



Episode 2

Branding For High-Dollar Sales With Johanna White of Design By Jo



**Jason: [00:00]**

Do you have a hard time finding clients that will pay premium prices for your services? If you do, we're going to dive into it in this session. We're going to talk about how to identify your X-Factor and develop specific solutions so you can show your value to your ideal clients.

Intro: [00:05]

Welcome to the Designer Discussions podcast. Tune in each week where we discuss marketing, branding, PR and business advice for design professionals.

Jason: [00:39]

We are happy to have everybody here for Designer Discussions. If you have not subscribed, please subscribe to our channel. And we are here with Johanna White, Design by Jo, and she's here to talk to us today about branding for high dollar sales. How are you, Johanna?

Johanna: [00:45]

I am excellent. Jason, thank you for having me.

Jason: [00:53]

So one of the reasons we wanted to have this today is because we actually had you on clubhouse, you know, a while back, and we had talked about luxury design because, yeah, the NKBA actually had a luxury summit where they talked about marketing and PR for the luxury market. And one of the things that we learn is that if you market to that industry, they'll work. And so you have to really position yourself so they could come to you and that was one of the reasons we actually had you on the talking. It was amazing. And we also had a CEU session with you where you had talked about a lot of this. So for anyone that's listening now, if you want to see any of the slides or anything, go to the website. You'll be able to see the CEU session, which is an hour long and we had talked about all this. So, Johanna, I'm going to just let you have a few minutes to just explain who you are and then we'll get into the meat of all of this.



Johanna: [02:00]

Absolutely. Well, my name is Johanna White. I own a brand design company called Design by Jo and I specialize in taking people and businesses who are truly the best at what they do and make them look like it. So the problem that I see a lot out there is there will be companies whose product or service really is the best but unfortunately, their visual brand doesn't line up with how great their product or service is, how great their quality is and so the world doesn't know that they're the best. Maybe their mom knows and their best friend and a couple of hard core fans who stumbled on them by accident, which is why I like to call them a best kept business secret. You know, those like take a hole in the wall restaurant that you've stumbled into sometime and it turns out to be the most delicious food ever. Nobody's there. Nobody knows about it. They're totally undercharging for the delicious meal that you just got served and unfortunately, unless they change something about their branding, they're going to stay that way. So obviously, I don't work with just restaurants. In fact, I don't even work with very many restaurants. But that's the best way I can say that people picture that best kept business secret that is the brand that I take to the next level. And so I love talking about branding for luxury because most of the time that was best kept secrets are the brands that are positioned to be just that.. They have the right ingredients. They have that uniqueness, the amazing quality and something really found for us to build a visual brand around.

Jason: [03:54]

Awesome. Awesome. So on on the CEU session you went over three tips and we're just going on a high level go over what those are today. So if you'll start with the first one.

**Johanna: [04:08]**

Absolutely. So the first tip in my process for branding for high dollar sales or for luxury or for however you most closely associate with those terms, is that first you have to know your value and that is because if you don't even know what makes you special or makes you worth more, you won't be communicating it. And your ideal client definitely won't believe it. If you can't know it about you and show it about you, they're not going to perceive it. So it starts with you knowing what makes you special and why you're worth being as delightfully expensive as you want to be.

Jason: [04:53]

OK, so do you have an example of that, that maybe, you know, the designers that are listening to this today may apply to them.

Johanna: [05:03]

An example of knowing your value?

Jason: [05:05]

Exactly!

Johanna: [05:06]

Well, I can yeah. Lots of them. I'll pick one, which is a client of mine called the Toffee Store. I will talk more about her as a great example when we do the webinar, because it's a really good case study for this whole topic. She came to me and she had amazing toffee.

Jason: [05:32]

Like shameless plug, I've actually had to talk to you. It's great. So I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I just have to put that. It is good. It is good toffee

**Johanna: [06:47]**

It is great and she did know that, thankfully, like she already knew that her toffee was some of the best out there. But what she didn't know yet was what people were looking for, what people were shopping for, aside from just occasional shoppers who already knew they wanted to party. So we took her and started asking questions and digging through some of what we'll cover in the webinar about various ways to identify her X-Factor or your X-Factor, which is what makes you special, what makes you appealing to that luxury market and we found that in her case, it was that her toffee makes the perfect gift every time. Well, when you figure that out, you can start to talk about it, which we did with her messaging. We clarified her brand messaging, uses it on our website, on her brand, but also when she tells someone what she does. If you say I make great toffee, that gets you so far. But if you say I make the world's best toffee and it's the perfect gift for everyone on your list, no matter how hard they are to buy for you, just open yourself up to something special to a lot more people out there looking for the perfect gift and toffee might be it then people out there are already looking for toffee. So we helped her identify a really good way that she serves the market, that X Factor. And now that she knows her value, then we could proceed to step two, which is show your value. But before I go into that, Jason, do you have any more questions about. I don't want to bunny hop ahead.

Jason: [07:26]

Oh, no, we can go and Mirjam and Maria, you can feel free to ask any questions at the same time, too. But right now I didn't have anything. So you can move on to number two.



Johanna: [07:36]

OK, so. Actually, let me say one more thing about number one is. We'll cover this more as well, but when people say that they want to be a luxury product or they want to charge a lot more for their services and they ask what step one is, and I say it's know your value. I explain what I just did about some of what that means by your X Factor. But then they also want to know why it's important and one of the reasons is if you don't believe that you're valuable, you will stutter and stumble every time you try to charge a higher price. Your clients may have come prepared to pay a higher price than you're charging, but if you don't know it, then you don't believe it. And if you don't believe it, you can't confidently say I cost that. But once you know and understand the value that you bring and that it really is incredible that you really are the best you are going to be able to set those prices where you want to set them and then say, this is my rate with no problem and know that you're going to over deliver every time. So if you want to actually sell at a high dollar and not just set your prices at a high dollar, you need to know what you're worth and believe it.

Jason: [08:59]

Just as an example that actually happened to me about, I'll say, four years ago, my first client that was at that high dollar range when I first set the number, I was like, is he going to really going to pay the same what he paid? I'm like, wow, this is not as hard as I thought. So I am 100 percent, 100 percent agree, if you believe it and it's going to show how you ask for the price and they'll believe it as well. So I'm a hundred percent with it. OK, so number two.



Johanna: [09:31]

All right. So number two, in my process for branding for high dollar sales is show your value. So once you've gone through all the steps that will cover it and we've learned how to identify your X-Factor, what makes you really special? It's great if you know it and believe it. But if you don't do anything, if you don't take action on that belief and somehow communicate that value with the world, with your audience, you are still going to be a best kept secret. You're just going to be a more frustrated one, because now you're really confident in what you offer. You're confident that you're worth it, but they don't see it. So now you're like, you see the gap and they don't. So you have to show your value. And there are several ways to do that. But the way that we're going to highlight is through brand positioning. Now, brand positioning has many different kind of simplified definitions, if you would, Google it, but I'm going to define it for ease of this and to keep it simple is aligning your company with the images, thoughts and emotions that you want it to be associated with in the mind of your customer. So as it relates to visual brand, think of tying your business visually to images that already have luxury association in the mind of your ideal client. So I know that a lot of your audience is interior designers or in the home development world. So just picture the last time you saw branding for premium home interior design, there was probably really well done photos, excellently staged, probably a lot of gold furniture and staging items used in those shoots, because quite literally, in its simplest form, those images of gold or of just clean, minimal spaces already associate to luxury in the mind of the consumer. So you want to position your product right next to it. And when we're doing the webinar and we can show visuals, I have some great examples of how I did that for my own company, how I've done that for other companies, and almost instantaneous results that happened once I did that. So for example, since I know Jason, that would be a next question. It's a good example.

**Jason: [12:17]**

How do you know me so well?

