but I can't—know we can't do it right now.

Devon:
I actually just watched that video. It's about invasive stinkbugs. The wasps actually eat the stinkbugs and kill them, so we're bringing them in to control that.

Bill:
And even more than that, there's actually subspecies of wasps that go after certain other subspecies of stinkbugs. It's great. I think we're a bunch of Tom Scott nerds here.

Wally:
Are they gonna go after the lanternflies?

Devon:
I hope so.

Wally:
'Cause those guys need to go.

Devon:
A couple years ago when Philadelphia was in the local news, there was a reporter that was in—was saying that she was blessed with this beautiful bug that just landed on her, and apparently on Twitter everyone informed her that was one of the spotted lanternflies and that she was morally obligated to kill it. Sorry, this got more dark than these chats probably go. So it was just a wonderful like retweet story of just how [inaudible 00:13:54].

Marty:
Let's talk a little bit about accessibility, and accessibility—Tamman is an accessibility consultancy. It's something that we care deeply about every day, and it's also the point of this podcast in many ways. So, I'd like to open it up, and any of you can jump in here. When did you first learn that accessibility was going to be important and obviously here at Tamman essential to your work? When was that first moment we're you were like, wow, accessibility really does matter? James, why don't you start?

James:

So, my previous gig before working at Tamman was at a big telecoms company that was very interested in accessibility, and I think I had experience that was similar to many developers where you kind of get a superficial understanding of it where it's like you know accessibility exists, there's like a small section of like ARIA labels or something when you're first going through and learning HTML, but it's not necessarily something that's inherent in your brain, and even further back, there was another job I had which was heavily focused on SEO and web development for SEO, and I find there's a lot of overlap between how you structure your documents, so I had at least a little bit of foundational understanding from that aspect, but it kind of first was approached to me as kind of a business requirement, but as I learn and just hearing more of the experiences of people that use technology that had been inaccessible and just learned from their experience, and also the friendships I developed from people that are evangelists for accessibility really helped grow how much I thought it was important, so that was actually one of the things that also led me to Tamman too because I knew that you guys were heavily focused on accessibility, so it just seemed like a really good fit.

00:15:25

Marty:
That's awesome. I'm grateful for Cabletown [ph] taking a lead on some of those things.

James:
OK, I wasn't sure how legally we could get with that.

Marty:
Cabletown's fictional, so I don't—I just—who knows who we're talking about in Philadelphia?

James:
They certainly don't have two buildings that look like a USB [inaudible 00:15:42].

Marty:
No. No, they do not. So, Wally, how about you? When did you realize it was gonna be something that was vital?

Wally:
I think I talked about this a little bit [inaudible 00:15:50], but very similar, I kind of want to echo a lot of what James said, like it started off as a business requirement, something that needed to happen for the work that I was doing and something that came down from our clients as something that they felt was important to do, and it wasn't until I started to research a little bit more heavily, started to understand the implications of what it meant, because I was in a position where I became the sort of lead person on my team. OK, someone needs to learn about accessibility and teach the rest of us because we all have to do it and we don't know what it means, and the more I learned about it, the more it sort of resonated with me. I don't

think it was so much like a moment that I realized this is important for my career. I almost want to flip that and say really, the more I learned about it, the more I cared about it and the more I decided it was important for my career because I wanted to make it a part of my career.

Marty:
Bill, how about you? Do you have that same kind of moment where the more you got into it the more you learned, or did you come to accessibility?

Bill:
Accessibility has kind of been on the sidelines for the first part of my career. I feel like when you talk about the [inaudible 00:16:52] and the early MuTools era, and everything was mouse driven, and there really was nothing out there for accessibility, and then that kind of gets under your skin, and that's the only way you're doing things, and you start talking about how do I make this accessible for a keyboard user to be able to remove what the strain is on the mouse, and you realize that I do that for they keyboard user, then I've solved some DOM issues for a screen reader user or for a braille keyboard user, and as you start looking at the reasons as to why you're doing it or why the fixes work, that they work not just for the use case you're looking at, for other things, it kind of makes it easier for you to start getting in there. Early in my career, I was always told to skip that accessibility part as far as what we were talking about with the ARIA labels and things like that because it would cost too much to retrofit, and it wasn't part of the budget for that. Now, what we do is completely different from that where we're building it in from the start, there's nothing that we ever put out that is ever like a retrofit, but that early career parts were just a lot of not yet, not yet, not yet to the point where you don't learn it, like it's so off to the side that it's so much more important to get it to work with the mouse than it is to get it to work for all people. There's really a lot of empowerment that we have with having the charge of accessibility first and always that just makes it easier to be able to get it done.

