

34: Sienna: Driving the Swagger Wagon Into 2021

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The Sienna is one of the best-known minivans on the market, with a reputation for being durable and reliable, and, of course, for being the perfect family vehicle. There's no getting around its suburbia-born cultural associations, so the Sienna team has leaned into them.

The 2021 model fully embraces its proud reputation while also striving to redefine how we think about minivans, altogether. A distinctly American car, this Sienna combines form with function to create something quietly confident and perfect for the here and now.

But what inspired its unique design-concept? We're delving into the development of this latest member of the Toyota family with one of its chief designers, Ben Jimenez. He walks us through some of the added features and explains how they managed to update the car's legacy without losing what's made Sienna special in the first place.

Intro: [00:00:00] [Intro]

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:00:32] Hi, everybody, and welcome to Toyota Untold. This is Tyler.

Kelsey Soule: [00:00:36] And this is Kelsey.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:00:38] And today, we are talking about the 2021 Sienna, which was fully redesigned, a next generation vehicle. Kelsey, did you have a minivan growing up in your family?

Kelsey Soule: [00:00:56] Absolutely. I don't know that any childhood is complete without a minivan experience.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:01:02] Then, tell me about your minivan.

Kelsey Soule: [00:01:05] I mean, obviously, it had the sliding door. It did not open by itself, but there were two bucket seats in the back, which were really crucial for my sister and I. And it had like a compartment in the middle for all of our like accoutrements, and snacks, and all that stuff. I had friends. I had an Astro van that like that one really, really lasted through. Like we took spring break trips in it in college.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:01:32] Yeah.

Kelsey Soule: [00:01:32] Minivans are clutch. They get a bad rap sometimes, but like there's nothing left out. Everything is in the minivan.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:01:40] I agree. We actually were the family that had a Chevy Astro minivan growing up, and my brother actually learned to drive with that, and drove it to high school, and it had a license plate that said, a custom license plate, and it said GR8 FMLY, great family. Of course. And so, my brother had to drive that to high school. It was amazing. But it had the seats like the bench seats, but you could take them out, so you could face them towards each other. You could face them out the back.

Kelsey Soule: [00:02:12] The versatility.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:02:13] Yes. So, today, we are going to be talking to Ben Jiménez. We're going to be talking about, again, the 2021 redesigned Sienna.

Kelsey Soule: [00:02:24] And when Tyler says we, she means her, because I was absent for this interview, so enjoy Tyler's conversation with Ben.

Kelsey Soule: [00:02:40] Ben Jimenez is the Studio Chief Designer at Caltly Design Research, and he was one of the chief designers on the 2021 Sienna. His main focus was on the car's interior. Ben has been with Toyota for over a-decade-and-a-half, so he's well-aware of Sienna's place in the world. He's been one of the driving forces behind reclaiming its reputation as a common choice for parents. The Sienna, arguably better known as the Swaggar Wagon or that's what we want you to think of it as, has completely redefined our perception of family

cars. As one of the most important people on the Sienna team, Ben explains his role a little bit further in his conversation with Tyler.

Ben Jimenez: [00:03:15] I'm the General Manager for the Ann Arbor studio, but I'm also the Chief Designer for the interior of it. I'm part of a big team of designers, the CAD modelers, clay toddlers, color and trim designers, interior/exterior designers. And so, my job was to gather the team together, and work closely with engineering and all the other groups that are involved in the project to try to set the vision for what this next interior would be, and then follow it through solving all the problems. So, what can I say? My role is Art Director for the inside of the van. It is fun.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:03:48] Season designer or not, creating a new car is a daunting prospect. With the Sienna being such an iconic line, there's so much to take into consideration when implementing new features and innovations. You want to push and make changes, but you also have to retain the core essence that made people fans of the Sienna in the first place. Wherever do you begin?

Ben Jimenez: [00:04:09] Our first thing that we do is, really, we talk about what does the van mean or what does the customer want? Can we just talk about ideas? And we go out, and we talk to the customers, and try to understand where they're coming from. I think people naturally think that a designer kind of like just sat there, and was eating a pizza, and suddenly, inspiration hit them, but in truth, it's a lot of work. So, the first, I'd say, two months of developing the interior is spent really just thinking, and making lists of ideas, and studying trends in the marketplace.

Ben Jimenez: [00:04:45] It was really during that time that we came up with this idea that this minivan really needed to express confidence, and that came from our customers. So, that's really our interior, our color designers, our exterior designers all working together, generating what we call a concept. That's really where it all starts. And then, from there, one of our designers gets inspired, basically, you know what, the idea of something feeling more sporty and something feeling more functional, I think it would look like this, and this would be cool.

