



Speaker 2 ([02:30](#)):

Welcome everybody. It's great to have you here on the Women In Product Podcast. So excited to talk to all of you today. I know that each of you involved in the steering committee for this year's conference, but I really want to start out by hearing from you about how did you initially get involved in Women In Product? And Avi, maybe you could start us off.

Speaker 3 ([03:16](#)):

Yeah, that sounds great. I'd love to share a bit more on how I got involved with Women In Product. So wow, a few years ago now, multiple years ago, I moved to the West Coast and started my job in product within Microsoft's Cloud, Azure, Azure networking specifically. And as I got more involved into the day-to-day of product, I wanted to learn more about other people that were in a similar position. And I was trying to find a community that I could leverage both for my work as well as personally, and also share my expertise and my experience of product and my lived experience of being a woman in product as a whole. And that's when I just did the usual searches and saw out there, what is the product community, is there something at all? And that's when I came across the Women In Product Seattle chapter as a whole.

Speaker 3 ([04:12](#)):

And I reached out to the chapter leads at the time and said, Hey, I'd love to join your events or learn more a little bit about how I could get involved. And the next thing I know, I'd been to a bunch of different events, got to know the board at the time was invited to be on the board, and since then took on a more leadership team and now I'm one of the chapter. So it really started from this journey of trying to see community and now really ensuring that community is provided for other people, whether you're new to the area, new to the product community, or just been here and want to upscale and understand the more recent trends that are going on in this space,

Speaker 5 ([04:57](#)):

You said about community really resonates with me too. That was what drew me to Women In Product as well. I moved to the Bay Area 10 years ago now, and I was looking for ways to get more involved and everything was new and different and I joined a different community, which was focused on women in tech more broadly. And I just found that while that was great, I really, really wanted to connect with other women in products specifically because we have so many shared experiences and it can often feel very lonely. And the community that we brought together through Women In Product is so incredible and that's what I love about it the most.

Speaker 4 ([05:36](#)):

My experience is also very similar. I also moved here in San Francisco to San Francisco 15 years ago, and it was also the same search around community and people not only as Anavi mentioned, the personal growth and trying to build a community on your



own, but also professionally. And I have a few Latinas that were in product there. So that's how basically I got into the perfect combination of what I needed both personally and professionally with this community.

Speaker 2 ([06:12](#)):

So all of you have done a lot for the community and PAs, maybe you can talk a little bit about why volunteering and supporting women in product both the organization and the community is important to you.

Speaker 4 ([06:32](#)):

Absolutely. Well, I've personally have always volunteered in wherever I go. I feel it's a really important part of how you can make the community your own and you can provide also, you can share the experiences and well what yourself to the people around you and supporting volunteering women in product and the community was vital for, because it basically champions diversity, inclusion and equity in all the tech area industry that in general, women are historically underrepresented and even in my case, Latinas are even further there. So for me it was first offering support when you can contribute to create more opportunities for women to grow, lead, and hopefully innovate with it. This involvement in general does not only help me personally like growth or through learning, but also helping others which really shape how the future can be equitable and hopefully encourage more women to excel in these product management roles.

Speaker 2 ([08:02](#)):

I really love how you recognize that your participation in your visibility helps encourage young Latin Latina women of all ages to participate in product stuff. I mean, we so need their voices and it's so great to have someone like yourself be that visible and that engaged, right, makes a big difference.

Speaker 3 ([08:29](#)):

I love that too. One thing that I would add to that is when I joined my company, I was not only the only person that was hired from university as a whole, I was also one of the few women, and this is a few years ago, and I had heard this concept of women are underrepresented, but for me it was more of an abstract concept because I went to an all girls high school, and even in college it was pretty, I would say fair in terms of at least gender and people's backgrounds as a whole. But I think the first really hit where this abstract, seemingly abstract concept, I believed it, I believed people's experiences as a whole, but it never kind of hit me in the head until I walked into a bunch of meetings and I was the only woman and the only young person or younger person I could say at the time in it.

