



Episode 99
The Top 5 Listener
Questions





Jason: (00:00)

Hello, and welcome to Designer Discussions with Jason, Mirjam, and Maria. Today, we are talking about the top five listener questions.

Intro: (00:14)

Welcome to Designer Discussions Podcast with Mirjam, Maria and Jason. Tune in each week where we discuss marketing, PR, and business advice for design professionals. Are you ready to get serious about marketing your interior design business? Our Designer Discussions Marketing Studio offers a series of in-depth, actionable, and done-for-you 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.

Go to designerdiscussions.com/marketingstudio to get started. So we're covering listener questions today because we're almost at episode 100, yay! We sent out emails and text messages to our listeners to ask what are the questions you have for us? And we got a lot of questions back, but we narrowed it to the top five that were overlapping, and so we're going to talk about all those today. The first one, I'm going to ask Maria because it's about TikTok, and we all know she's our resident TikTok expert. So, Maria, first question is, how relevant is TikTok to the remodeling or interior design industry?

Maria (01:30)

So you may not want to hear this, but it's your best search engine opportunity with the use of social media. I know we're used to these beautiful curated Instagram spaces that make you think, I want to hire you because you have created a beautiful space. And what TikTok has done is TikTok has created this very easy, CliffsNotes searchable space for specific information. And if someone goes online and they want to search for your area and kitchen and bath remodeling, or if they want to search your area and interior design, you're going to get all the normal stuff. You're going to get Houzz, you're going to get all those normal search engines. But what happens is sometimes you'll see that the TikTok videos pull up in a row as well on Google Search. And if you're already in TikTok, they have a little search bar, and you can just type in those words and you can be found. The search in TikTok is phenomenal. The search in TikTok you can basically ask a question, and you will find multiple videos that might help you to answer that question really fast. And you don't have to worry about an intro and an outro.

**Maria: (02:52)**

You don't have to, you know, figure out if the person who's giving you the information on YouTube is viable or recent. Tiktok does all that for you. They give you the most recent one and the one that seems to be the most valid. And so searchability on TikTok is super easy. Is TikTok the same as Instagram? The answer to that is no. Those really beautiful videos of all of your finishes laid out on a table where you pan over the top of them and you put a couple of words over the top and it says "This styled kitchen and it's beautiful finishes." And then everybody asks the question in the comments like, "Well, what was that countertop material?" And "What is that sink?" Those questions are very typical, and that conversation is extremely typical on Instagram. That content doesn't generate questions over on TikTok. Tiktok is a conversation, and it's set up where you actively answer questions about things that you're an expert in and what other people want to know about in a quick and easy way, in a friendly, easy way. And then what happens is those people start to see you as someone they can ask hard questions to.

Maria (04:13)

Those hard questions are what starts showing up in your question feed, not like, "Which countertop is that?" And "What type of sink is that?" But more along the lines of, "Why do I need a pot filler?" "Should I get a pot filler?" "What's the story with gas ranges versus induction?" Those are going to start being the questions that you'll see on TikTok. And then what happens is you can click on those questions, and then you can make another video to answer those questions. So after a while, you become this online expert who can specifically answer questions about certain things. And then people feel like they can reach out to you, ask questions, and those questions that they're asking is actually your content generation tool. Each one of those questions that you're getting on TikTok is actually the information that you need to write your newsletter on. It's the information that you need to help you speak to your audience on Instagram. It is like an instantaneous communication tool where you can test market content and see who's going to respond or not. So when you look at TikTok, it's not just another social media platform.



Maria (05:26)

It's more of an opportunity. It's an opportunity to get the feedback. It's the opportunity to cast out content and see if it's valid or not. But it is not a place to showcase your finishes because that's not what's going to go over. So how does this work? Instagram content does not convey to TikTok well. TikTok is a place where you need to be standing in front of the pot filler in the video. And what happens is people want to listen to your video because you're standing there answering a question about the pot filler. Whereas on Instagram, you might pan over a pot filler and say, top three reasons why you need a pot filler. That's an Instagram response. But on TikTok, they want to see you standing next to your pot filler and say, "Two reasons I would choose a pot filler" and "Two reasons why I wouldn't choose a pot filler". They want to have edutainment. They want to be learning something. And if you're this really interesting person online and you're answering these questions, your audience will grow dramatically on TikTok. And then you just start creating this larger environment of people and you can create easier, faster, relevant content.

