



Episode 16
Best Apps for Interior
Designers



**Maria: [00:00]**

Hi. Welcome to Designer Discussions today. We're going to talk about apps, tools and software that can help make your business more efficient. If you're looking to be more personally productive, maybe you have a team. You could be team free, whatever it is. Even if you're managing a larger team, we have some type of solution to help you.

Intro: [00:20]

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

Jason: [00:35]

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Maria: [00:40]

Okay, so, Mirjam, you are the productivity Queen, and you know all of the productivity apps and systems. So I'm Super excited to hear from you. What are some of the things that you are using to help you be more productive?

Mirjam: [00:58]

It's funny you say that I am so not the productivity Queen, but I'm working on it. Honestly, I'm always trying out new things, and I've tried out so many different things over the course of the last few years, and it's going to be interesting when I tell you what I ended up with that I'm using now, but there's definitely productivity apps like Asana or Trello or Base Camp. I used an app that's called Sunsama that I was very excited about because it integrates the Google calendar with Asana, and I thought it was the greatest thing since sliced bread until I realized how much work it is to set everything up and manage it.



Mirjam: [01:41]

Which is basically what I'm trying to say is that I think there's a lot of great apps out there, and they all do a lot of great things. But for me as a solopreneur, I ended up finding that it's not really working for me. So I went back to just using my Google calendar, and I use my Google tasks, so I Mark some of my emails, I turn them into tasks, and then I slide them into my calendar when I need to work on them. So it's very basic and it's all free, but that actually ends up being more helpful to me than using one of these big project management apps because it's all just me, and most of it mostly lives in my head anyway. And then the app doesn't know it, so it's not complete. So I just didn't find it to be super effective. However, when you're working with other people as a team, it's like when we work on this podcast, I don't think we could do it if we didn't have an app that keeps track of all the different steps. Right? And we use Aura, but there's a lot of other good ones that work. So like you said in the intro, I think it makes a big difference if you're just working for yourself or if you're working with other people, the team flow has to be visible to everybody. So on the productivity side that's it. My children think I'm nuts because I have so many apps on my phone. It's a little bit ridiculous, but I do use a lot of them. But I live and die by my Google calendar basically. Then I do use QuickBooks. I actually use QuickBooks self employed for my finances because it works really well. It does my mileage does everything like the scale back version of the Real QuickBooks, but I don't have to do sales tax, so that works for me. I use an app called Toggle to track my hours when I do client work, which that is helpful. I only use it half the time because I figure my service is more value based per hour based, but it actually works well if you really use it, those are my main ones, and I use a bunch of apps for personal development, like yoga apps and meditation apps, and I think that's part of personal and professional development.

**Mirjam: [04:12]**

So I wanted to mention it. I love the Chopra app there's inside timer. There's a ton of really good apps out there that can help you center yourself or your life as a solo printer. It's very boring, but sometimes it's my philosophy, and my entire business is I keep it simple, and I find that that's true for a lot of how you use apps as well.

Maria: [04:42]

I also think that software and programs are a lot like shoes, right? You've got sandals for when you need sandals, you've got boots for when you need boots, and you have high heels for when you need high heels. But you may not want to throw on high heels for your beach vacation. So what you want to do is understand when programs can help on a personal level, when it's just a one person shop, or maybe you're integrating a virtual assistant versus whenever you do have a larger team and you're needing to grow and you're trying to figure out how to scale your business. So some of the other things that I love.

Mirjam: [05:18]

We all know some shoes look really good, but are very uncomfortable.

Maria: [05:24]

And that's a lot of programs, right? I agree. So one of the things that I like to do is I like to use Canva. I think Canva has a free version. It helps to get all the graphic design stuff done, and it helps to look professional and get all of the graphics that I need completed without having to pay someone. I love using Fiverr for having just one extra person to take on a small task. You can get plans drawn up. You can get a couple of quick and easy solutions done online through Fiverr for just a couple of dollars.



Maria: [06:01]

And I also really love Etsy. Etsy is a game changer when it comes to understanding. You can buy business templates online for social media that are actually already done and completely branded for your business. And you're talking \$15 to \$24 for 50 or 60 templates for social media. And it's everything from ideas on how to present your business and how you could break it out to just even different styles and graphics for your business. And that is all a simple, easy solution that's available to us online. I also really love that I can find some of my first dibs vendors on Etsy as well. If I just research what type of item it is. Color type, size, that type of thing. I can usually find items that are being sold by the same vendors on both platforms. And so I do really like Etsy for some of those things for coming up on holidays or client gifts. Always look at vendors off of Etsy because they are not drop shipping product. They are making it. So if you find someone who is located here in the United States, you can get the product in and you can get it customized, which is awesome. So those are some of my favorite things I do hear from people all the time. They're like, What's the best time tracking app? What's the best mileage app so that I can have it running on my phone? Well, just like Marian said, you may not want to wear high heels on the beach or they're really uncomfortable, right? When you are running an app that is tracking everywhere you go and is running on your phone at all times, you will wear down your battery before the end of the business day where you may not actually be able to get all of your normal tasks that you need to do on your phone done. So if you can, I would love to hear from other people. Maybe you can leave comments on this podcast and let us know what is your favorite Mileage app? What is your favorite time tracking app? And then other people can look at those comments and get ideas on which ones are good for them. But once again, this is one of those things where you got to figure out what works for you. And the only way you can do that is by trying it out yourself. So one of my other favorite apps that I think every business person should have is audible.