Speaker 3 ([09:21](#)):

And that's when it just hit me like a lightning bolt. Like oh my gosh, this abstract concept that I've heard about not having enough women or enough representation across the board actually exists and I'm seeing it with my own two eyes now at work. And so that actually was also a fuel to my fire, not only for looking for and supporting



women in product and retaining them and bringing them to the organization or bringing them into tech, but also just younger people. Nobody at my university knew about this. So I even started university recruiting for my team and then since the kind of, what do you say, the distribution of people across age groups, across levels has since changed. And now I'm the Cham for university recruiting, and then of course I'm the women in product Seattle chapter lead. But just seeing that I think firsthand and getting that hit a reality, I was just like, oh my God, I must do something about this. I need to do something about this. Right?

Speaker 2 ([10:18](#)):

Yeah, totally. Yeah. So I want to ask you guys what was it like to be on the steering committee for the conference? And then maybe you can just also share with our listeners about what does the steering committee do? So that's sort of two questions packaged together for you there. And pause. Maybe you want to take a stab at that as well.

Speaker 4 ([10:46](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I've participated in the steering committee twice and both times it has been a great experience. I really enjoyed it. So basically it's really rewarding and also challenging in the sense that you have a responsibility for really selecting and trying to propose what women in general are trying to say about product management. So it's a very rewarding experience. I am basically, it's very well organized as well. So they help you a lot with how you can really manage the information you have and how can you agree with the team that you have? I dunno if you want to add more

Speaker 2 ([11:37](#)):

Charmaine.

Speaker 5 ([11:38](#)):

Yeah, I thought mean the team at Women in Product is so great, which is no surprise. The organization is so great. And we were brought together, we were asked to talk about what are the themes that we're seeing in product management this year and specifically how those might apply to women in product. And through those conversations, the team was able to distill what was rising to the top as a primary theme. And then that's what drove to the final evolution of landing at Evolve and Excel, which I think is very empowering and a very powerful theme to have.

Speaker 2 ([12:15](#)):

Yeah, I mean, first of all, shout out to Rachel Royce who does an incredible job pulling the steering committee together and having things structured in a really productive way. Have to give her a little shout out here. She's

Speaker 3 ([12:32](#)):

Super efficient. I absolutely loved it too.



Speaker 2 ([12:35](#)):

Yeah, but I think it's really important to talk about that it's really a series of conversations about what's going on in the market, what's going on in the profession, how are people feeling, what are they thinking about? And we do try and get a really diverse set of people in the room, so from different kinds of companies at different levels in different geographies if possible, so that we're kind of trying to get a snapshot across the whole profession, which is kind of a daunting thing to do when you think about it. ~~But~~

Speaker 3 ([13:16](#)):

I agree, this was my first experience on the steering committee. And it's interesting because there was a lot of this organization and efficiency, which I absolutely love as a very almost type A person, but it was also super scary. We didn't know what it was going to be. There's no end. I mean, there isn't a wig end goal, but there isn't like this is what you have to accomplish as a whole. So each conversation was evolving and bouncing ideas off of what we're hearing from the community. So it's kind of being on the receiving end of the feedback and using the feedback to guide the next set of just overall ideas, but then also specifically for the conference. So for me, it was kind of the whole typical with great power comes great responsibility type of deal, where it's like, oh my gosh, I have the power to now kind of bring this feedback from that I'm hearing from the community, but at the same time it's like, oh my gosh, how do we get together? But then it was so cool to see the support from people and coming up with this idea of evolve in Excel. I think it was a super rewarding experience, and seeing that from behind the scenes I think was super cool for me as well.

Speaker 2 ([14:27](#)):

Yeah. So I think it's a great place to dive in a little bit and say this year the theme of the conference this year is Evolve Excel. So what does that mean to each of you and why do you think it's important? And Charlene, maybe you can start us off here.

