



Episode 47

Partitioning - Why its important to end on a high note



**Jason: [00:00]**

Welcome to Designer Discussions with Jason, Mirjam and Maria. Today we're talking about why you should end on a height.

Intro: [00:05]

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

Maria: (00:38)

Thanks, Jason. So today we're going to talk about the importance of ending your client experiences on high notes and trying to see why that's important and how you can apply that to your business to improve your business practices. So first off, I think we have to understand what is our client going through right when they're meeting with us and what is it that they are experiencing when they're making a bunch of decisions about their house or their office or whatever that they're going to be designing with you? And what is their goal? Their goal is to make completed experiences happen or completed tasks happen. Right? They're going in there, they hired you, they want you to complete the processes for them. And if they were to sit down with a to do list at the end of your appointments, are they able to check something off that they would have on their to do list at the end of that appointment? So why is all that important to designers? Because I think sometimes when you're in school, you're not taught about how the client is going through a decision making cycle, and if you stop them outside of completing their decision making cycle, you actually create all of the behaviors that are annoying in your client.



Maria: (01:38)

Knowing that we're the ones creating the annoying behavior, it's kind of eye opening, I think personally to learn that it's our fault that someone is going to act like a difficult client after meeting with us. But if you learn why they're acting difficult and you can kind of stop it or circumvent it through your processes, then why not apply it to your business so that things can be easier for both you, your staff, and your client all at the same time? So first we're just going to look at what is that decision cycle and what does it look like. So each person is going through five stages. They're identifying what it is that they need, then they're going to gather it. This is shopping or this is resourcing as a designer, then they're going to compare what their options are. Comparing is a completely human, natural behavior. And if you don't have it already in place and your business processes to be able to compare their two options to something that they can relate to, even if it's like this is your sports car sofa and then this is your family style sofa. If they don't have anything to compare it to, they are going to look to compare things on their own. And then after they've compared it so they understand its value, then they're going to evaluate if they want it or not before they make that final decision to choose and then live in regret or euphoria. Okay, so the cool thing is that you can guarantee they're going to do that every time. And if you can control what's happening for them, then you can control that experience and then you can make them very happy. So why is all that important? And doesn't that just seem like these people should have more self control? And if the designer can't finish the project or finish a task while they're with their client, then how is that the designers fault? Well, we're going to talk about some things that are in psychology that are going to impact how they're actually going to look at your business and they're going to feel about the experience of working with you. So first, the thing that we're going to talk about is called a peak end rule. Okay, so peak as in a mountain peak. So if you look up the concept of peak end rule, what happens is you weigh how something completed ten times more than what it was like during the process.



Maria: (04:38)

So you're already either setting yourself up for success on a much more exponential level, or you're setting yourself up for more failure. Whenever you look at these clients that are cycling through these like, five stages of decision making and you get your clients all the way through the process, they will automatically wait that appointment as a better experience for them because they will feel like they accomplish something. So how can we set ourselves up for success and know that our client is going to feel like they accomplished exactly what they were supposed to do during that meeting? The term for that is called partitioning. It's very similar to what it would be like if you were to go to a pizza place and have an opportunity to order a pizza with three friends and understanding how much pizza everybody's going to get versus going to an all you can eat buffet and not knowing how much food everybody's going to eat and how much stuff is going to happen. So what you want to do is set yourself up for success by creating partitions in the work scope you're going to be accomplishing during your client appointments so that your client is aware of what you're going to accomplish beforehand. And at the end of the appointment, they get acknowledgement for accomplishing something. I think a lot of times, since our industry is so artistic in its essence and what it is at the root that we would think we'll have somebody come in, they'll look at a couple of options, they'll make some changes, and then the next step is for me to go get more stuff for them or to create a rendering. But the reality is you're leaving the client in the shopping and the compare and contrast phase and sending them on their way and you never actually finished what it was that they were asking you to do. And you didn't end that appointment on a high note. And then whenever you don't finish that appointment on a high note, you're going to see the hunting and gathering behavior of a client who's never even met with you and is looking at all their other options without you present. And so all of these little behaviors that as designers we find annoying, it's difficult. It just adds to the client management. And the scope of the work that we're going to have to do can sort of be nipped in the bud.