Johanna: [12:19]

You know, I'm just starting to. But for example, I am going to use the time that I created a business card, a high impact premium design business card for my own business, which is brand services. Prior to that, I had an average business card with all the necessary information on it, and I would give that to people and then I would just try to tell them what a great job I could do, developing a luxury premium brand that would make people stop in their tracks. Well, as you can imagine, not everyone can catch the vision. And I did not close every sale and I stopped. This is silly. Why am I letting my own brand be nearly invisible? Well, I'm telling everyone else that I can do it for them. So I decided to go from just telling them to showing my value. And I took my brand and I made this premium business card with rose gold foil and debossing and gold. And as soon as I got those and started handing them out, I was having people chase me out of networking events going, how can you do this for my business? And then I was like, wow, OK. This whole like showing them instead of just telling them really works. So how can I take this to the next level? So I set time aside to treat myself like one of my own clients and worked on my brand, not just in it. And I'm going to stop just telling them. I'm going to show them. So I did a photo shoot around this business card because I've been getting such great results. I had fake nails custom made on Etsy. I bought buckets of gold paint and I got my photographer and we papered the floor and the walls of the studio and flung gold paint everywhere. And the end result you can see on the home page of my website designbyjostudio.com. But it is this business card brand positioned next to several images that immediately make you think of luxury, which is gold dripping the airman's bracelet that's on my wrist, various things.



Johanna: [14:40]

And as soon as I redid my site to show, not just tell, another immediate result happened, which was that I was at a coffee shop working on my laptop. A man walked over to me and asked if he could borrow my power cable because he also had a Mac. I was like, Yeah, sure, no big deal and gave it to him. He came back 30 minutes later just making conversation and asked me what I did. I handed in my card. He took one look at it, raced back to his computer, sat down, came back five minutes later and said, Oh my gosh, your card was so amazing. I had to go check out your website immediately. Your website is so on brand with the card and I can see the luxury that you deliver. And I need you to make some things for my personal brand immediately. Oh, by the way, I work for Google and we're also working on these other projects and I would like to bring you on board to those and so I went from walking around trying to find high end clients and trying to just tell them, I know that I can do this for you to showing them and having them approach me. Now, granted, he first approached me for a power cable, which is why everyone should have a Mac. Bonus, if you don't have to pay extra. But yeah, so I went from knowing my value, which took a while to it probably took me three years of transition to go from just being a commodity designer who undercharged for everything and didn't know what made me different to knowing what I could do uniquely to help my customers in the holistic aspect of branding, creating vision that they could be this aspirational brand and then helping them develop it and live up to it, and then showing that through my designs on my own brand, my own customer touch points, which I'll hit briefly before we sign off here, just kind of the importance of brand consistency as well but that journey took me from a designer who constantly undercharged and overdelivered to charging eight hundred times my rate.

Jason: [17:15]

Say it again. How much more?

**Johanna: [17:18]**

Maybe eight hundred percent.

Jason: [17:20]

OK, so this audience hears that the importance of really showing your value and being just what a designers out there would. I like to tell, you know, a lot of the designers that we work with. After you've done a lot of projects to aim at this market, do not show all of your projects because some of the projects, you know, you're not as happy about or it does not show the actual value that you're trying to achieve. So pick the projects that really showcase what you do well and highlight those on your website, not all of them, but the ones that really showcase what you do well. So that's an excellent point.

Johanna: [17:59]

That's a great point. Really great point, Jason. And what you said there, like highlighting the good projects. I'm going to take it another two steps further and say, if you're still trying to show your value through just a portfolio, you are living way too much to chance and way too much for your potential clients to have to decipher. You need to have a business website that is one of your main touch points. You need to clearly communicate your message, the problem that you solve for them and how you're going to do it, rather than just a portfolio that may show beautiful images, but they're going to have to draw their own conclusions, and at least 50 percent of the time it's going to be the wrong one, probably more like 80. So don't leave that to chance. Go beyond a portfolio and you will be taking it to the next level with showing.

Jason: [18:52]

Loved it.



Johanna: [18:54]

So step three is once you show your value, you need to find a way to add more value. And this kind of circles back around to if you don't believe it, you won't be able to charge for it. But once you start charging those luxury prices, you may have a moment or two where you waiver and you go, am I worth this? Am I overcharging? Am I you know that big. But if you find a way to always add more value, you will know that you are delivering what you promise and you'll be able to continue. Also, you need to add more value in a way that your customers want. So if you say, oh, I give all kinds of bonuses and freebies, but they're really just for you and they do nothing for your customer or their nothing they ever ask for, it's not likely that you're truly adding more value. You're probably just adding more noise. There is a lot of it out there. So I believe the best way to first add more value is to create that aspirational brand for yourself, show it and then go out there and work and live up to it. Like for a while you can sell at a high price. And not deliver, but that will only last for a little while and people will start to notice that what you're actually producing isn't living up to what you promised, and you'll get upset customers and you'll go back to that place where you were before, except maybe with more angry reviews. But if you build that aspirational brand, you live up to it and you over deliver again and again, you create raving fans who will keep coming back to you as your business, which is the core of any good business. And also one of my favorite quotes and kind of where I got the inspiration for this add more value was when I was at Tony Robbins Business Mastery Conference a few years ago. And he reminded us to fall in love with your clients, not with your products or services.