Ben Jimenez: [00:05:18] And actually, one of our designers, his name's Hiro, came up with the idea of this console that spreads out from the dash. And it's really innovative, but it just came from his connecting these kind of elements of abstract thought, confidence, feels sporty, has this big functional impression, still feels open, put it all together, and it just inspired him. That's how it starts. After that, it's just a ton of work.

Kelsey Soule: [00:05:45] It's no surprise that inspiration is an important part of the design process. A great source of inspiration is often our own personal emotional connection to the project itself. The cars we own and drive hold a huge place in our lives, because they're there alongside us for so many years and important milestones. So, because of this, we were interested to know if Ben had ever owned a minivan of his own.

Ben Jimenez: [00:06:06] I have three children. We got a minivan. We had, actually, two of them. And yeah, the kids miss it. They loved it, because just mom or dad just opens the door as they're walking up, they climb in themselves, especially when younger kids love that feeling of, I can do it. So, being able to climb in themselves and get themselves in the seat was really rewarding for them.

Ben Jimenez: [00:06:28] The fact that like we can bring their friends with them, there's an entertainment system, so they loved it. And funny story, after a couple of years, we got an SUV, we said, okay, we're going to try an SUV, and the first day my wife takes my son to the bus stop with the SUV, she goes to push the button and it's not there. She has to get out, and go down the vehicle to let him out at the bus stop, and she's not sure we made the right call.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:06:54] Designing any vehicle is impressive, but minivans come with their own set of criteria and expectations. The Sienna holds the celebrated position among Toyota's lineup. So, Ben and the rest of the team must measure up what preconceptions the car is going to lean into versus which trends it's going to buck. Innovation and surprise are just as much a part of the Sienna as any other vehicle, yet with its reputation as a family vehicle, they also have to account for the way the people are going to approach the car and the way they're going to use it. Ben explains how that differs from working on a straightforward vehicle like a Camry or an Avalon.

Ben Jimenez: [00:07:27] I think what I've seen over time is that the idea that that function is everything has not changed. That part of it is still there. So, the expectation of our customers or minivan owners is for this super function, but Sienna has gotten better, has gotten more bold, and better looking, more fun to drive, more confident feeling, and more premium. We've seen that the customers expectations have also grown with that.

Ben Jimenez: [00:07:55] So, we find that there's no longer the idea that, yeah, I'm going to get a minivan, but this is just a point in my life that I'm going to hold on to it for a while, and then, yeah, sorry everybody, this is who I am today, but really, I dream of being somebody else. It's like now, I think our buyers, our new families are thinking, I don't need to give up anything. I'm still a really confident person. It's just about everybody says, I'm not a minivan person.

Ben Jimenez: [00:08:20] Even our customers, even when I got a minivan myself, I said the same thing. But what makes it a really fun project to work on is that each time we have to try to really break through this element of it, and really build back the value of the product, because we're always fighting the stigma, and we are with what we did with this current one. And the way we fight back is by making it cooler each time. And so, the new one, I think, feels more confident and looks more confident.

Ben Jimenez: [00:08:50] And it's just a cooler statement. I think it's unfortunate that minivans have kind of a negative stigma, because they're such a functional vehicle and I think people continue to oversee the style element of it or the great value of it. But I think we did an incredible job of just making it look cool so that people will give it a second shot, and really stand proud. Even regardless of the fact that it's more functional than everything else on the road, it still looks great.

Kelsey Soule: [00:09:18] It makes sense. Function goes hand-in-hand with Sienna's reputation as a family car. In order to carry your family around, it needs to be functional. And function is actually one of the hardest things to get right, because there are so many possibilities and variables to account for. Not only do you have a driver and a passenger, but then you have kids in the back, additional passengers, and you add them into the equation, and you may as well triple the amount of variables. Is there enough space for all of your kids? Are there compartments for their snacks and drinks? Are they going to fling the door open or can it open itself? From a design standpoint, adding kids and additional passengers changes everything.

