



Episode 67

How to Recession-Proof your Interior Design Business



**Mirjam: [00:00]**

Welcome to Designer discussions with Jason, Maria and Mirjam. Today we are talking about how to recession proof your interior design business.

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.

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.

Mirjam: (00:46)

Jason, how do we recession proof our business?

Jason: (01:03)

Okay, so I actually gave a presentation on this about a week ago to a group of designers and remodelers' and one of the things that we had talked about, we had talked about some of the knowns that happen when a recession happens because we are not sure if we're in one, if we're going into one, if it's happening now or not. But one thing you can say as a small business owner, if you're in business for any amount of time, you will eventually be in one. It just inevitable. Like if you know anything about the Marvel movies and then he says, I'm inevitable. If you're in business for a long time, you will head through a recession eventually. It's just inevitable. One of the things we have talked about, there are three main things we had talked about. We had talked about the budgets that will decrease. We had talked about digital marketing and nice to have. So I'm going to break each of those up. Then I'm also going to talk about some of the tools we have talked about that you should have. And if you have not invested in them now, you should invest in them for the future.



Jason: (01:53)

So one about the budgets decreasing inevitably, like I'll say, budgets decrease when a recession happens. And so you need to define what is necessary and what is wasteful. So look at your budget and then determine what do you really need to spend money on and what can you either hold off on or what you do not need now. So you should do this anyway. But during a recession, looking at all of the expenses you have in your business, you need to line item and say, okay, is this something I need to run the business effectively or can I do without this? And so once you define that, you'll see where you can save money and where you may be able to overlap some things that is not happening now. So that's what the budgets decrease next is with digital marketing. One of the things that happened during the Coronavirus, and we heard a lot from this on the marketing side is that a lot of small businesses in the design realm were not adequately prepared for what happened during the Coronavirus because foot traffic stopped and offline. Traditionally they were having a hard time. So digital marketing became a norm, which hopefully from the Coronavirus, you have began that transition to have more opportunity with your digital marketing in terms of SEO, search engine optimization, in terms of email marketing, in terms of social media, in terms of paid ad. Those are just a few of the digital marketing assets that you need to take a look at if you haven't already. So are you doing email marketing if you're not, like I say, look at, we did a whole podcast on email marketing. We have a training on our website on email marketing. So look at that, because I hear from a lot of designers that haven't used it, that it hasn't worked for them. And I say if that's the case, you're using it the wrong way. And I'm not going to get into the whole emphasis on why I say that. But ultimately, if you use email marketing consistently, it will work. But you have to be consistent. You have to define your audience. So you have to know who you're marketing to on the email side and then create the content for that audience. And if you're consistent, email marketing does work also with the SEO, same thing. SEO is a long term strategy. Hopefully you have started to implement SEO before a recession happens, because SEO is a long term strategy. So you cannot start SEO now and then expect next week, next month, to get leads online placement.



Jason: (04:53)

This is more like a four or five, six month process before you see an ROI from SEO. But if you start now, even if we're in a recession now, and you start to implement that now, a few months down the line, you will see results from that. So for the next recession, you're prepared. Same thing with paid ads. If you are using paid ads, look at the keywords that you're using. Make sure you're using negative keywords. That when I say negative keywords, those are the words you do not want to show for. Because remember, in most paid ads, you're paying for every click. So you want to have negative keywords in there, so you're not paying for the clicks you don't want. Okay? So you're looking at all that. You're looking at the ad campaigns you have out there so you can optimize the content. So you're zoning in on your ideal target audience. Like I said, this all heads back to know who your audience is, and it helps you with the content and then with social media. We had a lot of podcasts on that. Look at, on Instagram, on TikTok, Maria has talked a lot about that. So make sure you're looking at that. And then with the knife to have that was something else we had talked about when I presented in a recession in the design industry. A lot of the time. Especially in kitchen and app remodeling and in interior design. What happens we're in an industry where we have a service that's a nice to have but don't need. Because a lot of times a kitchen remodel. A bathroom remodel. You'll love to do that. But if your money is tight. That's an element that you don't really need. But it's nice to have. So for designers, how you can get around, that what happens a lot in a recession, you see a lot of the do it yourself DIY stuff. So what you can do is create content to make you the expert on that DIY topic. How to make the room larger, how to add in life, how to add color into a space. If you're creating content around that to your target audience now they refer to your site, your YouTube channel, your social media platform. Wherever you're creating this content, you're viewed as the expert. So they're relying on you to provide that DIY content.



