



Episode 25

What we can learn from lifestyle brands



**Mirjam: [00:00]**

Hello and welcome to the Designer Discussions Podcast. Today, we're going to talk about what we can learn from lifestyle brands to show up better on our Instagram.

Intro: [00:10]

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

Mirjam: (00:29)

Okay, so we have an expert in this field here with us. Maria

Maria: (01:34)

Yes, we do. Don't make a face like that.

Mirjam: (00:40)

Maria. Tell us your thoughts and why you think that. I know you're fascinated with this topic. Tell us, what do you think about it?

Maria: (00:51)

Thanks, Mirjam. Okay. So first off, I think we should also motivate ourselves with a word. It's called parasocial. And the way that we should look at it is called parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction is what social media is. And if you look at the word parasocial interaction, it is an illusionary experience where an audience interacts with a person that they are engaged, and they believe that they're engaged in a reciprocal relationship. And this was a term that was coined in 1906 by Donald Horton and Richard Wool. So this has been around for a long time. This is the whole idea that if you see a celebrity out on the streets and they are walking around and talking, you feel comfortable walking up to them while they're eating their breakfast Taco and starting a conversation with them over dinner. And you don't feel like that's a weird, awkward experience. And so pair of social interaction is the act of feeling like you have this relationship. And social media is our tool to create that with a wide audience of people. And there's a lot that interior designers can learn from the lifestyle brand industry to help them show up better on social media.



Maria: (02:15)

If you were to sit down and just look at two social media feeds, pick a high end interior design firm and pick your favorite, lovely social media lifestyle Instagram person. And you look at what their feeds look like. You're going to notice they both have really nice photography, but one of them is going to have the lifestyle person in every picture. That person is selling a transformation. They're selling a lifestyle that you, too, can have by purchasing the items that that person purchases to create that level of lifestyle and of happiness. But if you look at that same interior designer's profile, you're seeing all other work, you're seeing gorgeous rooms and homes and beautiful spaces. But you don't understand how buying all those beautiful, wonderful, gorgeous homes and spaces improves someone else's life. And so as interior designers, this is where we can all step up and we can start to lean into our Paris social interactions. This is those videos where you're sitting in your car and you're talking about going to a job site or going to a showroom and how you are fixing a person's problem, who has two dogs or they have kids and they want to have white. These are the conversations that you have with your friend. Look into your phone and talk to your friend. Your friend is your audience. Because if you understand how this works, the audience will begin to think of you as a close friend. And this is how you gain the ability to influence your audience. So the best thing about being an interior designer is that we have all of this amazing content. You could have been a blogger and been using other interior designers photos to say this is the new style that's coming out. This is the new look that's coming out. But the reality is people can't use your photos and we're getting a little bit tighter on that. We're not using other people's images to push our agenda. So interior designers are the fortunate ones that actually do have photographs of job sites, of construction sites of that front door getting put in of paint colors, actively going up and discussing what those paint colors are. And so all of these elements are what people are super duper interested in. I don't know if you've ever heard of this, but HGTV is making a living off of this type of content, and we are the producers of it.



Maria: (04:15)

So one of the things that's really great is that interior designers have a messy, unglamorous job that we hide from our audience, and we make ourselves appear to be the authority on all things beautiful and aesthetically pleasing. But the reality is our audience doesn't want us to be intimidating. They want us to feel like we're the friend that they can ask a design question to. That's fine and dandy until you're designing these big, beautiful homes and everybody needs to know what your custom blend of color is for the trim and the stainless on your wood floors in that space. I get it. You shouldn't have to give that information away for free. In fact, I think if you felt like you should have given that information away for free that you were wrong. I think that our innate feeling to say, I get paid for this. This is my design. This is my art. This is what we are supposed to be protecting ourselves from giving away for free because this is our livelihood. But this is the ultimate solution to building an email list. This is the ultimate way to start building assets that are considered influence. If you don't believe it, look up the statistics, having an email list and the emails that go out and that get open. That is a huge thing that companies and brands want to know about companies when they want to partner with them and work with them. So don't overlook these opportunities to move people to your email list. Send out an email once a month that talks about paint color that are shown in your blog post, your two or three favorite accessories that show up in your pictures and put hot links to them. Get your affiliate link set up and use this as a way for you to start making some money and pulling people off of your social media platform. You might have 10,000 followers, but how many people do you have on your email list right now? And how can you monetize that email list? Sure would be nice if you're making a couple of \$100 every time you send out an email to have that pay for itself. Right? And like we talked about in some of our other podcasts, we have apps that are easy to use.



