

## **The Design Untangled Podcast**

### **Episode - DU036: #IamRemarkable – Aggie Dawborn & Sofia Corrêa de Sá Stratton Interview**

**Host: Chris Mears and Carla Lindarte**

**Guests: Aggie Dawborn & Sofia Corrêa de Sá Stratton**

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(00:17) **Carla:** Hello everyone. Welcome to Design Untangled today. I am really, really excited to be here with two amazing Googlers, Aggie and Sofia from Portugal. Because everyone here in this country, their children and names, I do not know. So Sophia, we are here to talk about something amazing that Google is doing at the moment, called “I Am Remarkable”. And you are going to explain a little bit of what that means, but, before we start, I would just like you guys to introduce yourselves. What do you do here at Google? How long have you been here and how did you get involved in this amazing initiative?

(00:55) **Aggie:** Oh gosh. Okay. I am Aggie. I am originally from Canada. I have been at Google for three years and I got involved in I Am Remarkable about six months ago. I just heard about it, I think through one of our internal career weeks. And I loved the message behind it. I loved what it was about. And so I went to a workshop myself and then instantly wanted to become a facilitator. So it was pretty quick. That was love at first sight for me.

(01:24) **Sofia:** And this is Sophia. So I have been at Google for too long, almost, like eight years. In several offices - Lisbon, London, New York, then back to London and always in the client-facing roles. On my second maternity leave, which happened last year. I went through a journey of looking for purpose and I was like, hmm, becoming a mother, the opportunity cost of going into work is so much higher when you have babies at home. I would love to do something a bit more purposeful than just ad sales. And I took this course called Step Up Your Career. And there they mentioned, I am Remarkable. They are like, oh, did you hear about this initiative that Google is running called I am Remarkable? I was like, no, I have not. And then I went home, researched about it. And then luckily when I came back from maternity leave, they were hiring for the first full time employee to be involved to help grow the program. And I applied for it and I had never even attended a workshop or facilitated a workshop. But I am just so

passionate about what it is trying to do. That it is not my full time job, so now, I skip into work knowing that I am being paid, to grow something that is really purposeful. So I am very happy.

(02:31) **Carla:** So, Sofia, I think maybe you are the best person to explain to us what it is. What is I am Remarkable?

(02:37) **Sofia:** Sure. So at Google there is this culture of a 20% projects. I think Google is a firm believer that, to stretch yourself, you can dedicate one day a week to doing something out of your core role. I think that is phenomenal. And so the two founders, it was this lady called Anna, and another one, who has left Google. They did this as a 20 percent on Fridays. They essentially attended a course that brought them the idea that it was very hard for women, and underrepresented minorities, to practice the art of self-promotion. Why is it that we, these groups of people, struggle to stand up and say, why we are brilliant, or why we deserve to be promoted, or why we deserve a pay raise? And they were, maybe this is a larger issue that we should tackle. And they did all the literature review and all the research, and said what if we tried to do a workshop about it? And they launched a 90 minute workshop, which we recommend 10 to 20 people attend. And where you go through the research on the stats. And the stats are, they are mind bog boggling. And there are lots of them. So for example, why do men apply for a role when they see that they fulfilled 60 percent of the criteria, whereas women only apply if they fulfill 100 percent of the criteria. And stuff like that, we have lots that we can share. And you go through the research and then you go through the practice of standing up and saying, why it is that you are remarkable on a personal perspective, and on a professional perspective. And the idea is, that you exercise it like a muscle. So at the start, it is hard, and you are like, why am I remarkable? I have nothing to share. And then when you start opening up, you realize that you do have a lot more to share, and that brings you your confidence levels.

(04:23) **Carla:** That is really good. I mean you have been facilitating these workshops for a while. So you have actually been through the journey of people going through the activities. So why do you think is the best part, or the part where, I actually attended one of your workshops, where you see really the value of this initiative?

