



**Episode 64**  
**Benefits of Trade**  
**Associations**



**Mirjam: [00:00]**

Hi. Welcome to designers discussion with Jason, Maria and Mirjam. Today we are talking about the benefits of trade associations.

**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.

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**Mirjam: (00:46)**

So, Jason and Maria, you both are members of different trade associations. Can you walk us through what that means and what the benefits are for you?

**Maria: (00:54)**

So I have been an active member of Aside since I was in college, and I've always valued the opportunity to network and also work alongside other interior designers. And fun fact, I was chair for Austin back in 2004, and Trading Spaces has contacted ASID, and that's how they would find their onset interior designers for each of the episodes. And so I actually got to do some of the slave labor that they require of people for those TV shows. Right? So if you're wondering how can I just create change, like, what is one of the things that I can do to create change in my professional status in the local community? If you're wondering what can you do to change your professional status as a role model, local ASID chapters, or if your area has a stronger IIDA chapter, these organizations are an excellent place to start. Secondly, now, as someone who's been in the industry for a long time, I get an opportunity to work with students, and I work more on a national level. And I do some work on a small business advisory for national Aside. And I've been speaking with them and talking with them about things that would benefit interior designers to provide above and beyond our health, safety, and welfare, education, actual business support.



### **Maria: (02:54)**

And so with your ASID membership, you will have access to these small business solutions. And one of the things that we're working on is finding vendors that will provide, like, four One K benefits for the small business. So that way you can provide equal benefits to your employees. And or if you work by yourself, you have access to something like that for yourself. They are looking at finding health insurance, insurance lawyers, people who will work with the small interior design business that have a very wide breadth of knowledge about the industry. So that way you're not having to bring someone up to speed or find out if they know anything about the industry after you've tried to start working with them. So this is one of the benefits of having these professional organizations available to you and actually being active in them, participating in them and getting feedback and letting them know what you need and what you would like to see in the future for the organization. I recently got back from the Gather event that they held in Miami and it was their first year to do this Gather event and it allowed us to get basic CEUs things that you would normally find. And then they just gave a large variety of resources for us to learn about and from people to meet. And that is honestly the best part about it. You may not even realize that a connection that you made at the event or a person you went out to dinner with or a chapter in a different town is exactly what you need for your business. Like the people who are all the leaders for all the chapters are at these events. And so you have this opportunity to be like, hey, if you need boots on the ground in this town that I live in, reach out to me and I can help you out, I can help connect you, I can do these things. And yes, we have Facebook groups that are providing some of these services. I'd say very lightly, but this is more of a like, get to know you, see you face to face and have someone that you know next time you travel to that town that they may be able to help you out and give you better resources and things to do and people you connect with and people that you have a lot of fun with.



### **Maria: (05:05)**

And I find that to be something that we may not think to reward ourselves with, but it is actually very beneficial for your design business to take into consideration having those professional contacts. One of the activities that I was able to participate in is the Ones to Watch Scholarship program and they offer that once a year. And Steel Case will pick a small group of people who have applied for the program and put them through leadership training. And then once you've experienced their leadership training program, they will automatically place you in roles of leadership within the national organization. And these are all little things that we don't get a lot of opportunity to grow and change who we are as a leader. We don't get a lot of opportunity to grow and change who we are as an interior designer after we've really been in it a while. And most of our bosses, even if you're working for someone, are not going to invest a lot of time and energy into educating you to become a better, stronger person and have a better role in your life. So, looking at the Ones to Watch Scholarship Program, highly recommend it as something to apply for. I think it comes out once a year. I think it's going to be in the springtime. They just awarded the new class at the last event that I was in Miami. And these are all things that are opportunities where, you know, you don't have to pay a lot of money to apply for these opportunities. These are things where you submit your resume, you submit your portfolio, and you write a letter for why you think you would be a good candidate for something, and you'd be beneficial to the organization to have you. So I believe 100% in joining a professional organization. I think it's one of those things that will actually help you along in your career and the people that you will get those better relationships with in the long haul are going to be found in those locations. So put yourself where you're going to be around the right people.



### Jason: (07:25)

So just to add on to what Maria said, with trade associations, I'm 100% advocate behind them, but I have to say that you have to participate to really get the main benefit out of it. Like they say, how much you put into it and how much you'll get out of it. And we have developed lifelong relationships on the architecture side because we've done a lot of JV projects, joint venture projects with other architecture firms, with master planning and all that, because of the networking and the relationships that were developed at these trade associations like the AIA American Institute of Architects or the National Kitchen and Bath Association, Inkba. So being active not just at the national level, and I would say being active at the local level is where you're going to really develop those relationships, and then that can lead into national, like Maria was talking about. But being active at those levels really helps you out. So that's one of the major benefits has helped us in terms of the architecture side. And then also just to put on my marketing hack, it also helps in terms of SEO, because you're going to have a link from a reputable organization that can link back to your firm about who you are. And we had talked a lot about SEO. We have a lot of episodes on SEO that you can talk about. Getting links from reputable companies or websites has your firm look even more reputable in the eyes of the search engine. So by being a part of the trade associations, you get those powerful links back to your website. So that helps out a lot as well. And one of the things we haven't touched on is the training. So training in terms of you get up to date training, a lot of the organizations help you out with CEUs, because for all professional organizations, or if you are a professional architect, interior designer, nine times out of ten you have to do CEUs, continuing education units. And a lot of these organizations offer those CEUs at their conferences, whether it's local, regional, or national. So you get access to that usually for free. Sometimes you have to pay, but you'll have access to that either at the events or they also offer that virtually beyond just the training. You get up to date information on what's happening in the industry. And we all know all industries change constantly and being in the know not only helps you, but it helps you do your job that much better.

**Jason: (10:25)**

So being a part of these organizations helps out a lot and I'm 100% advocate of it. Yes, sometimes it could be daunting and you may view it a waste of time, but like I said, if you put time into it, get to be on the leadership side where you can help to make change and make the organization what you want it to be, that is really where you get the most benefit out of being in these trade associations. So I would 100% agree with everything that we see here and feel free to take a look at what's happening because there's a lot of organizations out there and some are more active than others and see which ones that will actually benefit where you are in your business to see what can benefit you the most.

**Mirjam: (11:06)**

Awesome. So this is a unanimous yes for participation in trade associations. And Maria, I loved what you had said about your opportunity to help with TV show. I do think that it helps your positioning outward to potential clients as well as to the media. Not just if you are active, but especially if you are taking on leadership roles. Like any kind of credentials that you can add to your title just legitimize you further as a business person. And that can be helpful when the media are looking for sources, they might be looking for designers themselves, or even if you just it's one of the things that you have in your bio that adds credibility to who you are. So I thought it was really good information. Thank you both and I hope it was helpful for our listeners too. And we'll see you again next week on Designer Discussions.



### Outro: (12:08)

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 Miriam 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 this episode from wherever you are listening.





# DESIGNER DISCUSSIONS

DIGITAL MARKETING,  
PR & BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT

