

# EPIISODE 073

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## MARSHMALLOW

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Jessica Bong, Ragged Edge

AND

Francesca Bennett, Marshmallow

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

### **ARMIN VIT**

Hi, this is Armin Vit and welcome to episode number 73 of The Follow-up.

It has been a full six months since our last episode so, first and foremost, thank you for your patience as the 6 to 8 weeks we had originally planned to take off turned into 24 but this year's Brand New Conference ended up demanding so much of our time. We are back though and ready to follow up on The Follow-up. So!

This week we are following up on Marshmallow, a digital-only car insurance provider with a focus on expats and immigrants that have recently moved to the UK, a group that tends to be targeted with higher rates — up to 45% more for their car insurance than their UK-born friends. To date they've sold over 342,000 policies and paid out £66m in claims. Back in 2021, Marshmallow raised £68 million on a £1 billion valuation.

The project, designed by London, UK-based Ragged Edge, was posted on Brand New on September 14, 2023. You can pull it up on your browser at [bit.ly/bnpodcast073](https://bit.ly/bnpodcast073) that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast073, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Jessica Bong-Woon, Design Director at Ragged Edge, and Francesca Bennett, Lead Brand Designer at Marshmallow.

In this conversation we address the number one question on most of Brand New's readers' minds, which is why would Marshmallow redesign a mere two years after having gone through the process? I won't spoil the answer upfront for you but it was interesting to hear how the answer reflected the evolution of the company itself. We also learn about how quick this project was, taking between 6 and 8 months from initial internal strategy to launch and how not even a legal hurdle was able to not just NOT slow them down but actually make the project better while keeping things pink, soft, and juicy.

Now, let's listen in as Bryony follows up with Jessica and Francesca.

**BRYONY** No matter what kind, insurance can be daunting, intimidating, and downright confusing. It has been very interesting to see changes within the industry over the last say, five to eight years, in how companies are positioning themselves, how they communicate with existing and potential customers, and what exactly it is that they have to offer. Today we're getting the inside scoop on UK-based Marshmallow. Jessica and Francesca, welcome to the Follow-Up.

**FRANCESCA** Hi, thanks for having us.

**JESSICA** Hi. Glad to be here.

**BRYONY** If you don't mind each introducing yourselves, what company you're representing, and what role you played in this project.

**FRANCESCA** I'm Fran. I'm the Lead Brand Designer at Marshmallow. I looked after the creation and kicking off the project, and the management and the delivery of the project liaising with Ragged Edge on all things strategy, identity, and rolling out.

**JESSICA** I'm Jess, I'm a Design Director at Ragged Edge and I worked alongside the team here, and the team at Marshmallow to build the brand that we now know and love.

**BRYONY** Well, with that in mind, I think it's important to establish what Marshmallow does and why it's different from the competition. So Fran, would you mind starting us with the elevator pitch?

**FRANCESCA** The really short answer is we offer those who are new to the UK much fairer prices on their car insurance based on all of their driving experience. What many people don't know is that when people move to the UK, they're sort of treated like they never existed before. They have to restart their credit history, all their paperwork that was sort of valid in their previous country may no longer be accepted or valid. In the UK, they will have had different requirements for their driving back in their home country. Therefore, the financial service industry see them as quite a high risk, and I think it's something like three-out-of-four insurance companies won't even offer those people a price. So immediately what they're able to gain access to is limited. And then when they do get a price, that quote is often really, really high because of the risk associated with them not having the financial background and the credit history I just spoke about.

It's kind of an invisible problem really. It's not something that the majority of us will ever experience unless you're moving into the country, or perhaps you have a similar experience if you've gone to live elsewhere. We're super aware that there's about a million people moving to the UK every year, so all these people have uprooted their life probably in the hopes of a better future. They're going to probably need a car to get them where they need to go and continue to live their life when they get here. We just really come in as that more helpful, fairer brand in a market that's really kind of forgotten about this huge cohort of people.

**BRYONY** Now, Marshmallow is about six years old and it underwent a brand evolution by Output about four years after launching. And here we are, two years later with another shift. So, the big question on Brand New and our audience has been why? Why so soon? Why the need? Pretty much “why” everything. Can give us the inside scoop?

