



Episode 6

What Makes An Interior Designer Marketable ?



**Maria: [00:00]**

Hello and welcome to Designer Discussions. Today we are going to talk about what makes an interior designer marketable. It's going to be what are the things that make you special? What are the things that you leave behind in your design process and your projects that make you really stand out? We're going to have Mirjam and Jason talk with us about marketing for interior designers.

Intro: [00:24]

Welcome to the Designer Discussions podcast. Tune in each week where we discuss marketing, branding, PR and business advice for design professionals.

Jason: [00:38]

So for me, what actually makes an interior designer marketable is really knowing your audience. So if you reference Episode four, where I actually talk about the marketing tips for you, one of the things I emphasize is knowing your audience. Once you know who your audience is, you now know how to develop your message to target them. Because what I see a lot in our own clients is they want to do quantity and not quality. They want to show all of their projects, all the things they worked on, but not all the projects that you work on, the best representation of you. So when you understand your market, when you understand who your ideal client is now, you could develop a message and all of the marketing that will go along with that.

Mirjam: [01:25]

I agree. I actually think that every interior designer is marketable. It's just the decision that they have to take that they want to market themselves. And then it's the process of finding out who they are establishing their branding. And I know, Maria, you have a lot of experience in this, but I think every interior designer has the potential to be very marketable. They just have to decide to do it. And the same is true for PR as well.

**Jason: [01:54]**

A lot of designers and other professions get confused with what PR is as opposed to marketing. They think they are the exact same thing in there. Not so. Mirjam, from your perspective. Can you give up a light on PR versus marketing?

Mirjam: [02:10]

Yes. And actually, oftentimes people get confused between PR and advertising because both of those deal with media. And actually, in our case, when we're talking about interior designers, both advertising and PR are under the marketing umbrella. So it all works together. But we're public relations really is different, actually. When we're talking about getting press and getting publicity, that's just a small sliver of what public relations is. But it's the one that's the most relevant in the interior design space. And how it's different is that public relations really is there to get you the third party credibility from the media, mostly through earned placement. So you don't go and buy an ad, but you actually build a relationship with the journalist, and you provide valuable, quality content that they want to feature in their magazine. And that gives you the third party credibility that you cannot get from marketing or from advertising because it's sorry, Jason, it's sort of like you're toting your own Horn in that's really all.

Jason: [03:30]

That's fine. And I was just going to add, so I can explain this to an eight year old. Marketing is what marketing agencies do to have others know about you. PR is how you maintain a good reputation in the market. Maria, with you actually a designer in the field, how would you say how have you either marketed yourself or how have you seen other interior designers market themselves and what has worked and what have you seen has not worked?

**Maria: [03:59]**

So what I would say is that people should spend some time assessing themselves. I think that designers probably don't take enough time to focus on their business because they're working so hard in their business. But I see a lot of designers that pull back and try to limit their client base to people who are going to execute either the size of budget or the aesthetics that they want. And in doing that, they are actually building their brand. They're doing things to help make them stand out and also to create a more cohesive communication with their client base as to what they're hiring whenever they hire that person to do design for them. I do think that that most designers do small commercial business. I do houses. I do whatever. Most designers really want to have this broad spectrum of things that they can do, because technically we can we can design someone's professional yoga studio and spot or whatever and knock out a house. But I think it's confusing. And when you confuse, you lose, right? So it's good that your clients want to take you into their business world just as much as they want to take you into their personal house or if you're their business client and they're bringing you into their personal residence, that we just communicate more clearly what it is that we're doing and what it is that we're good at doing and what we enjoy. And I think that finding the time to assess that is really one of the biggest things that can help someone to understand how they're marketable and whom they would like to market to.

Jason: [05:49]

One of the things that you had talked about that resonated with me is you said interior designers spend a lot of time working in their business, but not necessarily on their business. And so from your advantage point, why do you think that is?

