

Hi! I'm Mauro Porcini PepsiCo's chief design officer.
Join me for our new series
where we dive into the minds of
the greatest innovators of our time
with the goal of finding what drives them
in their professional journey and in their personal life.
Trying to uncover the universal truth
that unites anyone attempting to have a meaningful impact in the world.
This is "In Your Shoes"

A design-led or design-centered organization
differs from an organization in which design
is not considered a strategic asset on two levels.
From an organization structure's perspective
either as a senior level design executive
who sits on the company's organizational leadership team
or reports into that team
as the requisite budgets
and as a diverse group of experienced designers as part of the design team.
From a culture and behavioral standpoint,
people in the broader organization embrace design
and co-collaborate well across functional boundaries,
are empathic thinkers and recognize that everything they do
is centered around their customers
and leads to meaningful solutions that drive value for the organization.

I'm quoting the guest of today:

She's the president of the Design Management Institute
and serve on both the advisory council
and the current board of directors.

Under her leadership, a variety of very valuable programs were initiated.

DMI Design Value Awards, for instance,

DMI Student Essay Competition,

DMI: Diversity in Design Manifesto conference

and publication issue dedicated to diversity.

Previously she served as the president of strategic change and innovation
as well as V.P. of global design and usability.

in technology support operations at Pitney Bowes.

And before that she worked at the Eastman Kodak Company
as a worldwide product manager.

Over the years she's been very active in the non-profit sector
and is a frequent speaker at conferences and symposiums worldwide.

Carole Bilson, welcome to "In Your Shoes!"

Hi Carole. Thank you. Hi, Mauro!

It's such a pleasure to have you here with us today.

We've been knowing each other for... for a few years now

I have the honor of sitting on the board of the organization
that you lead, that you share, that you drive

with passion, with knowledge, that is the Design Management Institute. Can you tell us more about what is the Design Management Institute and what does the president of the Design Management Institute do? Sure, the Design Management Institute is a global non-profit organization for design managers, executives and leaders, people that are focused on design and innovation, in general and we provide a platform for people to connect to share ideas, to support one another.

So, it's just a great laboratory, if you would say, of design leader and thinkers around the world.

How does it differ from other organizations like IDSA, RGA, what is the difference of DMI?

Well, I've been a long time member of IDSA so I can... I know the difference but I can't speak to the others.

I would say that... you know, we're global and DMI has existed for 45 years.

The founder Bill Hannon had this great vision and from the very day the organization started, it had an international focus.

It has never been a US-only organization and that continues today.

So, I would say that's a huge differentiator.

We're a leader globally, we have the largest community, our digital community is 30,000 people in 60 countries and also a lot of our members are either managers, business owners, executives, they are heads of design and innovation

And certainly, anyone can be a part of this community.

You do not have to be the head of a design or innovation organization and certainly younger people who aspire to these roles we welcome and encourage them to become a part of the organization.

Yeah, so, international and then there is this strategic component... this management component.

One of the reasons why already as a young manager I really loved DMI was this idea of connection between the world of design and creatives, and the world of business, the world of companies and you know I was at 3M and I was trying to build that kind of connection between the two worlds and I always found DMI a wonderful platform to learn about the connection... How to build a connection listening to the experiences of so many other people that were facing the same kind of challenges.

Do you agree? I mean is it something... Absolutely, absolutely. I mean I have been... I was a member of DMI for many... for 14 years or so, before I became president and what I loved about DMI was the opportunity to come

