

# 132. Phillip Michael Leblanc: Balance

## **Gavin Kelly**

Hey, everybody, you're listening to beyond 1894 this is the official podcast of Louisiana Tech University. My name is Gavin Kelly from the Office of University Communications, and our guest for this episode is Mr. Phillip Michael Leblanc. He is an instructor in Communication and Media Studies. We appreciate you making time for us here today. I know we talked a little bit before the summer about having you on, so I'm glad we were able to do it now. But now but now schools just started back, so you're getting back into the swing of teaching. So talk about, kind of, what it's like being an instructor during this first week of school, what the vibes are like in class, and kind of how you tap into that energy as a teacher.

## **Phillip Leblanc**

Gavin, it's, it's, it's crazy. It's just used to, you know, as many of my colleagues would say, is just like full throttle when the quarter starts and you try to prepare as much you can. You're balancing during the summer of Well, I just want to relax and just sit back and do nothing. But, of course, nothing be further from the truth, right? Do nothing. You know, if you've talked to anybody, especially if you're talking to someone with a family you have, you're balancing family. You're balancing trying to relax your balance. Oh, the train is literally coming down the court, down the pipe as far as the beginning of school. So, yeah, it's crazy. But, you know, you just like anything. You'd have to relax and sit back and rely on your expertise and your knowledge, and just just be willing to just let anything come forward, you know, and just deal with it as it comes. That's just all we just all we can

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do. Yeah, and it's a fun time all around campus. So the vibes are high right now. But yeah, you know, I introduced you as an instructor in Communication and Media Studies, and I mentioned to you before we hit record, that you think about someone who teaches in communication here, and you think about those communication classes, you know, think about writing and speaking and that sort of thing. But you're definitely more on the media studies part, right? So talk to me about what that means, kind of like, the nature of your job as an instructor, and those areas that you cover. So I know, like photography, videography, I'll let you take it away, but we'll talk to us about that.

## **Phillip Leblanc**

Sure, sure, it's, it's a different beast. Sometimes I feel like I'm kind of like the, kind of like a stepchild in communication that, like most of my colleagues, deal with, you know, the spoken word, the right word, et cetera. There's many different types of communication, but, of course, I deal with the visual side of things. And so it's interesting in that you have to kind of think from that standpoint, how do you package these words together? How can we use visuals to help communicate a certain message, etc. And so it's a different beast, to a certain extent, when it comes to the things that you know, most of my students deal with in our comm classes. So when they come to me, it's almost kind of like, I feel like I'm teaching them, and I am teaching them graphic design elements and all these visual things that they

don't typically get in other classes. And I have to my background is in graphic design. In fact, my alma mater is Louisiana Tech. I studied in visual arts center right down the way there in graphic design. And so my approach, typically is in my classes to kind of teach from that approach, but I have to constantly tell myself that my students aren't graphic designers. They're encompassing all different types of communication. And so visual is just one of them. I happen to be bias in it and a point to think that it's an important one. Yes, it's one thing that I think that makes up our society. We are a visual society. We purchase things, we we use services of companies that you utilize great visual design. So I think it's important, but I have to, all in all, I have to keep telling myself that I can't be too hard on my students. I can't, you know, push too hard, because in a lot of cases, this is the first time they're even dealing with visual problems in that way. So yeah, I have to keep that in mind. Yeah.

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So, so those, those visual elements, so we're talking photography, videography, layout, like you said, Graphic Design Magazine layouts. I know that's part of it, too. So what is it like? I guess, when you get a batch of students, especially who are early on in their careers as students, and they're used to taking different classes in the communication curriculum that they have, and then they get to a class like yours, are they little, I guess. Are they nervous? Are they scared? Is the material something that overwhelms them at first, and then it's your job to kind of get them to relax into it. How does that work