Maria: (06:38)

If you start to look at why is the peak end rule important? Like, why is it that if I get them ten times more satisfied with their selections because they completed at the end of the appointment? Because they were being set up to make a completed task happening before they walked in the door, versus allowing a longer, broader timetable between appointments to go back, do more work for them, and then leave them hungry and wanting more. It's just like having them come in, get appetizers and a drink, and then saying, Sorry, I'm not going to be able to feed you today. That rendering is going to take a week to get done. And no dessert for you either, right? So you want to start looking at your whole design menu like a meal. And you want to be giving your client a full meal. You want to be giving them an opportunity to have a little dessert at the end of each one of their appointments. Just like your installation is going to be this huge dessert for them, right? That's why these one time install project where your client just shows up. Everything's there is so amazing, it's so dramatic, it's so satisfying. And if you piecemeal a design project, you're never going to get that super excited, elated satisfied client experience for them at the end of the project. And you may never feel that super elated satisfied phase of the project either. And that may even impact how burnt out you might feel in your job. And when you're working with people because you aren't set up for that big, satisfying experience for the client is really happy. When we talk about this, like peak and Role, how do you partition your client appointments? What are some things that you can do that can actually change or impact your client appointments in a positive light? Right? So number one, let them know what they're going to accomplish before they come in. Number two, one of the things I do, I have this as a freebie on my website on design app. If you want to get them and download them. Every page is the selections for a room for a house. And instead of it being here's, a plumbing spec sheet with all the plumbing on it. And here is a hardware spec sheet with all the hardware for the whole house.

**Maria: (09:38)**

I just have one page per room and you fill out each and every item that's being selected. And this is a piece of paper that the client can hold and know they can check off each one of the items has been selected. It's a piece of paper that they actually see being completed whenever they are sitting through the client appointment. So even if you're not able to design a large area and a whole lot of stuff, if you're tackling one room at a time, you're bike sizing as much as you can your large project. If you can just look at how other businesses have taken control over making sure satisfaction happens in their process. Because your branding is the memory of working with you. And so you're going to want to trigger the high notes as many times as you can so that your client is a raving fan of not just your designs, but your process and what it was like to work with you. So Jason, one of the ways that we've talked about in the past, I know with Kimberly Sent about how you can add a high note to your website is super interesting.

Can you talk to us a little bit about that?



Jason: (10:38)

That's a good point, Maria. And what we have instituted is once we signed up a new client, we do a video just to welcome them to our team. And it's a personalized video. We usually do a little research on them, either on LinkedIn or Facebook, on the social media to let them know that we're happy to have them here. And we acknowledge that this is big investment and that we're here to make sure that everything gets off to a great start and that we're going to crush it for you on your marketing efforts. And then that actually leads into going over the virtual onboard and then meeting with the team. And it helps to get the client off to a good start because the personalized video, they have not received that from others in other aspects, whether that be vendors that they work with, contractors or whoever. And so that personalized note helps them to give us just a little more leeway if we happen to mess up down the line because something always happens, something always happens. That's just that little extra niche that we say, like how we used to say in the old days we used to have brownie points. So there's a little extra brownie point that we can have at the end of the day that helps us. So if any issues happen, they remember, well, you actually have good customer service. And even though you have these issues here, that little extra gives us leeway for any issues that may happen in.

Mirjam: (12:00)

The future, like in PR, when you work with the media, when you get the coverage, it's obviously very nice to go say thank you for having been included. And you want to keep it short though, and relevant because journalists are very very busy and they don't want you Brown nosing them. It's all about efficiency and helping them. But saying thank you in a nice way, I think it's a good idea. It's just a quick email and don't send them flowers or go crazy, but just acknowledge that you appreciate what they've done for you and they'll remember you more next time.

**Jason: (12:38)**

That's it. Yes, I know it's not a big complex conversation. It's just the idea that we don't I love your room by room list.

Mirjam: (12:50)

So that makes so much sense.

Maria: (13:00)

Yeah, it makes sense because too, whenever you show them how many things they have to decide or what all needs to be done before the end of the appointment, they stay on task and they understand that you're at the lead, that you're in charge. And it's really not they can't take you astray because it is a piece by piece list that they have to follow along. So it's just very interesting, though, when you start realizing that it's just as important when you stop the meeting as it is, what your branding looks like from the elements of how beautiful it is and who the website design person is and all of that. And I think as designers, we spend so much time thinking about the physical things and the beautiful things, and we don't really think about as much the personal things that happen mentally in our clients, like heart and soul, how they feel like if they trust us, if they feel like they're being taken care of. I feel like a lot of times when I hear about designers worrying about their processes and how they are going to get their stuff done, they don't really think to pull back and see what is the client experience?