**FRANCESCA** It’s a really simple answer to be honest—it was a completely different brief. The scope of work that had been done with Output had been led by a product design team before the marketing team even existed at Marshmallow. At that time, what they really needed was foundations and fundamentals to build a really consistent design system so they could create a good looking product. And that work gave them just that. Without a marketing team, I think the concept of brand wasn’t something that was wholly understood at Marshmallow. I think in that startup world it’s about getting the product to market, and not necessarily thinking about the positioning, and how you’re going to comms it to the customer so much. I came in about two years ago. In my experience, brand building is obviously very different to building just a design system. Everything works so much better when it hangs off a really good strategy, and there’s rationale. Rather than trying to sort of backfill the bits that hadn’t been done, we felt the best outcome would be to let the strategy guide us.

The business had gone through a little bit of a refocus in that two years. I think when you’re in startup world, everything’s moving all of the time. We’d learned a lot more about who we were. We’d learned a lot more about what we were good at. We’d figured out who our audience were, and we knew where we were sort of going to double down. It just felt like the right time to go really back to the drawing board and start with a really good strategy. And I don’t think it was about throwing everything out and starting from scratch. We really took our time to reassess what were the missing gaps that weren’t filled in the first time, what was old and no longer relevant, what was still working and how could we sharpen that up and give that focus. And I think it did end up looking quite visually different for us, but

actually everything was really considered and it felt like everything had a lot more substance because it hung off a broader strategy. It just meant everything that we did had reasoning behind it, which just makes everything feel that little bit more authentic.

**BRYONY** And Jess how did Ragged Edge get involved with this project?

**JESSICA** Fran is a really huge reason as to why we wanted to get involved and how we got involved into this project. There was a real literacy when it came to brand, understanding the power of brand and its ability to really cut through to build affinity and to really make sure that there was a strong North Star that the company could work towards and work forward in. So we'd been chatting for a while and we knew that we just both shared a really similar way of thinking about the world. Like yes, I've mentioned the brand and how we think about brand, but even how we view the world. When I heard about the project—there were internal conversations—I knew that, oh man, this was definitely something that really resonated with me as someone, you can tell from my accent, I'm actually from Australia, I'm working in the UK. I had never even thought about what's it going to cost when I get a car and when I have to drive around and pay insurance. It's going to be like some sort of penalty. Instantly already from a functional point of view, I related to it and there's a lot of people on our team who are in the same boat, so instantly we knew that we were going to be a great match 'cause we really understood what you guys were about, and we really resonate with that.

**BRYONY** What does the beginning of the project and this partnership look like from both teams? and who's involved on either end?

**JESSICA** Just to introduce the cast on our end, and the people who were on the team at Ragged Edge working for this Marshmallow rebrand: Creative Director Matt Smith, we had Nicole [Griffin], our strategy partner, and we had obviously me, Venetia [Thorneycroft], a brilliant Senior Designer, we had Peggy [Afriyie] writing and copy, and a few other people that were involved along the process.

The way we start every single project is we have a kickoff meeting. We really get to know the business, and then we have an immersion process and that is doing a nice audit, really going into all of the comms that you provide, going into the website, going into all the different places that the brand is going to really live and need to really work, but also get to know each other. There's a lot of upfront conversation. The whole point of doing all this is to create something that's really going to work. If we don't know how you guys think, operate, the real challenges that you face on a day-to-day basis, then we're never going to be able to create something that's fit for purpose, something that you guys will run, apply and bring to life. There's a lot of getting to know each other. We also find that if you don't have the ability to have honest frank conversations then you're just never going to get the best work.

**FRANCESCA** I guess for me it's probably one of the most ambitious projects I've ever worked on and I say that because at Marshmallow we're sort of a really lean team. We have more or less one person doing each discipline. We're starting to grow out a little bit more. At the time it was myself and our Brand Manager, Megan [Elliott]. Obviously we had a lot of additional stakeholders along the way, but the very first bit for us was actually taking the business on a bit of a brand journey and creating a business case for it to help them understand what it was going to deliver. Trying to help the business understand marketing and brand from a longer term brand building investment, not just performance-led. We need to see the results and we need to prove things are working. So that was a real journey internally before we even got to talking to Ragged Edge and scoping out the work.