00:18:12

Marty:
I'm hoping that the world is changing, right? And that's part of what all this awareness building—and I'm hearing it more. It might just be the circles that we're running in, but I do hope that more folks are thinking about it at the forefront. Harper, I wanted to give you a chance to jump in if you had a question.

Harper:
Thank you, Marty. Bill, something that you had said really resonated with me, you had said that when you were working at previous positions, it's not the right time to learn about accessibility, it's not the right time to learn those skills again and again. At what point was it the right time for you to learn those skills, and how did you learn them? What caused that change?

Bill:

A good question. I think when it becomes the requirement that's when you focus down and you can get the real field learnings as to how it operates, and I'm a different person with accessibility than I was four years ago, just like I'm a different developer in general than I was four, five, so many years ago. But it's that empowerment, I think, is what it is. It's that I want to make this better, I want to be able to be a leader in this space, so therefore I will do what needs to be done to learn how this works and to be the best accessibility champion that I can be.

Harper:
Interesting. Did that shift start at Tamman or somewhere before? I'm curious.

Bill:
I've been working with it for about maybe eight or nine years now, but yeah, I mean, Tamman definitely put it into overdrive, but there's definitely things that have changed how I've been operating in the past few gigs with specific projects that I've had access to that I've kind of started going down that path, but it's not like it's a on/off switch. It's like finding your way.

Harper:
Thank you for sharing. It's fascinating to see how you put the pieces together, as did all of you.

Bill:
But I mean, to Marty's point also, we do run in some pretty great circles with accessibility-focused people, and it's a challenge when you see their posts on LinkedIn or Twitter, like adding a company that absolutely got in their way and just trying to figure out, number one, how do I not be that person? And secondly, how do we learn from this, like what can we take from this?

Marty:
Billy, that is so great, and I completely agree, and I think it's something that at Tamman we're still striving to get better, whether it's an internal retreat where we wanna make sure that our videos are fully accessible, or documents that we have in our onboarding. There does take a commitment to it, but I think just as you all have been saying, it's helpful when the more you do it, the more you want to do it, the more you're, wow, this is really, really great. To kind of move us along though, and Devon, to bring you into the conversation here, I want to start with you on this next question. I don't know why. I feel like you're gonna have something to say with this, but if you could tell all the designers of the world to do just one thing when they're putting their designs together that would make your life easier from an accessibility standpoint, what would you tell? You have the mic now, you have the power. Every designer in the world is listening to you right now. What is one thing you want them to do?

00:20:57

Devon:
That's a lot of power in one statement. The first thing that comes to my mind is just consistency, just stay consistent with everything. It really reduces a lot of the overhead that we have to do when it comes to like spacing colors, all that kinda stuff. Even though we have like a

design system, sometimes we still have to stray away from that with a lot of custom stuff, so yeah, I would say just consistency in general in everything is probably my number one.

Marty:
I dig it. I'm going to give the same power to anyone else who wants to jump in. If you could tell the designers of the world one thing to make your life easier, what would it be?

Wally:
I'll hop in on that. I think it's important for every designer to at least try learning a little bit of HTML CSS, at least just a little bit. I don't need you to be a pro, but when I've worked with designers who have taken the time to understand a little bit of how things work under the hood, I have a much better experience because they have a little bit more of an understanding of, OK, I need to systematize these things because there's only so many building blocks that you have access to, and it's always night and day when someone has never worked with any kind of code before, or not to say that you've never used it, you're not a good designer. I don't mean to say that. Just that when you do try to dabble in our little world a little bit, it really shows, and it gives you an edge when you're putting things together.