to come when the meetings were held in Cape Cod, it was just a nice environment to meet people from all different industries and you know in a casual setting and just the energy and the... the exchange, the people are just so approachable and I just, I met so many interesting people, I learned a tremendous amount, I built networks. And so you know, if you're a manager or a leader in your organization it's very, very helpful to have you know, peers all over the world that you can call on at any moment for advice, for ideas, for collaboration. And so, I would say that's probably one most important qualities of our organization is that you know that when you come to a DMI conference, you are gonna meet some very interesting, impressive, knowledgeable people that are very giving, very down to Earth, and very willing to share their knowledge. And with DMI, you've been as I said earlier you've been initiating a variety of different programs, initiatives, awards. One that is very interesting is the Design Value Awards You know, we are surrounded by so many awards that celebrate, often brands and products that sell nothing. You know, they are beautiful... beautiful, but they... nobody has access to that. So, they cannot really add value, not just to the companies that produce them and launch them but even to the society. If you create something amazing and nobody can use it because you don't sell a piece of it, then you know, it can be amazing and beautiful but it means its intent is purpose. So why did you create this Design Value Award? What is the meaning of it? What kind of message are you trying to give to the world through this award? Well, first of all I should say that the seed of the idea came with my predecessor, Michael Westcott, who passed away, because he initiated the design value index and I was on the team that did the initial work and so it really was an extension of what he began. I realized that so many people look to DMI as a leader you know, we are a trusted brand, people... people view the work that we do as high quality work. So, it was just a natural extension, and so, working with a team of people. you know, board members and others, we came up with this idea to have these Design Value Awards, and the point of these awards is they should deliver value to either business, society, culture and, we seek teams that work across boundaries because that's really I think one of the biggest challenges. You know, having

worked and led a couple of design organizations
one of the things that I learned is that
it is very difficult to work across boundaries, and
those boundaries can be within your own company
or they could be boundaries from your company to an external company.
And, the second reason
for having these Design Value Awards,
not only to recognize people out there in the world doing incredible things,
but also it's a great way to communicate with non-designers
So, when people win an award and you know, winning is everything
from honorable mention, third, second, first place, everybody's a winner
and when you become a winner, we put together a story.
Basically it's your story that you submitted
and we published them in our fourth quarter magazine.
It's a full color magazine called the DMI Review.
And so, you have all these incredible stories of teams that have
collaborated across boundaries.
There's always a designer, a designer innovation component to it
but they would be working with people from other parts of the organization
or people from different companies. So, for example,
you could have a foundation, you could have a university,
you could have a company or a business, or a consulting firm
and they work together to solve a problem
or to invent something new or different, and
you know, just having to work across boundaries, that stretch
and then delivering value.
That's really how the whole thing came to pass
and you know, it's part of the whole design value system, I would say.
Oh that's fantastic. It's so important
to have companies and the business community understanding,
the value design can create and have organizations like DMI,
platforms that can really tell the world about this value
and amplify as much as possible the value that design is creating today,
already in these companies is really priceless,
it's so important for for all of us.
And Mauro if I could just give you a couple of examples.
For example, one winner was a nurses service from West Africa, in Ghana,
working with a foundation in Australia,
and then I believe there was a group at Harvard...
Harvard University in Boston that was involved.
So you had three parties working on this digital solution
you know, to leapfrog traditional
phone technology so they could communicate easily
in cities and remote areas and it was a health solution for the nurses.
Another example was an engineer in California
working with setting up a company in India

to create modern rooftops.

And you know, the traditional rooftops are made of tin or metal and they're very noisy. So if you have birds or animals walking across the rooftop, it's so noisy, and also it generates so much heat, it's already very hot there and so you have, you know, these challenges.

So this company created this... they created this company called "ModRoof" and essentially, they created these really inexpensive tiles of natural materials that can be very easily put together and don't require sophisticated equipment and they're relatively inexpensive. So many people now can have an improved lifestyle because you don't have this noisy roof and you don't have all the heat coming off of the roof.

So, those are just a couple of examples and we have so many.

I... you know, obviously once the judges are done judging, we get a chance to you know, produce stories out of them.

We share the stories at a celebration, we share them online, we share them on the DMI website and we also put them in our fourth quarter magazine.

We dedicate that issue to sharing those stories, so I would encourage anybody who wants to learn more about design and innovation and what do people who participate in DMI do, you know, just get access to that fourth quarter magazine, you can get it on our website at dmi.org and you can read so many stories. I believe we are in our fifth or sixth year now, so it's going strong.

Well you know, I wanna even reinforce the message you just shared.