**Johanna: [21:25]**

So then you will always be looking out for what they need versus what do you want to offer and you'll be positioned to pivot quickly. If there is need to change, you'll be ready to expand into adding what they're looking for and you'll be a long lasting business, making it worth your while to grow your brand and spend time on it because you're not going to just be a flash in the pan.

Jason: [21:54]

I love that! So we're going to open up to a few questions and Mirjam and Maria, you can ask anything. I get asked a lot by new designers is how do you position yourself if you're just beginning? You don't really have a portfolio to show. You don't have work to show. So how do you position yourself as a new designer?

Johanna: [22:22]

Well, first, I would still say that there is a lot that they can do to find their X Factor, they entered this market for a reason. They have something that they are passionate about, something that makes them special, whether it's their fresh take, whether it's they're not yet cynical, whether it's that they're not yet stuck in the need to of doing what everyone else is doing. They have something. So I still believe that their first step should be knowing what that value is. But then when it comes to showing that value, they may have to put in a little extra effort to find ways to create photos or stage rooms. They might have to find a family friend that will have mercy on them and let them decorate a room, even if it's just for the day. You know, they may have to go out of their way to create those initial examples. But there's always a way and you don't need like you said earlier, you don't need one hundred examples.



Johanna: [23:30]

You just need a couple very intentional ones that showcase your style so that your audience can connect with what that style is and know that, yeah, this is the person for me, because when people hire designers, they want that connection. They want to feel like you get them. So rather than going out and trying to create a portfolio, which we've already said is only a small piece of what your website should be, instead think about building your own brand and if you don't have a lot of examples yet, look at that as an opportunity to create who you want to be early on. You can choose where you want to be positioned rather than accidentally getting shuffled along into a part of the market that you don't actually find to be your most ideal audience.

Mirjam: [24:27]

Actually. I have a question because my mind got stuck on the toffee shop. My thought about that was and just knowing that so many people have dietary restrictions. Right. So if you think about your audience for the toffee shop and I love the messaging you came up with, but what if somebody doesn't eat sugar? You know, and I think a lot of the struggle that designers and a lot of other business owners have is it comes to niching down and they're afraid to leave part of the audience on this side and I'm just curious to get your perspective on that. It's like, do you how far do you have to niche and do you really do that? Because obviously it's critical to come to the messaging, which then plays a huge role for the rest of your marketing and your PR efforts and all around it. So what's your take on that?



Johanna: [25:33]

So that's a great question. I would say that niching down is essential if you're going to charge luxury prices, because if you're not exclusive in some way, there is nothing that makes you special. And I would also say that, sure, some people might not eat sugar and say if someone buys them a gift of toffee, they get it. They don't eat sugar. They're still going to be grateful that they were thought of and they're still going to pass it along to someone who can enjoy it. So even in worst case scenario, there is. But she knows that not everyone is her customer couldn't possibly be. There will be people that love truffles and there will be people that love pretzels and there will be people that don't love toffee, although they may be few and far between. But if she just kept saying this is for everyone, general message, you get even less of a connection because people need to know what they're connecting with. And when it comes to niching down, you need to realize that. When it comes to the luxury market, that's absolutely got to happen, but also realize that there is an entire group of people who will not purchase your product if you're too cheap. There is an entire group of people who purchase items just for significance, for the sake of being able to work with the best or buy the most expensive. Louis Vuitton is not for everyone in any in any means, and they don't try to be. But that is what make the people in the luxury market purchase them. Is that exact fact? If you were saying, like, if we were not here talking about branding for high dollar sales or branding for luxury, we might have a slightly different conversation. Although I still agree that it is better to serve one segment of an audience really well than to try to serve the whole world kind of poorly or not really be great at what you're doing. There is someone for every market, and I am not saying that there's any group that doesn't deserve to have good branding or any group that doesn't deserve to have a nice interior to their home or anything like that. But there are strategies to choosing which group you will serve and aligning yourself to do that with excellence.