For us, having come from a design background myself, the brief is probably the most important thing. So we had a lot of information which we fed into the brief in terms of things that we know weren't working, things that we were missing, things that we probably knew were going to be off the table, like the name was a no-go. We had such

a clear brief, and I think Ragged Edge had such a great portfolio that they'd done very similar challenges in previous clients before, so it felt like a natural fit. And they came back to us with a really tight scope of work, and a really tight plan on how they deliver it. At Marshmallow the question is always like, "great, how quickly can you do it? Great. Can you do it even quicker than that?" And I think we knew that this was going to be something that we didn't want to rush.

Ragged Edge were really good at turning us around and turning around to us and sort of saying, look, here's the steps. We've done it this way before. This is sort of our magic formula. Trust the process... And really when we looked at if we could do it any quicker, I think the only place we could really shave time off was feedback turnaround, which was already a 48-hour loop and we decided not to make it a 24-hour loop, for our own sanity. [Laughter] It was a bit of a journey for us internally even deciding to do the project. I think Ragged Edge were a perfect partner, having looked at their portfolio and the clients they'd worked for before—really then it was the standard sort of getting the brief together, and scoping everything out, and working out who we needed to bring along on the journey for us internally because I think we knew that in order for it to be a success, it couldn't just be something that marketing and design did in isolation. It had to be something that truly felt like the whole organization could get behind from a strategic point of view, and understand why we were making the investment, and then from an executional point of view make sure that anyone that was using and interacting with it felt like it was a positive step in the right direction for us.

**BRYONY** Jess, from the scope that was developed, and then the plan that was laid out by Ragged Edge, walk me through that first round of actual creative once the strategy was in place. What did that entail? Was it in-person, was it a remote meeting? and what was the sense going into that presentation?

**FRANCESCA** It was in-person and I have to say from my side I was a little bit nervous, not because I didn't believe we'd be getting shown great work, it was actually because we were running at such speed, we made a decision that any stakeholders or anyone that had opinion or influence needed to be in those presentation meetings. It was the first time in my career that I'd been seeing the fresh design work, like shown at first concept at the same time as the senior stakeholders. So I think for me that was a little bit nerve wracking, but actually it was fine and everyone was asking really intuitive questions. We felt like it was important to get everyone in a room so you're all having the same conversation. I think it's very easy to water things down as people present back to other people and other stakeholders.

**JESSICA** Yeah.

**FRANCESCA** Ragged Edge presented us three concepts, sort of remembering holding my breath after the first concept and thinking, oh crap, I think this is the one, but I need to remember to keep my mind open.

**JESSICA** I actually didn't know that you were nervous going into that.

**FRANCESCA** It was more from the expectations that... what I love about design is everybody interprets it and feels very differently about different things, right? [Affirmative] When you are in a room of designers and you can make very rational decisions and you can talk to each other, understanding what's opinion and what's fact. I think when you bring non-designers into the mix, everybody has something really valid to say, but sometimes it can be quite hard to field out. People just have this emotional reaction to "I like it, I don't like it." You can get hit with, "I just don't like it, so it's a no". That was my nervousness. I didn't want us to discount anything really on just because of personal opinions. Probably an unnecessary nerve because actually everyone is incredibly low-ego, both on our side and on Ragged Edge and it was really about interrogating the work with intention and having different viewpoints about thinking how it would work and how it wouldn't work. [Affirmative] Maybe I've been burnt in the past, I dunno.



**JESSICA** No, I understand that you really want the project to go well, and I think we all felt that as well. We felt a level of like, will they like it?

**BRYONY** So what did you bring to the table for that meeting and how did you prepare?

**JESSICA** The one thing that I look back and I remember on when I think of this whole Marshmallow/Ragged Edge collaboration is very much that: that it was such a collaboration. There was a lot of Slack huddles, and us talking and showing each other things all throughout the process. But the one time that it wasn't collaborative was the upfront conceptual phase. Right after we had gotten that strategy, the designers, the writers, we were all involved in the strategy as well throughout that whole entire process, and had seen how Marshmallow was reacting to certain things that were being put in front of them, how they were speaking about certain ideas and concepts. Certain key words or ideas that kept coming back up and we wanted to really test that out in the concepts that we put in front of them.

