



Episode 28
Changes Designers are
Making in 2022



**Maria: [00:00]**

Hi. Welcome to Designer Discussions today. We are super excited to introduce you to our favorite recovering interior designer, Rick Campos. He's going to talk to us about what some of the trends he's seeing in the interior design business models. And we're going to talk a little bit about that luxury client drama.

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.

Jason: (00:25)

How are you doing today, Rick?

Rick: (00:32)

I am doing great, guys. Thank you so much for having me. What a pleasure.

Jason: (00:40)

Awesome. So if you could just hand our audience a brief introduction into who you are.

Rick: (00:46)

Yeah. So as you said, my name is Rick Campos. I'm a recovering interior designer turned influencer and podcaster and design business consultant. So I've spent the last probably 15 years in the luxury high end residential design market. And a few years ago, I decided to say goodbye to design and focus my efforts on informing and inspiring design professionals to help them grow their business and fulfill their vision.

**Jason: [01:10]**

One of the reasons I wanted to have you on is because you have an amazing podcast, and I'll let you do a little pub on that at the end. But one of the things I love that you do is you actually meet with designers real time. So you have an experience, honestly, that it's hard for others to have because you see what's happening on the ground with designers all across the us. So I just want to hear from you what trends are you seeing in the interior design world based on your interviews that you've done for the last few years.

Rick: (01:46)

Thanks, Jason. Yeah. A lot has changed in the last few years, for sure. And I'm really fortunate to be able to have these conversations with designers from across the country. It's one of the reasons why I decided to pursue this type of business is to continue to have these conversations and more importantly, to share them with other designers to help them learn from other design professionals experiences. Obviously, 2020 was one heck of a year. And so I like to say that 2020 was a year of discovery. And then I'd like to say that 2021 is more of a year of recovery. So we discovered a lot about our businesses in 2020. And then in 2021, I think that there was a lot of innovation happening in response to everything that was thrown at us, and I won't get into too many details. We've all lamented over that. Plenty. And what's exciting about 2022 is I really think it's a year of implementation for so many design professionals, because now is the time for them to really implement all of those strategies and techniques and ideas that were developed over the last two years, both out of necessity and also out of a desire to really kind of elevate their business of design.

**Rick: (02:46)**

So, I mean, if I had to pick just a couple of trends, if you will. With relation to the business of design, I would kind of start with ecommerce because I think that ecommerce is really going a new place in the business of design. Design professionals have spent so many years really kind of battling with ecommerce and trying to compete with it. And it's just been such a thorn in our side. It's made our business very complicated. And I think designers have finally decided, you know what? I'm going to stop complaining about it. I'm going to stop hating on it, and I'm going to start emulating it. And so the good news is that there are some great new tools out there, like side door, for example, that allow design professionals to integrate ecommerce into their websites and their newsletters and things like that. And so it's exciting to see designers finally say, you know what? I'm going to stop complaining about what's happening out there on ecommerce level, and I'm actually going to embrace it and integrate it into my business and make it a source of revenue and a profit center for me.

Jason: (04:00)

What is your view of what have you heard on the technology side in terms of the integration of design and technology? Because I know sometimes from what I hear on my own and with the clients that we deal with, and then at the time we talk to, there's a little angst in terms of adding in technology into the design industry. What have you been hearing out there about it?

**Rick: (04:20)**

Well, I mean, technology is really important in the business of design, and there's just no getting around it. Part of the reason is because our consumer base is so technology savvy, they're getting younger. And the level of technology and integration that expectation from consumers, there's really just no getting around it. And some of the responses and solutions that I've seen from design professionals is rather than because, listen, I'm old school designer. I learned CAD long enough in design school to pass the test, and I never touched Cat again. And I always joke because at my firm, I didn't hire anyone that didn't know Cat. If you didn't know Cat, you couldn't work for us. So I always joke that I wouldn't have been able to hire myself in my own firm because I didn't have those skills. So technology is really important 3D rendering CAD skills, all of this presentation style that clients are expecting. But what I'm seeing design professionals do is rather than try to learn all that stuff themselves and become overwhelmed with it. They're getting very smart, very savvy about creating these lanes in their business and inserting people with those skills to grow and develop their business and allow it to rise to the expectation of consumers without becoming overwhelmed with all of this responsibility of technology.

Jason: (05:41)

You know, we do a lot of market research and what I used to hear from designers is everybody used to be in their silo. They really didn't want to talk to the designer down the street because they view them as competition. But what has happened since 2020 and then I would like to hear your views on this. I've seen a lot more collaboration happening and with clubhouse and other apps out there, and I've seen a lot more designers meeting and collaborating than I have in the past. And I just wanted to have your views on the designers that you're talking to, what have you heard and what's your views on it?