**Maria: [06:06]**

Our clients are the loudest voices in our heads. They're the ones that are calling and emailing and texting and keeping us very, very busy and preoccupied. And you never get time to stop. Pull back and really look at yourself when you're that busy. I have a lot of friends who are like, Maria, I don't know how you have time to paint and create software. Now I'm putting together a podcast, and I'm like, well, I don't work with as many homeowners. I try to just limit a couple of projects that I work on for them to meet my goal. And I tell people no. And Unfortunately, I've had to say no to big projects and builders and architects that I think would have been great relationships for me from a work standpoint. But I now see the value in pulling away from the hourly fee and spending more time figuring out how I make myself more valuable.

Mirjam: [07:04]

And I think that's the problem that's so many entrepreneurs, solopreneurs small business owners fight and struggle with, including myself. So I can completely relate. But it is definitely crucial that if you want to set yourself up for growth, that you do make the time to work on your business and marketing, it should be a big part of that. You should also have a dedicated budget. And I'm talking from the PR side, which is supposedly free, and it can be very affordable if you do it the right way. But you should have a dedicated budget in terms of money and time to work on your

Jason: [07:47]

That makes sense. Mirjam, since you work at the Behemoth that is called color and you are working with designers, and now that you're on your own, how would you view designers now and how they market themselves when you are working on the corporate side? So now where you're working with them individually.

**Mirjam: [08:06]**

I would say the one thing that struck me the most is that I think a lot of interior designers, they underestimate how highly they're regarded, especially from brands that work in the industry. And I think the same is true for the immediate, too. And it's like all the brands and all the media are looking to partner with good designers. And I feel oftentimes designers are hesitant because they're scared of rejection and they think they don't have anything to offer, and they feel like they're at the mercy of the media or the brand. But really, it's not like that. It can be if it's done the right way, both with brand collaborations and media, it can be a very synergetic relationship. And that's really what I'm trying to do. And helping interior designers realize that there's nothing to be afraid of. People are actually waiting for you to reach out to them and share what you have to offer. So I think that is a big misconception that a lot of interior designers carry around with themselves.

Jason: [09:22]

Maria, you're doing a lot of videos now as an interior designer, and I actually hear this a lot from our own clients. How do you have time? Like you just said, you're now on the podcast and you're also on Club House. So how do you have time to also do video? And what have you seen as helped you producing the video? Because we were talking offline that one of your videos had over. You could correct me if I'm wrong. I believe over 5000 views. So how did that happen? What is the secret that you could tell the designers that are listing that may unlock that for them.



Maria: [09:58]

It is 1 hour on Fridays for Club House. And I do think that us putting together this podcast now so that we are saving the content we've been doing is a game changer. But realistically, we've spent 1 hour a week on Friday afternoons around lunchtime where we are opening a room. We bring in one expert a week, and we really dive into a topic and we learn the shortcuts of how to do it and how to do it right. Like, what's the difference between right and wrong? And honestly, the difference between right and wrong? It can you could do the same content, the same recording the same video. And if you don't do it correctly by linking the right things or producing it in the right platform, it could get zero views. But I did an Instagram Reel recently. I followed their rules. I used their audio. I used their in app software to record the video, and then I published it. And they were like, thank you for doing exactly what we want you to do. And they just sent it out like crazy. And it was immediate. It was like, I have never seen anything like it before to get 5000 views in 1 hour. And I have, like, 940 followers. So this is like some kind of crazy phenomenon, and they're still sending it out every day. It's just knowing having an opportunity to sit down with some of the people that we've had. We had Kyle Harvey on for talking to us about Pinterest. And wow, she just created so much more for me and understanding how to do it right. And so I'm not wasting a lot of time doing things incorrectly. And I really lean into these experts and collaborations and the things that we've been putting together in Club House through designer discussions to transform and change how I work. And I also am enjoying the relationships and the connections that I'm making with other designers that are helping me to understand that I'm doing the right things as well in taking time out of my work schedule to work on my business.

**Maria: [12:39]**

I don't know. And I had talked about this also in episode or social media. There's a lot of designers we work with when we look at their profile, they don't even have a complete profile. It's not all the way fill down. They don't have a business profile, they have a personal but they don't have a business one. When we ask them to do certain things, it's not all the way complete. And, Mirjam, you deal with designers and a lot of times where they drop the ball to follow them. And I'm asking about that. But a lot of the time, the simplest things in terms of following weird directions may seem easy, but it's not. We had a client that came to us for web design because they actually had all of their information on Facebook, but one of their employees did not follow the directions, got their account shut down, and they were offline for six weeks. So following directions is so critical.