(04:44) **Aggie:** That is a good question. I think I think people are quite shocked about how afraid they are to shout about their achievements. And only when you force them to flex the muscle, which is how the, I guess maybe without giving too much away and sort of what is expected towards the end of the workshop, in case anyone listening wants to do it. You are quite challenged. And I think facilitating, it is been interesting to see how much people (a) get emotional, when they start talking about how remarkable they are.

And we, and we encourage them to talk about not only kind of work achievements, but some people have said, I am remarkable because I dealt with infertility and now I am pregnant. Or I am remarkable because I have a family member who is terminally ill, and I have gone through that, and they forget that these things are actually very remarkable traits. Like you are a survivor of something or you have achieved something outside of work. And when they talk about it out loud, it is emotional. And so when I first did it, I experienced that. And then seeing it, has been quite rewarding as well. So that has been surprising. The other thing that is been surprising is just the cold hard facts,, about how women specifically do not feel like they can shout about their achievements as much as maybe men. Which is what the research tells us and that, those are the two things.

(06:10) **Carla:** One of the thing that struck me when I was in your workshop was the data around women being harsher to women.

(06:16) **Aggie:** Yes. That one always comes up in the workshop. So this data is women and men, do not like women who self-promote. So it is not even just women do not like men. When men self promote it is just viewed a lot more favorably, or people expect it. Whereas, women and men react when women self promote, which is really sad. And I think, subconsciously a lot of women know that and maybe that is why they do not do it as much. But yes, I agree, I found that stat particularly hard, because we should be empowering each other as women.

(07:00) **Carla:** I know. I was really surprised about that, I just have to be honest.

(07:03) **Sofia:** It is quite sad. And actually we get a lot of feedbacks from people. We did 20,000 workshops in 2018, so we are talking about people within Google, and outside Google, because this is open to everyone. So we get emails from people we do not know, who said, oh my goodness, I attended the workshop. Thank you so much. This has changed my life. I have applied for a promo since, and got the job. And we get those, the stats, but also one of them, I remember we got was, I have since become much more aware of self promoting others. Like it is not only my route to promotion, my route to the next level, it is becoming aware of why was I not so supportive of my colleague running for a promo. And we really want to bring awareness to that.

(07:47) **Carla:** As you have been facilitators of this workshop, is it only for women, or is it also to everyone who actually struggles with self-promoting?

(07:55) **Aggie:** And I would let Sofia jump in and say something, but I think it was designed originally for women. I think it is evolved a lot. I think it is now for women, and

also people who feel like they are a part of underrepresented groups. So, we have a organization within Google called, The Gayglers, which is the LGTBQ community. And I ran a workshop for them and obviously that was mixed gender, and not focused around the struggles that they felt just being accepted for who they are, and their sexual preference. And the literature still applied. It was still relevant. So absolutely no, it is not just for women. It is for anyone who feels like they need support in sort of shouting about, not shouting, maybe that is too aggressive, just talking about their achievements and feeling like they need support in that area.

(08:49) **Sofia:** Yes. I also think definitely like I said, it started as a women initiative, and it is evolved from that. We have more and more mixed workshops, not just sort of specific minorities, like what you were talking about Gayglers LGBTQ, but just anyone really can invite you to attend, male and female. We have also been running co-facilitating, male and female facilitators for the audience to relate to both. And the feedback that we get is, even though you might not be an obvious minority, you might have been in a position of a minority at one point. So you might be a sort of the typical straight, white, male in something quite common in your reality, but as soon as you, you are located to another office, or another context, you become a minority, and then you might relate. So there is that angle. But there is also the angle of bringing awareness. So, okay, you might not be a minority at all, but coming to the workshop will give you awareness of stuff that you might never have felt, but either the people in your team might feel, or your peers, or your superiors. So just bringing awareness to that. If you are a manager, or you are just interacting with other people, this is extremely important.