We know that when it comes to designing work that is really substantial, interesting, and cuts through, it can't be done by a consensus, at the start, at least. We really try and protect that, and so we let the designers go off and enter into a little bit of a design cage, a little bit of a state of flow. I don't think I showered much throughout that process... [laughter]

Because you just get lost in the whole entire journey of designing it. We came forward with three concepts, they weren't territories or rough ideas or mood boards. Of course there were some mood boards in there, but they were quite misleadingly resolved ideas even though they're not resolved, and everything is always up for grabs. And when we did present it to you guys, we made that very clear. That whilst everything looks quite polished, everything was still up for conversation, but what we wanted to do was really show you something that you could really imagine. We've worked with a

lot of brand-literate, design-literate people, clients, but then we've also worked with a lot of non-creatives, people who have completely analytical minds who really just cannot see the vision unless they see it in front of them. And that's why we try to create something that feels quite polished when we show and present that. The way that that all ended up looking was three really pulled apart ideas, really simple really single minded. There was still pink. I think there were certain decisions, creative decisions that we knew were just always going to be there and pink was one of them; but beyond that, some felt a little bit more stoic and paired back, more editorial, some felt a little bit more obvious, squishy, glowy, juicy, and then the one that you see now.

**FRANCESCA** I think "juicy" was a keyword that came up, wasn't it? [laughter]

**JESSICA** Juicy was a keyword! [laughter] and then we did something that we had seldom, or never done before, where we took our presentation room, we took away all the tables, we just lined up all the chairs, almost like an amphitheater and then we presented on a huge screen so you can really see things up close. After that, we printed all of the key slides and we dawned them around the room, allowed people to get up, touch things, make notes, scroll, rip things up. That part then was almost the opening of the collaboration once we had presented. That's essentially how it looked.

**BRYONY** So it kind of turned into a workshop.

**JESSICA** It ended in a workshop, for sure.

**FRANCESCA** I think that was really important. Obviously the beauty of the internet and Zoom and being able to have these conversations even though we're thousands of miles apart is brilliant, but honestly as a creative there's nothing like getting in a room, and putting creative up on the wall, and being able to see it and look at it and absorb it, and not being just talked through it on a screen. You can do that and it does work, but I think also you get more honest conversation out of people when you're not sat behind a screen with nine other people.

The conversation flows a bit more easily and I think you can open up a debate a little bit more. I think we all went to the pub afterwards actually. The conversation continued at the pub.

**JESSICA** I love it... exactly.

**FRANCESCA** Yeah.

**BRYONY** From that meeting, what happened next? What was the outcome? And how did that translate into the evolution of the actual brand assets?

**JESSICA** It starts with the feedback, doesn't it?

**FRANCESCA** And we were really strict with ourselves on feedback. The most important thing to give any agency is really clear feedback, not necessarily specific. I think they've got a job to do in solving it themselves, don't want to do the work for them, but we captured feedback in the room, worked through anything that was conflicting, what was useful, what was an opinion... I think it's always great to sleep on it because how you feel about something in the room maybe influenced by other people and what they're saying. We literally had a 48-hour feedback loop, so anyone that was a final key decision maker, we brought onto a call from Marshmallow's side and got ourselves into alignment.

I think we were sort of 80% all with the chosen route. The other 20% was considerations around how we adapt a few other things that we liked that had been explored in other routes that we were just curious as to see whether they might be able to be brought along in development. We always typed up the feedback and sent it over before having a call. It allowed the team at Ragged Edge to read through it, almost prepare for if they needed to challenge or have a conversation amongst themselves. I just think it's a much more purposeful call if you can do that. We were very quick to pick a route and I mean for me it was actually once we had that, I felt like it was plain sailing from our side. It might not have been from yours, but the rest was working out details.