Speaker 5 ([14:48](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. And I think this is really what I love about the theme is that it can be applied to us in so many different ways. And so if you think about where are you as a person in your career, on your personal growth journey and how are you evolving this year and how are you going to push yourself to Excel, but then you can also apply it to your business, what's happening in the market, in the climate with the economy, with your company and the business that you're supporting and how is that evolving and excelling as well? And then I think one of the other things that we talked about was really reflecting on what's happening in the industry today. AI continues to be very important, but last year the market dropped and it was the year of efficiency for a lot of people. So how do we evolve in a market or environment that is operating under more constraints than previously? And still despite those constraints continue to excel in your industry. And so it's just very interesting to see the different ways that we can take a very important angle out of this theme.

Speaker 4 ([15:56](#)):



Yeah, I see what you mentioned Shein. And in the way also with the topics that we saw for the conference, they were showing all this to different perspectives that you were exactly mentioning, like the economy, how people would evolve, we need to pivot while others, how we can make the best out of this and excel. So I totally agree to what you were saying in this, how we see from the community, the topics there, and how we can help them show it's their perspective around the topic.

Speaker 2 ([16:38](#)):

Any other? I

Speaker 3 ([16:40](#)):

Would say it's also super relatable. I think this was what Charlene was also trying to say, where it's not just something that needs to be in the context of women in product or supporting our cause and our mission. It's just overall as a human being at a fundamental level, how are you evolving and excelling across different backgrounds? So I feel like it's very appealing and relatable, and then it can be applied to different topics and different areas of expertise, which is what you'll see with the speakers and the workshops that are being set up as well. So that's really what spoke to me most about how relatability is across kind of actually even industries. I mean, I know it's limited to product as a whole, but it is really applicable across different industries as well.

Speaker 2 ([17:27](#)):

Yeah, I mean I think your last point is one that I hear a lot these days because we not only work with traditional tech companies, but we have a lot of companies that participate now that are not traditional tech companies. And they're really trying to evolve their thinking in terms of product-led growth, and what is product management and how does that really work and how does that change our organization? And in some cases, how do we train people to be able to do these new things and evolve their skillset, et cetera. So I really love the theme this year because it has that sort of big picture, but also that small lens depending on

Speaker 3 ([18:20](#)):

How you view it,

Speaker 2 ([18:20](#)):

You and what you're bringing to it and what you want to get out of it, right. So yeah, I thought it was a great theme. ~~Yeah, definitely.~~ As part of the team that selected this year's theme, why do you think people should attend? What is important for the women in the field? Why is it important for them to gather regularly and what do they get out of this? And Charlene, I know you've been at the conference for many years, so maybe you can start us off on that one.

Speaker 5 ([18:58](#)):



Yes, absolutely. I cannot stress how much women in product has had an impact on my life. I think I started attending back in 2018, I got to present in 2019 and have been a part of the conference in some way, shape, or form ever since then. And it just continues to be such a, it's an inspiring event. And what I love about Women in Product is that there is always a call to action. So you will be listening to the keynotes or you'll be listening to the breakout sessions that resonate with you the most. And we really, really care about asking everybody, what are you going to do based on what you've just learned today or what we've just talked about? How are you going to make this your reality? What are you going to do differently this week, next month, next quarter? What does that mean for each of you?

Speaker 5 ([19:48](#)):

And it's just such a good reminder because as product managers, we're so busy caring about our products and our users, we forget to care about ourselves. And so what are we doing to PM our career? And for me, this conference every year brings us all together and reminds us to care about ourselves as well. And also for me, I think I mentioned this earlier, it reminds us that we're not alone. I think our role can be very lonely at times, and it reminds us that there's a lot of people fighting the same fights, that we are going through the same challenges, evolving in the same way, and this is the place where we all get to come together and feel united as that community.