Maria (06:45)

So before I leave, I'm going to say one thing that you could do. For example, if you have four countertop types, you could do a video with four countertop types, add wine, add mustard, and talk about how each one of them responds to staining and exposure to that thing. And you can do that on a TikTok video. On Instagram, you probably wouldn't want your face on it. You probably just pan over it and talk about it. But people are going to want more information, then you can do one video about each one of those four countertops. That is how you show up on TikTok. It's just a completely different animal. And people really do want to hear from you. They want more people who are super educated about product knowledge, super educated on telling them what your direct experience is and what they're going to regret and what is something that they should be spending more money on. So don't be afraid of TikTok. Get on over there. I think you have a lot of opportunity there.

Jason (07:50)

Great. The next question is also for Maria, because she's also the resident AI expert. So how can I use AI to enhance my marketing?



Maria (08:01)

Okay. So AI is this quick, easy, visual communication tool. The products of the AI designs are not necessarily buildable. They're going to have problems. You don't have enough control, and this is progressing fast. But it doesn't work in plan, it doesn't work in elevation, and it doesn't understand enough about space planning to actually make things work. Like I had a faucet drawn in the window, on the windowsill, instead of sitting on the countertop in a recent image. So it's going to have all sorts of weird problems. And it had like three cabinet doors under a sink.

Maria (08:42)

So it's not accurate, and it isn't going to be accurate. Someone can't space plan an 8 by 10 kitchen that would allow for what they need. Those things are not doable. But what you can do is pick a aesthetic style. So maybe you want English Country. You can say, "I like wallpaper. I like wood countertops, and I would like simple, like Duvall style base cabinets, and I would like brass, plumbing fixtures, and a large window over the sink." And you can say, "Please draw it with," pick a color, and then you can say, "And wallpaper." Ok? You're just going to get an English countryside space with finishes, things you would see online. Well, what you can do is then ask the same prompt again and change the color. Only the color, not necessarily anything else. And what you're doing is you're rendering similar-style rooms over and over again, and you can swap out the color. You can go yellow, orange, red, pink, any color you can imagine. So now you're creating concepts, right? You could have a visual that when you're meeting with someone, you can say, show me in these images which one you're drawn to.

Maria (10:03)

Show me in these images which one makes you feel like what you want. If someone says, I want to pop a color, do they really mean that? Most people don't communicate in words as well as they can point at something and tell you if they like it or not. So AI images are a visual communication tool for you. You can use them to create inspirational concepts like if you want to put a garage door in a breakfast room and something that looks industrial, you could have an image drawn like that and you could just post it to social media or even pin it to Pinterest from your business and say, you know, there are ways you could work in these full access to outside spaces within something that you would not traditionally expect it. Does it necessarily mean it's the best solution? No, but it's these concepts. It's showing ingenuity and concept. And I also really love the idea of being able to ideate and create color studies for your clients just because these are the things they want to hear about. These are things they want to learn about themselves without necessarily requiring your portfolio to have executed each one of those styles and looks.

**Mirjam (11:26)**

Yes. Jason, the next question is for you. What are some of the marketing trends for 2024?

Jason (11:36)

Good question. So there are two things I wanted to go over here. One is being omnipresent. What a lot of designers and remodelers are seeing now is that just using one marketing method isn't enough. They may use social media and then they'll do it for a while, but then there'll be ebbs and flows. They may do Google Ads, but then there are some downtimes. They may do SEO, but there are slow times. With your marketing, you have to be everywhere that the end user is, so you have to be omnipresent. You have to use a number of different marketing methods. I always start, if you head back to anything I talk about, you got to understand your client avatar. Go back to the Marketing Studio where we have the free client avatar workbook. Go over that and understand who your market is, who your ideal client is, and then you can reverse-engineer and understand what platforms or what marketing tactics you need to be on because you need to do multiple, not just one. And the other trend is actually what Maria just talked about is AI and automation. That is huge. There's a lot of designers, and there's an episode we just had on I believe it was Episode 96 where we talked about designers being afraid to use automation and ChatGPT, but it is the wave you need to get into because it's going to make your life easier if you use it the right way. So automation and AI is the trend that will be huge in 2024.

Mirjam (13:15)

Yes, I was expecting you would say that, and I totally agree. Jason, here's another question for you. How can I use Google Products to market my business?