Mirjam: [13:35]

Yes. I think that obviously is something that's really crucial. And PR, because PR really is a long term venture. You cannot come in. I mean, you can come in and say, okay, I'm going to do PR for a month, and I'm going to get the cover of Architectural Digest. Yeah, that's not going to happen.

Jason: [14:00]

That completely destroyed their dreams.



Mirjam: [14:06]

I would say if you show up and you do PR for a month and you put in, I don't know, 40 hours, okay. That's going to do less for you than committing to doing PR for I would say you have to commit to at least six months after six months. If you do it the right way, you're going to see results. And I would guarantee that. But you really only have to commit maybe 2 hours a week. If you do that consistently, you can see success. But then if you want to keep seeing success, you have to keep doing it. So PR, as is marketing, if you run a real business, it's something that you have to commit consistent time to. And that is a big struggle. It's like you actually don't have to hire a publicist that costs \$5,000 a month. That's the number I hear all the time. I mean, you can it's very easy to find one of those, but there's easy ways. I would sorry, Jason, and I would say it's simple, but not easy, but it's not easy. Right. But there's a simple way to do it. And that's what I teach interior designers, but it does require some level of effort, and it does require consistency. Right. And that honestly is key, because it's like building blocks. You start small and you keep building, building, building, and the longer you build, the more success you're going to have. And that can be difficult. But if you set yourself up the right way and you find a partner or a group that you can have accountability with, like I do in my membership, then that can really help you stay consistent over time. And I think as you start seeing the results, that also makes it easier because you're like, oh, my God, this actually works. Woho! You know, and it's so funny. When I have designers and they get even their first placement, it doesn't even have to be a big one. But it's like Christmas and your birthday combined. You get a lot of happiness hormones.



Jason: [16:31]

I love that. So, Maria, what I want to ask you is I get access a lot by new designers is how do you market yourself when you're new to the industry? Either you were working at a firm, now you're going out on your own, or you're just in another profession, and you just moved over to interior design. How do you make yourself marketable and novel when you don't really have the cloud you don't have, you don't have the history. You don't have a project.

Maria: [17:02]

You don't have to have a finished room to be seen as a really good designer. That's providing an excellent service. So put yourself in your homeowner's shoes or your business owners shoes. What do they need? What do they really need and deeply start to explore what that is and what they need is they need to understand what the design process looks like. And if you can clearly outline what your design process looks like in either social media or your website, and you can consistently show up providing a good level of service within that area of your desired expertise, then you will be seen as a good, strong designer that can accomplish complete and do something even without good photographs. So say, for example, if I wanted to just work on my own home, I could style and set up corners. I could begin going to artist Studios and borrowing artwork for photo shoots. I could have social media content of me meeting with really good artists and showing product that I find is good. Plus, placing it into spaces and then providing social media content for those artists who have for their websites and for their social media and all of those little things that can be done that are the design life. And if that can be represented in a way that shows that you're compelling and that you're interested and you're very, very considerate of the people that you work with and the consideration that you're taking in all of the details, then people will see that as part of who you are as a genuine, authentic experience. So maybe you put together room boards or a rendering of a space that you would create for yourself or for your own child or your parents.

**Maria: [17:02]**

Maybe one of the issues that you're thinking about right now is how are you going to handle your aging parents residents. What would you do if you were to redesign your childhood home right now to make it a better space for your parents? You can put those ideas together, those finishes, the colors. You can talk about why that project would be so compelling for you. And it doesn't matter if it never gets built or if it never gets done. We're still doing the design process, and you can still show that. And you can still represent it to people in a way that they can understand if you are communicating and producing what they want. And so just because the projects aren't getting completed, I mean, honestly, you could be hired by someone who has a big budget and they're a jerk. And they want to put together the Ugliest project in the whole entire world. And they can make your life miserable every day. And then they can fire you before you've gotten into photograph this ugly house that usually dedicated the last two years of your life on. And then you're standing there going, what did I do? I have nothing for my portfolio. But you were getting paid for those two years of design work. So it's best to always be putting together projects for yourself on the side. Maybe you do three options for a client, and they pick the third option. But, you know, one and two are good, too. Maybe you just shin those up a little bit more and talk about the talk about them with your audience, and just start looking at building your audience through these platforms that we have available to us. But don't be afraid to be a designer if you are one. This is not a question of if you're a designer and if you're designing things, it's a question of just showing up and presenting yourself and to people to be able to see you, that visibility of you being there. Those are all things that can be done.

