



Episode 54

How to Build Trust with your Clients



**Jason: [00:00]**

Hello, and welcome to Designer Discussions with Jason, Mirjam and Maria. Today we're going to be talking about how to build trust with your clients.

Intro: [00:08]

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

We're opening the Designer Discussions Marketing Studio - a monthly series of in depth, actionable content to guide your marketing, PR and business development. We want to help you transform your business and elevate it to work with your dream clients.

Maria: (01:27)

Hello. Welcome to Designer Discussions. Today when we talk about building trust with your clients, we want to talk about those designers out there who you'll hear them say, I don't know why, but my clients just don't trust me. We want you to start to see how we are the important factor in why someone trusts us or not, and that there are things we can be doing and that there are actions that we can take to create more trust. So we're going to go over those today. Grab a pen and paper because you're going to want to take notes on this one. When we think about trust, you should think of it as a gauge that people would want to give you an online review, sort of like if it was an ongoing situation. Your family and friends are going to give you one level of review. Your clients, people who have actually worked with you in the past, would give you a different level of review on how much they trust you. And then you will have your periphery. And your periphery is going to be your social media following people who know you professionally.



Maria: (01:51)

So what we want to talk about is that trust is so much more than just business. It's about the relationship and it's about who you are as a person. So why do we need to know this? Why is this so important? Well, I think we all understand that marketing is about know like and trust. Do they know who you are? Do they like who you are and do they trust you? But I think the most important thing we should move up is that people should want to trust you further up in the know like and trust. So maybe it should be they can feel like they can trust you, that they know who you are and because they trust you and because they know who you are and you've proven it, that they like you. And so when we look at that, trust is going to be made up of three parts, and you're going to have three parts to how someone feels if they trust you and if they like you. And those are relationship your expertise and judgment and if you're consistent. So when we look at those, what we want to do is understand that relationship is actually probably weighted 50 or 60% of how much trust someone is going to have in you. The consistency thing we've heard over and over again. And yes, we all need to work on being more consistent, but just know that the relationship someone has with you is actually weighted the heaviest. That's why your family and friends would rate you in one way, your previous clients would rate you in a different way, and your social media following would rate you in a periphery or tertiary way. Why is any of this going to really be important? And why does any of this impact you? And it's the fact that 95% of the research that is done on you and your business is happening before they've ever called you or even spoken to you on the phone. And so we want you to be proactive about making sure that you are having trust worked into so many elements of your business that when someone does call you and speak to you, they are already won over by who you are as a person and that they feel like they know you on a deeper level and not just superficially. So if we are leaning heavily into what our relationship looks like, I'm going to give you six elements that you should look at and see if you can work it into your business.



Maria: (02:51)

These things can be worked into comments and reviews that you ask for from your clients. This can be worked into your social media. This can be worked into your website. This can be worked into your PR presence. So we're going to go over these six things. This is why I was like, grab a piece of paper and a pen because I do think that each person should be able to look at this list and ask themselves, have I demonstrated each one of these six things on my website? And have I demonstrated them on my social media? And do I consistently demonstrate these on my social media? And is this something that I feel comfortable being gauged by if someone was to write a review about me? Okay, so let's go. These would be the six things about trust building that you need to demonstrate. Number one, are you in touch with the concerns and the deep feelings of your client base? So we talk a little bit about your client ideal client avatar. This is why that is so important. We want you to understand who your client is on such a deep level that when you are speaking to them, you are in touch with them. You know what their concerns are and you know what's really bothering bothering them or keeping them up at night. Number two, can you demonstrate results where you applied your concern for others and executed what it is that they needed? I know sounds crazy, right? But it's those moments where you say, I have a family. They have four kids. They really like a certain aesthetic. They have a dog. I found the perfect solution for them. It still looks the way they asked me to, but it's wearing well and holding up well. And maybe that's through a photograph you take when you visit your client's house later in the game and the kids are playing on the sofa and the dog is sitting on the couch. It's not just your professional photos, but the one that shows maybe a family living in the house that you designed and saying these were their problems and concerns, and this is how we addressed it, and they love it, and it turned out to be good. So number two is, can you demonstrate the results where you applied your concern for your client? Okay. Third, demonstrating that you can generate cooperation among all parties.



Maria: (07:00)

I know this is part of our business, right? We are in the art of managing a construction project, stressed out clients, working with builders, general contractors, just trying to get everything done, plus make it look pretty at the end. So how can you look at what you're doing now and show that you can generate cooperation amongst all parties? So what does this look like? This looks like in your social media where you talk about how you have a great relationship with a general contractor. You've been working with him for years. Your client loves it. You're walking around the job site. Everybody's sitting around talking. There's maybe even pictures of you with the people around. This is that show that was on either Lifetime or TLC or HGTV, where it was like a couple who has polarizing design aesthetics. Oh, no, he likes this look. She likes that. How are they going to live in the same house together, right? So how can you talk about that? Talk about that in your social media? I've had people ask me straight up, in my social media, what should I do? I'm getting into a new relationship. We're moving in together. How do we address having two different design aesthetics, right? And just even responding to someone asking a question like that on social media shows that you're capable of working with groups and creating a collaborative work environment. And honestly, that is a concern of your client. They don't want to see that you are causing conflict and angst and more issues. They are going to want to see that you are creating a very cohesive, comfortable environment for them for their project. So once again, we want to talk a little bit. So here's number four. How can you actively demonstrate that you resolved these conflicts? So we're really digging down and pushing on their pain points and saying, we know this isn't going to be the most fun experience that you've ever gone through, but we will make it enjoyable. There are going to be problems, there's going to be conflict, but this is how we resolve it. So we talked a little bit about how if someone leaves a negative review, that you should respond to that negative review because just showing that you're willing to talk to someone who is saying something negative or it could be high conflict and you make it better is such a valuable asset to your business and who you are as a person.