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for your students? Well, I take it as my approach is, when students come in, I have no idea what background they're coming from, as far as, or should I say, I don't know all of their knowledge at that point. And so I have to, you know, approach it from the very, very basics, which is, is a good thing, but also kind of like a sometimes you just feel like you wish you can just hit the ground running. Of course, I wish I could teach a course that that was more, you know, down the line, so to speak, as far as knowledge of visual communication, stuff like a better term, to get back to it, I just. Just, I try to keep it as simple initially as possible, and I just go from there. And I try to to get too much in my head about it, because the idea here is, again, that not all these students are visual communicators. You know, as far as all the experiences they've gotten their other classes, you know, they're, they're building up communication skills of different sorts. And this is just one slice of right? And so the beautiful thing about it is, one of the things that lights me up the most is when students get it, yeah, you know, when it, when it, when it, when it all falls into place, and they see, oh, this is just another tool for communication, very powerful one indeed, but a tool nonetheless. And so I get all sorts. I get some that come in and they've already had experience in graphic design courses or in creative courses, and they just hit the ground running. And some that it takes a little time, but the light bulb goes off, and it's a beautiful thing when it

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does, yeah, it's, well, you mentioned about the way you have to teach the class, and how people come in with different backgrounds in terms of what they already know. It reminds me about i I've played guitar for a long time, and I think about when I was learning, and I got to a point where I knew the basics and was kind of trying to pick up on some other stuff, but I was, you know, mostly self taught, watching YouTube videos and stuff like that. And you pull up a YouTube video trying to learn something, and they start out, and they go, this is the guitar, and these are the frets, and these are

strings, and you're sitting there going, I'm I'm on board with that already. I know what you I know what you I know what you mean. I need to skip to the part where I need to learn something. But you also have to think, I guess, as an instructor, that you're structuring the class for everybody, and not just a specific subset of students. So that's an interesting part of it. You mentioned being at Louisiana Tech as a student, having a graphic design getting your graphic design degree. Here is that, right? So let's backtrack a little bit before that, talk about kind of finding those interests early on, like, at what point did you know that those were the academic pursuits, pursuits that you were going to go after?

### **Phillip Leblanc**

I think that, and maybe this is true of your own life. I mean, it's true of a lot of people, that early on, you don't get wrapped up in a this is gonna go towards a, you know, a job or a career, etc. You just want to do something that interests you, you know. And so I grew up in a small town, not many people. I'm always surprised. I always say, nobody knows where this place is. And then people will say, Oh yeah, I know of it. But I grew up in a little town called rain Louisiana, just down the road from Lafayette, Louisiana, and there was not much to do there. People complain about Rustin and, you know, not being anything to do here, rain is pretty much the same.

### **Gavin Kelly**

You're preaching in the choir, by the way. I'm from a very, very technically, it's a village called Sykes in wind parish. Are you from Sykes? I am from Sykes.

### **Phillip Leblanc**

I have a store. Okay, we'll talk about that later. Okay, but, uh, my dad used to hunt there, of course, yeah, it's like, all you can mostly so weird. I just met someone the other day. I was in Lowe's, and someone we just, just happened to bump into each other and start having the conversation. And he mentioned that he was from Sykes. I was like, I've not met individual from Sykes in over two decades, probably this week. And number two, yeah, in the span of a month. Anyways, that's crazy, but, but yeah, you grew up in a small place, and you just have to find something to plug into, or just absorb into the you know, absorb into the fabric of that place, you know, and just never leave. And so I knew that I knew two things inherently when I was young. For those that are from rain, I love rain, not talking bad about it, but I just wanted to go and explore and move and do something different. And also I knew that whatever I did was going to be something creative, because I don't know where it came from, because no one else I knew my family were creatives, but I just found myself sketching and making things and building stuff at an early age, I guess the building parking for my dad. He was a he was a construction guy. He built a lot of things for the Katie of parish school board. He worked for for them for quite a time, and he would he was tasked with building shelves and different things that the classrooms would need, amongst other things. He done a lot of things, but that was one thing. And so I was always kind of following along with him and having to, like, do those mundane tasks, like pull nails from boards and just crazy say, you know, I say crazy, but mundane stuff. And so maybe that was part of the spark too, you know, just being around all those building materials and wood and stuff like that, and there's nothing else to do, it just feels good to make something, to create something, to build, something that's outside of yourself and useful, you know, now, I don't know how useful those early products were projects where I make, like, just random stuff boxes, but to me, was the you know, it was amazing stuff. It was you were making. I was making creative using my hands. And so I knew inherently that I wanted

