

Best of the WWEST, Episode 1: Cole Brown, Web Developer

Intro [iamota](#)

_____ in Vancouver, B.C. iamota is a full service digital agency recognized as one of B.C.'s fastest growing companies. She is responsible for building web interfaces and guiding developers and projects to success through team mentorship, research, and strategy. She has worked in the industry for over fifteen years and is passionate about empowering technology users while they browse the web. Outside the office, Cole regularly mentors women beginning development careers and has presented workshops on web performance through local event groups, like [Style and Class](#) here in Vancouver. Hi, Cole! Welcome to the podcast.

Cole: Hi, thanks for having me!

I found my stride, and here I am feeling pretty confident in the work that I do.

Danniele: So Cole, you mention the importance of mentorship in the workplace. Can you tell me a bit more about how you approach that, how you've been mentored in the past, and also how you approach mentoring people who are within your team, since you're a lead?

Cole: Yeah! So in the past, my first job opportunity in Vancouver was a company that had just one other staff member my boss, my H.R. person, the lead designer, etc. But he was very instrumental in taking me under his wing, showing me the whole process of building a website, and how it comes together in a professional setting. I learned a lot from him. He specifically was looking for a junior developer so that he could work with them, to train them, to help them grow their career while also taking advantage of their learnings to help build work for his company. And it was such a wonderful experience for me, because it really gave me the confidence that I needed to be able to move to any future positions. I felt like I had been given the right toolset, I knew what was expected of me in a professional setting, what my deliverables were, and then how to market those to other people who might be interested in the same thing.

me was that some of the jobs that had not responded ~~at all~~ whether they saw my resume or not – didn't get back to me under Nicole Brown, and then all of a sudden I had a response from them, same resume, with just the name changed to Cole Brown. And that felt kind of a bit cheeky, like, how dare you? I'm the same person, my qualifications are the same, my work experience is the same, my history within the community in terms of my technical showmanship is the same ~~portfolio~~ portfolio is the same, and now you're willing to bring me in for an interview? I never found that anybody ever commented on that personally, except for one organization which stressed to me that it would be very difficult for them to hire me because they had ~~an~~ a small team and I would be something of a distraction.

Cole: Yeah-

praising and pushing me to continue along this path, I felt like I could. Like it was possible for me. So it became this thing where, when I got through high school, I was toying with the idea - what do I do? And I was like, I really want to go into building websites, but there's no four year degree program for websites (or there weren't any at the time). The closest I could get was computer science, but that's more backend programming - databases, software development and that's less my jam. So I decided that I would take what I knew and keep doing it on the side, pursue a degree in biology. And then

Danniele: Great. So Cole, what do you like to do in your spare time? Outside of work, is there a cause or issue that you're really passionate about?

Cole: Yeah! I volunteer with the [Asexual Visibility & Education Network](#), also known as AVEN. I've been involved with them for about ten years now as a web master. Primary responsibilities would include the look and feel of the website, leading the technical team - we just did a massive server migration, so server maintenance and upgrades is part of that. And then we have sixteen different language forums, and each of them requires their own maintenance and upkeep, so what I like to do with them is a bit on the technical side, but I also do education in that realm. I'm a speaker at U.B.C.; I do a guest lecture every semester on asexuality to college aged psychology students - it's important to me, but I like that when I started doing the technical side of things, it was the thing that I could give back. It provided so much benefit for me, but I was able to give something back, and it's evolved into a lot more than just the updates I was performing in the way old, old days. These days, it's become a full time position, and I sit on their Board of Directors as their Chief Technical Officer. Managing all of that has been very rewarding, but it's kind of seeing it grow - that experience leading a team on the flip side of my professional work life leading a team. They've synergized nicely, if I can say that.

Danniele: Well, that brings us to our lightning round questions! These are going to be short answers. So. Are you ready?

Cole: Yes.

Danniele: Awesome. Cats or dogs?

Cole: Cats who are trained like dogs. My cat is named Greycat, and I only adopted her because she's very obedient, listens to my commands, learned some tricks, and we go adventuring together.

Danniele: Aw, that's great. What is your favourite or least favourite word?

Cole: Oh, goodness. I would have to say my least favourite, specifically about work, is when somebody asks for your weaknesses. I just think it's such a lazy, putting us down while we're trying to build ourselves up kind of word. I just don't think it has much of a place within the realm of work. We're all here because of our strengths, or we should be celebrating other people

because other people have families. One of the things that I've heard from more women than men in this industry is, "I don't know that I'll be able to do this job for very long, because at some point I will have children one day and my employer would never allow for me to have to go to daycare to pick up or drop off my child." Make flexibility for that, because just because they have other responsibilities at home does not mean that they're not a good, dedicated worker or that they wouldn't get the job done for you. If somebody can accomplish in six hours what another person can accomplish in eight, those two hours to go pick up from childcare or drop off at childcare are really nothing. So make sure that you're investing in people who are investing in themselves, investing in being bright, energetic, well learned individuals, and you'll see good reward.

Danniele: Well, thank you so much for joining me today, Cole, on the WWEST.

Cole: Yeah, you're very welcome.

Danniele: Do you want to tell people where they can connect with you online?

Cole: Yeah! You can find me on Twitter at [@nmebrown](#) and our company website, where you can see all of our case studies for all the work that we've done at iamota, would be at [iamota.com](#)