I would encourage all the known designers listening to us to to read that magazine because

you share two examples that for any designer, are normal examples of design.

But I'm sure that many people listening to us right now are thinking

wait a second, but is that design? That's innovation

or that's, you know, entrepreneurship, and that's what design is about.

The story you shared, you didn't use once the word aesthetic or style or things that, you know, usually are associated to the world of design.

And for us designers, we know that. That's what we study, that's what we do, but often, you go in companies, that don't understand it.

You know, they expect designers to work

on the aesthetic of something, on the graphic

of something, on the form of something

and not on what they call innovation, but in reality

we call design are really two powerful examples of

what design really is. And I think reading the magazine

that fourth quarter issue of the magazine, will help

many people to better understand what design really is. Absolutely, I mean, you know, designers can touch systems you know, user-customer experience, service design. You know, I think what happens is you start out as a designer and as you work on projects and you build your skills and your knowledge over time when you become a manager, that's when you can really kick things into high gear. That's when you start thinking very broadly, strategically, and so designers can have a tremendous impact especially if they are involved from the outset of a project or an initiative. And so, I really call it it's a higher order level of thinking. You know, designers have a very keen sense of observation and listening and empathy, and so, you know, coupled with your educational background and all your practical work experience you build up this knowledge, this base of knowledge and also designers work collaboratively. I mean a lot of design groups, you know, you'll have several functions working collaboratively. So you would have, you know, industrial design, interactive design, visual design human factors engineering, you know, information architecture. I mean you have about five to eight disciplines that work together collaboratively that people would call you know, the design department or the design organization. So it's not just one type of design, and by working collaboratively, it can produce very powerful results. I totally, totally agree. And in this year, DMI also you have been driving another initiative that is very close to to our hearts, we've been putting a lot of effort here at Pepsico in that territory, that is the territory of diversity. The Diversity in Design Manifesto, the conference, the publication, the awards, is something you've been driving and if we think about who you represent, what you did you have been one of the very first women, and African-American women, to lead a global design organization. This is already by itself an achievement that you represent, and by the way, congratulations for for being able... for have been able to achieve something like this. So you had this particular sensitivity for a topic that today in the past few weeks and months, with the Black Lives Matter movement, and everything is happening especially in the United States, became even more on the top of any conversation that is going on in the planet, not just in America.

Can you tell us more about the diversity initiatives of DMI, but also about your vision, your experience, and what you think design can do to help in the diversity area.

Wow, well, yeah, that's a big topic and you know, the reason why I have such passion for this... these initiatives of DMI

is because of my own experiences. It was very challenging, I mean it's challenging to become the head of anything the career path, you know, the challenges you have to overcome, but when you're a woman and you're an African-American you're truly... it was a very lonely path.

I mean being a designer was fun, it was exciting, it was challenging, but once you're trying to get, break into management it was not easy for me and, you know,

if you had a day I could tell you stories but I'm gonna try to fast forward. So you know, I had an excellent

art teacher in high school, I had a fantastic design professor in college and it wasn't until I got into the work world that I...

it was like somebody just threw, you know, blocks of ice at me, it was just so different.

I mean it was challenging to be the only woman.

And, you know, it's not just symbolic it really is when you're in an environment where you see people that look like

you, you feel like you can aspire to do what they do,

you might feel more comfortable in approaching them to ask questions.

So, you know, it was a fairly lonely path. I mean, when I started working,

I was the youngest person in the department,

I was the only woman industrial designer,

and I was the only African-American in the department

and there were no other women in the department for at least, probably

I don't know 8-9 years. In fact, I worked on...

I used to work on a lot of projects

with engineers and other disciplines and I remember distinctly

I worked for 7 years as an industrial designer

before I was on a team with other women.

The lead engineer was a woman and the human factor specialist was a woman

and the three of us noticed it. So, you know, I wanna fast forward that to

you know, when I became a manager and eventually started having

the ability to influence other people's lives

you know, I really made it a point to try to diversify my teams

and if you put a focus on something, you can make it happen.