to go and travel, see the world, move at least, move out of the rain, see what else is out there. But also, I knew inherently, also that I want to make something in different, you know, in different respects. And that stayed with me since then. Well, that kind of

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leads into my next question, because I was going to ask, why not you? Like, how did you get to Louisiana, tech? Why was tech the. I answer for you funny.

### **Phillip Leblanc**

Well, not maybe funny, but straightforward, maybe a little bit tech at the time when I came here in late to just like the late 90s, 1999 2000 they had an amazing powerlifting team. They still do have a powerlift in here, but they had a huge powerlifting team. And so in my high school days, I got recruited on the power lifting team, and was a decent lifter. And so it just really, like any other sport out there, just lit me up, you know, yeah, and so I played football, I ran track, did a bunch of things, but power up thing was just, I don't know, well, maybe just because I was good at it, you know, when you're good at something, that's thing that kind of sticks with you. You sticks with you. And so, of course, when it came time to looking for colleges, like students do sometimes when they're younger, it's like, okay, well, instead of looking at the academic side of things, I looked at the, you know, oh, they have a great policy team. This is what I've heard from, you know, many people that they have a great piloting team. So we did a tour here Time Offer tech way back when. Oh, yeah. I remember a funny story. I remember walking by Hill Hall when it was, it's old, and the original iteration of fire, yeah, and there was graffiti on it was just really not up to snuff, you know. And I didn't care. I was just like I want to, I'm away from home, potentially gonna, you know, be on the, you know, that one of the best part of them teams in the country, collegiately and and, you know, I can be creative up here, I know. So everything was aligning, you know, everything looked everything looked golden to me. Sure that time, you know, I'm at a college. I'm meeting new people, etc. This is going to be the place for me.

### **Gavin Kelly**

So what were the thought processes then, whenever, you know you get your degree, or you're getting your degree, I'm always interested to ask teachers here at what point they knew they wanted to be teachers, because, you know, not everybody goes into their degree, planning on using that degree to teach later on. So Was that something you decided early on, or were there early career moves and then the desire to teach came out of that, like, walk me through

### **Phillip Leblanc**

that sure, when I first graduated with my my bachelor's in the arts and specifically in graphic design, I wanted to do, like a lot of you know, young designers go to find a firm, you know, and you know, and plug myself there and learn, etc. And I did do that for a time, but eventually found myself coming back to Reston. And at the time, there wasn't a lot of places for graphic designers here right now, there's a few ones, very small firm that's still here, Donnie Bell designs, one of the only ones that I saw, but it was just publications and different media outlets and not a mini and so I actually started working for the local newspaper here for quite a time, and after about two years there, found myself with an opportunity to come over to Louisiana Tech and work In the journalism department at the time, journalism was by itself, its own department at a time, and so they needed someone to a professional in graphic design to

come in and help students inspire them to put together the newspaper here. And eventually we created a magazine, speak magazine. But initially it was just the newspaper, The Tech Talk, which is in hiatus right now, right but they needed someone to come in and help with that. And so given my layout and design background, I was a shoe in for that. And so for a time, for about I can't remember, five years or so, that's all I did was just help students with layout and design problems for the newspaper. And eventually it came to the point where we wanted to expand what we taught in the journalism department. We we needed someone who had, you know, a higher skill set in the arts in design. We had some really amazing professors in terms of the written word and journalism ethics, etc, but he needed someone to come in and help with the design side of things. And so that was me. That was me for a long period of time. And naturally being around the, you know, academia, yeah, you know, you want to, you know, you know, put your two cents in, you know, into the classroom, so to speak. And so I helped one of my colleagues for a while with his layout and design class. He was over the layout and design class, but he was more of a writer and an editor, and so I came in and assisted him with that, and eventually got the credentials to be able to teach. In fact, I got my masters in Mass Comm at Grambling State University, right on the road, and that allowed me to come into the classroom and and, you know, and teach. And so that's what I've been doing since then, yeah, teaching graphic design elements and visual communication.

