

SmashingConf Freiburg 2026 *Day 2, Wednesday September 9th, 2026*

https://smashed.by/spaces

Hello friends! :) Willkommen! Let's take notes together. Please be cool and **friendly**. Notes from Day 1: ***https://smashed.by/tabs***

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Let's Get To Know Y'All!

How many cups of coffee did it take to get here today?

- Absolutely none! 😂
- 1 cappuccino and 1 espresso did the job
- Eh … two? And counting
- 1 cappuccino and 1,5 coffees
- 1 Flat White

What's your Freiburg trip highlight so far?

- Konvikstrasse 😍
- SmashingConf 😉
- Beers 🍻

Schedule

🏃 7:30 AM — Morning Run

On both conference days, join speakers and attendees for a 30–40 minute run. All levels are welcome!

🧘 8:45 AM — Morning Mindful Moment

Start your conference day with some mindfulness before we dive back in.

9:15 AM — Doors Open

Our doors open at 9:15 AM. Pick up your badge, grab a coffee and get ready for the day!

9:45 AM — Welcome Back 🌅

Good morning and welcome back! We've got another day packed with talks, ideas, and plenty of fun ahead.

10:00 — Mystery Speaker on Mystery Speaker = Heydon Pickering on “Making Music With HTML”

Mysteries are there to be solved, by those with curiosity and perseverance. We're not saying anything more than that.

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Questions:

- ✅[**Sascha**] Where does one find those old video samples? >> Internet Archive: https://archive.org/
- Is the cowbell framework open source!?
- What exactly is a blam? Is that a term musicians use?
- What was the idea behind using the cowbell? >> Start with something simple. SNL reference (Will Ferrell)
- So what is your honest/unfiltered opinion of JavaScript 🙂?
- [Lucas] incredible talk / performance. I spotted the mystery theme.
- [Chris] Can we have another talk about how you did the presentation? 🥲>> Hyperglam. Some custom JS
- When does the album drop? >
- Could you use this approach to create a track with more classical instruments, like violin or piano? >> Yes, there is violins in there. This is where JS can work well.
- with this code would you best use for a digital mpc player or a snyth or dj controller?

- How close are we from a live-coded concert? >> Getting there, challenged Karaoke. Fun to do a concert where audience interacts with samples on phone. Audience becomes the music, easy for Heydon

Notes & key takeaways:

- He eats caviar only with a fork.
- Every event needs a hydration break
- Swear counter: ✅✅✅✅✅✅✅ (does BS count?)✅
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Links & slides:
https://hyperblam.how/

☕ 10:50 AM — Morning Break

Time for a little refresher! Coffee, tea and snacks are ready for you.

11:05 — Vitaly Friedman on How to fix Legacy UX

Not fun, but very very useful. About how fun ERP systems are and more things we can learn about!

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Questions:

- Do YOU actually get joy from this?
- So this talk was Work Outside the Work (hope it was a happy surprise)

- Have to ask the AI question. All this seems a lot of process/work. That is ‘the normal’ in larger operations. In what way can/should/will AI help/break this?

- What makes ‘successful’ software (‘it works’?)? As long as it works it’s just fine? What would your definition be?

- Can restoration mean something as simple as putting a new ‘UX-optimised’ front end on a old but working system?

- User testing: how big of a % of time spent?

- Strategies: How do we solve all this?

- [**Sascha**] How do you find out and document the shadow systems and how do you get the users to abandon their workarounds? I found these two things make up a lot of the work when working with legacy systems.

- No question but this was a really good legacy talk! I didn't think it was possible to hold a good talk about this after hearing a few legacy talks.

- How well does a Frankenstein solution work in practice? Is it a good shortcut or does it make the problem of fragmentation worse?
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- [**Michal**] How do you ensure the system works well not only for expert users, but also beginner users? They are usually not available to easily for an interview

- [**Anusha**] I’ve heard conducting 5 interviews should be enough because after that observations become repetitive, what are your thoughts on that?

- [**Pattamon**] Is it possible for a legacy UX modernization to fail? And if the result still doesn't meet users' expectations after modernization, what should we do next?

Notes & key takeaways:
https://davestewart.co.uk/blog/the-work-is-never-just-the-work/

- Legacy software isn't broken
    - if a software works for 30years and is still working, it's a good working software

Links & slides:

Slides:
https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/jwxl4l66r8lb1op19lu3g/vitaly-legacy-slides.pdf?rlkey=d4so47loz0zj5guqrg6a5vcyk&dl=0

☕ 12:00 PM — Coffee Break

Quick coffee break before we continue.

