

Chris:

Hi, and welcome to the Design Systems Podcast. This podcast is about the place where design and development overlap. We talked with experts to get their point of view about trends and design, code, and how it relates to the world around us. As always, this podcast is brought to you by Knapsack. Check us out at [knapsack.cloud](https://knapsack.cloud). If you want to get in touch with the show, ask some questions, or generally tell us what you think, go ahead and tweet us at the DS Pod. We'd love to hear from you. Hey, everybody. This is Chris with the Design Systems Podcast. We're going to do something a little bit different today. We're going to talk about this really cool plan that we have at Knapsack. We try really hard to not make this show about our company or us specifically.

Chris:

We try really hard to elevate stories in the community, people that are doing really amazing things, talking about what it's like to work here, talking about all the really incredible things that are going on. And we've actually taken that concept and we've extended it to real life. And so today we're going to talk about this really awesome, exciting opportunity called patterns. It's a conference that we're going to be throwing in June in Santa Fe, New Mexico. And my guest is Ryan Peterson, the VP of marketing at Knapsack. Ryan, why don't you say hi and introduce yourself real quick?

Ryan Peterson:

Yeah. Hey, everyone. Thanks, Chris for having me. Good to be here. Usually, I'm on the other end on the producing side of the podcast. So fun to be with you today to tell you more about patterns and what we're going to be doing down in Santa Fe.

Chris:

And again, this is all about storytelling. It's about figuring out how we continue to communicate the really awesome things that the people in the community are around us are doing. And so I hope that we piqued your interest, kind of peeling it back a little bit, a few of the key facts, this is going to happen in June the sixth through the ninth in Santa Fe, New Mexico, at this really incredible place called Bishop's Lodge. The conference itself is all about folks that are leaders in engineering products and design that want to understand more about why design systems matter to business strategy and what investments in design systems ultimately mean for their company's strategic vision and their ability to execute on that.

Ryan Peterson:

Yeah. So you kind of hit on the first question, like why do another design system-related conference? There's lots of great conferences out there, but you know, Chris, as we were talking about this over a year ago, I think it became really apparent based on that conversation and the conversations we have day in, day out with lots of folks on design system teams at lots of companies from the top of the fortune 500 all the way down to startups. Design systems really need that practitioner leader alignment if they're going to be successful and really go beyond just, hey, I built a great system, or our system got adopted and we're using it now to launch lots of cold products and features and stuff like that.

Ryan Peterson:

So we wanted to create a space for leaders who maybe don't have the same time to invest in online communities or go to the same conferences where we're really focused on the how of systems and give them something that's more tailored to their needs, what they need to know to be effective leaders who are helping those teams enable their systems to go be successful and get adopted.

Chris:

This is our attempt to push back against this insurgency problem that we talk so frequently about on the podcast, how few people that are first adopting design systems at any size of the organization have a lot of leadership buy-in and leadership buy-in is a lot of different things, right? It's first of all, a mandate to make a design system actually happen and be successful. Second, it's the ability to drive adoption internally inside an organization, and third, it's about budget and investment and focus on the value of design system inside of a company. And for that all to be present, you need an organization's leadership to believe that it's strategically aligned with the objectives of the company or the organization. And so I think that's really the core of it. I think that there's a subtext here also about pushing back against this idea of design systems being all about design problems.

There's a lot of folks that see the word design system that are first exposed to it for the first time, and everybody probably listening to this podcast knows that usually executive leadership is two or three years behind the mental models of practitioners and they say like, oh, okay, isn't that this aspirational thing that is a design problem? And I think that a lot of folks in leadership don't really look at this as something that is core to how we build products, they look at it as core to how we organize design teams. And if you listen to the show at all, you recognize that we tend to take a very democratized, very balanced viewpoint about who these systems are for. Yes, it's about the organization of a design team, but it's also about how the design team collaborates and works with product and engineering to ultimately build the things the company needs to represent itself on the internet.

Ryan Peterson:

Yeah, absolutely. Those leaders need to understand how the system ties into and supports their goals. Things that we often hear, design system teams talk about I want to create ease of use for other teams to consume the system. I want to make my other designers, developers faster. Like that's all great, but that's not necessarily what the leaders need to hear or care about to commit to that support, that budget, that resourcing that's going to make a system really effective. And so we try to think about for at least for patterns, we're bringing that back to what do leaders focus on or what priorities do they have that as the design system on the surface, they may not see that as a tool that supports it, but in actuality, a system being both product and process really supports things like attracting and hiring great talent. People want to work on a team where they know that there's a process and there's a commitment to best practices. They want to onboard great talent or maybe their agency partners more quickly.