James:
You kind of stepped on what was gonna be my joke for a second because I was gonna straight up open up and say I think all designers should learn how to code, which is a topic of contention among designers, but I completely agree with what Wally was saying, not necessarily—I don't need you to know JavaScript or anything, but house things are—like say like the box models handle in HTML when it's like understanding the difference between like the adding margin order and just how elements are randomly ordered on the page, like styling technology with CSS has gotten a lot better, so we can kind of work around some idiosyncratic designs where maybe like the right read order jumps around a little bit, so you can use like CSS grid to kind of like affect that for some stuff, but it's so much easier, like they come in with that idea of, OK, it's kind of going from a typical left to right thing, so this'll be read this way, and this'll be read this way. I'm using my hands. It does not translate to audio, certain order of operations as far as reading would go. And also just want to second what Devon said too. Use one rem [ph] for all of your bottom margins for all things. Don't do like a one rem of 1.5 rem, two rems, or something. Don't make me have to measure every single time.

Harper:
I think James is a proponent of the Lego school of designs system. Everything's the same dimension.

James:
Yeah. No. Completely agree.

Bill:
I would say that I would want signers to review their designs from the view of someone with an accessibility need, so if you are designing a logo for an image with text nearby, look at what the

contrast is for a black and white screen, for color blindness. If you're trying to design a focus effect, try to see if that's the right thing you wanna do. If you wanna have this paragraph of text behind this tiny little feature that somebody who has a tremor can't hold a mouse long enough in that position or can't see their iPhone at that angle in the light, just keep an eye on what you're doing that impacts the people that are in most need of the information that you're trying to give.

00:24:14

Marty:
Very well said. Absolutely. We could talk about accessibility for another hour and a half, but something I've been wanting to start, a little controversy within this dev group, because as every good colleague and coworker should, I wanna drop a bomb and walk away, see what happens. So my bomb is knowing that humor plays such an important role on this team and at Tamman, which one of you is the funniest member of this dev team?

Bill:
It is not me. I will just say that. I know it. It is not me. James, take this.

Wally:
I'm so glad you said that, Bill, because I was gonna say the same thing.

James:
I think frankly it's me. The three other people are—

Devon:
I don't think you can vote for yourself. I think I'm biased for myself.

Bill:
I would tend to agree. If I had sports bowl knowledge like James does, that would be the crux of my jokes, but I just don't have those references. I don't know a [inaudible 00:25:01].

Marty:
But yet you do. Yet right there, you just proved you do.

Devon:
I think each of us has different strengths. I think Bill, he kind of forces it where it's funny. It gets to a point where if you force the joke enough it's kinda funny, like you have to laugh. I feel like James is good with the deadpan delivery. Wally is pretty contemporary. I don't know what my humor style is. I'm not gonna stylize myself, but that's just what I see. That's my personal—

Wally:
Contemporary.

Marty:
Contemporary is the best.

Devon:
Very hip, very like modern.

Marty:
I think you just called Bill old. That's what I heard. I don't know if anybody else heard that. That's what I heard.

James:
You got that adult contemporary styling of comedy, hosted by John Tesh in the evening.

Bill:
I was gonna say, Radio Delilah's gonna start rapping around here soon.

James:
Are those still going on?

Bill:
I don't know. What's radio?

Wally:
I can't decide if being called contemporarily funny is like a roast or a compliment. I'm not certain, and you know—

Devon:
No, no. It changes with the times, like you're very up to date.

James:
You had your finger on the pulse of the zeitgeist.

Marty:
I will say, we opened up—so at Tamman, we do a question of the day in our Slack every day, and thus the name. I opened it up to everybody, and I got a ton of wonderful question of the days. There was only one person who consistently I had to modify their question of the day, and it was Mr. Devon where I was like, nah, it's just too dark, or I'm not sure I could ask this. There was—I don't know if humor's the right word, but there was some stuff there that I was like I'm not sure I can go with the zombie apocalypse questions three times in a row, so very good stuff. But I do agree with the assessment there. Devon, if you could jump in on this one. Thinking about the team that we have here, if you got stranded on a deserted island, which one of your colleagues would be the best at escaping, and who would adapt Tom Hanks style to the environment that they got left on?