Jason (13:26)

Google is the number one search engine out there. You'll hear about Yahoo, Bing, and you'll also hear about TikTok and others. But right now, Google is king in terms of search, and they have a number of products. I'll talk about three ways you can use the Google Products to really market your business. One, I would say, is Google Business Profile, which used to be called Google My Business. Do it the right way. It'll help you in terms of being found in your local market. So optimizing your GMB or GBP profile is number one. Next I would say is Google AdWords. So there's a lot of remodelers and designers that may not use AdWords or they use it but don't think it's effective. Using Google AdWords is helpful, but you have to know what you're doing. And it takes practice and a lot of A/B testing and optimization to really get it right. If you do not have the time, I would say hire out for that because that is a time consuming process. So getting your ads right on Google is another product you can use. And another one, which is not so much Google, but it is overall used in that sense, is SEO, Search Engine Optimization, because usually when you're optimizing your website for search, nine times out of ten is for Google search, because it's the number one platform. And so you want to make sure that you optimize your site. And we also have an episode on this. I have this in the show notes where we talk about how to really optimize your website for search.

**Maria (15:09)**

The next question is for you, Mirjam. How can PR help a remodeling business grow?

Mirjam (15:16)

That's an excellent question, and I like that it is focused on results, which in the world of PR actually can take a while to manifest. But the number one reason why it is important to have PR in your marketing mix is because PR, press coverage, media coverage, provides you the third-party credibility that you can get nowhere else. So basically it's like a version of amped up word of mouth, right? Because word of mouth referrals are great. Everybody loves them. But if you get word of mouth by a reputable media outlet, it's 1,000 times more powerful than when your neighbor tells one of their friends how great you are. So it's really, it is the third-party validation that makes it priceless, basically. So if you think about media coverage, it's worth more in terms of awareness and attention than an ad. You can run an ad anywhere. You can buy an ad, but you can't buy authentic, earned PR coverage. That's why it's harder to get, but the impact is also much greater. I want to just address a myth when it comes to PR, because when interior designers, remodeling, anybody in the design industry thinks PR, they think of these big feature placements like an A.D., or Elle Decor or any of the big national shelter magazines.

Mirjam (16:48)

But in my opinion, that's, I mean that's fantastic. But it's maybe the top one percent of designers who are ever going to get there. So I think you're setting yourself up to be disappointed if that's your goal. And in reality, what most remodeling and design businesses need to boost their business is different kind of coverage. There's expert mentions that are online that are fairly easy to get, and we do a lot of training on this on the podcast and also in our Marketing Studio Academy. And it's really that and regional press. That's what you need for your business, because if you think about it, it's a way to differentiate yourself from the competition. And chances are not many competitive businesses are actually doing PR because I feel like it's still a minority in the world of design that actually proactively seek out PR opportunities. And what happens is if your ideal client is online and is searching for a design or modeling company, PR also helps with SEO, by the way, greatly because the links are super valuable. So if you already have it, you're more likely to pop up sooner.

**Mirjam (18:20)**

And then when people get to your website, think of two exactly similar websites. If one of them has a section right when you get there that says, As featured in Forbes, House Beautiful, Better Homes and Gardens, Apartment Therapy, whatever it may be, I'm like, that is going to make the difference. If it's exactly the same, the person most likely is going to pick the company that has press features because it inspires trust, it inspires that they can do their job, that they've had success, that they're well-known, they know what they're talking about, they're a good business because they basically have been endorsed by these media outlets. And that is going to get you the business. And that's in the end how PR can help you grow. It's a long-term effort and you want to do it consistently. But if you do, it can definitely be a driver of growth for your business.

Maria (19:19)

Mirjam, I would also assume that if you're looking at two different design websites and one has a lot of press mentions, there's probably less pushback on price.

Mirjam (19:29)

That is very true. It can allow you to raise your rates, which is either get more of your ideal clients, which are likely in the higher price range, more of the bigger projects that are not as competitive when it comes to budget. Yes, absolutely. That's another benefit.

Jason (19:48)

These were just a few of the questions that our audience asked, and we touched on, like I said, the top five. But if you want to know more about any of this information, come check out the Academy. And that's something that we had talked about in the last episode, episode 98, where we had talked about The Academy. So a lot of these answers, we delve into detail and show you how to enhance and work out all of this in your own design and remodeling business. So check that out if you haven't. Listen to episode 98, check it out. And if you have any questions at all, let us know. And we hope to hear you all in two weeks here on Designer Discussions.

Maria (20:33)

So we are super excited to announce that the Marketing Studio is open. We are providing simple and easy-to-use resources to help keep your marketing, PR, and client communication the best that it can be, go to designerdiscussions.com/marketingstudio to get started.

Maria (20:54)

We hope you've enjoyed this episode of Designer Discussions and all of the helpful information. Subscribe to our podcast, leave us a review and share it with your friends. We look forward to having you back next week. For more information on the podcast and the Marketing Studio, visit designerdiscussions.com and follow us on social media.



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