(09:58) **Aggie:** And I think some of the language that is challenged in these workshops. So, often strong, women who are in leadership positions, the language that is used is words like, bossy or demanding. I was in a workshop with a woman one time that said that her husband and his friends regularly talk about their female manager as the witch. And she asked him to kind of elaborate and he was, well, you know she is just really bossy, and she is just all over us. Whereas, if you think about a man in that position, like you would not really call him, I do not know what the male equivalent is, but in general, you would probably say, oh, he is particularly demanding, or he is really sort of strict, or whatever. So there is an importance in terms of, if a man cannot take advantage of the shouting about the achievements element of the workshop, it is definitely around the awareness of, hey, women who are strong leaders are not witches. They are just trying to get their voices heard and you know what, it is harder for women to get their voices heard. So sometimes they do feel like they need to speak louder and maybe in some ways a little bit more aggressively to get their message heard. So I think, like Sofia said, just getting the awareness to males, maybe in privileged positions, just to kind of

understand where these women are coming from, I think is important.

(11:26) **Carla:** I do you think that personally, when you start growing in your career and your industry is the design industry or the market industry, where it is heavily dominated by men. I find it sometimes a bit sad that women who get to those positions, kind of start losing their femininity. They start adopting these behaviors and being more aggressive and stuff like that. So it is surprising that, even the similar personality traits could be perceived so differently, from between men and women.

(12:04) **Aggie:** Yes. And if you look into the research, there is a real primal thing, that there is a reason for that. So deviating from social norms and when we used to come from a time of cavemen era, where women worked in tribes and they supported each other. And anyone who was seen to adopt more male characteristics of going out to hunt or being, it was all of a sudden, well, you are not being womanly. And so maybe a lot of women feel like once they do get successfully into leadership positions, they all of a sudden need to hide their nurturing, sort of motherly, or Kent cry in the office.

(12:42) **Sofia:** Do not let people see your weak side, your vulnerable side.

(12:45) **Aggie:** Exactly. And it is like, we women are women, and yes, maybe sometimes we do have a tendency to become more emotional or whatever. You do not really need to veer too much away from who you are, to be strong and good at your job, and to be able to be leaders. But I do think that a lot of women, yes, they do feel that pressure to adopt this persona, in order to be respected amongst their colleagues, and hopefully that is something that will change over time. I think you could definitely be both.

(13:11) **Carla:** So how was the process for you to become a facilitator?

(13:18) **Aggie:** So I think the process is a tiny bit different internally and externally, or maybe it is not actually. I think I just signed up to be a facilitator and I attended a training. So the training is really important, because you have to understand how to run the workshops, but also, really understand the research behind it. Because You will find, you will get people in these workshops who really question the research, and say, well, I do not really agree with this. Or, I had a woman in a workshop say, well, I always support women when they shout about their achievements. I do not really agree that women do not support women. And it is like, well this is you, and you are not the norm and this is what the research tells us. So, it was signing up to that facilitator training, understanding what the research was, where it came from. I would definitely recommend, externally, if you are interested in applying, to follow the links on the I am

Remarkable website. And then I would really recommend shadowing in a couple, before you take it on yourself. Because it is interesting to see how people... the materials and the slides are just pictures, there is very limited sort of writing and that is done on purpose, so people could spark debate and conversation. So understanding how to run it and watch people do it, is really, really helpful.

(14:37) **Carla:** So you, now, Sofia, got a full time job growing this, which I think is amazing. It is something that is to be admired, by Google, to do that. So what is your purpose, what are your goals and how can everyone get involved in I am Remarkable, from outside of Google as well?