Jason: (07:13)

And when they need help, who do they turn to? You, because you are the one that's providing that content. And when the money lightens up and they have extra income, or they have that disposable income, now, when they're ready to buy, they're going to turn to you because you provided that DIY information. So being an expert in the DIY realm helps you. Now, in the recession, that happens. So those are some of the topics that we have talked about in terms of what usually happens in a recession, in terms of the twos and then the marketing assets, one of the things I had touched on is website. Always start with your website. If you do not have a website, you need to focus on enhancing your website now. Because what I find when I talk to a lot of designers and remodelers is they have a website, but it's like 45678, even a decade old. And if you haven't enhanced your website in years, it's out of date. Because I know if you're in the design industry, I know you have done projects within the last year. I know you've done a new project within the last year. So if that is the fact, your website is out of date because you haven't placed on your site any of the new work that you've done. And hopefully as you get older in this profession, more experience, your projects improve, the design improves. So you want to have your best projects on your website. So you need to make sure you're up to date on all the projects, all the style that you are working in, in your industry and your style is on your website. So make sure all of that is up to date. Like I said, look back at the podcast we did on optimizing your website. We have all of that on the site and then we have trainings on that too. And then something else we had talked about was social media, making sure that your social media is up to par. We had talked one about just a few minutes ago about making sure that the DIY that you're showing the expert in the industry and all, but also look at the competition. So we had given an example of reverse engineering the competition. So now is a good time to take a look at a lot of the other designers.



Jason: (09:13)

You may have a designer in your area that has the same type of audience, or you may not have a designer in your area, but you may have one in your style. So, for instance, if you're in Chicago but there's nobody in your area that's catering to the elderly, you may have somebody in New York that is and you want to take a look at their social media profile to see what they're doing, see what are they posting about. Because that's going to hand you a gap analysis to see what you're doing right, what you're doing wrong, what you can add into your own content to relate better to your own target audience. And that's what ultimately it's all about. From everything that I'm saying, the one nugget you want to take is knowing your audience and catering directly to them. That's going to help you get through any recession is zoning in on the content that you produce. So it's targeted for your ideal audience that resonates with them. You're going to cut all of the noise out and you're going to become the expert where everybody in your audience turns to you over all the other me to designers out there. So knowing that and then reverse engineering all of that helps you out tremendously.

Mirjam: (10:47)

Now, I love everything you're saying, actually. And I just wanted to say that the same is true for PR, that it's not a last ditch resort. So if you are interested in having PR being helpful, it can definitely help procession proof because it will feed into all the things that you said, right? It makes you stand out. You're going to be different from everybody else. You're the go to person, but you have to start before the recession starts because the results don't come in so quickly. But I just wanted to add in something that I learned in my old corporate life at Cola Company and Solar Company always is very successful company, right? They're huge and they're privately held. So the nice thing about that is that they don't depend on providing value for the shareholder side so they can take a more long term vision. And one of the things that they do really well, and this was definitely under the guidance and division of Herb Kohler who just passed away. He was a believer in always continuing to invest in marketing and PR. So your brand awareness was a big factor that we always measure.



Mirjam: (12:47)

And you want your brand awareness to be strong. And in order to have that, you have to be out there, you have to be marketing. Because what happens in a recession is that most companies, small and big, they pair back on the marketing side because they're like, well this is not really a must have, this is a nice to have. OK, where can I trim it's? Like when you said you go through line item by line item and to say I don't really need this, it's like I'm going to cut all of this. And what happens is that you lose all the momentum that you have built up. So if you're off the marketing grid, you don't go to trade shows or you don't do any to scale back, you don't do any advertising, you don't do any PR, you don't do nothing, you're off the grid. And your brand awareness, the awareness of your ideal client that you're around drops significantly. So if you can be the person who doesn't do that, like everybody else will do this, but you're the person who keeps investing on the marketing side, it will really position you for success when the economy rebounds and you can take market share from your competition. That's really the goal.



Jason: (13:27)

I love that. Mirjam, one thing we had touched on too, what often happens is when small business owners are looking at the line items or what is the necessary and what's wasteful. Usually marketing is classified as wasteful, which it should be classified as necessary because of what you talked about. And so that helps you with brand awareness and getting through a recession and also building market share beyond because a lot of the competition is going to be marketing as wasteful. And so when the recession ends, you're better positioned to take more of the market share in your area. So that is so right on point. And one of the last items or tools we had talked about is that making sure that you're tracking what is happening. Because what I hear from and what we've seen from a lot of small businesses in the design realm, where do they do marketing on their own or they hire how to do marketing, they don't really know what's working and what's not in terms of the marketing efforts. And tracking is vital to that. So if you do not have tracking in place. This is something that you need to invest in and do now at a basic level. Google analytics. Google Search console or free tools that you can put on your website that helps you track all of the visitors that come to your site. How often they pair. Where they stay. What they are clicking on. What page they're landing on. What they visit. What they like. What they don't like. So you're learning a lot from that search console is helping you develop and define that audience so you can target your marketing. That also helps you out if you're doing any paid ads. And so tracking at a basic level is vital. And if you're doing any type of email marketing, you need to be on the page account of any of the platforms you're on, whether it be MailChimp, constant contact, AWeber, whatever you're using for your email service provider, make sure you're using the pay to not just the free tool. The free tool does not allow you access to the analytics and that's really what you need to optimize the campaign to know what you're doing right, what you're doing wrong, and how to optimize for success. Those are just some of the ways that you can recession improve your marketing efforts doing any recession and we hope this has been helpful information and if you have any questions at all, feel free to reach out to us. Make sure to like, share and comment on this episode and all the episodes we had in the past and we hope to see you all here next week on Designer Discussions.



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Outro: (16:03)

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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 episode from wherever you are listening.





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