### **Gavin Kelly**

So thinking back to what you said about growing up and learning that you had passions that lied in creativity, and then now it's something that you teach. You pass on your knowledge to others. You know that's that's what you do. I'm curious to know if you still like how do you still tap into you? Your passions to create. Like, how do you work at this crossroads between your professional duties as a teacher to teach you things and also them as your personal hobbies and your personal creative outlets? Like, do you still find time to do graphic design, photography, videography, all that, all that stuff, or is it still is teaching kind of taking up the bulk of that?

### **Phillip Leblanc**

It ebbs and flows, yeah, peaks and valleys. You know, which is, which is true of any creative right? Oh, my God. You're always constantly balancing, and it takes, and maybe you're from your you've thought these thoughts before, too. It just, it takes us a bit more space to get the ball rolling, so to speak, the creative ball rolling. We, we these things don't just happen, right? You know, we need space to be able to think things through, create on a creative level, on a problem solving level, and then, you know, go from there. But to get to your point, into your question, yeah, I do a lot of freelance work. I have my own design, SAS photography studio, as it were, blah Design Studio. And so I've done a lot of freelance work in photography, headshots, etc. I still have a good client base in terms of my graphic design work, which I'm a big fan of, branding, building, logos, etc, you know, getting the look and feel of a company. And so there's that I plug into a lot of things. Sometimes I'll lay out booklets for people. I just have someone this week that wanted me to lay out their full manuscript. And of course, it for to some people like, oh, you know, like manuscripts and books, but I get off on that. I love typography. I love consistency and design. I love elements, you know? I love when things kind of have a cohesive look, you know, it's just built into me, you know, again, cutting my teeth, right there, the vac, they embedded this into us. And then, of course, as you go along, you're doing your own work and your own research. It's just, you can see the commonalities, okay, well, this sings on the page, or this looks good on a

digital screen. This makes sense. And so anyways, it's just, I'm always plugged in. So it's a task, though, it's a task. Trying to balance all of that with, Hey, I've got to translate that to students too, you know, especially when it comes to teaching the design and creative things. Because we're not here, you know, it's not physics to certain extent, right? Like, there's no formula to it. To a certain extent, art

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and science is two different approaches to teach topics. Like, there's

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a lot of there's a lot of overlap, but for the most part, they're two different camps, a certain extent, in terms of how we execute. And so the hamster wheel in my mind is always turning on. How do I translate this beautiful thing that I find to be life giving? I really, yeah, maybe a dramatic way to think about it, but I find the creative realm to be life giving. You know, I can't see myself doing anything else. So how do I translate that to and embed this into a student, you know, who may be on the fence about what they want to do in terms of their career. Maybe they are really jazzed about the creative field, but they just don't know how to plug in, like, how do I like, translate that to a student and keep them excited about it? You know, that's the, that's the hamster wheel. So it's a balance of that hamster wheel rolling and then the hamster wheel of, how do I like feed my own soul creatively?