Maria: (06:59)

Flodesk is a really inexpensive platform right now. I think they're still in beta at \$20 a month to have access to their email, and you can put as many people in their database as possible. So it's not a large investment to create an alternative stream of income, especially if you started to build an audience and you start working on your parasocial interaction with your audience. So make those friends build those relationships. And when you look at your social media feed, say, hey, do I have a picture of me sitting at my desk? Do I have a video of what all I put in my work bag before I come out to your job site so that I know I am super prepared and that there are things in my bag you didn't even think to have, right? We're going to show up with more boots in the back of our car. We're going to have our iPad on hand. We're going to have a tape measure. We're going to have these amazing big paint samples, and all of that is illusionary up until the point where you let people in behind the scenes to see that about who you are and when you can take and put time and effort into having professional photos of you sitting at your desk and talking to someone and looking into that camera with your eyes. Whenever you have a picture of you holding a cup of coffee in your own kitchen and talking to them, maybe you're staying there with your kids. Maybe you're sitting on a couch with your husband until they have walked into your life and feel like they're having a glass of wine with you in the evening. They do not think of you as a friend, but they will think of you as an authority. But where do you want to blend those lines? And how can that help you grow your social media? Yes, none of us really want to be on camera. Nobody wants to have to see that their Botox is wearing off. I understand that I don't like what I look like, and I don't really love having to be in front of the camera, but I do understand that I need you all to be my friends. I need you to be the people that I work with and that I relate to, because the more I do that the more people talk back to me because they do genuinely feel like they want to hear from me.



Maria: (09:09)

And as we start digging in and we start looking at some of these other platforms, you will learn that everything we're learning and everything that we're doing on Instagram does have a little bit of a it has to be perfect feel, and you'll find that the other platforms that are faster to grow on and have a different look and feel embrace the quirky and really want to see behind the scenes as to what it is you're doing and why you're doing it. So follow us on social media, come to our clubhouse talks. We really want to hear from you because you are our friends, just like I hope you feel like we are your friends when you listen to us in the car. So you may not know this about me, but whenever I was in high school, I was not really doing my school work, and I would draw cartoon scripts to my friends as to what the story of craziness that I felt like they needed to hear that day. And I would origami up that piece of paper and put that pull here sign on the outside of my envelope as I handed them off in the hallway. And my friends really loved and cherished those things, and I didn't get a good education because of it. But the good thing about that is I still to this day would rather draw you a story than sit down and have to write out a long, drawn out paragraph of what's going on. So I did put together what your social media feed looks like as a professional interior designer, and I compared it to what a lifestyle, a lifestyle blogger or a lifestyle brand would look like. So that way you have some visuals that you can look at that will show you the difference between the two businesses and how you can learn to bring some of those elements together to improve your business. And we are going to include those on the designer discussion website.



Mirjam: (10:49)

Well, Maria, that was a lot of great information. If any of her listeners have an interest in learning more about how they can integrate becoming a lifestyle brand into their social media presence. There's a few companies out there that do a good job of educating their audiences. Maria's favorite is called Four. That's F-O-H-R. And we'll put the links in the show notes as well, but it apparently is the oldest influencer agency that's out there. I didn't even know about them, but I checked them out and they have a great approach because it's all about authenticity, and they have a great email that they send out and lots of interesting information that can help you better understand how being a lifestyle brand and potential influencer can work for you. There's other companies out there, too, like Embello and will actually have the founder of that particular agency on the future podcast. Plus, there's other ones that have gotten really huge like Izea I-Z-E-A. So there's a number of them out there. And if you're interested, just go on their websites, poke around and sign up for their email list.

Outro: (12:13)

We hope you enjoyed this episode of Designer Discussions. What was your takeaway care to share your thoughts and tag 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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