Ben Jimenez: [00:09:55] You have to account for everything that you think people will do and everything that you can think that they might possibly do, because kids, they change by day. I have three children myself, and I've seen the things that they'll do at 1:00, they won't do at 2:00, and the things that they'll do at 7:00 will just shock you sometimes. So, yeah, you'll find all kinds of things. Yeah. We have to design for all of that. Cleanability is a huge part of it. I think you just can't get away from that. But when we design it, we also have to make sure that we can't compromise. You can't say, oh, it's a tough situation, so it can look poor. No, everything has to look great.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:10:34] The 2021 Sienna isn't just a minor tweak to an existing car. It's a tremendously exciting redesign. It boasts exciting features and gadgets, not to mention a sleek new look. Yes. It retains the core of the Sienna, but at the same time, it's pushing the model in a brand new direction. Ben breaks down a little bit of what we can expect from the latest model.

Ben Jimenez: [00:10:55] I think the outside of Sienna looks super confident. And then, when you get into the Sienna, we really tried to bring that feeling of confidence through to have you, as an owner of the vehicle, feel confident about who you are, and feel confident about driving it, and confident about how it works. The first thing is there's this idea that the driver of the vehicle is all about taking care of the passengers in the minivan. That's the history of minivan, has been a little bit about that.

Ben Jimenez: [00:11:23] But really, we wanted this one to be different. We wanted this one to feel like the driver of the vehicle is rewarded with a great space. So, it's very upscale in the front compartment. We put a lot of effort into getting really nice materials up there. We've got things wrapped, and stitched, and handsewn. We've got really nice, really well-orchestrated finishes that are more in tune with what you think of a luxury vehicle, less than what you would, maybe a traditional minivan.

Ben Jimenez: [00:11:51] And then, just this driving position of being more engaged with the driving dynamics by having the sporty shifter, the high-mounted information display. So, there's just a lot of more traditionally upscale grand-touring-type feel upfront. Of course, there's a ton of functionality there as well. So, we've got this huge space below the console for all the gear that the drivers and passengers need in this stage of their lives. And we've got all the positions for wireless charging and that kind of thing.

Ben Jimenez: [00:12:24] And then, when you move to the second row, we have, really, two levels of this interior in the second row. One, we've got the seven or eight passengers sitting with lots of flexibility. We've got this really long slide situation, which is super flexible for hauling gear or hauling more people. But then, we've also got this really game changer with the really super long seat with the ottoman seat.

Ben Jimenez: [00:12:49] So, I don't know, I hope everybody gets a chance to see that, because it really changes your perception of what it really is or what a vehicle is, really. I kept telling our design team when we were working on it that this is the only vehicle that you walk up to and it opens the door for you. It's as close to a limousine, because you get your chauffeur. You push a button and it opens the door.

Ben Jimenez: [00:13:10] So, I think that super long ottoman seat is more like a private-jet-type experience. And it's a pretty big game changer for us. There are just loads of features everywhere throughout it. We've put a great deal of effort into making sure that everything looks great, but in truth, beneath the surface of that or integral to that is every part of this interior is functional, is there for a reason, and it's shaped that way so that it works super well.

Kelsey Soule: [00:13:37] In one form or another, the Sienna has been on the road for more than 20 years. What works in 1997 isn't necessarily going to work today, especially given how much the world has changed. So, what is it that makes the 2021 Sienna a valuable addition to the roads here and now?

Ben Jimenez: [00:13:51] I think functionality is at the core of what its value is. So, there's probably been no better functional vehicle out there. You can haul many people in it. You can shift the seats back and put something else in there. If you run to the Home Depot, you can throw a four-by-eight sheet of plywood, and really, there's no vehicle out there that can do what a minivan does. So, I think there will always be a place for minivan, 2021, or 2025, or beyond. As long as people have a need for flexibility in their lives, a minivan is going to make a lot of sense.

Ben Jimenez: [00:14:25] I think the minivans of the past don't have a place today, because they were really only about functions. They didn't appeal to the emotional side of the buyer or the emotional side of what we need as vehicle owners today. Now, I think people spend a lot of time in their vehicles today. You're stuck in traffic. People are busy. They've used the same vehicle for bringing our families around as we do to go to a nice dinner or to drive to work. The modern minivan or the Sienna, really, it has an ability to be everything to everybody when we need it. And that's really a remarkable capability.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:15:02] Ben has hit on something there. Many Sienna owners are drawn to a minivan for practical reasons. Why shouldn't they be? As he says, function is the core philosophy behind the Sienna line. But something we hear about time and time again is that these reluctant minivan owners grow to love their vehicles. Once they get used to it, some of them never want to drive anything else again. The 2021 Sienna is unapologetically itself. Fully embracing what it is instead of pretending to be something else is pretty cool.