Speaker 3 ([20:30](#)):

I love that. I love that you said PM your career. Sometimes I say it to everyone in my life who is a pm, I'm like, PM your life. You know how

Speaker 3 ([20:38](#)):

Prioritize what's important and what gives you value. So hashtag pm your life. But one thing I also wanted to add is I'm often always trying to prioritize as much as possible for efficiency. Someone might even say that this is my toxic trait. If I have to do only one thing, I'm not going to go a certain area. I have to make sure I'm doing all of the three things in that area to get most out of this grocery trip or this chores trip that I'm doing. So that's my toxic trait I'll say right off the bat, but I choose to view it in a positive light. Personally, I think that's important here as well. If we're already doing something in an industry that's working in the product side, this is a great place to bring that and not reinvent the wheel, especially as you were saying, Elizabeth of different industries, trying to understand product and figure out what really the product is for them or what a product manager role is, or how they can use this to the best of their advantage to excel in their industry as a whole. And maybe a non-traditional product role as well. I think that's a great opportunity to bring here and be like, how are people doing it in this industry? How can I leverage that as a whole instead of having to start from scratch, which is obviously a lot more work and I would expect not as much fun. So I think that would also be a great reason to add in addition to what Charin said too.



Speaker 4 ([21:59](#)):

I would second what Charin said as well in the way pm. So sometimes it's a very lonely role, and so I feel people should attend because you can find community, not only personally if you find some support in any way that you can or relate to people who are actually doing the same thing as you write or going through the same things, but also professionally you will learn a lot. And there's a very high caliber of quality there in terms of the different areas, the same spectrums, where people come from, where and where they want to go. So there's definitely a lot of learning and quality that people really should be. And again, I'm second Charma, they will be inspired by it.

Speaker 2 ([22:49](#)):

Yeah, I think sometimes people come to the event or they just start off by looking at the agenda and they're like, whoa, I'm drinking from a fire hose. How am I possibly going to be able to wrap my head around this to Charlene says, walk away with actionable things, et cetera. So do you guys have any advice for people who are planning to attend about how to maximize their attendance or their takeaways? And Avi, maybe you want to start with that one? Yeah, give us some tips on that.

Speaker 3 ([23:32](#)):

Absolutely. So I've been going to the conference for a while now, and I think initially the move to virtual was a little bit hard for all of us, but we had to do what we had to do given the climate and the world health at the time. So one of my key things would be just identify goals for yourself. What are you looking to get out of this? And so maybe that's two or three things that you're like, Hey, these are my non-negotiables. I really want to get this out of it. And then find those appropriate breakout sessions, workshops, networking sessions, or even the keynotes appropriately, what is best for you that you're able to fulfill those goals. And then I would add in one, maybe last goal is a buffer period you always have, or a buffer goal maybe because you always will be, I guess, surprised, right?

Speaker 3 ([24:20](#)):

Things that you didn't think that you were looking for or things that you didn't realize you needed help in or that you could evolve certain ways that you're already doing stuff. So that's what I would do. So two or three, just to summarize two or three maybe goals that you have and then a buffer in terms of, Hey, what else can I add on without feeling overwhelmed? And I think the biggest thing here is you have to make it work for you. And so if you bring this energy of overwhelm and oh my gosh, I have to do all of it, I think it's not going to be as successful. So definitely there's a lot of content, but it's not like if you don't go to each and every single thing, you're missing out on it. You're prioritizing for what's important for you and accomplishing your goals while also letting something surprise you. So that would be my advice as a whole. I don't know if folks had other things they wanted to add too.

