



## Episode 72

# Predictable client behavior



**Jason: [00:00]**

Hello and welcome to designer discussions with Jason, Mirjam, and Maria. Today, we're going to be talking about predictable client behavior.

**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)**

Hey, everybody. So today we want to talk about what is a predictable client behavior and a little bit of why it is happening. I can only begin to touch on the tip of this iceberg. It's a big, huge concept. There's a lot to it. But I am going to talk about sort of like some of the top five things that I'm seeing in the Facebook groups of what designers are complaining about and what the clients are doing. And then they don't understand why the client is acting that way. And we're going to just kind of go over it very lightly. It's a deep, heavier conversation, but it is a podcast. We're gonna try to make this nice and short and bite sizeable. So, first off, can we, as interior designers, begin to standardize outside factors in a way that will actually positively impact our client behavior and maybe cut out some of the things that we have happening in our client relationships that we don't want to have moving forward? A lot of times we have found the red flag movement to be one of our favorite failsafes for why something didn't work out. But the reality is, any time a client starts acting bad or they start displaying a behavior that is less than amenable to our business processes, we should start to look at them and what they're experiencing from their perspective and then discern why it may have happened.



### **Maria: (02:15)**

And it happened through our business, through our businesses experience. So let's just look at, I'm thinking, five items that can be blockades that your client is going to experience that are 100% going to be there, that maybe you can start talking to them about. Let them know they're going to experience it, and also let them know how you are going to help them out so that they don't experience it in the future and sideline your whole design project. Okay, so, number one, everyone is really overwhelmed and we have too many choices. Everybody's brain all day long is consuming content, and this is actually a real problem. And there's this wonderful book that I would recommend, and if anybody wants to do a book club with me, I am up for it. It's called Paradox of Choice why More Is Less by Barry Schwartz. He goes into depth on so many little details that if we were to look at the design process from a scientific lens that you would find that technically we would be happier with less choices. And we are happier when things are not returnable. If we are living in a world where every interaction we have with the items that we choose, we're going to personalize them, they're going to come into our home and they're going to be ours forever. We're actually more satisfied with that concept than if we were working in a world where everything is returnable. And think about how unfavorable the client experience is going through a return. I mean, imagine huge, heavy furniture pieces having to be returned, right? I've had clients do that with retail stores and they don't want to experience that anymore. They want to work with a designer where they don't have to go through those experiences. So even though people may think that they want to return things, people may think that they want to have more options. The reality is, in the brain, in all the chemicals that our brain has, we prefer less choices. And we want those things to be so personalized, we don't ever have to worry about returning it because that is better and more satiating and much more gratifying for us as people. So check out Paradox of Choice. Why More Is Less by Barry Schwartz. It would be a great book for your business and just to learn more about how human nature works. Number two, one of the biggest things that we don't talk to our clients about is other people's opinions.



### **Maria: (04:15)**

Oh, I know. I feel it too. I feel it too. Just saying it out loud. All of our clients have a friend or a neighbor or a mother-in-law with an opinion. And it is not a good opinion. It's a bad opinion. In fact, that opinion is so terrible that we don't even have a nice way of processing it. Like, if our face doesn't have a filter, it would have the RBF on it. When we hear that other person's opinion, like, we try to smile our way through it and pretend like everything is going to be okay. But those other opinions just cause doubt and friction. During the design process. One of the design mentors that I follow is Cheryl, and she will say to her clients that they have like, a hall pass to say, oh, no, Cheryl has done this before. And I'm listening to Cheryl on this. She actually preemptively gives each one of her designers and her clients the idea that they need to tell the client before the process starts that they're going to interact with people who are going to have opinions and it's going to cause a problem. And then this is what should be set. So if you aren't following her, if you're not in her Facebook group, I highly recommend that she has some brilliant ideas. So number one is you're going to have too many choices. And the way people handle the choices or maybe not in their best interest. Number two, how are other people's opinions going to impact your clients behavior? Are they going to emotionally react to those opinions? Are those outside sources going to cause doubt in your relationship and take the Cheryl advice and give the permission and the words to say so that your client knows how to pass on other people's advice instead of being drawn into it and questioning you in the long run? Number three, if you give clients price without context, they will shop you because they will feel a deep frustration inside of them that will cause them to want to find out what the value of something is. Most interior design items do not come with these beautiful branded packages where you can quickly and easily reference how much something is worth and know if you're getting a good deal or not. And this isn't a question of like doubt or any of doubt and a lack of trust from the client.