**Mirjam: [28:07]**

Yeah, I think I think that's great. And I'm so glad that you said it took you three years to really hone in on your messaging, because I think that's also something that a lot of interior designers underestimate. They think they can sit down for five minutes and come up with their messaging like that. And it's not that easy because I'm in your shoes.

Johanna: [28:34]

It's a work in progress. And I would also say that I wish that I had known me back then. That is part of what I can offer to the world if I've gone through this. I've known the struggle of being a designer, trying to develop a design brand, and I like to joke that it's a curse for designers. The cobbler's children wear no shoes. We are so busy being creative all day long for other people, that when it comes to our own, it's like we get a total roadblock and can't do it and if I had been willing to admit that three years ago, I might have been where I am much sooner. And so I also want to point out that there is no shame in a designer hiring help for where they're struggling. There's no shame even in another brand designer hiring a brand designer, because sometimes we just have blind spots when it comes to our own messaging. Like as a woman, I'm sure you have friends who can say amazing things about you that you can't see about yourself or one of your friends that does this dress make me look fat and you go, oh, girl, you're crazy. It looks amazing. And she can't see that. But you can. It's the same with designers. It's the same with your message in your brand. It's almost always easier for someone from the outside to see those hidden parts of what make you really great. And so when I work with anyone be it a designer or any other client, I like to do what I call content mining when we're working on their messaging, which is I know that the answers to what makes them special and unique are inside of them, but they don't always know what questions to ask to draw those answers out.

**Johanna: [30:19]**

So if anyone listening here today needs help with developing their brand, they can feel free to contact me at designbyjostudio.com, and we will start the process and maybe take it from three years that it was for me to six to eight weeks for you to borrow from my lessons learned. Set yourself some time

Jason: [30:49]

Awesome. So as a recap, you want to know your value. That's the first one you want to show your value that's number two. You want to find ways to add more value. That's the third. Johanna, this has been excellent. Do you have any last minute tips or anything you want to share before we go?

Johanna: [31:11]

Let's see, last tip I will share is only because it's been going over so well and even Jason is taking advantage of this one as a designer or almost anyone in the service industry. If you are still trying to show that you are worth a high value with a black and white line estimate, you are really missing out on a huge touchpoint and a huge way to visually show your value. You need to be using a proposal that was another like seems like a small thing. But when I switched from estimates to proposals overnight, closing 20 percent more sales at four times the price and people were no longer saying I don't get why is it so expensive. If it was still too expensive for them they were saying things like, oh, my gosh, I totally see why it costs that much. I can't afford it quite yet. But I'm putting you on the vision board. And as soon as I have the budget ready, I'm working with you later. That was the impact of going from my own estimate to proposal. So I have a proposal software that I highly recommend that Jason put the link into the shown ups. But that is one step. Even as you're just starting to work on your brand, you can make a huge difference right away. So take some action. I know the it can feel a little overwhelming. First, I got to know what I'm worth before I can start branding. What the heck? Like, I thought I'd write down 3 things and go off and charge five times the price. That one you can do right now & it can make a difference immediately.

**Maria: [32:54]**

Hey, it's Maria. You wanted to tell you that after hearing you talk about this, I have actually followed through with putting together a proposal instead of a line. I line item estimate, and I knocked the socks off of a very large presentation. So thank you so much for that. Yeah.

Jason: [33:15]

I have to also add on to that I had used the software that we are going to have in the notes and it helped me get a client as well. So that is a great tip. So Johanna, we would like to thank you for your time today. This has been an excellent talk. If you have to talk today, hit subscribe so you can subscribe to our channel. And if you enjoy it, what Johanna had to say visit her website at designbyjostudio.com and she'll be happy to help you out. So we hope you had a great time today. Johanna, again, thank you. And we hope to see you all next week.

Outro: [33:55]

We hope you enjoyed this episode of designer discussions. What was your takeaway? Care to share your thoughts and take Jason, Maria and Mirjam on social media. You can find them on all platforms at designerdiscussions.com. Don't forget to like, subscribe and leave a review or comment for this episode from wherever you are listening.



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