**Rick: (06:20)**

Well, I pretty much only speak with designers that adopt this concept of community over competition. That's really kind of my jam. That's my baseline. And so if you're not on board with that, we're not on the same page. And what's exciting for me is when I started in this business about 15 years ago, there was a whole lot of that competition and people weren't talking to each other, and everything was very secretive. And over the years, I'm excited to see it kind of develop into what I now consider a design community as opposed to a design industry filled with entrepreneurs and design professionals who are willing to share information and tell stories and exchange horror stories and solutions to help fellow designers really kind of learn from everyone else's experience and again grow faster and excel and succeed. Maria is shaking her head.

Jason: (05:41)

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**Maria: (07:01)**

I'm excited. It all sounds amazing. I love all that. I love technology, and I like, really diving more into what the client experiences are for the consumers. Right now, consumers are changing and interior designers need to change. And all of that is totally something that I've been lining myself up with as well. So the skinny I want to know about as an interior designer, I've been in the field for 20 years. I've worked with professional athletes, and I've worked with large company owners, and I've seen some weird stuff, and I've dealt with some really weird things as an interior designer, and I understand as someone who's been working with people at different levels. But it seems to get a little bit weirder the higher end the project gets. And so I'd like to hear from you since on everybody's vision board for 2022, they're like, I want to be a luxury interior designer. What does that really look like? And what is it like working with those luxury buyers?

Rick: (08:16)

I will tell you from experience that's the market that I'm familiar with. I have only always worked in the luxury market and not because I chose it per se. It wasn't necessarily on my vision board, but I think it is on everyone's vision board to work on these big, beautiful, amazing projects. It was just circumstantial for me that I landed in this market and have worked in it ever since. I learned a lot about the high end market. And I will say for every designer out there that the more modest clients are probably just as crazy as the high end clients. So they all have their issues. None of them are any easier. I will tell you that you can't say I'm going to work at this level because they have more money, so they'll be easier to work with, because with money comes a lot of other things that you have to deal with, just like on the other end of the spectrum. They call this work for a reason, but it's a very exciting market to work in. But I will tell you that it's not for the faint of heart. I say that all the time.



Rick: (09:16)

I think for design professionals who really have that vision to work in that high end market, you need to prepare yourself with some additional tools that you may not be considering right now as you develop your business, because communication is so key and you really have to be, like, empathetic and really kind of understand and try your best to be relatable to these clients because they're really just ordinary people with an extraordinary access to wealth at the end of the day. And they have expectations. And you are a service provider. So it's really important to kind of keep all that balanced. And obviously I learned how to balance that over the years, and it didn't happen overnight. I mean, there was a lot of like, oh my gosh and head buried in the pillow and crying on the way home from Los Angeles at 08:00 at night because it's been a twelve hour day, and I have two more hours of traffic to go and just text from the clients on the weekend with unrealistic expectations. But it was a lot of fun, but it is a lot of work. And I will say that communication is key and one of the trends that I wanted to bring up as we had this conversation was really the trend of better and more enhanced communications between designers and consumers. And that really shouldn't be a trend that should be a no brainer. But really, I think that the past couple of years have taught designers and especially this year with the supply and chain issues has really taught designers to step away from behind their email and behind the text and start having real conversations with their clients, because no matter what level your client is, as long as you're clearly communicating and being honest and upfront and really setting those expectations from the very beginning, there's really no obstacle that you can't overcome.

**Mirjam: (12:16)**

So everybody has it on their vision board that they want to work with these luxury clients. So is it something that you recommend or that you support people aiming for, or would you discourage them from it, or does it depend on how do you make that decision, whether or not you want to aim for the luxury market or not?

Rick: (12:47)

Actually, that's a really good question. And it is something that I do actually recommend it. And here's why. Because the bigger high end jobs, with the bigger budgets, you are able to support a business with less of them, the smaller your jobs, the more of those jobs you have to take to support your business to a level to where you're profitable and you can support your team and all of those other things, typically, that's how it works. So I do encourage it. If you are cut out for it, by all means, fewer larger jobs is definitely the way to go. But if you've checked yourself and if you know if you've done the right things and really kind of looked inward and you know that level of business is not for you that you're not cut out for it, that you're not cut out to have those conversations to deliver, that disappointing information that you reference and really kind of be responsive and not reactive and all the things that it takes to work at that level, keep it in your comfort level.

Maria: (14:10)

Rick, would you say, as an interior designer, if you have money issues to start off with with, like your smaller projects where you do get more reactive, that just seems to get worse when you're dealing with \$100,000 damages and all that kind of stuff, do you see that in people as the bigger the project, as they become more adapt at handling those bigger financial burdens or that they become less.