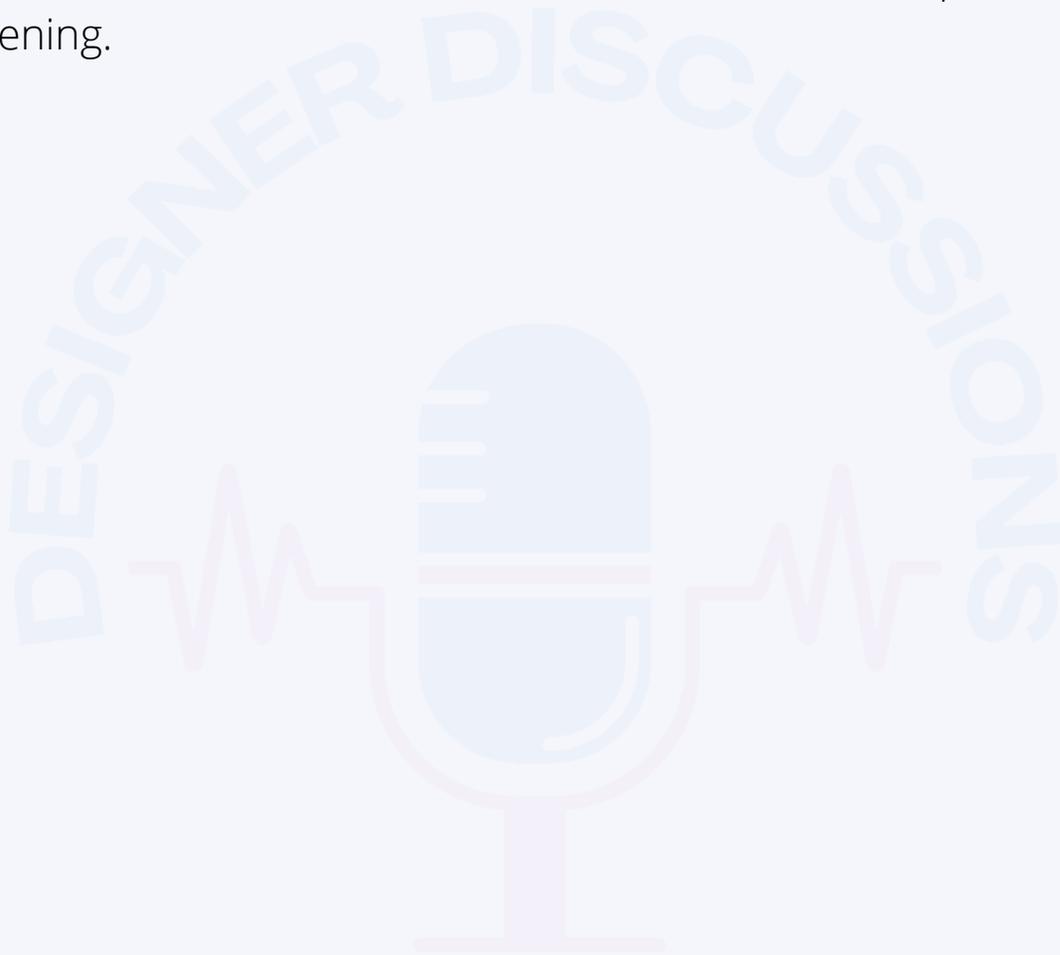
Maria: (14:00)

What was the client going through? Why does that client not trust me? Why is that client still shopping me, we picked out those light fixtures in that last appointment, and then it's like if you look back, you can see the point at which you left them and you didn't say, Congratulations, we're going to do this light fixture and it's going to be perfect. And here's your rendering of what it's going to look like so you can see it in your space and you have ownership of it, even if we're just placing the order right. And I think there's a lot of that that is being left out or dropped during design processes in hopes of shaving off some time, making more appointments more frequently with clients, and not taking into consideration how more holistic the whole experience seems to be. All right. So just to recap, I want everybody to know what the five stages are that a client is going through whenever they are making a decision, and that is to first identify that they have a problem. They're going to gather what they can choose from. Then they're going to compare their options and determine the values, the pros and cons, then they're going to evaluate which one is the best decision for themselves and then they will choose and then deal with the consequences of making that decision. But that is the completion of the decision making cycle that your client is in. And keep in mind it is as important that the client is able to process through that experience when they are meeting with you and they're being serviced by your business as it is how beautiful the project is going to be in the future. Because the concept behind all this is the peak end rule and if you are looking at how the peak end rule works they are going to remember ten times more positive if it ends on a high note than if you cut them off and stop the process somewhere in the middle and that can also cause your problem. So I hope you get something out of this and if you like what we're talking about please leave us a review on your platform that you're listening to this and if you have any questions always feel free to reach out to us through social media.



Outro: (16:00)

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@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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