12:15 — Lyra Rebane on CSS Mystery Bag

Lyra brings a security researcher's curiosity to the CSS spec, digging up surprising, lesser-known features and edge cases most of us have never touched. Equal parts fun and immediately useful.
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Questions:

- **[Vitaly]** Which upcoming CSS feature are you most excited to go digging through once it ships?
- ✅ [**Sascha**] How can one reliably know if a widely available feature is bugged in certain browsers? Is there like an automated system we could use?
- [**Vitaly**] Security researcher: requires a certain mindset / what do you think is helping you most to find all the quirks and vulnerabilities?
- **[Bash]:** I love the your slides and T-shirt match
- [Anusha] - What's a good source to learn how to hack *ethically*? xP

Notes & key takeaways:

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Links & slides:

- https://lyra.horse
- https://lyra.horse/slides/#2026-freiburg

🥗 1:10 PM — Lunch Break

Time to recharge! Plus, an optional Interledger Foundation lunch session for those who signed up (25 spots).

14:40 — Marie van Driessche on Accessibility for Everyone

Accessibility is too often reduced to a compliance checklist. Drawing on over a decade of UX research and her own lived experience as a Deaf professional, Marie shows what it actually takes to design and build for everyone — not just the easiest 80%.
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Questions:
Note Vitaly: always turn subtitles by default, never call / lip reading

- ✅ **[Kilian]** Can an experiential website be truly accessible? I mean the kind of highly creative, interactive websites you see on Awwwards. What does that actually imply in practice? Do we essentially have to do the work “twice”, creating the full experience while also making sure it remains accessible to everyone?
- ✅[**Sascha**] How does internationalisation work for sign language if every country has their own sign language? Is there some kind of “universal sign language”?
- ✅[**Sascha**] Are there automated assistive technologies like a program that can “speak out” sign language recorded by a camera? +2
- ✅**[Carl]** For conferences, how well do live transcriptions (the yellow text on the stage screen) work compared to signing interpretation? Ans: Close enough. The sarcasm and intonations cannot be read through the live transcriptions but that is where the interpreters are important.)
- ✅Do you use any tools to summarise websites for you to get to the information you need asap? (Like an equivalent to a screen reader that skips through) I can imagine looking for relevant information can be tiresome if there is no translation to Sign Language available.
- ✅Do you feel like society as a whole needs to become more aware of the nuances of being Deaf? Should kids learn basic signing in school, or should sign-up forms query for hearing ability and change the e.g. customer service experience accordingly, in your opinion?

- ✅What is something an average person can do or learn to make your life easier?
- What is the one small thing that people could change in their everyday lives that would make surprisingly big difference for deaf people?
- As there is no universal sign language, are there any sign languages you can understand much better than others? E.g. relationship between US/UK English – or Spanish/French/Italian — is there something similar in sign languages?
- You made a strong point that we shouldn't be designing for Deaf people, but designing with Deaf people. This applies to accessibility in general. We are working in a company that frankly just doesn't care enough about accessibility, what do you think is a good way to explain it to them?
- What are frequent challenges you are experiencing with Zoom/Teams / which ones are working better than others?
- ✅**[Conor]** As a deaf person I do want to share one pet peeve I have about subtitles is that they often censor swear words. I suppose they're trying to protect children, but doing so they're excluding people in a system that is supposed to provide more accessibility. YouTube is terrible for this! How can we push for companies to address issues like this?
- For a product that doesn't have many customers with accessibility requirements who can help with testing, what would you recommend the testers to look out for? +1 (Ans: Try to put yourself in the shoes of the target customers. Use tools available to test for accessibility. Forget your mouse at home or don't use keyboard for input etc. while testing.)
- [Carl] Where can I recruit D/deaf people to test my product or service? +2

- You said you've been deaf since birth, and I was wondering: what are sounds and voices like in your mind? How do you imagine what hearing sounds like if you've never actually heard anything? (Ans: It is abstract)

- [Pattamon] Have you had any experience using AI as an additional tool to simulate or test accessibility from a Deaf user's perspective? And do you think it could be useful alongside testing with actual Deaf users?
- How are the latest technical terms expressed in British/Dutch Sign Language? Is there a common dictionary (is that the term?)
- As developers we rely on WCAG guidelines a lot. I think they are mostly focused on blind users. How good are they for deaf people?
- What do you think of the movie Baby Driver?

Notes & key takeaways:

- deaf vs Deaf: deaf describes somebody with a severe hearing problem, Deaf is a cultural identity
- Sign language is 4D (3D space & time)
    - It's not universal but varies by region
    - British Sign Language differs from written English, the grammar has a different order with different aspects
- There is no average Deaf user
- Readability improvements:
    - Headings and subheadings
    - One point per paragraph. Open with the point and then explain it.
    - Write in active form
    - Use images to illustrate the written content
- Relevant regulation: EU web a11y directive, European Accessiblity Act, WCAG 2.2
- Let people choose their preferred way of contact instead of making phone nr mandatory
    - Phone, Email, Text, Other (please specify)
- Disability definition: ~~Personal Health Condition~~ Mismatched Human Interactions

What to do for components?