Maria: (09:30)

And it's ultimately going to be really building that trust, like hard, fastening it in and making you appear to not just be like this expert at making things the way that we want it to look, but also an expert on the level that you are making the whole process go easy and well for them. I know we talk a lot about keeping your processes, having that information out there, repeating and repeating over and over again what you do and how you do it. But I think that we aren't talking about things. I really don't think that we story tell enough. I don't think we talk about the conflicts. I don't think that we talk enough about the risk taking that some of our really exciting clients do to make the project a better project for everybody involved. So, number five, we talk about the importance of social proof and how the importance of social proof is something that is so heavily weighted and having social proof has more value than many other things that you could have. We talk all the time about how important this is. This should always be your number one thing. Bring social proof to the table. How is social proof brought to the table in social media? Well, you have people ask, what is that paint color? Where did you get that wallpaper? I know interior designers are sitting around going, I get paid to give this advice. I get paid to talk about my favorite paint color. I don't want to give away what I get paid for. I'm valued for my colors. I'm valued for my ability to pick patterns and move things around like that. But the reality is, if people are asking for your advice, if they're asking for your details on your designs, it doesn't mean that you have to give it in social media. In fact, I say that should always be given in your email newsletter so you have a reason for people to sign up. But talking about that, people ask about that information. This is my favorite paint color. Every time I use this in a project, people ask about it. Talking about that social proof. Mirjam is our resident expert on how important PR is. PR is the ultimate in social proof. It shows that you are an expert and not just an expert locally, but even in a national level.



Maria: (11:30)

We want you to anticipate and respond to what you know are going to be future problems and show that you already anticipate them. Do you do that right? Do you show that you are actively anticipating that there are going to be problems on projects and that you are actively working behind the scenes to always try to mitigate the issues that would arise for your client in the future. So that is number six. Those are the six things that you should look at implementing on social media websites. This is where video testimonials are going to play a big part in getting that media coverage that you want. Those things will all help bolster this and help create the trust that you and your business are going to want to have. So we talked about that there are three parts to trust. Relationship is the first part and probably weighted more than 50% of the value of trust. Then your expertise and your abilities to make good judgments. Then the consistency that people get to see from you how consistent you are about things. So there are a lot of ways that technology is actually impeding this in your business. You should look at how you maybe are leaning into technology in some areas to kind of mitigate working with your clients so frequently. And if you can look at where you might be actually taking away from the trust that your client would have because you are using technology to not directly work with them and demonstrate some of these skills. And then also just keep in mind that 95% of this research about your business is being made even before they have made the phone call to you. The partitioning episode, we do reference how trust can be built and made through when you time your projects, when they start, when they end, and how you handle and manage it. So you may want to look at that episode a little bit too to learn more about it.



Maria: (14:30)

And I'm so glad you mentioned that press coverage is the ultimate social proof that you can get. And I just want to elaborate on that a little bit because it is true. The one thing that differentiates it is third party credibility, right? It's like a testimonial but it's better because it comes from a reputable source and that's the power of press coverage and you see it. I think there's not many other industries where the effect of press coverage is so pronounced as it is in interior design, really. If you want to be established, if you want to be recognized, if you want to get those luxury clients, you have to have published. You have to have been published, right? It's like if you can be the best designer in the world, if you don't have any press coverage to augment that, you're never going to be on the top and you don't have to be on the top top. It works on every level actually. If you're just happily designing in your region and that's your business. But getting the coverage that supports that work of yours is just as important, right? So it can be regional, it can be national, it doesn't matter. There's no replacement for getting third party credibility from the press in this business.

Jason: (15:56)

Well, what I was going to add and this actually has to do with where you talk about number five social proof. If you reference episode 52 where we had talked about ads, do's and don'ts of Facebook ads, we've done a lot of AB testing and video testimonials by far helps out with sales. Like, if you want to really get to people to know, like and trust you that you do not already have audience with, video testimonials are the way to go. They help out from real life clients that you have that can show and tell about what you accomplished in their own project. That passion. A lot of the times when we talk about the big reveal because, you know, a lot of designers say they don't have the big reveal because they had their client involved throughout the whole process. At the end of the project, whenever that is, like I always say, they're just happy to have you out of their house and they're happy to have their space back. And that passion when they talk about what you went through, the design you did, and the passion behind that, that's a testimonial that will help you sell in the future.

**Jason: (17:56)**

So what you said on five, the importance of social proof video ads or video testimonials and ads are the way to go.

Maria: (17:17)

Awesome. So just keep in mind you are responsible for how people are going to think about you. And if you keep everything superficial, you're not going to build that deeper, more vulnerable relationship that you are going to want your clients to feel comfortable reaching out to you about. Really. This is an opportunity to look at your client avatar. Dig in. See whom you like to work with and why you like working with them and then just start talking to them again. Even if you don't acknowledge who they are as a person. But just talk about their project and talk about the problems that came up. How they were resolved. And how you really changed someone's life doing their design. Because we want you to be trusted, known and like.

Outro: (18:07)

Are you ready to get serious about your marketing? We're opening the Designer Discussions Marketing Studio, a monthly series of in depth actionable content to guide your marketing, PR and business development. We want to help you transform your business and elevate it to work with your dream clients.

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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