Devon:
That's a good question. I would not be escaping. I am terrified of the ocean. I would not build a raft. I would just sit there. I would try to adapt. I feel like I would do pretty good. My dad is a pretty handy guy. He opts to fix things himself, which have led—one time we needed a plumber, and he decided to fix it himself. I'll just leave it at that. Our kitchen flooded, but I feel like I would pretty good at like mcguivering my way. I feel like Bill also would Tom Hanks himself a nice fortress out of palm trees or something. I feel like he's handier than it appears, but I can't speak for the rest of us though.

00:27:11

Marty:
So, who's escaping?

Devon:
I feel like Wally. Wally would try to get outta there as fast as possible.

Wally:
I would want to, but I don't know if I could. I think James is the one that would actually have the wherewithal and the knowledge to escape. I would really try, and I would be very supportive, and I would be a cheerleader for that escape process, but I don't think I would actually be able to pull it off.

Bill:
See, I don't know. I think that this is how it would pan out, OK. We'd all be there stuck, and the three of us, Wally, Devon, and me, would be standing there trying to figure out if we're gonna build a fire, what we're gonna do, and James is gonna go off on the horizon. James goes off and for hours and hours and hours he's gone. We're sitting there trying to keep this fire going. It's getting on dusk. We're sitting there cold because it's windy on the desert. Is it a desert island or is a island deserted? Is it cold or wet? Which one is it? And then, as we're sitting there, we're like, oh my God, was there—where next people coming from? And we're all eyeing up Devon because he's the thinnest one, he's the fastest one that's gonna be able to be turned into Devon jerky, and—

Devon:
This is all skin and bones, Bill. This is all skin and bones.

Bill:
I don't know.

Devon:
I'm not gonna make anything.

Bill:

It's the fastest—

Devon:
You're gonna lose more calories trying to kill me than eating me.

James:
So we've gone to cannibalism, and I've already apparently left you all to die in this scenario.

Bill:
Right, because as we're right about to cannibalize Devon, you come back around the corner with a case of beer in your hand and say, "Wait, you didn't see the sign for the bar over there? I've just been sitting over there playing shuffleboard for the past five hours."

Devon:
I respect that that's on brand for me, so thank you. I mean, I don't know—

Marty:
I agree, yeah. I think you nailed it. I think that resonated. That was my favorite question of the podcast so far. This one, just quick hit, popcorn, boom, boom, boom, who has the strangest work habits, and what is it?

James:
We work from home, so I don't know if we have a good way of answering that.

Wally:
I don't know. I don't sit with you guys. It's hard to say.

James:
Yeah, sorry, don't know about that one, but I have no idea if anything—say for that.

Devon:
I can't work without having—I play cooking videos in the background of when I'm working, like I need background noise, but it can't be super interesting, but I still wanna absorb the knowledge passively, so I play cooking videos in the background, and it's very comforting and really helps me focus.

Marty:
That's amazing. I love that.

James:
Yeah. I definitely have—I'll put like Twitch channels on in the background, generally not of like people actually playing video games but there's certain ones that maybe scan around copyright that show a particular travel channel show that is no longer being produced that's really nice background noise.

Harper:
I love that. You'll have to send that to me, and I can check it out because I love finding interesting Twitch rabbit holes.

James:
I was just saying, I have no idea how it doesn't get pulled off for copyright constantly because it's literally just [inaudible 00:29:40].

Harper:
Interesting. I did wanna ask, from what you guys have seen, who has the best remote work home setup? I did wanna ask, from what you guys have seen, who has the best remote work home setup?

Devon:
I gotta say Marty. I gotta say Marty for that one. He's got like this little home office. I think you're in the office right now, aren't you?

Marty:
Yeah, I'm in the actual Tamman office now, but so you don't mean this, do you? I mean, this is nice.

00:30:00

Devon:
No, I mean like your home office, like you've got a little like—what is the separating privacy thing? Then you've got like a desk mic.