### **Gavin Kelly**

Yeah, because it's if a hobby turns into a passion, but then that passion turns into like a career. To what you study at school, what you want to do in your career, you have to be careful, because, you know, it's easy to if something you know, they say that if you love what you do, you don't work a day in your life or whatever, right? But also, it's true that if you get if you turn what you love into a job, you risk, I guess, falling into some traps of having a you know

### **Phillip Leblanc**

what I mean? I know exactly what you mean, if you have to be careful with it and be precious with it, you know. And I think I find what helps me is just plugging back into creatives on my level, or even beyond my level, you know, just continuing to learn, yeah, and hear the students, it's it's fun to learn. Yeah, I know there's some people, some people, I mean, this is a silly statement, but, but some people think that it's a, it's a drag to have to, you know, to learn. But as you grow older, it becomes more exciting to do it, you know, to to revisit those fundamental thing that you learn and add to it. I guess the best part of that, or the better form of that is when you deal with people who are already in the know, and they're, they're already doing their own thing. And when you can come together and talk about these things together and just, and just have people blow your mind, you know, right there in front of me, like I had no idea that this program can do this. I had no idea of that approach, this particular form of communication, with photography, whatever you have to water that gift otherwise, then, yeah, it becomes stagnant, and it becomes a job, yeah, and repetitive and mundane.

### **Gavin Kelly**

And I think too, in that, in that same vein, like college education, we're at a point where it kind of has become, in some viewpoints, a little transactional, you know. And. Degree is a tool to get a job, you know, for a lot of people. And while it is helpful in that regard, then that's a destination, not a journey



type way of thinking. And, you know, like you said, it's good to learn. And I think if you're too worried about the end goal of the degree, and you don't stop to, you know, smell the flowers along the way, and risk kind of losing, like, like, are you really learning to your full potential?

### **Phillip Leblanc**

For sure, for sure, a while back, I'm not sure if you remember what tad carpenter who was this prolific designer. He's from Kansas City, Missouri. He's worked with so many I mean, his client list is ridiculous. Yeah. Anyway, he came here, that was maybe a couple academic years ago, and I sat in on the conversation. He was saying just those things, you know, he obviously was talking about all of his jobs, you know, should I say all of his clients, and doing things in the real world, and very much a transactional kind of thing to a certain extent. But if you're doing it right, I think that you're going to see beyond just the beginning and end point. It's the journey in between. And like, how, how fun the research section could be, you know, in terms of, like, researching a client and what they need and what their culture is at that place, you know. How can you visualize this? You know, if you do the research and you plug yourself in, there's no way that you can't have these beautiful moments along the way, you know. And so, yeah, it's never a one two thing, and, you know, it's a journey in between, you know. Yeah, it's never a man, you give me this problem, and automatically I have a solution. You know, we have to dig, you know, we have to experience, you know. And in that, there's some beautiful, beautiful moments.

### **Gavin Kelly**

Yeah, it's good. You talked about teaching somebody how to work with clients. It's that's valuable to like, how do you work with feedback? Like, make it pop more. Or, you know, because age old, age old feedback that people get from clients when it comes to design, but

### **Phillip Leblanc**

make the logo bigger. Yeah,

### **Gavin Kelly**

make it bigger. Make it how do we make it jazzy? Or jazz it up. A little vague feedback. But anyway, I guess talking to you about this kind of makes me, you know, I've gone into this topic with a few people we've had on the podcast, because it's kind of a gray area. But, you know, I want you to feel free to speak your mind about it. Let's talk about AI, because you work in, again, a very visual area. And I think all of the areas that you touch as an instructor, that you're teaching your students are in some way or shape being affected by the advances in AI, no doubt. So I guess my question is, you know, how do you work with that? Do you feel like that sort of thing is working against you? You know? How does that affect you in your field, you as a teacher, and you in these different creative passions that you have?

### **Phillip Leblanc**

That's a great question. It's funny because right before this interview, I had web design, we teach a web design class in communications, com 200 and we use, because these are communication students, they're not, you know, computer science students. They don't know a lot of the back end coding for this, we use what we call WYSIWYG sites. You know what you see, right yet, type of sites. And so it's, there's a lot of design elements already packaged in the site, and you just, kind of just pluck and play