**JESSICA** I don't think anything was too surprising on our end. Instantly read in the room which one it was going to be. It felt like a 80% swing towards one particular route, but then there were lots of things that people loved in the other routes, which is always really useful because when you are going through the process of concepting... We seldom ever just have a designer working on one in isolation, in fact, we try and avoid that. We try and do a little bit of, okay, we have an idea, massage it, do a little bit of back and forth amongst the team. We knew that the concept that had the shapes, the one they see now, it really did celebrate variation and really did the concept of "value difference" so well. Also understood that there was a pragmatic side to it. And a thing about a brand is it doesn't just come to be, it's all these individual people on client side working together day-in, day-out for years even, to make this a reality. And the worst thing is if you join a company and absolutely hate working with the material, so we really just wanted to make sure that it was something that you could take and it wasn't hard and laborious to use.

That was also part of what drove the concept with the shapes to be picked, right? That was what we felt was best, but then there were very much so specific points of feedback about color, about type, and preferences that we were also so okay to listen to. I think we did challenge when it came to, yes type, but also color.

**BRYONY** Yeah, I want more details on the type because you have a custom typeface. I want to jump into that aspect [affirmative] of the identity system.

**JESSICA** What's really interesting is that this was the first typeface that we put forward in front of them in that concept, and that's really rare that the typeface that we use within concept is the one that ends up being the final one. We had a lot of airtime with it throughout the whole entire few months and just naturally we were finding that there were some legibility issues when it came to the scale that we needed it to work at. We worked with the foundry All Caps. Shout out Ondrej [Bachor], he was our main man who we spoke to tell him like, "Hey, your typeface

is amazing and we love it, but we also know that it was built with bigger usage in mind, but working for an insurance company, it's going to have to appear on aggregator sites, really small performance marketing comms and all that stuff..."

**FRANCESCA** But I think to have personality and for it to feel like it fits within the broader design system, for it to feel distinct, it isn't an easy challenge. Like Jess said, we actually started, especially with the type and the logo, thinking about where does it have to work the hardest and 80% of our business comes through price comparison websites. You get a postage-size stamp area to show up as a brand, so you have to also then make sure it's not so detailed as a typeface that it loses any detail when it shows up so small, or you're kerning it to the exact measurement so that actually it's still really legible and doesn't just become a blob. One of our considerations is that we're talking about our audience and people that are new to the UK. We have to remember that English might not be their first language. They might be used to different alphabets, and I think where we had ascenders and descenders on things like A's and D's, we had to exaggerate that a little bit for legibility. We were getting the style, but the legibility, we were sort of customizing to make sure that for our audience it wasn't going to be confusing for them.

**BRYONY** That makes a lot of sense.

**JESSICA** Absolutely, and I think on that note, that seamlessly gets us into the logotype which was based off Marshmallow Youth. It is such a long word and that definitely was the first thing that us designers, when we looked at the brand Marshmallow, we instantly called out, "God, that's a long word, and are so wide, what are we going to do?" Finding out that it had to fit within a postage-size space, that was one of the first things that we tackled alongside the concept, alongside development. It was always making sure that the logo was really going to work within the proportion that we had. Which then we also realized, hey, it is

quite a neutral typeface when you're only using the letters "M-A-R-S-L-L-O-W," there are certain letters that had more character and own ability within the rest of the alphabet set. But within Marshmallow, there's a lot of repetition of very specific letters. They weren't the ones that had the uniqueness... And that's why we also then knew that we needed to bring that mascot in and elevate it as our icon. So Marshall, we call "it". We made sure that that icon, that logo really shared the same DNA and the silhouette of the typeface, [affirmative] but also had the same proportions that would fit within an aggregator postage-size stamp thumbnail.

**FRANCESCA** It was a really nice bridging gap between the world of shapes and the typography. Almost like the transition of—

**JESSICA** The doorway.

**FRANCESCA** Yeah, exactly. [Laughter]

**BRYONY** So how did you define when you use the full logotype, when you use the mascot, and when you use the shapes?

**FRANCESCA** Yeah, I mean this is the age old question for brands. How famous do you have to be to drop the wordmark? In an ideal world, we'd love to be able to say you can create something so iconic that you can be a Nike and just put a tick, but the reality is we're a really new brand, and our name has nothing to do with what we actually offer; so there is still a bit of an education and brand awareness piece for us. Anything comms world needs to be full wordmark and be fully Marshmallow and explain who we are. I think when we get deeper into the customer journey, and obviously you're working on things like social channels and apps where you've got the tiny little square or circle to work with, if you're thinking digitally first as a brand, you need to create an icon really to have something distinctive in that space.