(15:00) **Sofia:** Yes, certainly this is something that started as we said, as an internal initiative and now it is open to everyone in the public, regardless of gender, career, location. It is a global workshop, that is free to attend and open to everyone. How we do it is, we have someone here in London who is responsible for doing all the external facilitator training. So as soon as you express interest, you contact us through our website, and you are contacted by this person who runs the external workshops. And you sign up for the next available date and you do it. It is over GVC through Google Hangouts and it is normally nineteen minutes as well. And after that, you can facilitate your own workshops. What we see is, people doing either out of pure personal interest, because they want to, they relate to the content and they sort of, well, I want to progress in my career. Or others who go, oh, I work at Sainsbury's and I want to take this internally, and they become facilitators, and then they roll it out within their company. Or they are sort of self starters and they want to sort of start running these workshops by themselves. So there is all types of profiles of people who attend. And this, I am thinking with the corporate thing in mind, we are also now trying to go to schools, and go to universities, and reach people before they have reached the career progression ladder per se. Next week, we are going into this underprivileged school to talk to girls who are seven to eleven years old and interested in studies. They are sort of having bad grades and because it is underprivileged, and it sort of, sometimes, you lose the will to fight. And we are going to do, I am Remarkable there, in a different setting, of course, because it is 200 students. But we want to start reaching people at a younger age, so that we do not come to work already with these society vices as biases. And we sort of kill that, not kill, but [inaudible 00:17:00] at a young age, that is the idea. So we are trying to think beyond just the corporate world and going, reaching people younger. And I have recently read the Michelle Obama biography. I do not know you have read it, but it is all about, this was a huge part of what she was trying to do. And she was a first lady like going into schools and she said like, minorities look at me and think, wow, she got there sort of, but I will never be able to do that. How was she at Princeton university?

And she would spend a lot of her time going to these schools and universities just saying, everyone can make it to anywhere. You have got to believe in yourself. And there was even one of the schools she visited where they had had an average of C grades historically, and just because of the confidence boost that they got with Michelle Obama visiting and telling them, saying no, anyone who studies and gets good grades, and you can make it. Their grades, went to an average B or A. It really turned around, just giving them that motivation boost that, you have reasons to fight for, and equal opportunities for everyone.

(18:03) **Carla:** Have you seen a specific results of feedback from people, taking this on and basically how do you measure that you are successful?

(18:18) **Aggie:** It is a bit difficult I guess to measure, because, we get a lot of feedback. There is a survey at the end that people can do, to talk about how they rated the workshop and their experience. But some specific, actually from 2018, are some results that we got, 69% of participants in the workshops, started to pursue a promotion within three months, which is pretty incredible. Yes, and then, 72% felt they were more comfortable speaking about their accomplishments. And out of the surveys, 95% would recommend it. So, and that is in a very young program. That is pretty incredible. So yes, we get a bit of kind of feedback from people just coming up to you at the end and say, this is really helpful and I have not thought about it this way. But then the numbers are pretty great as well.

(19:13) **Carla:** Something, I remember from the workshop, and every time I am thinking about self-promoting is, it is not bragging. I always think about it first, like actually, it is fact, it is true. And I know that it is true, but then you feel that is just so weird is it not?

(19:34) **Aggie:** I tried to use the example, in one of my workshops around, if you had a friend ring you in the morning and you had just run a 10K, and it was your best time ever. It is not that uncommon to drop that into the conversation. Oh, you know, what have you been doing this morning? Oh, I just went for a 10K and guess what, yit is the best time I did. I am so happy. And you would not expect your friend to then be like, why are you bragging about your running? But when you take that same thing to work accomplishments, people are so afraid to say that, because they are, well, I am bragging, but it is not bragging if it is based on facts. And that is something that the program tries to preach is that it is really not bragging if it is based on facts. but people have a really hard time with that one. We sit on that slide in the workshop for a while.

(20:20) **Carla:** Yes. Personally the hardest one was the more job related ones. I think the ones that when you want to talk about your achievements in life, I found it personally

easier that I have talked about my achievements at work.