and you and you have access to all these templates and stuff. And so, um, I've coined a phrase. Maybe it's not mine, I don't know, but, um, I've tried to steer students away from the simplification of things. You know, certainly you can, you know, you can use AI, you can use templates as a tool, but don't let it be the end all be all. Don't dictate the overall look and feel of the of the site. You try to give my students enough tools to be able to make their own design decisions and not to be afraid to create things from scratch, yeah, you know. And so you just have to, kind of like a lot of people are afraid of AI. A lot of people are thinking that it's going to take jobs, etc. And certainly there's nuance to it all. There might be that might be true in some areas, but ultimately, if you forge your own design style and your own way of thinking about design issues, then that's going to show up in your work, you know? And so I would say to say this to most of my students, just make sure that your voice is in this, you know, that your viewpoint is inside this. Don't let yourself, don't let your design more specifically seem like everyone else's, which is the danger of AI and templates and all these different things, that everything starts to look the same, yeah, you know. And so how can you, how can you make your particular project sing and break out from everybody else's? You know, that's the important thing, just mindfulness when you're using this, these tools, you know, sure, templates are there. They can inspire you. They can push you to the towards the right direction. But, like, how do you make this yours? Yeah, you know, it's what I try to push as much as possible.

### **Gavin Kelly**

How do you place value on the idea of creativity and not the product of it, right? Like, how do you the value is not so much on what comes out of your creativity as it is the creativity. Self correct, right?

### **Phillip Leblanc**

I believe that. I believe that, of course, you know, we have a goal. We have, you know, we have things to build, things to do, yes, goals to to accomplish, but at the same time don't get that's where it goes back to we, I think we were talking earlier about, like, the monotony, or, how do you protect your career from feeling monotonous and just feeling, you know, draining the life force out of what you what you do, and I think that's in the journey, that's in the discovery, that's in the not just conveyor building, cranking out these products, you know, the services that we have, you know, like, how do you have fun with it? And that's always the case. And again, in this is maybe a bigger conversation, but I think what helps us to stay in that creative flow. That realm is just connection and communication, you know, connecting with other creatives, but also connecting with people in general, because ultimately they're the ones who are using these products and services that you build, etc. And so if you're just building and creating an echo chamber, then I think your work dies on the vine, you know, yeah, it has to be connected to other people, other creatives, and that juminates things. I think, you know, at least it gets your mind turning in and get you out of this, these blinders, so to speak, these creative blinders.

### **Gavin Kelly**

So and also, in a you know, the world's getting faster and faster every day, and AI makes things fast and convenient for a lot of people, you know. So I think that, again, you have to put value on being creative, and not just the product of the creativity, or else AI is going to become, you know, the default method for creating, right? You know, for some people, that's it's, again, like I said, fast and convenient, but for creators who value their work, you got to find ways to walk to the line, and it's a very thin line.



**Phillip Leblanc**

Walking the line, I think, is the right thing, because it's so tempting. Yeah, you know, it's a

**Gavin Kelly**

tool that has its uses. We're not gonna act like it's not right, yeah, certainly, it's so

**Phillip Leblanc**

tempting. And I'm not gonna lie and say I haven't used it in some form or fashion. You know, it's just when it becomes everything. I saw an ad, as we're all inundated by ads. It's funny, being a creative and a designer with great power, concrete responsibility, the phrase that comes with to mind, and I always think it's my profession that are like facilitating these, what I would call for like a better term, just just awful messages. More specifically speaking, there was a commercial that I saw, an ad, I think I was on YouTube looking up something, and it pops up, and instead, this guy comes up and he says, like, you see all these companies, these apparel companies, and they're all their products. They're big. They're able to craft and create these, these shirts and all these different things. And it seems like it's just, like, so fast, and then see how the efficiency, what efficiency they can get all this stuff out. It's because of AI, and all you have to do is tweak this one little thing. And basically, he was talking about just, you know, letting AI create all these different designs for you. He was blatantly just come out and saying that.