Ryan Peterson:

So we're not spending weeks or months with that game of like where's this stuff? Where do I find the thing? We've all lived that life before probably. And then down to ensuring the brand that we're spending so much money on at any big company that's being accurately reflected in lots of the one-off digital experiences that end up making a lot of meaning for people as they kind of see a big flashy ad come to the website and then have that intimate experience that moves them from a potential customer into a user or a customer of that company's product. So lots of things like that that we'll be tapping into with patterns. So leaders can understand, hey, this is why I should resource that team, help my people,

and ultimately, we love those design system practitioners out there, and we're just trying to find a way to get them some more support and I guess, a bigger seat at the table within their works.

Chris:

Yeah. Certainly. And again, there's a lot of great content that's out there or for those practitioners, right? I personally love going to things like clarity because you get to see a lot of voices in the community that are talking about things like how we build design systems or what those design systems really mean and represent, and that evolving conversation about what goes into your design system. And there is some there that is about how to talk to your boss about this or how to get a budget for this inside of your organization. But fundamentally, those conversations are typically aimed at that practitioner level and we're trying to basically talk about now why you should give a budget to your team for this, why this is strategically aligned, and why it matters to your organization to have these because if you don't have one soon, you're going to get left behind. You kind of diving in a little bit more to the place.

Chris:

Ryan and I had the opportunity to visit there early in January. This resort's incredible. It's going to be a really exciting place to have this kind of conference where it's all about small cohorts of people being able to get an intimate view into why of these things matter. This resort is just outside of Santa Fe, almost everything in the event schedule is going to happen on the resort grounds. It's intended to be this intimate personal experience between people that'll allow them to talk openly about their thoughts, their concerns, their challenges, around design systems, and really get to the core of why this stuff matters.

Ryan Peterson:

Yeah. I think too, as we bring leaders together, we want to create that space for a little bit of safeness for humility for saying, hey, I don't know this and to really ask some questions about something that like we talked about earlier, their teams are probably a year, if not two years ahead of them and they're thinking on where this thing is and what a system is and how to use it. And so really trying to architect the time there around that peer-to-peer discussion, bringing in some thought leaders, some folks who are maybe at different stages of the journey.

Ryan Peterson:

We've got folks attending who are just starting out from their systems or maybe they're scrapping their old system for a new one. And then we've got folks that are from companies that have the systems you could name, and they've been at this for years and years and years, they've kind of gone through it all and seen it all. And they're kind of now thinking about what's next for our system and lending some of those learnings to the folks who are just starting out now try to help everyone get ahead a little bit faster.

Chris:

We're taking this in three steps. It's going to be a three-day conference. And so it's all about the first day being the problem. So what is it that is the problem that design systems go out and solve for big organizations? And then the second day is a lot more solution-focused. So how do we actually think about the ways the design systems help us solve these issues? And then the third day is all about delivery. So what are some practical ways that you can look at the delivery of these things as an

executive leader? What are the metrics you need to measure? What are the ways you're making an impact and how do you empower the teams that ultimately report to you to actually build this stuff the right way?

Chris:

And so the idea is to really spark some inspiration around this and we do it in this really incredible inspiring setting. I mean, it's going to be a lot of fun. We're going to really get integrated with a lot of the local community inside of Santa Fe and other really cool experiences that are going to help put us in the mindset of collaboration and working together and I'm really excited to see what comes out of this.

Ryan Peterson:

Yeah. Well, hey, thanks again for having me on to just chat about this, and super excited. Again, go to [gopatterns.co](https://gopatterns.co), apply if you haven't applied already, we're taking applications right now. We're only taking 50 engineering product and design leaders total down to Santa Fe with us. So get that application in if you want to be in there, it's filling up already, and think too about if you're a designer, bring your engineering partner. If you're a product person, bring a designer and engineer. Design systems are very much a cross-functional effort to make successful and so all the better if we can get at least two or three parts of that triad there kind of hearing, aligning, being part of this experience together. Really bird pricing is in place up until April 15th and then it jumps up to the full registration fee. Check it out, it's going to be awesome.

Chris:

I know I'm excited. Ryan, thanks for being on talking about this briefly. Again, go to [gopatterns.co](https://gopatterns.co) to learn more. That's all for today. This has been another episode of the Design Systems Podcast. Thanks for listening. If you have any questions or a topic you'd like to know more about, find us on Twitter at the DS Pod. We'd love to hear from you with show ideas, recommendations, questions, or comments. As always, this pod is brought to you by Knapsack. You can check us out at [knapsack.cloud](https://knapsack.cloud). Have a great day.