I mean it's not easy, because there aren't...

there are limited number of women and people of color

studying design, specifically industrial design

and so, it's the whole pipeline. There are challenges all the way. I mean I think that more kids from K to 12 should be exposed to design and innovation and there are pockets of initiatives around the country but there's so few. You know, for a country that has delivered so much invention and innovation over centuries, I mean, the United States is heralded and admired for the innovation. However, we could do more and I think that there is a real opportunity for a huge chunk of the population, you know, women and people of color to get more into design and innovation, so that's where I think the design world can help. So now we move it to the management level in DMI. So you know, with the support of the board and at the time, Jerry Kathman was the board chair, and he was also the CEO of LPK and he was extremely excited about you know, launching a diversity initiative, and so you know for the first time I felt so supported and encouraged to pursue something that, you know, is so important to me So, LPK along with Procter & Gamble supported us to put on our first diversity conference. And so we started it three years ago, and honestly when I sat to think about who might come, of course the conference is for everybody it's for people of all cultures and all races but I wanted to focus on making sure that we got women and people of color to come to the conference. So I literally had to roll up my sleeves and just call people. I created a list of maybe 10 designers and I just said, okay, who do you know? And gradually, I think in the first year we might have had somewhere around 60 or 70 attendees and then our second year, we had 100 attendees and it takes time because, you know, you need to let people know you're here and of course, at DMI, our mission is about managers and executives, but also we're trying to cultivate the next generation, we're trying to build a pipeline. So, you know, we can be a place, an environment for women and for people of color who aspire to become design or innovation leaders. They can come to our organization, to our conference to meet other people, who have walked that path and who have accomplished things and who have reached levels of leadership that they would like to achieve,

and they can talk to them and they can build networks, and they can seek mentors. So it's a slow building process but you know I have started a number of initiatives in my career, so I know that change is not easy, it doesn't happen overnight and you just have to be passionate and you have to stick to it. So, you know, I'm very excited.

I mean this year was our third year, and we had to do it all virtual, so that was a huge challenge.

However, we were able to expand the network.

You know, bring in some new faces

and have more conversations, we had a career development workshop.

And so, you know, it's exciting it and it feeds my soul

and you know, even if one person contacts me and says

wow, I'm so glad I attended

you know, I learned so much, I met some new people

you know, I'd like to get in touch with this person. So, it's really all about

you know, giving back. You know,

you know, I've had a wonderful career, I've had many challenges

but, you know, I'm a persistent person so challenges don't stop me.

It's such a beautiful story and especially this last part

of the giving back is so precious, because many people

do achieve, you know, they reach their dreams and they become

whatever they want to become but then they forget to give back

and to help others and instead, you made it a

part of the purpose of your life, the mission of your life.

Well, you know, Mauro, I have been giving back my whole career.

I mean, when I started working right out of college

I joined organizations to volunteer

and that's really how I got a lot of my leadership

development experience, not from the companies, I got it from volunteering

in not-for-profit civic organizations.

Whether it was, you know, the Rochester Woman's Network

or whether it was you know Network North Star,

which was an African-American network

that we started at Kodak, five of us started.

So I mean, there have been a number of initiatives and projects

I started along the way and I've gained so much leadership experience.

So, once I became a manager, I'd already had so much experience.

You know, leading teams with no authority, working with difficult people,

you know, working with limited resources, so you learn all these things

that you can bring to bear to the workforce.

What would be the advice that you will give to Pepsico, to myself, to our team

to really accelerate even more our investments in diversity, to

find more diverse people, to attract them, to engage them, so any kind of

suggestion or advice that you may have.

From really finding them, where do we find more diverse people, all the way, for instance, the IGA census of 2018 told us that there are just 3% of black people in the design community in the United States is what exactly what you said earlier, the number is not very high. But they're there, they are, you know, 3% is still a number. So how do we find and where do we find, and then how can we make sure that they find the right environment when they enter these companies, they can engage, that there are not bias, that eventually, you know, we are not aware of.

I mean, you basically have to start from within.