Ben Jimenez: [00:15:31] We went out and we spoke with some new market families, and the difference between was that they don't see any reason to sacrifice their personal image in order to get it just because they're parents. They feel like, I'm a parent, it's cool, it's cool that I'm a parent, I love my kids, I love being a dad, I love being a mom, and the minivan should make me feel cool and I look cool driving it. And I think that's, really, the new thing that's growing in the segment or changing from past minivan buyers.

Kelsey Soule: [00:16:01] In 2010, we launched a Swagger Wagon campaign to support the relaunch of the Sienna. The first commercial was a music video featuring a suburban family rapping about their Sienna. If you haven't seen it, it's on YouTube. Please go look right now. With lyrics like, where my mother, father's at, and subsequent ads enlisting the likes of Busta Rhymes, the Swagger Wagon had rebranded the idea of parenthood as something a little bit more hip. Ben believes the ads tapped into a growing sentiment, the Sienna was already cool.

Ben Jimenez: [00:16:35] I think one of the reasons Swagger Wagon was successful, this is just my guess as the designer, was it said what people were thinking. It was a funny thing like, oh, yes, but really, it was just speaking what was under the surface. And now, we don't really use that term. We take it for granted that people want to feel cool, that the minivan shouldn't apologize in any way. It's the best vehicle you can buy and it's cool. It's good.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:17:01] The reputation of the Sienna has changed so much and Ben has seen people push them to the limit. So, just how cool can a Sienna be?

Ben Jimenez: [00:17:10] I remember somebody showing us pictures of their minivan. Like they used it, it was an off-road truck, They got it back in the woods. Overlanding is now a thing and there are plenty of people taking Siennas out into the wilderness.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:17:23] Are we ever going to throw something like 35s on a Sienna factory?

Ben Jimenez: [00:17:31] I'd love to see it.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:17:32] Never say never?

Ben Jimenez: [00:17:34] That's right. I'd love to see it, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:17:36] I only ask, because someone asked me one time, hey, can I take my Sienna out, and onto the beach, and camp in it under the stars? And I just said, I was like, we don't recommend that you take your vehicles on sand. I know that's a legal thing, and a frame issue, rust issue with the salt and stuff like that. And that's not just for Sienna, but any vehicle. Don't take it out on the sand. But that's how people want to use their vehicles nowadays. It's just incredible to me that people are thinking about overlanding in a Sienna. That's awesome.

Ben Jimenez: [00:18:07] For sure. Yeah. You know what, it's a little bit boasting, but Toyota, we've earned this reputation for being incredibly durable, reliable, works forever products. And there are customers that are testing this reputation.

Kelsey Soule: [00:18:22] The Sienna is made right here in America at our Indiana plant, and it's designed primarily for the North American marketplace. So, as a car that redefines our preconceived notions of minivans, what makes the Sienna such a uniquely American car?

Ben Jimenez: [00:18:36] Minivan is huge in Japan. There's really a huge following for minivans. Their minivans are, in most cases—well, not most cases, but in a lot of cases, they're like super luxury, super bold vehicles. They look almost strange to our eyes, because they're so over-the-top, character-driven expressions. But yeah, it's a really big deal in Japan.

Ben Jimenez: [00:18:58] And when we speak to our Japanese counterparts in design, in every group, they're often surprised that minivan has a stigma in the United States, because in Japan, it's really a cool vehicle. So, that's an interesting kind of challenge that we have communicated, because minivan has a different meaning for us. But we take what they've done to make their minivans cool and we take it as inspiration. That was part of what kind of drove us to think, we could be more upscale and more confident.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:19:24] Urban legend has it that one of the engineers assigned to Sienna in the early 2000s was desperate to redesign a Supra. Instead of letting disappointment get the better of them, they channeled their super energy and ideas into what became the Sienna sport model. I wanted to know if Ben took any inspiration from the Supra when designing the Sienna himself.

Ben Jimenez: [00:19:44] The position of the shifter, so we kept a mechanical shifter in the Sienna and we positioned it up high, so you basically can rest your arm on the console and shift gears. And that was inspired by when I was in high school, a friend of mine had an MR2. An MR2 was just an awesome little car that had this—everyone at that time was like, oh, this feels like an airplane, like a jet fighter. And everybody just remarked about that position of the shifter. So, we took that idea and brought that through. It was like, yeah, this, put this in a minivan. It's a counter of what you might expect, but really, it provides that sense of control or that sense of being involved with the driving experience.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:20:26] That's so amazing that the MR2 was involved or was an inspiration for it.

Ben Jimenez: [00:20:29] I know. It's about the most different vehicle you can find, a small, mid-engined, two-seat car.