So we're not going to try and shoehorn the wordmark into it, but it's really thinking about every point individually, and thinking what

makes most sense here? I don't think we've got a hard and fast rule. We do say in the guidelines, if you want to use the icon by itself, please check with the brand team first so we can just run it through our process of thinking of "is that going to work? Is the customer going to know who it is? What point in the journey are they going to be?" We're perhaps a little bit more slack internally, 'cause you can have a little bit more fun with it and we've got different variations and moods the Marshall icon kind of takes. Still in that process of building brand awareness, so I think that kind of keeping it as a lockup the majority of the time is the right thing to do.

**JESSICA** And when it comes to creating a guideline, creating a style guide at Ragged Edge, we don't have the view that just rules and regulations upon rules and regulations are going to create the best work. A lot of the times it just comes down to also trusting the creativity and the skillsets of the designers that will be taking this brand forward. We like to create principles, we like to create lines of thinking, so it really was about using common sense. It was really about understanding the context, understanding what the function of that logo / icon / the pieces, the pictograms. We really wanted to make sure that they didn't feel suffocated by the style guide because that doesn't make the best look at all.

**BRYONY** And I find that whenever our brand is transferred to an internal team, that's when you really start to test all of those items and see if the vision really fits the day-to-day needs because as designers sometimes we go crazy and start designing all these mockups and they look beautiful and amazing, but the reality is the budget doesn't match those mockups, or the day-to-day needs are a little bit more mundane and that's when you really have to test the brand assets.

**FRANCESCA** We actually built that into part of our process. We had some stress testing sessions and afternoons. We were on a super tight schedule, but it just made sense to build that in before we got to a point where we'd absolutely refined everything. Ragged Edge took us through after

one round of development, gave us a bunch of assets, and designers sat in a room and just took their own disciplines and thought, how would this work here? That was absolutely essential because it just meant that we got the best out of the work.

**JESSICA** This is really where the collaboration really shined, wasn't it Fran? It was when we were really trying to work out the finer details and we let everyone in. I know that we were all working on the same Figma file. I know that a lot of places I've worked at in the past, other agencies that I know you want to keep the files away from the client until you deliver them. But you guys had complete visibility of what we were doing on a day-to-day basis because we sat in the same Figma file. That was what made it, it was going to work. It wasn't a piece of design that was built in a vacuum—but had everyone's expertise on it. Definitely not the feeling that I think some people are afraid of when it comes to collaboration that the client's going to absolutely tear everything apart and question things to the ground, and also then feel like they had to come up with a solution. It wasn't like that at all. It was so respectful, it was so kind, and it really was born out of a sense of curiosity and a genuine desire from all of us to actually build something that would work and stand the test of time. You really gave us the room and the space to come back to you with our recommendations, so I loved that.

**FRANCESCA** That was really a key part of how I saw my role on the project. Was almost to protect you guys, and your thinking. I think it's very easy to be the client and to be the one that said, "these are all the problems and you need to fix this and you need to figure this out". At the end of the day, we're paying the expert so we need to take their lead and I've seen it times before, you just don't want to water down a concept. You want to interrogate it and make sure it's going to deliver, but you never want to dilute it with so much feedback that this idea where you started, which you all bought into has been designed through committee and ends up as something that's just not as exciting.



**BRYONY** I find that the design process is experienced differently by the client side and the design side, and it's a bit of a roller coaster. Sometimes you're on the quiet side and the other team is working nonstop and the other way. Was there a moment for each of you, the pivotal or aha moment when you saw something or experienced something in the process and you were like, "this is it, we are so on track, so excited..."