So, you know you as the leader, and any African-Americans or people of color, women in your organization, that you view as role models or doing great things, you have to bring them out.

You have to have them engage in the broader community and you really should go back to the colleges

because you know, with the resources of a company like Pepsico you could actually, you know, highlight certain colleges and focus, have a focused effort and encourage designers of color to

study design or to make sure that they continue their studies and offer them summer internships

because I remember when I was in college, there were probably 3 other African-American designers, there was an interior designer, a graphic designer and one other industrial designer other than myself.

And as far as I know I don't think

any of them found jobs in design, maybe 1

for a little bit and I think there are many obstacles

you know, some of them are financial. First of all, they have to select design, and you know in the broader community

people, parents and families have a view of what is a lucrative career.

You know, lawyer, doctor, engineer. Nobody thinks of designer. And

you know, we have fantastic careers. I mean, not only

is the work so interesting, it's meaningful, it feeds your soul

and you get paid to do it and if you advance

you make just as much as anybody out there

actually you can even make more. So I don't think...

I think from a communication standpoint I don't think a lot of parents and families, first of all, understand

you know, especially in the minority communities that

design is a very lucrative career and you can go in so many directions.

You know, as I mentioned, you know, whether it's visual design,

industrial design or interactive design.

So there's the college level, you know

hiring students in the summer, giving them meaningful experience

so that when they graduate they're positioned for those good jobs. Then the second thing is you know, so once you've gotten them through college and they have graduated and they get hired, then it's the environment. It's extremely important to have buddies, you can call them a sponsor mentor, whatever, but they have to have an internal sponsor or mentor because they're going to experience so many challenges that you can't even imagine and they probably won't tell you. So, you know, it's one thing to get them in the door it's another thing to keep them. So, you know, they really need a good support system and you know, when I think about my career, you know, when I started I didn't have any mentors and it was a struggle. I mean, I was the only woman in an all male department and a lot of the guys were at least 20 years older than me. So, you know there was a generational divide, you know, we didn't have anything in common, other than the work and I was the junior person. Then a lot of times people have these attitudes, they think that you're there because of a quota system and I can't tell you how many people would ask me for the first 5 years you know, "You're the designer?" "So you're gonna make the decision on this design?" "You're the person making the decision?" And I'm like, "Yeah," and then they wanna know "Did you go to school for this?" "Yes, I went to school for this. I have a college degree." So you would just not imagine the dumb questions and the thing is, you have to be... you can't overreact. You know, you have to take it in stride, you have to tolerate a lot of stuff. You know, you just have to remind yourself that you know, they're ignorant because they haven't been exposed to people like me and so they don't realize: a) that it's a lucrative career and it's a degree in college and it is a career, and, you know, and yes, people of color and women can have these roles. Because let's face it, as an industrial designer on a project, you have a lot of influence and so you know, that's why I'd get these kinds of questions. So, it wasn't until I had been working for about 7 or 8 years and we started an employee network at the company and, the employee network was really to provide a support system for African-American employees. And it really happened organically because a reporter from the local newspaper

asked one of the black employees, was there a glass ceiling at the company. And so, before the employee talked to the journalist she called a meeting at her house and invited 6 other people and I wasn't at that meeting but they decided they were not gonna talk to the journalist because, it was just, they were afraid that whatever they said might not get accurately communicated. So what they did was, they said "Gee, this was so much fun. We got to talk to each other and meet each other from different parts of the company. Why don't we call a meeting?" So they called a meeting at a community center and 100 people showed up and I was one of the 100 people. And so after a few months five of us got together and we wrote the by-laws for the organization. We hired a lawyer and we brought in some very key senior people in the company especially in human resources because the company was a non-union company and you were not allowed to organize. So, we wanted to make sure that it was clear that our purpose was to be supportive of the company while supporting each other to enhance and advance our careers. So, after forming that organization, I developed so many contacts and relationships with people that I had never met, the company was so huge there were six locations in the city alone, not to mention all the international locations. So, it was the first time in my career after 7 or 8 years where I got to meet women and African-American men and women role models. And so, my first real mentor came from that experience. Now, my mentors... I had several mentors and they were you know mostly men because I worked around mostly men and also I had white mentors as well, so I had a mixture of mentors. You know, I had one black women who was the highest ranking executive. She reported to the chief human resource officer and she tried for years to get me into HR because she thought I had so many great ideas for HR. And I was very honored and flattered, but I said, "Hey, I love design and I have a lot to do in design." So that's really when I first started to develop role models, and honestly I think my career would have moved along a lot faster had I had role models early on, but it is so critical, I mean, I could not... would not be where I am today