Speaker 4 ([25:08](#)):



Yeah, they totally resonated with me. I think it's definitely, you should focus on the goals that you have for yourself and try to look and to discern what you want from there. Maybe a little bit more specific around that. What I've done is I try to focus on, okay, my current situation, this is what I'm doing, this is my area, this is what my space is, and there is another room. I live for the future, future path and where I want to learn about executive part of things. That kind of thing helps me to balance and helps me a little bit more the prioritization with where I would be spending the time. And I totally agree with the buffer. I usually pick something very randomly and I say this, I dunno, I need to say this. I want to say, even though it's not related at all with what I have done, what I've been doing takes

Speaker 3 ([26:06](#)):

Your interest or

Speaker 4 ([26:07](#)):

Something. Exactly. So I would advise anyone to do that, to get a well card of something that really catches your attention, even it's not related to what you were doing.

Speaker 5 ([26:22](#)):

And honestly, I think the conference just does such a great job of making it a very friendly event. It's easy to onboard virtually. There are the keynotes I have always found to be incredibly inspiring. So they're a great way to kick off the conference. And then there's always mixers and ways to connect with other people in the downtime. So it's just show up. If it's too much to look in advance and plan it out, just show up and you can't go wrong, it's going to be great.

Speaker 3 ([26:52](#)):

That's true. You don't want to get overwhelmed or anything if you don't have goals, if you don't have that buffer. Just kind of showing up as half the battle as my mom.

Speaker 2 ([27:01](#)):

So true. One of the things that sort of sticks out with me, which is a little bit, I think people that are new to the conference don't expect is make a point to connect with other people, go to the networking mixer, reach out to other people, people. Making those people connections is really, really valuable and actually really doable at this conference. So I always really encourage people to do that. The other thing that I always recommend to people is if other people in your organization are going, if there's a group of you that are going try and get together beforehand, just a little brown bag lunch or something and just share, I really want to do these things well, somebody else wants to do those, et cetera. And then do the same thing after you're at the conference so that you kind of cement your knowledge and share it. Right. Here's my really big takeaway. Oh, I didn't go to those. That's good to know. So I always think those are good tips to kind of help people feel more connected, be more part of the community, find things that are valuable,





Speaker 3 ([28:23](#)):

And bringing in that in-person connection too. And so you don't feel as isolated when you're going to the conference, especially if it's your first couple of times or something like that.

Speaker 2 ([28:31](#)):

Yeah, I think that that is one of the things that is so valuable about the conference, but about our community overall, which is this sense of first of all, that you're not alone. But second of all that when you're uncertain or feel like you don't exactly know the answer and you feel like you're in a situation that you feel a little vulnerable, you have a place to go to ask that question where people aren't going to judge you, they're going to help you, right? There is this spirit, and you guys are such a good example of this spirit, but this spirit of giving, of giving and receiving, sharing what, helping other people, receiving help from other people, it's a beautiful thing. I just love that part. So to kind of finish up our conversation here, but all of you have volunteered in a variety of ways to support women product and the community over the years. Do you have any suggestions for our listeners about how they can get more involved? This is a question I get all the time from people, so now I'm going to toss it to you.

Speaker 3 ([29:48](#)):

Ooh, this is a good one. I think step one would just be figuring out the kind of bandwidth or the cycles that you have to be involved and just being realistic about that. I think I remember really early on in my career, I kind of just said, yes, I want to do this and I want to volunteer for this, and I want to volunteer for this. And then one day I just sat at home and I was just like, oh my God, I think I've overcommitted myself, so learn from my mistakes. And definitely don't do that. And be realistic of the kind of bandwidth or the cycles you have or the time and the energy you have. Make sure your cup is filled. It's a popular terminology I hear nowadays, so I think that's step one. Once you figure out what kind of cycles or bandwidth you have, there's a variety of different ways.

Speaker 3 ([30:29](#)):

Maybe I'll recommend three and then I'm sure the group here has more to add. One is just showing up to events, finding your local chapter. There's probably a local chapter in your area if there is one, reaching out to the people. There's very accessible online pages that we have for each chapter and who the chapter leads are. If one already exists, reach out to them, find out how events are run for that chapter. Some have events every month, some have it on a quarterly basis. Some have more informal brunches and things like that too. So find those kinds of events and just show up and try to show up to a few of them. That would be one easy kind of low commitment way. The other way is seeking for help. Hey, do you need help actually organizing these events or planning these events or bringing your expertise to the table.