**Gavin Kelly**

And it was a selling point. He was framing it as a positive thing, right? Exactly. He was crazy because you

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crazy, insulting all the things I'm like, what I know, how much effort I put into the creative process to put these things together, but it's where we are. It's just, it's the maximalist approach. To a certain extent that when I was in design school, we didn't have the internet was there, but we didn't have as many resources to put these ideas together and to be inspired. And now it's just at the, you know, push a button. You have all these different styles that are, you know, shoved into your face. Just pick a style and slap it on, you know. And that, to me, is just such an awful approach to it, such a money first approach to it. Again, I'm not saying that we do jobs for a reason, right? We have careers for a reason. We want to make livelihoods. But also it just seems like, when you put the bottom line above the process, or it just takes, just strips the joy out of it, and I would argue that it deludes the end product, you know, yeah. And so it's all about the journey, yeah, you know, and really thinking things through, versus just slapping a style on and hoping that things work out.

**Gavin Kelly**

Yeah, and I think, too, you know, it's going to change, obviously, the way that you approach your students. Because I think, you know, you think about, in just three, five years, you're going to have students in your classroom that they went their whole high school, even junior high years, and AI was a part of their lives. It was a part of their workflow. So that's why I like talking to teachers about it. Because I just, I like to hear about their approach to how they handle it when it comes to teaching the same subject matter to their students, when their students are being, you know, coming in with different ideas about it. So just an interesting thought, I got one more question before we let you go. We always

said the nice retrospective question till the end, but I'll ask you that in your time, not just as a professor, but here at Tech, here in Ruston, as a creator, as a designer, how have you seen changes in yourself, in the way you approach your work, in the way you approach the classroom, now, today, versus maybe just. You first started,

### **Phillip Leblanc**

I think goes back to again, just just the amount of resources that we have available to us, to to gain inspiration, to connect to like minded folks, you know, in your field, you know, whether that's to create a field or, you know, there's a lot of people here, in a lot of different areas here, but in every respect, I think being able to connect is it's just easier to do that. Yeah. Now the dangers in that, I think, and I see danger, maybe that's too intense of a word. I think that it's important also to literally get out of town, you know, and travel and see how people are doing things in different culture, different places, etc. I just recently took, I say, recently, about six months ago, my daughter and I took a trip to Europe. She's a student here, and she's taking German and so the opportunity to go out and and take this trip practice their German. And so I went along with it. Because why not? Yeah, of course, of course. And so I've wanted to travel abroad for a while, and I've been out of the country, but not to Europe. And let me tell you how stimulating that trip and the first thing I noticed when we landed in Frankfurt was just the Germans appeal to design elements when it comes to like signage, it's just everything is just, I'm a sucker if I get if I could be, like a little geeky for a second, little type geeky. I just love sans serif typeface. How clean they are modern forms that we have here. And it just seems like they get it and they get it and they use it everywhere, and they lean heavily on symbolism. Symbolism, with symbols, it's soft, communicated

### **Gavin Kelly**

soft. There's a softness to it. It's very like people. It's people friendly. Very people friendly. Signage, yeah,

### **Phillip Leblanc**

yeah, exactly people friendly. And they, I think they, they think that this symbol will communicate exactly what you need. And I don't have to have an extra fluff, you know, it's just and so just as a designer and creative, it was, I was a very appreciative of seeing that type of stuff, and on the side of that, just the landscape was stimulating as well. Just seeing, just just thinking in a different setting that alone is amazing. So to get back to your point, certainly we have access to a lot now, and that has given me the opportunity to be able to not just design and create in an echo chamber, I can see what other people are doing, quite literally, you know, across the country. But that doesn't negate, I think, the need and underlying need to get around, get out, travel. See other people. See how people are doing things, how they're designing things, and creative things that informs the work,

### **Gavin Kelly**

you know, so get inspired in an old fashioned way by just Yeah, seeing it for yourself. Balance, yeah, balance, maybe that's what we'll name this episode. Mike, I appreciate you making time for us today. Again, it's the first full week of the quarter. We're at kind of the end of the first full school week of the quarter. So I know you're busy, but I really enjoyed this conversation, and thanks for being on I

**Phillip Leblanc**

appreciate it. I appreciate you having me. Thank you.

**Gavin Kelly**

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