were it not... it's a combination of persistence, you know, hard work you know, delivering results and then having a support system and that's so important because you can run around and find people but you want to make sure they have meaningful career and that they stay because the amount of money and energy it's gonna cost you to bring them in you don't want them to leave after short amount of time because of antibodies that might build up internally that you might not be aware of.

It's such a beautiful story of connection, of empathy, of love.

You didn't talk about divisions and walls and us-vs-them.

Your mentors were diverse themselves,

it's really beautiful the way you've been telling this story.

And I totally agree, I think it's really about dialogue and respect,

mutual dialogue and respect and, together... all together,

with all our different backgrounds,

we can really build something important and drive progress in the society.

In these years, you have been interacting with so many different

people and managers and companies through DMI,

what do you think has been changing in the past

10 years in the world, in society and especially now with COVID.

How is the world changing? You see some trends

that are particularly relevant the way people connect, the way

they communicate with each other. What they eat,

what they drink, what they do,

even the way you're running DMI,

the way you're organizing the conferences,

obviously right now, it's been impacted.

How do you see the future of all of this, the connection of people

the creation of brands, the society in general.

What do you think is gonna... it's been changing for years and now COVID

is eventually accelerating even more.

Wow. That's a tough question because we ask people that a lot.

I guess, you know, really I think there are segments

that do certain things in certain ways. So, for example

you know, you have a lot of large consulting firms

you know, accounting, investment firms that have been buying up

a lot of top or highly visible design consultancies.

So, in terms of the design world, there's been a big shift,

there's not as many independent solo small design firms,

they're all getting snapped up, bought up by a lot of these big companies,

and you know, that has been going on for the last 5, 6 years or so.

So, the jury is still out on that because

you know, now that COVID is hit, some companies are starting to

lay off and cut designers, you know, that snapped up... these large groups.

So, you know, COVID, I mean, whenever you have these disruptions,

you know, people really think that dramatic change is coming

and we're going gonna be doing things differently.
And, you know, I obviously can't read a crystal ball,
but what I can say about change is that
I think it depends on how long this pandemic lasts,
because you know from everything I've read and experienced
when people experience a crisis or a major challenge
you know, they'll change momentarily or temporarily, but when things go back
I don't want to say normal, but almost normal, people go back to their old ways.
I mean, change is difficult.

So, I really think a lot of it has to do with how long
this is this is gonna last. Clearly,
you know, this video collaboration revolution has taken hold. I mean, even me...
You were supposed to come to the studio, you remember we had to
change our plans and to the design center... That's right!
And finally we're doing it in a digital way.

That's right, that's right, and I've never been...
I've never loved to turn on the camera. I mean I would talk to people audio.
So, for me this is a big change, you know, I'm on a lot of video chats now,
and, you know DMI has always been doing webcasts,
we just generally focus on the material and the slides,
but we're now starting to do a combination.

How do you feel, you know, many people are changing behavior right now,
forcing themselves to do things differently,
and then they realize that actually they are enjoying that, you know
both socially in their personal life

and in a professional life. How is it for you, are you enjoying it?
Something that you were not used or you didn't want to do before,
or you're doing it just because you have to, but it's not really your thing?

Well, you know, I really miss the people,
I really miss gathering with people.

I love people and DMI conferences are so powerful and so engaging
and so I really miss that.

As far as working from home, I was working
from home about 60% of the time before.

