SPOTLIGHT: TEKLA SZYMANSKI

Tekla serves as the website editor for New York Women in Communications since 2004 and has taken part in numerous redesigns of nywici.org. She is a recipient of a NYWICI Membership Empowerment Grant and a member of the Communications Committee.

Tekla is the founder of Content + Design LLC, a one-stop-shop for WordPress website development, content strategy and website maintenance, specifically for mission-driven nonprofits and personal brands. Before that, she was a foreign news editor and writer and held managing and senior editorial positions in international and domestic newspapers, magazines and the radio.

Tekla has worked on three continents in five languages. After spending her childhood in Florence, Paris and Berlin, she started her career in Tel Aviv as translator, foreign news editor and op-ed columnist at a financial daily and as reporter for European affairs on the radio. She holds a B.A. in Liberal Arts, a 3-year accredited certificate in Journalism, TV & Radio, and a certificate as full-stack developer from the University of Washington.

Why she does what she does... "As a journalist, I believe in good content, no matter the platform. As a web developer, I believe any design has to supplement the content, increase its impact, assist in its presentation and support its functionality. Think Bauhaus. Content should never be click-bait or fluff. I don't waste users' and readers' time. Digital and print—brevity vs. long-form, immediacy vs. in-depth—are both here to stay but won't work on their own. I try to bridge the gap."

Drawn to NYWICI... "NYWICI introduced me to my sisters in arms. We have each other's backs and help each other succeed and stay sane as female entrepreneurs in a world that still dumps too many roadblocks onto mid-career, professional women."

Social Media's biggest challenge... "Sharing, disliking or liking is not enough to make you socially, culturally or politically engaged. It is often the medium of the lazy, not the creative. And without "old media", you'd have much less substantial news to share. But social media are one crucial step toward changing the top-down flow of news. We need to find a way to really engage on social media. Twitter comes closest. I use it to listen in and to curate and share content that falls through the cracks. It feels less bloated and self-absorbed than Facebook, because it still promotes the message and, to a lesser extent, the messenger."

At the top of Tekla's trend watching list..."We will start vetting and verifying all our news sources more. Facts, accuracy and the truth matter. Another trend to watch is the increase in online security vulnerabilities: We will discover that The Internet of Things (IoT) is not only more time-consuming than time-saving but a real treasure trove for hackers. Our personal carefully constructed passwords and server-side encryptions are embarrassingly inadequate to cope."

Off the clock, really... "I read domestic and international historic fiction, set in 1930s and 1940s New York or Berlin, and preferably in hard cover. I love the smell and feel of new books."

Tekla's nirvana... "I recharge my batteries at the MET on Friday evenings, when all the tourists are gone for the day, and I feel almost intimately alone with great art, soft chamber music and a glass of wine on the balcony. Art is my sanctuary. My parents were artists in Berlin (my mother a graphic artist and my father a sculptor), and I practically grew up in museums, foundries and art galleries."

Did you know... "I collect antique Burmese string puppets—some of them are almost life-sized."

Day to relive... "The day my husband and I arrived in Manhattan 23 years ago from across the pond, with five suitcases, a bulky laptop, limitless energy and boundless excitement to reinvent ourselves in the city we love. I guess I was an immigrant deemed fit to stay."

Words to live by... "Less is more, especially in design: a minimum of design for a maximum of functionality."

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