**Rick: (12:47)**

You mean from a business owner perspective, like the budget and that sort of thing. Yeah. I was really blessed because I was able to work under another designer when I learned about this level of design. And so I always had that comfort, that support of being able to quite honestly make a mistake and recover from it financially and otherwise. And so that is something that you need to take into consideration. A lot of designers ask me, should I just launch my own business right off the bat, or should I go work for someone I always recommend maybe going and working for someone first, especially if you're going to pursue that high end market just to kind of learn the ropes. And quite honestly, to see how to recover from some of these mistakes and understand the financial backing and overhead required to not allow them to affect your business because they happen. things happens.

Mirjam: (15:31)

And that's why I actually asked my question, because for the designers that are striving to have more luxury clients, I mean, publicity is key, because that's really one of the things that can set you apart from the package.

Rick: (15:48)

Yes. But don't you think, though, that with social media now it's so funny because some of my clients now that I consult with are in the high end market. In fact, most of them are. And I always was like, you're not going to get business from Instagram. That is just not how high end consumers shop. But it's funny that that's actually changing. But you're right. That level of consumer they're reached in a different way that requires a level of investment from us as design professionals. So like shooting your projects professionally and having them ready to be published in regional and national publications. It's a big commitment, and it's a big investment.

**Mirjam: (16:31)**

I will say that what I hear a lot from media is like if you have to have a good social media presence, and I don't think necessarily it gets your clients directly, but it helps your visibility with the media. Also, because a lot of the time when they research designers that they want to feature in an article, I think they probably look at Instagram more than they look at the website.

Rick: (16:58)

We have a responsibility to these media outlets now. It's a two way street. Now. It's about what they can do for you, but also what you can do for them. So if we publish you or if we embrace you within our media, how can you promote that collaboration to your people?

Jason: (17:17)

So, Rick, you actually had a podcast for years, and you've talked to a lot of designers knowing what you know. Now for any of our listeners that are newer to the industry or may want to have a rebirth in what they do, what advice would you hand them based on all of the designers that you have actually talked to over the years?

**Rick: (17:38)**

Yeah. It's a good question. And thank you for your compliments on the podcast. And before I answer that question, I want to compliment you guys on your podcast because it's really amazing. I love what you guys are doing. Welcome to the design podcast community, and Congratulations on all the accolades that have been coming your way. You guys completely deserve it. So Congratulations to you. And I mean, as far as having those conversations with designers, I think probably the biggest reoccurring theme and advice that I get from speaking with design professionals from all over the country is for people to really kind of take stock and inventory personally on themselves and really kind of develop a vision that works for you. It's very easy to get caught up in the comparison game, and it's very easy to, like I said, hide behind social media and all of these things when what you really need to be doing is getting out there in front of it and asking these questions, relying on your design community to help you get to the place that you want to be. I'll use pricing as an example because it's something that everyone struggles with. And I think by having these conversations with so many different designers, from designers with big fancy offices and 15 employees to designers who have been in business for a couple of years working from their kitchen table, that has really helped kind of reinforce the fact that our design community is really broad. The business of design is very broad, and it's different for everyone. That's why there's no secret number. There's no secret pricing structure. As much as I would love to see across the board pricing structure that we could all rely on and be consistent, it's really not possible because everyone gets into this business for their own reasons, whether it's because they want flexibility to support their family and be with their family and children if they need the flexibility for other reasons, or they just have goals that don't align with working. Maybe in a corporate environment, whatever that is, every business size is different. And so the revenue to support your financial vision is going to be different for everyone. So really have that money talk to answer your question. Have that money talk with yourself early. I think that's been one of the biggest advantages of having such a diverse community of designers speak on.

**Rick: (20:38)**

My podcast is for everyone to hear a relatable story and to understand that they don't have to be like that person they saw on Instagram or that person that they just saw in a magazine or that person that just got the cover of whatever. You know what I mean?

Jason: (20:16)

That makes complete sense. That makes complete sense. So you have an amazing podcast. I listen to it all the time, so let our listeners know where they can find.

Rick: (20:26)

So it's really easy. It's called Designbizurvival Guide with the Z at Biz, and so it's designbizsurvival guide.com. If you go to the website, you can listen to all the episodes on there and learn more about me and then you can also go to itunes and Spotify it's there as well. But the website is a great place because the website really helped kind of explain the platform in its entirety. It's actually a multifaceted platform, so it's more than a podcast. I also do business consulting and I produce personal and business development events and programs for design professionals as well, and it's all on the website.

Jason: (21:02)

We appreciate your time and we hope to see everybody next week on Designer Discussions.

Rick: (21:08)

Thanks guys. Thanks for having me.

Outro: (21:13)

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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