So, that part has not changed, it's just psychologically,
you know, sometimes I think about I'm like
you know, I'd like to get up and go to the office in Boston. Well,
I can't go. I'm not gonna get on a plane,
you know? So you know, from that standpoint,
there's a psychological restriction

that comes through my mind you know, every
every few days. I mean, it's not a constant thing.

I've become fairly disciplined and you know, I'm married to my
laptop and you know, I'm very much into the work. It's so interesting.

But yes, I do really miss, you know, getting together with people.

So, you know, these, you know, digital video chats are kind of a half step.

It's a nice way to interact with people, it's not quite the same as in person.
So, you know, I mean in terms of personal..
there obviously has been a lot of adjustments,
because, you know, I used to be
working from home and had the whole territory to myself
and now I'm sharing it with family members.
And, you know, so we've all had to go through some adjustment.
And fortunately, I live in an area where, you know, the
the numbers of people hospitalized is low.
So, you know, I'm still very nervous about the whole thing and I'm very cautious
but I limit where I go and I obviously, you know, distance
and I wear the mask and all of that, but I love gardening as well, so
that's a great outlet for me. So early in morning and in the evening,
I'm out there watering and observing what's growing
and so I'm excited. I have a Japanese eggplant
that I planted for the first time and it's growing like gangbusters,
so I'm excited.
I'm the same. I'm planting things and
I love to even just see them grow day by day.
Yes, I mean even pre-pandemic, I mean,
you know, when I back out of the driveway,
I like to glance back and see what's growing today.
It's just so gratifying, you know, I plant
flowers, vegetables and herbs, and it's something I have
I've loved since I was a kid.
I didn't know this and now I'm gonna tell you something
that you're gonna remember for sure.
You remember the board meeting of DMI in Boston last year
in September, I show up with my tomatoes that I took from the garden
and we ate all together, the tomatoes, at the end of the meeting.
So, we share the same passion. They were fantastic!
And I do grow tomatoes, although,
mine haven't looked quite as good as yours did
and it's probably because I grew them in pots.
So I just ordered raised beds, so I'm about to transplant
so I'm hoping that I can show off some of my tomatoes to you
in another month or two. Yeah, those were fantastic.
They're so... you put them on the ground and they do everything by themselves
so I didn't do much. You didn't? You don't water them?
No, I know, well, I have an irrigation system
so they get their water, they get their water.
I do it the old-fashioned way That's the best.
One last question: What inspires Carole Bilson and how do you inspire others?
Wow, what inspires me...
Well, a number of things, I mean, you know,
family, design, creativity,

gardening, you know, I just find that the more you put yourself out there your life becomes so rich.

And you get so much back, and I learned this, you know, very early when I got out of college and I started volunteering in the community. I would just get so excited because you know, the more you interact with people, you know, whether it's creating a wonderful design, or whether it's gardening in the garden, or whether it's volunteering to help you know, kids, on the weekend, in, you know, science or design or innovation you just get so much back and I really... that's what inspires me.

I mean, from the time when I was young and I discovered that I had the ability to draw and I knew you know, I knew by the time I was in college I wanted to be a designer. I mean, I knew I wanted to be in the creative field at a young age.

But you know I didn't have the right influences at the grade school level. It wasn't until I got to high school that I had a fantastic art teacher. So, you know it's really just making everything around us, inspires me.

There's no one thing really.

And it all informs, you know, your creativity, your thinking. You know, reading, talking to people, having quiet time, traveling, I mean, it's just so many things I get inspiration from.

Wonderful. Well, Carole, thank you so much for sharing with us your ideas and thank you also for everything you're doing through the platform of DMI. First of all, as a designer, thank you for how you're pushing the role of design in the world of business and then for the new initiatives to help minorities, to help the new generations of the younger people to have a seat at the table and to have opportunities in this world.

This is really priceless and so, thank you for everything you're doing.

Thank you, Mauro, and I hope if there's anyone out there listening, come join us, we need more people in our community, you don't have to be a designer.

- Thank you, Mauro. - Thank you, Carole.