



Episode 70

Curating your client



**Jason: [00:00]**

Hello and welcome to designer discussions with Jason, Mirjam, and Maria. Today we're talking about how to curate your client.

Intro: [00:17]

Welcome to the designer discussions podcast with Jason, Maria, and Mirjam. Tune in each week where we talk about marketing, PR, and business advice for design professionals. Are you wondering where to start marketing your interior design business? We are 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: (0:45)

Awesome. Thanks, Jason. So, as an interior designer, have you heard you should niche your design business? How does that feel for you? Does it feel wrong? Have you felt like that was a limitation that you were putting on the work that you were able to do and that might hold you back? Well, if that's the case, then this is the episode for you, because what we're going to do is we're going to talk about looking at and curating the clients that you work with. Curating your clientele is an act of defining and refining your business based on the type of work and the people that you want to work for and not based on the type of work and the aesthetics that you can create as a designer. A great client can have multiple projects. They could have rental properties, a business, a mountain vacation home, and a beach house. And do you want to be able to serve them in all of those aspects, or do you only want to service one certain aesthetic for them in a certain way? So once we start looking at those questions, I personally felt like the idea of niche in what I did would actually limit my ability to truly serve the people I care about.



Maria: (02:05)

So when you look at who your clients are, your design business should serve a person that you want to work with in a way that is unique to them and is unique to you, but is not necessarily niche to style, but niche or niche to the client. And the way that you can start to do that, to start to curate your clientele, is by having caring, style conversations. These conversations are just conversations about understanding and defining the boundaries for which you work and having these conversations in social media and emails that go out to your clients. Having conversations like this in your blog post or emails so that they understand how it is to work with you. Are you dealing with the clients roles to create something beautiful, but their rules are not allowing the beauty to happen? Are you working on a project under the way that the client wants you to work, but yet they're totally stressed out and you're not able to actually help them because it's the way that they're taking the project? These are conversations that you can be having on social media and in the way that you present your business with your clients so that the client can begin to understand that there are some acts that are barriers between easy and fun design and emotionally inflammatory design experiences. And as an interior designer, we all understand that people come into wanting to have design done in a fun way. They think it's going to be a really pleasurable, enjoyable experience. But in reality, it's a very high stress, highstakes experience in someone's life. And people will act in certain ways during that process. And we know what that looks like, and we know why it happens. Most of the time, when you think of a caring conversation that you're having, you're thinking of your message and your processes on how you work as an interior designer. But I think designers need to look more into talking about the clients process and the client's behavior during that process and talking about it, being vocal about it, and having these open conversations about what that is like. Because those types of kind conversations are kind to you and to your client, and that you are able to serve your clients better. This process of having conversations will start to sift out certain behavior and create a better outcome for both you and the client. I believe a lot of designers are not looking at creating these emotionally compelling conversations in the way that they talk about a design project because they don't want to talk about that something doesn't come in on time and that it's stressful and that people have to be patient.



Maria: (04:05)

And sometimes you might plan for something and that it doesn't work out. Or that if someone doesn't provide a high enough budget. They're not going to get what it is that you show on your social media. On your portfolio. And that you're either still able to work with them or you're only going to be able to work with them on a limited budget. Why are these conversations? They would build on each other. But what would the outcome be? Right? So if you start thinking about it, what would the outcome be? If I talked about a little bit more high stress situations, if I talked a little bit more about disappointment, if I talked more about failures on a project, if I talked more about risk taking and design limits and pushing boundaries with your clients on their aesthetic, what type of outcome would result from those types of conversations? Well, what you would be doing ultimately is teaching your client to be a good design client. And in doing that, that helps everybody out, right? So if you can start to have these conversations in your messaging, in the social media, email, and in your business processes, you'll start to find out that clients actually one, think they're really great. There's never been a person who has walked into a design office not thinking that they are fantastic and that they are going to be a good client. Like, everybody walks in under the guise that they're going to be really good, they're going to be a great client for you. Obviously, their project is going to be a good project for your portfolio and they are going to be crushed to learn that they aren't a good client for you. And there are a lot of things associated with that that you can prevent by having more of these types of conversations in the beginning. Like, for example, I worked with a branding agent and her bill was five figures to do branding for a business. And she said. You know. Just tell me. She told me during the meeting. She said. Just tell me if this doesn't fit into your budget. Just say. Put me on your vision board and I will take that as the most satisfactory answer from this consultation if you just tell me that I'm aspirational for you and you can't wait to come back to me. But I understand that right now my budget doesn't fit you.