**FRANCESCA** There were two moments for me. The first point was in the strategy phase because I honestly thought people have tried to do this internally. We've tried to do it before. I have no idea how they're going to solve this problem. I didn't know how they're going to bring all this thinking together into a really great brand strategy that's going to lead to an incredible creative platform, but they did. When we got presented the concepts for the strategy, I was like, "oh, this is brilliant" because we've got the perfect jumping off board now. It was honestly that first creative presentation, and that first route... You know when you just see an idea and you just think this is so simple, but in a brilliant way? You have that moment where you just think it should have been obvious, but obviously there's a lot of hard work that goes into finding out what that obvious and simple but not simplistic ideas are. For me, everything just worked, and made sense, and it was a no-brainer.

**JESSICA** If I understand the question, it's when did you feel that click? When did you feel that moment of excitement that, hey, this is it? It wasn't a single moment, to be honest.

**BRYONY** Fair.

**JESSICA** It was like a da-by-day. It was definitely more day-by-day uncovering it little by little. When you are creating something and you feel a sense of energy, and you feel a sense of excitement, people call it inspiration, right? Feeling inspired throughout the entire process, especially upfront to the concept share, and even in development. It just felt like there was just such a nice buzz in the design team, in the writing team, and we always felt just so excited to actually share it with you. There was never this trepidation or this fear that something was going to

be unreasonably critiqued or shot down. Everything felt like a really healthy and inspiring buzz. I would say there is no other click bigger than when you see how everyone in the company really responds to it.

**FRANCESCA** Actually, the whole project was just very exciting. I think when you talk about seeing people's reactions, we were always excited to see what you had done. You were always excited to show us what you had done [affirmative], and we were always excited to talk about the outcome. Probably the only thing I wasn't excited to talk about was when we hit the legal barriers [laughter].

**JESSICA** That's what I was going to say. If you really want to talk about the dark spots, that was probably it. [Laughter]

**FRANCESCA** We had one hiccup. Honestly cannot believe the project was so incredibly smooth. I mean, I think at one point we were pacing a week or two early 'cuase we'd just been collaborating so well, which we thought was unheard of. It was a complete oversight on both parts purely because in my experience before anything that I'd worked on from a brand perspective had already been trademarked or wasn't too far off of where we were with the trademark. It was more obvious that we were going to be okay when it came to legal, so I hadn't allowed for the amount of time that we perhaps needed on legal checks around trademarking the icon and the logo. And we got some pretty good feedback from the legal team that the first go at the logo looked like it could have encroached on some Pac-Man territory. It would be quite a huge risk if we wanted to go forward and we could end up spending quite a lot of money just to be knocked back and told that we wouldn't be able to trademark it and we'd have to go again. So we did do a little bit of work, and it was a spanner in the works, but actually it was a really good lesson learned and I will definitely be making sure that that gets scoped in—

**JESSICA** Oh my God...

**FRANCESCA** —if I ever have to work on anything like that again. [Laughter]

**JESSICA** Yes, yes. It was such a big learning for ME, I would say. I'm so aware that it sounds like, oh my god, Ragged Edge and Marshmallow had the best client supplier/relationship ever, and that could be uhgh, tedious to listen to, but I got to tell you, there were tough points as well. This definitely was one of them. I really felt that all the momentum that we had created was completely stalled without this mascot looking the way it did. I don't know why, there was literally no other option, but the particular option that we had initially shared! That was such a good learning for me, to be open, and just to be okay with actually updating what my view of something should be. Of course, we're doing that throughout the whole entire process anyway when it comes to color, type, whatever, but sometimes there's one thing that you're really, really in love with and it's really hard for you to shake, and even the idea of being sued millions and millions of dollars doesn't even get you thinking straight. [laughter] I think there was even internally we're like, "but it doesn't look like it!" We felt, right.

**BRYONY** Yeah, you don't want to see it.

**JESSICA** It just came to the point where we were like, but would we want to ever put a client in a situation where they had to have a major legal fight, lose all this money, and we were like, shit, no. We'd never want that to happen. We sobered up [laughter], gave you a bunch of other options.