Kelsey Soule: [00:20:34] Ben makes it clear that when designing a car, he and his team are standing on the shoulders of giants. Taking inspiration from Toyota's other cars is one thing, but we wanted to know if it goes even further.

Ben Jimenez: [00:20:44] We literally pick competitor's vehicles apart in some cases and in many cases. And also, we study them. We bring them into the studio and evaluate them. And yeah, we look to do them better. If they're doing something similar, that of course, we check to see how they're doing. In most cases, we find that our direction is already, I'd say, better, because our approach is perhaps, I feel, more customer-driven than many. Our job as designers is to always do better and always to change things. And frankly, we drive the engineers crazy, because we just cause a lot of problems with, what if we did it like this?

Ben Jimenez: [00:21:22] But I think the thing that might surprise people is we often will take apart not our competitors', but vehicles that are outside that. We spend a lot of time looking at concept vehicles, and really exotic cars, and exotic products, and jets, and boats, and home interiors, any place that a designer has taken an effort to try to make the customer inspired, or feel better about their product, or feel like something's got more value, we look to see, how do they do it? What's the catch that they're finding? What got people excited? Because ultimately, that's what our job is, as a team, is to make this next product as more exciting than anything else on the road.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:22:01] You're looking at jets and boats, even for a Sienna, too?

Ben Jimenez: [00:22:05] Oh, yeah. There's a lot of yacht interior concepts there, yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:22:09] I guess it's bigger, too, right? It's a bigger vehicle, so you can get more stuff in there.

Ben Jimenez: [00:22:14] That's right. Yeah. I think the idea of a sailboat yacht with the deck of a sailboat was a big inspiration point for us, so that there's this sense that you look across the surface like that and you feel a little bit more calm. You feel a little bit more positive. I think our buyers would like that.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:22:33] Between its longevity, its awards, successes, and even the cultural impact of Swagger Wagon, the Sienna is arguably one of Toyota's most iconic cars. How does it fit into the Toyota family? And what exactly does Sienna mean to Toyota?

Ben Jimenez: [00:22:48] The Sienna is super important, because it's really one of our unique North American products. It's designed and catered, really, to our North American mindset and our North American needs. So, the minivan is really popular in Japan as a segment, but the Sienna is completely different. The Sienna is a more robust, bigger expression for North America, because of how we use it.

Ben Jimenez: [00:23:14] So, it's super important to us as a design team to make sure that it's successful, because I'm part of the North American design group, so my job, really, is to make sure that we make a great product for our customers here. And Sienna's one of the iconic North American products for us. We've got the two studios. We've got Ann Arbor, which is, we call it the production studio, and Newport Beach, which is our advanced studio.

Ben Jimenez: [00:23:40] And the two studios work collaboratively, especially in the early phases of the design. In this project, I actually went out to California for a time to work with the Newport Beach team. They worked on the exterior of the design. I worked on the interior of the design. We worked together to generate the idea of what this next product would be, what is the target, the vision? How do we want the customer to feel when it's done?

Ben Jimenez: [00:24:04] And then, the Newport Beach team really generated that original exterior design shape through what we call the advanced stage. And our Ann Arbor team developed the interior advanced shape. But we really worked together, because the inside has to fit within the outside. And that cross-continent work is really, really important, because we have not only a production mindset and an advanced design mindset, but we also have kind of a Midwest, and East Coast, and West Coast philosophies going as well.

Ben Jimenez: [00:24:37] So, we put that all together and work together to make it one design. We were really fortunate in this project that those advanced designs were really pretty well on target. So, we got through that advanced stage and the outside of the van almost didn't change after that, that first advanced model. And the inside, same. Like we pretty much kept the design the way it was. It was really remarkably well-executed, advanced stage, and a lot of collaboration with engineering, because engineering supported us and made it through.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:13] Did you get to go to Newport Beach in the wintertime, I hope?

Ben Jimenez: [00:25:17] I did, yeah. That's helpful.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:19] Fantastic. You're like, alright, I'll send a couple months there.

Ben Jimenez: [00:25:25] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:25] And I once heard designers say, we hand them a circle and engineering hands us back a square. So, it is constant work to make those two things match up.

Ben Jimenez: [00:25:36] Absolutely. It's funny that at a philosophical level, the designer's job, a designer approaches a situation, and says, I want to completely change this, and the engineer from a philosophical level says, you know what? I want to do it the way I did last time, but better.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:25:53] Right.