Maria: (07:05)

Right? And her telling me all she wanted to be told was. I'm putting you on my vision board was teaching me how to be a good client and to not feel bad about coming back to her. About not having the right budget for her work. Right. Even though I respected her work and I thought she was very talented and gosh. If I had that kind of money sitting around. I would have loved to have worked with her. So number one, all of your clients think that they're great and that the projects are fantastic. Number two, they are hiring you because it's their home, their money, and they believe that they're going to have control over the project. And they have to learn that hiring a designer is a trust game. You're going to have to learn to trust you, and they're going to have to learn to hand over some trust and control. Otherwise if they are too controlling on the project, their fees will go up significantly because managing their inability to trust you becomes very expensive for them. The client can read you. They can tell if you're hungry, if you want them, if you need the money, if there is fear of managing or dealing with a large budget, it's always best to start having these boundaries conversations earlier in the game to try to make both people feel more comfortable. And then that way those elements don't exist. During your appointments, a lot of times people will hire you because they want to hand over all control. And if you're talking and your social media about how you manage everything, take it over everything, have like a system of meetings you have with your clients and it's this way and it works every time. That is completely different client that would hire you than someone who felt like they could push you around, change your appointment times to after work hours or on the weekends, right? So having even these types of teaching conversations in your social media will help everybody out. They will understand more about what it's like to work with you and you will explain to them what it is like to work with you. Number three, let's talk about the cold, hard facts. Designers are kind, interesting, hard working people, and design is an industry of servitude and it makes socializing and interaction during a high stress conflict time easier and better on the person hiring you. We make it better than real life for them every day. And the reality is they're totally willing to take advantage of that level of service in any way that they can.



Maria: (10:05)

If you do not have clear cut boundaries on what it is that you're providing for them and how you want to work with them. You should look at having more conversations that speak to the heart of the client. Talk about are they smart. Willing to experience the best. But also have control over their emotions. And willing to be an active participant in their own happiness and not expect everyone that they hire to generate or create that happiness? A lot of people build and design homes to create happiness in a marriage that's falling apart. And just having conversations that talked about that might help to detract some people who may not be a good client fit for you, but then also attract the handful of people who've already designed a home before and then maybe worked with the designer and it didn't work out because they were pushing that designer around and they knew that that didn't work for them. Right? Number five, social media has ultimately been teaching people that they don't necessarily need to have respect or discipline when it comes to asking interior designers questions and getting from them what they need. And these conversations that are teaching people how to be good clients can be used to help reverse some of that and help to establish that respect and discipline that someone should have when working with a seasoned professional. So the rules are I don't think you need to niche because once you find out who your ideal client is and the type of work you want to do, that technically results in a niche, right? And you get to do whatever you want. You can do all of the things. It's not an I can only do conversation, you can do it all. But what you want to do is only be helping certain people with certain types of projects. So some ways that you might already be niche and you don't even know it is that your geographic location where you work is your primary niche? It's going to be to determine the style, size of projects, size of budgets, type of architecture, types of clients you're going to be working with if you only work in a certain area, if you live in a certain area and those are the only projects you do that's already your niche, right? Number two, look at your clientele base and say, hey, am I most successful when I work business to business, and I work with people who have multiple property ownership? Maybe I should be talking more to them in my social media, in my website, in my advertising, so that it is more clear that the types of people that you work with have multiple projects and that you are working with affluent people who have multiple projects in multiple areas so that you travel and manage projects and places outside of town.



Maria: (13:05)

These are all the conversations that you can be having that technically will start to net you. Because if someone just want to have one house and they just need you to come out and do one room here or one room there, that is not the same client as someone who is looking to build a relationship with a designer that they're going to be having travel across the country with them to help design their next house. Their next house, their next house, or their next investment property? Investment property. Investment property. So you have to start looking at the way that you'd be talking to the person. And I think we spent way too much time talking about having an aesthetic and having a brand and being branded on the Internet and having everything look the same so that your website looks nice and your social media looks nice. But honestly. Start looking at who the person is that you're working with. Because you can do a range of design aesthetics for design and for your business and still be niche. And you would be serving a certain person. The best person for you. And you are the best person for that client. But you have to let them know that you exist, otherwise they won't know that you are there. And these are the types of things that you can continue to develop for your business. So this is a big thing that I would love to see more people doing in 2023. Is having more of these conversations and really start looking at who is your ideal. Perfect type of client and start marketing to them your business. Naturally. Because you will have now curated the type of client that you're wanting to work with. And you will start to see that your business is more niche.

Mirjam: (14:47)

Maria, that's really great information, and you mentioned the word boundaries a couple of times. I just wanted to include here that by the beginning of 2023, so whenever you listen to this podcast, if it is 2023, we'll have a set of email messages available in the marketing studio for purchase that will help you outline those boundaries to your clients. It will be a really nice package and one of the things we'll be offering starting in 2023. So we hope you've enjoyed this episode of Designer Discussions and all the super helpful information from Maria. Subscribe to our podcast, shared with your friends if you liked it and we hope to see you next week.

**Outro: (15:47)**

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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. Review or comment for this episode from wherever you are listening.





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