**FRANCESCA** And you know what? It's funny, isn't it? I think sometimes things just feel right because you've been looking at working with them for so long, and internally as well it felt like we were making some compromises. But it was never go back to the drawing board and we want something different. It was how do we solve this within the parameters that we've already set? I remember you coming back to us and thinking, oh, I don't love it as much as the first go, but I actually think this works in the system a little bit better now [affirmative] actually—it's one of those really cheesy things to say, but I think we actually ended up with a better outcome because of it.

- JESSICA** A hundred percent. A hundred percent. I agree. I love this Marshall!
- FRANCESCA** Don't get me wrong. The stress and the heart attacks that I thought I almost encountered, I'm not sure were worth it, but ending up with something a bit better at the end it.
- JESSICA** That's when we were just way too deep into it all, right? We had become the rebrand project. We were no longer individual selves.
- BRYONY** What is the feedback that you're receiving from customers, from the internal team, from the people who are starting to use it, from vendors? And what of the branding most excites you moving forward?
- FRANCESCA** It's been overwhelmingly positive. Internally we launched it in July. You always know like, oh, this feels good, but there's nothing like hearing people say it back to you. After we launched it at our Collective Ambition, we had saying, "oh my gosh, that launch video gave me chills, I'm so proud to be part of this company..." I guess it felt like we were growing up as a company a little bit. Internally it has that kind of, "we look a bit more professional, so we are a bit more professional" element to it. In terms of externally, we started rolling it out in August. We're still doing that and we haven't done any big comms work yet, so we're actually waiting before we run any brand awareness or brand sentiment surveys around it. So I think probably within the next few months, in the new year, we'll probably start to get that feedback.

We've obviously had lots of really lovely write-ups on it from the industry, which is never the goal, but always the cherry on the top, isn't it? Before we had the brand, there was always an element of frustration. We lacked consistency, we lacked alignment, there was an overall reliance on using this: we'll put a line drawing of a Marshmallow on everything, and that's what defines it as being on brand. I guess that's a really scary space to be in as a designer that you have to rely on one asset to make something feel on brand. Whereas now we'd have all these wonderful tools in the toolkit, and we can dial up certain things like the marshforms and the shapes. We're really

able to customize the design experience throughout all of the different touch points, but it all feels like it belongs to the same DNA and family, and that for me was always the goal. I'm just super confident that we now have a brand that our customers feel it's for them. They can look at us and they can say, "oh, this is something that is made for me", which is obviously brilliant because it's going to help us with our acquisition goals, but also it is going to allow us as a tool to build a deeper, more emotional connection with them, which is for me, when branding really starts to work and it's doing its job at its finest.

**JESSICA** Oh, Fran. Well, that's my answer. Basically, we have a happy client who is really confident and empowered to make the moves they want to make in the future, and also we just have some new friends. That's what we get out of it. We're really, really curious to see how you continue to grow, and we just see you growing from strength to strength, and we're so proud of the work that we've done together.

**BRYONY** Well, I think you set out to answer an incredible challenge, both as a business and as a branding project to create a service for people who are more challenged than most in obtaining the service. And then working through that accessibility, and legibility, and recognizability through not only an industry, but languages, alphabets, all of these things. It is a testament to that collaboration, that partnership that you developed right from the beginning and that grew and grew actually strengthened by the legal curve ball that stalled the process. Got everybody in a pause moment, but you persevered and you ended up with a brand that is an emotional connection with that customer that is, without a doubt setting you apart from everybody else. Job well done.

**FRANCESCA** Thank you.

**JESSICA** [Laughter] Amazing. Thank you so much.

**ARMIN** Now that we have been out of the COVID lockdown for more than a year it's nice to hear about clients and designers getting back together in

the same physical room for that initial design presentation. In the first 60 or 70 episodes of The Follow-up we heard from both sides about how Zoom was a great alternative but, let's face it, there is nothing as electrifying as presenting in person. Although I take that back... a more electrifying sensation is your legal team coming back to tell you you can not use a design asset you've fallen in love with and that you must either risk legal consequences or change it. We'll never know what the original Marshall icon looked like and, as Francesca acknowledged, it might be no Nike swoosh but it certainly has the personality to stand on its own and we hope Marshmallow can soon enjoy some recognition from the pink, soft, juicy Marshall and its supporting army of abstract "Marshforms".

Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.