Speaker 3 ([31:15](#)):



And so volunteering and saying, Hey, I'm happy to help with the next event. Let me know. I'm happy to learn the rails and help you. So being on the other side of instead of just attending, but helping organize the event. And then finally I would say is just trying to become a community leader. Bringing more people in, whether it's at your workplace or your personal life, you see people and maybe they're feeling isolated or maybe they don't have that community and say, Hey, actually I'm going to a women in product event on March 27th. Actually, that's one of our events, a shameless plug there, and maybe you just bring a friend to that event and then kind of doing it at a smaller community level. So those are three different ways, of course, apart from going to the conference as well, that I would recommend, but you really have to be realistic with yourself and how much time and energy you have for that. For sure.

Speaker 5 ([32:06](#)):

I love all of that. And then the one that I'll add is perhaps the most low key, which is just get involved in the Facebook group. The Facebook group is so active, there's so many people, and it's a great way women are always posing questions and other people are chiming in and answering, and then that's kind of spins off. It could become a DM or a way for people to connect. And I always felt like that was a really great way to just get introduced to the community, completely, virtually do it from your home, from your phone, and then you can get more involved as you get more comfortable and familiar through that.

Speaker 4 ([32:47](#)):

Yeah, I think, and there are very chapters in Facebook as well in the community, so you can participate on a more local side of things. I would add to the people, the listeners, I would like to reinforce the part that this is a very welcoming community. So if you think that you might like, oh, I want to present, oh, I want to do this, but I'm not sure and how do I do it? Because you are going to receive very well that they're going to hear you and you can find ways of getting involved in any way you want. People. This community is in general very welcoming. So just do it. Just try to start with something that you feel it can really provide some help to others or it can help you either way. Just participate in it.

Speaker 3 ([33:43](#)):

I love that you added the speaking aspect too, right? I mean, all of the people that have spoken, I know that some people just decided one year they were going to go ahead and speak and kind of reached out to people who've done it in the past. So I love that you added that because that could also just be, Hey, it's only the conference is usually annually. And so it's very another low effort kind of thing. Just say, Hey, okay, I'm going to mentally prep or I'm going to do this. I'm going to reach out to people. I know I really liked this session in the past. Or maybe as you're going to the conference this year, you find two speakers that you really resonated with and you loved how their delivery was for the session. Reach out to them, Hey, next year I want to do a session on this topic. Any tips or any things like hindsight is 2020, so what are your things that you would do differently if you were a speaker? So using this



conference as a platform for you to step forward and also get involved. I love that pause.

Speaker 2 ([34:36](#)):

I often say to people, women who will say, oh, I couldn't possibly speak. I don't have anything important to say. The whole gamut of things that come up lately, this is the best possible place to start speaking because you'll get so much help from the community in thinking about what you want to talk about and recognizing what you do well and listening to your thoughts on things, and then helping you put together a proposal. Everyone wants you to succeed. Everyone will give you a hand out and a hand up to succeed. And so it's just the best possible place to start that. So I really encourage people to take a stab at that. We do have a call for participation that opens every year in January, and it's great to submit. We do get a lot of, so there are people that submit and spend time on submissions that don't actually get to speak. But let me just say that even preparing for it and putting together a proposal is really valuable. You will get feedback and that has a lot of value. So anyway, three are such fabulous examples of members of our community. I'm so grateful for the contributions that all of you have made, and I'm really grateful for you having taken the time today to talk to me about it. Hopefully we answered some questions for people out there about what the steering committee does. It's not really a mystery, even though it seems like it is one.

Speaker 2 ([36:22](#)):

And I really, really appreciate you being a part of this today and a part of the steering committee. Thanks.

Speaker 5 ([36:30](#)):

Yeah, thanks for having us. Thank you.