(20:36) **Aggie:** You know, why? Sorry not to interrupt, but again and Sofia can probably back me in the research is that, women in reviews tend to use the word we, and then use the word I. Now, I will say that there are times when it is appropriate to use we and times when it is important to use I. I do not think that you should be all about, I did this and I did this, but I think women really struggle to ever use the word I. And so, I am not surprised by that, you saying that you find it hard because women tend to be, well, I was actually kind of more of a collaborative team effort, and yes, maybe I drove it a little bit, but actually in the end everyone pulled together. Whereas men are like, I found a problem. I found a solution. I have got the people that I needed. [inaudible 00:21:22]. This is what we achieved. And yes, maybe we did it as a team, but like really I kind of set it up. Yes. That is really interesting. I think.

(21:31) **Carla:** Yes, it is true. It is definitely how it happens to me, I would say we. Yes. It is really good. Well, I think this is an amazing initiative and just to kind of clarify to everyone in who is listening, they just need to go to a website. They just Google, I am Remarkable basically, and find it, hopefully they will find the website.

(21:54) **Sofia:** But if not, we can share.

(21:56) **Aggie:** Yes, there is an I am Remarkable website and then I think...

(21:59) **Sofia:** Yes, [iamremarkable.withgoogle.com](https://iamremarkable.withgoogle.com), and there, you can read about it, you can read testimonials. We are actually about to launch the new version of the website next week. So that is very exciting. Yes, because with International Women's Day, there is lots of workshops going on, and there is a huge buzz around this. And there you can register to become a facilitator. And it is free. It is open to all. Everyone is welcome.

(22:21) **Carla:** And is this a global initiative? Because a lot of our audience is actually based in the U.S.

(22:28) **Sofia:** Yes, we do US friendly hour facilitating sessions as well, sort of workshops. So I think those are currently Monday evenings, those are the U.S. friendly hours. And I think we run two or three a week. It depends a bit on the flow, and number of people that sign up. But there is definitely, sort of demand and it is growing. And we are very excited about the plans for 2019.

(22:52) **Carla:** Great. I think just to wrap up, and sorry if I put you on the spot, but if you were to give advice to someone young who started in design, or marketing, or overall



creative, or digital career, what would be the one or two advice that you would give them to become a bit more confident about themselves?

(23:12) **Aggie:** So if they are trying to go into a new job?

(23:16) **Carla:** Yes.

(23:16) **Aggie:** Apply. Apply for the job, because, I am going to bring out another fact, women tend to apply for jobs once they feel they have 100% of the requirements, whereas men apply when they feel, they have 60%. Learning on the job, is common, we all have to do it. You cannot be expected to know everything. So if you are new into your career, take a leap of faith, do not hold back because you feel you are not ready. Everyone in some way, feels that way. Really believe in yourself, in your ability to grow and adapt. You are a woman, you are remarkable and men listening, your remarkable too. And just go for it. Just try, and make sure to give yourself more credit than you normally would. That would be my advice.

(24:11) **Sofia:** My advice, I think it would be sort of spend time thinking about the things you enjoy doing, the things you do not enjoy doing. And also spend time if you are interested in perhaps pursuing a career in creative, or tech, or marketing, or whatever it is, try to talk to as many people in that industry as possible, and learn, and just be proactive about discovering and finding, because I think the more we know what we want, the more confidence we will bring to the table when we are in a situation that is decision making for that. If you are applying for a role, if you have done your homework, chatted to people in the industry, figured out what you would be good at, what you want to be good at, I think people breathe that in, in a meeting and an interview. And, I think that can only be helpful. And also, yes, believe in yourself. Read the Michelle Obama biography. I have never read a book that had made me cry and also feel so confident in the same sort of chapter. It is really about looking within and having that strength from inside. Not relying on advocates, not relying on someone else to do the promotion for you. It is good to have mentors and people who will promote you. It is amazing. It is actually sort of free marketing for ourselves, but we cannot rely on them. They would not always be there. And so we have to rely on ourselves and find those tools within us.

(25:30) **Carla:** That is amazing. Thank you so much guys again, for this time, and I will see you next time. Perfect. Thank you.

(25:39) **Sofia:** Thank you.

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