- Audit the design system
- Audit communication: Is it just one channel or are there options? Can Deaf people access, understand and respond equally?
- Audit the experience: Evaluate the context of the components, in practice
- Test with D/deaf people
- "Your user is your expert, not you"
- "Nothing about us without us"

Links & slides:

marievandriessche@pm.me

Slides in my Drive (FYI, its not an accessible PDF!)

☕ 3:35 PM — Afternoon Break

Coffee, tea and snacks — take a breather before the next talk.

15:50 — Emma Bostian on The Joy of Being Wrong

Being wrong is one of the most it like a disaster to avoid rather than a skill to build. Emma shares candid stories from engineering management and public tech commentary on what it actually takes to be wrong well, and why that might be your fastest path to growth.
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Questions:

- [**Sascha**] How would you suggest implementing this mindset “bottom up” for a regular team member? Is this something that can be implemented in the day-2-day? How can this “bleed” into other departments without us forcing it on the other teams?
- You can somehow reach a middle ground within your own team but the work culture seems completely different when teams are located in different countries even though you are in the same company. Do you have any recommendations for scenarios where one has to communicate with a different team whose culture does not match yours and is always setting up barriers against collaboration (in lieu of being busy with their own tasks)? >> cross cultural team needs ‘explicit’ process. Identify how you want to work together.

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- 6,5 per minute? Is this average neurotypical or ADHD ?
- How can you encourage the team (remote-first) to be more vocal in terms of providing more feedback (between their colleagues, and manager)?
- Mark Twain said « It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble, it's what you know for sure that just ain't so » (that’s my favorite quote). To what extent do you feel our false certainties pose a greater obstacle to learning than ignorance itself, and how does your approach to making mistakes help shatter these deeply held misconceptions? How can we encourage people to actively challenge their own beliefs when they are convinced they are right?
- How can I give feedback to mangers who didn’t ask for feedback? We don’t have opportunities to give anynomous remarks or bottom-up evaluations..
- How do you deal with a situation where managers are venting a lot about their other reportees to you in a 1:1? It also makes me uncomfortable because it feels like they would do the same with you
- How do you deal with situations where you’re willing to be vulnerable and open to feedback, but the other side isn’t reciprocating? At what point does continuing to open up become counterproductive?

Notes & key takeaways:

- The Culture Map by Erin Meyer

Links & slides:
Slides: https://canva.link/gbc69nf9c8fh386

☕ 4:45 PM — Afternoon Break

One more short break before our final talk of the day.

17:00 — Hidde de Vries on A Web That Serves Us All

As co-editor of WCAG, Hidde has spent years shaping the standard the whole industry measures accessibility against. In this closing talk, he asks a bigger question: who is the web actually built for today, and what would it genuinely take to build one that serves everyone?
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Questions:

- **[Kilian]** Can an experiential website be truly accessible? I mean the kind of highly creative, interactive websites you see on Awwwards. What does that actually imply in practice? Do we essentially have to do the work “twice”, creating the full experience while also making sure it remains accessible to everyone?

- [Sascha] Do we need the web dev equivalent of the hippocratic oath?

- **[Sascha]** In my experience a11y and ethics will basically never be implemented if not forced by law. How can we change that as developers when “ROI” is always the argument against it?
- [Pattamon] When designing a website for everyone, do you think there’s a risk that accessibility requirements can limit the uniqueness or creativity of the design? How do you balance inclusivity with creating a distinctive brand experience?
- Some values might conflict and we might have to make a choice. While we can make more fun stuff- maybe thanks to AI, a lof them also become internet trash. How could we balance these different dynamics?

Notes & key takeaways:

- This is for everyone by Tim Berners Lee
- Accessible UX Research By Michele Williams
- Careless People: A Story of where I used to work

Links & slides:

- Slides

- https://www.websitecarbon.com
- https://www.thegr
- https://the-web-you-want.org/
- https://www.w3.org/TR/ethical-web-principles/
- https://www.w3.org/WAI/people-use-web/
- https://squoosh.app/
- https://wakamaifondue.com/
- https://hidde.blog
-

5:55 PM — Closing remarks

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And that's SmashingConf Freiburg 2026 — done! Two days full of ideas, inspiration, and wonderful conversations — thank you for being part of it.

6:10 PM — End

👻 6:30 PM — Walking Tour

Join the Witch of Freiburg for a walking tour through the old town — a fun, spooky way to close out the conference. If there are still spots available, you'll find them on the website.

Notes from Day 1: ***https://smashed.by/tabs***

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