Ben Jimenez: [00:25:54] And so, there's automatically tension there. I mentioned earlier about the kind of early phase, where we're just talking about what the product is, even during that phase, we're talking to the engineering group and the sales group. We're talking to the dealers, everybody getting together and talking about what the vehicle is, because it's really a team effort to put together a product as complicated as a vehicle. And a minivan is probably the most complex of all the products that are sold on the road.

Ben Jimenez: [00:26:22] So, it takes a lot of agreeing on what the image is, what we're trying to achieve. And agreeing doesn't mean everybody gets together, and says, okay, this is what it's going to be and you just do it. No. People have to agree at a level, at almost a subconscious level, to do it. And to get there, it takes a lot of communication and a lot of talking. After that, the design team comes up with some crazy shape, comes up with some really difficult assembly idea, and then it's just nuts and bolts, and getting together with the engineering.

Ben Jimenez: [00:26:54] I like to say that great design takes even greater engineering. I think the bridge console in the Sienna is a great example of that. It started out as an idea that was made of folklore and some tape. But in the end, it's got to work, and it's got to stand proud in the interior, and function for decades. So, that took a tremendous amount of innovation on the engineering side. And then, thank goodness, the chief engineer, Monte, was super supportive and he kept pushing. The engineering team was right behind him to support. It wasn't the first engineering drawing that solved that. It was the 10,000th. We reshaped it 17 times.

Kelsey Soule: [00:27:35] Ben has spent the last few years working on the 2021 Sienna. But even though it's been released, his work hasn't stopped.

Ben Jimenez: [00:27:43] The downside of being a designer, you do a product, you get it out there on the road, and you're super proud of it, and then 10 minutes later, you're picking it apart.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:27:51] Yeah.

Ben Jimenez: [00:27:54] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:27:54] As we do here at Toyota, kaizen, continuous improvement. We can't help ourselves.

Ben Jimenez: [00:27:59] I know. It would be nice to be able to just sit back and just enjoy it. I can't take an objective view of it. It's totally, I'm still trying to make it better every time.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:28:08] With the coronavirus pandemic, many of us have had to change the way that we work. That's as true when making a car as it is for anyone. Thankfully, the 2021 Sienna was largely unaffected due to so much of the work having been done before the pandemic began.

Ben Jimenez: [00:28:23] We're working a few years in advance.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:28:25] Yeah.

Ben Jimenez: [00:28:25] Yeah.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:28:26] How is the work now working between Caltly Ann Arbor and Caltly Newport Beach now in a pandemic, and getting through that, and collaborating?

Ben Jimenez: [00:28:35] In some ways, it's better, because like we're talking right now, we're in different states, right? It's the ability to, we really transition to everything virtual, so we're having virtual meetings and we get better at it. So, now, we're actually collaborating even more frequently with more ease, even, because of the pandemic, we don't have very many people in the office, but our clay modelers, they still need to be there. They're artists. We have them working distance and following all kinds of protocols. But we have to just work through, and resolve, and keep going. It forced us to be more careful in how we design. We have to think ahead and make sure we do the right decisions.

Kelsey Soule: [00:29:16] The design team's work is never done. So, what's next?

Ben Jimenez: [00:29:20] We have a lot of great work coming up. Yeah. The clay modelers right now are making beautiful shapes that will be on the road sometime soon.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:29:31] I can't wait to talk to you about it, to be honest. I am so excited.

Kelsey Soule: [00:29:37] I'll never get tired of getting an inside look at how and why we make our vehicles. I loved learning about how Ben and his whole team have been taking back the Sienna's image and turning it around. You know what? I think that they have succeeded. They have officially made the minivan cool.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:29:53] And I'm so excited to see the 2022 Woodland Edition that they just came out with, all good things for the Sienna.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:02] Thanks for listening to Toyota Untold. This is Tyler.

Kelsey Soule: [00:30:05] And this is Kelsey.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:09] A reminder that modifying your vehicle with non-genuine Toyota parts can negatively affect your warranty, safety, performance, and straight legality. Other trademarks and trade names appearing on the vehicles are those of their respective owners. Do not use the lounge chair with ottoman when the vehicle is in motion. If the ottoman is in use during an accident, the lap belt may slide past the hips.

Tyler Litchenberger: [00:30:29] This could result in restraint forces being applied directly to the abdomen, or your neck may contact the shoulder belt, increasing the risk of death or serious injury. See owner's manual for additional limitations and detail. Off-roading is inherently dangerous. Abusive use may result in bodily harm or vehicle damage. Wear your seatbelt at all times and do not allow passengers into the cargo area.

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