Jason: [20:50]

I love that. Now I have to ask you about what you just said about the two years of the project. I heard the passion. So is that a story that you have?

**Maria: [20:59]**

Everyone has that story. Everyone has that story. I built my own personal residents. I had it on the AIA tour, and my husband left me with a newborn baby after I had moved into the house after four months. And I had to get all my stuff together, pack up, and move out of the house that I had just had photographed, featured on this tour and done all this. I work. There are no guarantee there is no one single project that's going to catapult and launch you into a whole new orbital space location of design expertise. It is solely what you do every day. It is the showing up every day. If you walk into a showroom and somehow your eye catches the most perfect amount of beauty, the most perfect amount of balance, and you can talk about it. You can explain why that would apply to someone else. And you can explain why you'd be solving someone's problem because you have a dog and that dog is causing problems. And this is how you handle it for your clients. There are so many things about being a designer and what we do in design that are not going to apply to the big fancy house only. And you can help people who are building the big fancy house and in talking to them, you can get them as your clients. I do know designers that don't like to be in homes with dogs because dogs scare them. And so if the recommendation, they'll ask, do you have a dog? And they'll go, I will put you with a designer that handles dog home issues. And I've worked with people before that asked me about how to deal with window coverings and cats, and I said, I'm sorry, I don't have a cat. And I don't help people with window coverings in cats. But I'm sure there's someone out there who has seen this issue and has dealt with it. And it can be as little as that. If you were the person that's providing a solution to a small thing that is pampering a lot of people's problems over and over again, you become an expert. You become the person that people come to and really want to know. How can I solve that problem? How did you fix the coffee bar situation in that space?

**Maria: [23:11]**

How did you add in a wine bar into your own house in an area we didn't even see that that would work. Or how do you set up your Med room so that your six or seven kids or maybe you don't have kids can be organized all things. People really want to know the media, too.

Jason: [23:28]

And this is exactly why I love having you on this podcast, because you can bring that real world experience and the passion anyone that was not watching it live, that you're only listening. You couldn't see Maria as she was explaining two years. I can tell. That's why I had to ask the question, because I knew it was an experience she has. So I appreciate that. One last question. What is one tip that you would hand designers to make them more marketable.

Mirjam:[23:57]

It's like I said, I think everybody is marketable, but start marketing yourself, start taking action. That's my one tip.

Maria: [24:07]

So my one tip would be figure out what you're really good at. And I'm not talking about that. You can make stuff look like what everybody else is putting out there, and you can style something in a way that's very appropriate. You kind of need to stand out and always remember, we had Johanna on one of our podcast and she said, Remember, show don't tell. And that's what we have to do is through our marketability is that we have to be showing people who we are and what it is that we can accomplish for them because interior designers are so valuable and important and such huge assets for people who are working on design projects. We provide so much comfort and safety and security that if you can just understand that that's who you are and show people safety, comfort, and security. You are going to be snatched up so far.



Jason: [25:09]

Also tied into that is knowing your audience, really knowing your audience. And the takeaway from this episode, if you look at the show notes, will have a downloadable exercise to help you define who your ideal client is. So that's going to be the takeaway from this episode so you can define who your ideal client is. Then you'll be able to execute what Maria said, what you bring to the table, and what helps you differentiate you from everybody else in the field. Tune in every week, we're going to bring you the information that will help take you to that next level. So we hope to hear you and see you next week.

Outro: [25:51]

We hope you enjoyed this episode of Designer Discussions. What was your takeaway? Care to share your thoughts and tag Jason, Maria, and Mirjam on social media, you can find them on all platforms at [DesignerDiscussions.com](https://www.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,
PR & BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT

