



By [Serena Down](#)

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*Blinkers are an interesting and dynamic group of people. Each Blinker is carefully selected to join the team because we understand how he or she will positively contribute to our culture and work. And while we do post [Blinker Bios on our website](#), we thought we'd go a little further and profile our Blinkers on our blog. Today we'd like you to get to know Serena Down, project manager.*

## **Everyone arrives at Blink along his or her own path. What path brought you here? Tell us about your journey.**

I've always loved listening to stories. My relatives used to worry about me staying inside talking to the old folks while the other kids were out lighting off fireworks, but that was where I wanted to be. In middle school, my best friend and I passed the usage exam at the local community television station and then produced our own talk show. We conducted multi-camera interviews with our school's student leadership council on what it took to do their jobs. Looking back, I can't believe the station let us take over the studio, but we were all business. I wish I could find the VHS copy of that show, I'm sure it is hilarious.

I studied anthropology as an undergrad where I got to listen to stories in an academic setting and received my first lessons in the ethical issues surrounding human research. I had a variety of jobs including working in the archeology lab. After I graduated, one of my first gigs was videotaping interviews I did in the home of users of a new online payment system. I was glad I

found a use for my social science degree that didn't involve heating more dirt samples in the oven!

I moved on to study documentary film in graduate school and worked on both independent documentaries and reality television. Most recently, I worked in e-Learning for a company called LearnBIG where I was both a content writer and project manager for courses and training students and employees take online. We had a great team of television producers and writers, as well as instructional designers and engineers, and we all came together to make the modules as lively as possible. Our goal was always how we could make our product the most engaging experience for the end-user.

Although the trajectory of my career wasn't always clear when I started out, I feel like my work at Blink has brought together many of my experiences and I'm so happy to be here!

## **We are all encouraged to focus on an area of Thought Leadership here at Blink. What will yours be?**

I've been thinking a lot about our senses and how they have the potential to change as we use new technologies. My 12-year old son and I were playing Pokémon Go and we started talking about how it shifted our awareness of the world around us. Around the same time, we were reading about feral children through history, these are kids that were raised by wild animals for the early part of their lives. When they were found, their speech and ability to relate to humans were severely impaired. But no matter the species that had adopted them—gazelle, chimpanzee, or wolf, these children had other senses and physical abilities that were more highly developed and had shifted with their environment. It is an extreme example, but I think the impact of technology on our physical experience is something I want to explore further.

## **Who or what motivates you right now? What's causing the greatest impact on the way you work/live/think?**

As a parent, being able to guide my kids into the world with a strong sense of empathy is what motivates me. When I first became a mother, I had the overwhelming impulse to protect my infant from any pain. As my children get older, I'm able shift my focus more on ways I can support their facing disappointment and hurt, rather than denying or avoiding it. I believe our experiences of joy and sorrow are strong teachers in ways we can connect empathetically with others.

## **When you're not at Blink, where would we find you? And what would you be doing?**

I like to get outside. I'm not athletic, but I'm a wanderer whether on bike or foot. I love to climb trees, bike without purpose, run on trails, create sledding runs through the forest and build fires. I spend as much time as I can with my positive and hardy family and friends. I'm so happy to be living in the northwest where it is easy to access both the city and nature all year round.

## **Lastly, if you set out on a long voyage at sea**

## and could only bring one book to read, what book would you select? Why?

A novel that's ended up circulating back to the bedside stack is *The Guest Cat* by Takashi Hiraide. It is a quiet book written by a Japanese poet. It is about two writers that have a cat that comes to visit them in their home. Although the central storyline involves a cat, you don't have to be a cat lover to get into this one. It conveys the transcendent experiences of love and loss through dreamy images of light and space.

*Serena is part of the project management team at Blink. Her move to Blink saves her several hours commuting each week, time she readily wastes in more creative ways.*