### **Maria: (07:15)**

It's that the client client is not 100% aware of the value of what it is that you're presenting them. So if your value that you're presenting something to someone and it's just a single item and it's not coming with an extensive amount of service, they will be able to price up it and compare. So this is very similar to like, if you woke up and you were on a ship out in the middle of the ocean, you'd probably be like, where am I and how did I get here? You would be like, what's around me? Is there something I find familiar? You would be very frustrated and scared to be somewhere where you don't know where you are and you have no context, right? But if you were to wake up and be in your front yard near your house, there's a different level of comfort and safety and security and just being aware of what the surroundings are. So, just like a sofa. And Restoration Hardware has a certain amount of value just based on where it is located, when you are presenting a sofa to a client, they will need something outside of the sofa in the middle of the sea to understand the context of how much it's truly worth and why you presented it to them. So even your professional photography and showing a sofa in a room that you've already designed will help them to understand the deeper value of that sofa. And then if it is alone on a presentation board, on a piece of paper all by itself. So context is key. People need to understand that that is why you're being shopped. It's not just about them wanting to save money. It's that there's this deep level of frustration and fear that comes along with not having any context. So if you can provide your clients with context, they will feel like they are being provided a greater value. So I think we talk about this a little bit in our other podcast. But you really have to look at context. And if you are lacking context and that is why your client shopped you. Number two, if your client is if your client is unaware that they had just purchased something, they will continue to gather and compare. This is part of what we like to call a decision making loop. If they don't know that they have currently made a decision, they will assume that they are still in a discernment loop and continue to gather and compare.



### **Maria: (10:15)**

So if you've had a client leave your office and they just picked out six light fixtures for their home and they signed off on it, you gave them the pieces of paper, the rendering of the space, and you're like, Great. Made all the decisions. This is all great, and they leave your office and they were still looking at light fixtures. They were obviously not aware that they've already purchased light fixtures. Right? So when you see a designer saying, okay, I have a client, they don't understand that we just bought everything you need to improve your processes behind understanding that those items were purchased and on order and when they will be arriving. Just like when you hit Amazon, you want to see what day to expect it. So what does it look like if your client is stuck in a loop? So perfect? Normal client behavior is for them to identify that there's a need, gather items that could fulfill the need. They're going to compare the multiple items that they have gathered to determine which one is best. Once they evaluate which one is best, they make a choice, and then they suffer the consequences of knowing that they just bought something. Right? Buyers remorse, the joy of dopamine whatever those things are. So if a client is meeting with you, looking at items, they get to compare, they make an evaluation, but they don't actually purchase those items, and you send your client out, they will continue to shop you. So if you aren't closing loops, if you're not creating completion, you're going to get behavior. What is that behavior going to look like? The client is going to resource on their own. They're going to price compare because they're trying to provide relief from an internal frustration that has come from comparing and not having a solution. Progress is going to be interrupted with their new ideas. They're going to come to you and want to try to rework something or do something different because they know they haven't made a final and completed decision. At that point, you may find them researching again and getting themselves into some type of decision paralysis. So if these things are happening to you, it has to do with the process, and it doesn't have to do with the client being bad. It has to do with the client's needs aren't being met, and they're not being preemptively met in a way to provide success in the end.



### **Maria: (12:15)**

And also the client will forget that they bought anything. They might even start to feel regret because they aren't sure what they got and if it is going to be nice. And they'll start to lose confidence in who you are. So if you are not completing these decision loops, you're not triggering dopamine. And the dopamine actually causes the frustration factor that comes from buying. And everybody else has taken the trigger of the frustration out of buying by making a click here, one click order thing where you don't have to fill in all the credit card information. And they did all of that because what they're trying to do is remove any reason for people to pause and step back and then not place the purchase. So as designers, we need to look at this and see how we can make this a better experience for our clients. Clients are going to forget. And it is the editing house forgetting curve's fault. It's not their fault. It's a forgetting curve. And if you look at the evidence forgetting curve, you will see that anyone who's been in a meeting selecting things and working on design stuff for a couple of hours, they're going to have already forgotten 50% of what you all went over before the day is done. And it goes dramatically. It's like another 50% for the next couple of days. And so there's just like an inkling of what is remembered. So anytime you're working with someone and you find that they've forgotten what they picked out, if you find out that they're asking you a question and you know that they're going to ask a certain request of you, but you've covered it in the past, you maybe didn't repeat yourself enough times. So work in repeating yourself over and over again about important things. It is because they forget. If it's not in writing, it's not on your website. Just give yourself the ability to repeat some things five to seven times without even feeling like you're being redundant. Because the reality is your client will forget. And when you see your client is forgetting in your design processes that you're working with them, you need to beef up repeating those details or that information earlier on in the game. This is also the reason why I say over and over again, make sure both decision makers are available for your client appointments. Because one person's responsibility to go out and report back to the other person is really not enough.



### **Maria: (15:15)**

It's just not enough. It's not enough information. It's not enough of accuracy. And it's also not enough of the sales experience for the other person to be on board as well. So you're not setting up your client for success if they're going to be reporting back to someone and they don't have the authority to be making those decisions. And then the last item on the list is internal bias. So we talk about internal biases all the time when it comes to media, when it comes to social media, any of the stuff that we see that everybody has an internal bias, right? We might prefer a look of a certain type of animal because it's the same look as our own pet. Okay? So we have a familiarity and we kind of know that creature. It looks cute because it already is like the pet that we have in our own home. So internal biases are everywhere. And did you know that there's 50 of them? There's 50 internal biases that impact us each and every day. It's the bias that we'd rather not miss out. And we'll get the middle sized item over the small item because it helps remove the factor of missing out. There's just going to be a lot of these small things that we can start to control and craft and strategize around to improve our clients experience and allowing them to feel like they're in control and that we're taking care of them each step of the way. And the first and biggest internal bias that I see that most starting out interior designers do not know is that new is no, right? I just said that the pet online, it was the cutest one because it looks like our pet at home is the best one, but that's not true. But it's an internal bias that familiar is yes, new is going to be no. So we'll go over more about biases and things that we're going to be seeing in design appointments. But as you learn more about the internal draws too and away from things, you can start to leverage those things to make your client experience better. So next time you're meeting with a client, or if you're even in an interior design Facebook group, and if you were to sit down and write down like the top three things that you're seeing are people's problems.





### **Maria: (17:15)**

And if you sit down and you look at your business as each interaction with your client that's a problem could be actually an indicator that there's something missing. As you start looking at those things and you start compiling what those things are, there are ways that you can change that and shift it for the better of your business. And we hope to be here for you through our podcast to help teach you more about these biases and the ways that people will interact with you so that you can start to predict the behavior of your client. Beforehand and that you can talk to them about things to expect beforehand so that you can cut out these problems in the long haul. So based on the five things that we talked about today, you can start to see that your clients do have predictable behavior, that the outcome is going to be caused by something that maybe they can expect or you can anticipate. And if you start to see problems in conflicts with your clients. Start to peel back that onion, see what's really going on and see how you can fix the problem and not blame your client for shopping you and not blame a client for talking to a neighbor because you can start to bring those things up early on in the game and make a better client experience for your client. Thank you for listening to this episode of Designer Discussions. We will be here next week and we will talk more about how to make your business better.

### **Outro: (18:50)**

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.

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.



# DESIGNER DISCUSSIONS

DIGITAL MARKETING,  
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