Marty:
That's true. Thank you, Devon. I kind of like Wally's background that we can describe it for a minute. He has the plant, which is very organic, but then he's got this neon tarot sign, which I think it just frames everything on your background. Bill, we never see.

Wally:
I really—I pissed off my boyfriend a lot by insisting that I needed some kind of situation for my Zoom background. He was like, I don't understand why you need this. Why do you need to look like a YouTuber? This is silly. I guess I could say it's for the combination because it's something that is like important to me to feel like I have a put together office space, like I look professional on a call like this, and I just hate the idea of being on like a plain white background. I feel like I'm too pasty white as it is. It would make me look like I'm sitting in a hospital. I just can't do it.

Marty:
That's a great question, Harper. I really like that. And we should actually have a vote, broader Tamman vote of who has the best background, because there's some folks that have some

really nice setups, as it were. I will admit this for the first time ever anywhere, even at Tamman, I'm not a fan of the virtual background, and it's not because the virtual backgrounds themselves aren't cool. It's that weird like a hand will just disappear or, yeah, exactly. Our producer Marcus is on a virtual background right now, and like his hand is there, his hand is not there. You know? It's like, doesn't work for me, and I've tried the greenscreen thing. I just, I don't—doesn't jibe. That's just my own picadillo.

James:
Yeah, I've definitely found them distracting sometimes, like I understand the circumstance people can be involved in why they would need it, but yeah, some of the fluctuating that you just previously mentioned, that can be a little tough sometimes.

Marty:
OK. I want to bring this to a close. This has been great from all of you, and I really do appreciate it. So as we look to the future, and this can be in the accessibility space or it can be wherever you wanna take it, when you think about the next evolution in software engineering—it could be frontend, it could be backend, again, take it anywhere you like—what are you most excited about as you think about what's coming next for your field?

Bill:
Virtual assistant-powered toaster ovens. I wanna say, "Alexa, make me a blueberry bagel with cream cheese," and then go downstairs and pick it up 30 seconds later, like that's what I want.

Marty:
Star Trek style. You want the Star Trek you could get whatever you wanted from the—just materialize for you.

00:32:08

Bill:
That's right. That's exactly what I want. Now that being said, is it real? I mean, no. In software development, I think we're really growing with regards to how the styling aspect of websites is becoming more and more like a design doc that's getting more feature complete with regards to that, but there's still a lot of old tech that's still there. Devon mentioned the date field, which has been unchanged since 1995, by the way, so there's definitely some old stuff there that needs to cycle through, but a lot of the things that we're doing are still like cutting the edge there, and there's so much we've done that—where accessibility was an afterthought with the ARIA labels and ARIA hidden, things like that that are becoming more of a first-class piece of the web development world, not to mention the fact that we are very nearly divorced from being a web app on a browser on a PC anymore, and we have to kind of grow with where Apple and Google have brought us in the smartphone era, and I was partially joking about the Alexa-powered toaster over, but I mean, that's where it's gonna go next where you're gonna have an accessible UI on your fridge to be able to reorder, and we look back and 10 years ago maybe people were starting to get into online bill page, and you were starting to do automatic

payments where I was joking with a cashier the other day about having to write a check because I'm just now starting to figure out how to tap to pay, so it's like these modalities are constantly changing around us, and modality with accessibility is a challenge, number one, for the person who has the accessibility need to be able to interface with a modality that's inconsistent with their ability, but the other side is from a technical perspective to be able to have either the forethought or the drive, funding to be able to research and get ahead of those pieces, being able to drive the car rather than being a passenger, and really, that's where it's going, and the modalities of accessibility become more and more important. They recently redid our road with the lights, and they put all these brand new accessible curbs and crossing lights and things like that, like spent millions of dollars on this one intersection, but there's 3,000 people that cross that intersection every day, so that's super important for a safety perspective but also for the accessibility that comes along with it, and think about this where your phone is your computer, where your phone is your television, where your phone is everything now. That's the world we're gonna be in within this software engineering world. That's where that's gonna go.

Marty:
Anyone else wanna jump in on that one?

Wally:
Yeah. I'll jump in. I think the thing I'm most excited about is the upcoming revisions to the WCAG, sometimes called the WCAG 3.0, sometimes called Silver. There are some really promising changes that are being proposed right now into how websites get graded kind of, quote-unquote graded, for accessibility. Right now it's pretty black and white. If you fail any single a criteria on any page, your website is not WCAG-conformant, and in Silver in WCAG 3 and the new versions, the very early graphs that I've been able to see, they're changing some of the ways that we think about grading where it's a little bit more of a spectrum as opposed to a sort of hard and fast this is a fail, if you have any failure you've failed the conformants. Giving some breathing room I think will be very helpful, and I think make statements like we're WCAG conformant, I hope that it will provide a little bit more meaning to that, right, where like right now you can say you're not conformant or you are conformant, and that means a very specific thing, but being able to say this website is conforming 80% of the these criteria and we are aware of these 20% and our goal is to move it from 80 to 90 next year, things like that, like right now we don't have those types of guides, and so it's all proprietary companies are coming up with their ruleset, their proprietary way of saying they're conformant, and it's not like standardized, so I'm looking forward to updates to that standard.

00:35:53

Marty:
Excellent. And for those of you who are unaware, if you're listening to this first time, WCAG is the web content accessibility guidelines, and we learned actually at our recently conference in Arlington, am enabling [ph], it's gonna be 3.0, which I was hearing Silver and all that too, so we'll give that caveat. I'm assuming they're sticking with it.

Wally:
Great.

Marty:
With that, we have one more question for all of you, and I wanna hand it over to my cohost Harper. Harper, bring us home.

Harper:
Gentleman, if you could display a message on a billboard at Times Square for one day and it had to do with accessibility or development, what would it say and why?

Wally:
Underline your fucking links. That's the first thing that came to mind. Just underline the link, please.

Devon:
I would probably say color contrast. That's the biggest thing that I see. Even before I got into accessibility, I would see websites with bad color contrast, and it would just make me upset before I even knew what it was.

Harper:
Makes a lot of sense. Bill or James?

Bill:
Have you put your mouse in a drawer today?

Harper:
Interesting. Would you like to explain that a little bit?

Bill:
It's a callback to my first podcast here. Putting your mouse in a drawer is basically using just your keyboard to navigate through a site that you're building, so instead of leaning heavily on focus- and hover-related, you're using your keyboard more closely to how a person with system technology would be navigating.

Harper:
That makes a lot of sense. It's very tough to know how that's going to be until you experience it for yourself.

Bill:
Yeah.

James:

Overlays suck.

Wally:
I love that one too.

Devon:
Yep. Agreed.

Bill:
Impactful. Impactful medium.

Marty:
I appreciate the pithiness of everybody's responses. That was good. And very, very deep cut from Bill on the put your mouse in your drawer for our listener who's listened to everything. They will enjoy that one, Bill. With that, I just wanna say thank you. I love working with all of you every day. You are a fantastic group of colleagues and humans, and the work that you're doing is really important. The work that you do gets seen by literally millions of people every day, and so you are making a huge difference, and I really very much appreciate all of you, not only in your expertise and your brilliance but also in the humor and the fun and the joy that you make here at Tamman, so thank you for everything that you do, and I wanna thank everyone who spent some time getting to meet our devs. That was an amazing conversation. I am so appreciative to all of you for coming on. If folks want to learn more about the high-quality engineering with an accessibility bent that we do at Tamman, please, please reach out. We'd love to talk to you more about any projects you have going on. As you can hear, our team is fantastic and ready to talk. If you like what you heard today on Article 19, please leave us a five-star rating, a review. You can tell a friend and a colleague. All of that would really help. If you disagreed with something that you heard, please don't leave us anything. Just kidding. We actually do wanna hear from you too. Let us know. You can find us across all of our social medias at Tamman Inc., or you can just contact us directly through the website at TammanInc.com, T-A-M-M-A-N-I-N-C dot com. And while you're there, don't forget to sign up for our newsletter so you never miss a beat with us. Thanks so much for listening, and we will keep this conversation going next time.

00:39:08