**Maria: [08:23]**

Audible is the solution to those 20 minutes drives to a job site or your long tracks to the design center. Whenever you want to add on to your business tools, get Audible, download a book or two a month, and it will help your business to grow as much as it will help you to grow as a person.

Mirjam: [08:45]

What about podcasts?

Maria: [08:47]

Oh, my gosh, yes. And we love podcast, especially one other app I also like is slow dusk. So this is one of those things where you may love MailChimp and MailChimp is your jam, and you can make MailChimp work for you. But I would have an anxiety problem if I was forced to have to use MailChimp every day for the rest of my life. And I found that I actually really like Flodesk. It seems to be easy enough, user friendly enough, and I like how it's pretty. So how do you know what email program you would like to have your business? Look at the bottom of the emails that you get that you like. It will stay on the bottom made with Love by Flodesk. It'll say, serve to you from MailChimp. So start looking at what you are receiving from other people that you like and then determine if that's how you want to present your business and look into those elements to make things better for your business. One of the things that we use is called Ora, but it's technically a version of Trello. Trello is a great platform. It's like if you were to play a game of Solitaire by yourself and you have cards and you place them all in a certain order. Those are how your tasks are presented to you. And this is one of the best tools to starting yourself off with having a VA or even having a team because you are all working off of the same set of cards on the same board, but each person can move it and change it. Just like Facebook. You will be notified if someone Tags you in those posts.

**Maria: [10:20]**

So then you know what your to do list is on that. If you go onto the Trello website, we do have a template that's made called Interior Design Order Tracking, in case anybody wants to see what is a Trello template.

Mirjam: [10:37]

How does it work?

Maria: [10:38]

And this same Coven board or Common cardboard is the basis of other programs, and they just have different names. It's either Asana, it's Trello, it's Ora. It could be a lot of different things, and these are all the way that you can quickly, easily and for free. Start organizing your projects. So the big ticket everybody loves to talk about is what is your client management software? Which one is the best one? Well, there's like five or six. Now we recommend going online and looking at the manufacturer's comparison cards. They'll have some type of comparison. It's either a blog or it'll be a tab at the top of the website that will say these are the differences between and it'll be the difference between IV Studio Webware, Dubsado or programs like that. So what we would recommend is taking an opportunity to look at those, see what the differences are. And then also, if you could comment below in our podcast notes, what it is that you're using and what you love, maybe other people can try it out and figure out what's best for their business. But remember, it's going to depend a lot on the size of your business, the amount of people and how much money is running for your business. So when we're talking about project management, there are other programs out there that we've all seen in Advertisement for Monday 17 Hats Base Camp. Those types of programs and all of those are great click up that will help you to keep everybody in your office maintaining the same task. This is once you start having more people in your office and you're needing to manage and maintain that, everybody's on task and doing what they're doing and those become subscription, they're a little bit more expensive, but they're a great way to start getting everything organized and ultimately always go back to what Mirjam said.

**Maria: [12:28]**

If you have the item tasked and then placed on your calendar, then you have allotted time to complete it. If you do not allot the time to get the tasks done, it will not get done. And Google Documents, it's basic. It's out there. It's free. Everybody has it. It is a great resource because you can put together these larger files, these larger presentations, and you can share them with your client. They can look at these multiple page documents. They can look at your beautiful presentations, and they can access those files without having to have a Dropbox account or use one of the subscription style business platforms that are available out there for interior designers. So to save us all, we have Jason so he can help us to understand what is the best thing that we can do for our business.

Jason: [13:17]

Okay. I love how you say how I can save you. One of the websites that I would say that I would recommend to everybody out there is AppSumo, and we'll have the link within the show notes of this episode. But that is a website that developers go on where they develop new websites, new products, new services, and before it heads out to anybody else, they like to have it within AppSumo as a beta test. And so that's where they can get everything ironed out. They can get a lot of feedback from the end users to see what's working well, what's not. And usually they offer lifetime deals, so you can get software very cheap that you'll have lifetime access to. So this is what I like to tell people. There's an SEO software out there. I'm not going to name the name of the software that we use. That's very popular. We've had this software for four years. We're paying upwards of \$250 a month for this software for our clients. They had a deal on Appsumo seven years ago. I saw it, but I didn't know who they were, and we were using other products at the time.



Jason: [14:36]

And so I didn't know anything about who they were, what they were offering and what they have now on the software they did not have at the time. But one of the things between a good company and a great company is that they listen to the feedback of their consumers, of their end users and clients. And so they did that. And now they have one of the top SEO software out there that we use monthly. Like I said, we pay \$250 a month. So if I bought this seven years ago, we could have saved thousands, literally. And still, to this day, thousands of dollars because we're still using the same program that was on at some years ago, and we would have had a lifetime deal. So that's one of the websites that I recommend, because there's always new products that they have out there, new software, new apps that you get the first crack at seeing what they're offering. It may not turn into anything where after about a year or two, they may not do well, and they may have to close. But on the other end, you may have software that you use ongoing. And so Maria, she had talked about that. We're using Ora in place of, like the base camps and Asana because it does almost the same thing. But we have a lifetime deal. So I don't have to pay monthly. And so that's one of the products that we use. So that's why I say look at the show notes. We're going to have a link to it in there and just be prepared because they are going to email you and you can set the parameters on what are the type of software or what you're looking for in the software. So you won't get as many emails. But that's one of the few emails I open every day because I want to see what the new software is, what the new product is, because we may not use it, but it may be something that we can use that I can in Lu have a lifetime offer, as opposed to a monthly subscription. So that's what I was talking about.

**Maria: [16:36]**

I went on there and just searched words of programs that I currently use that I do have monthly subscriptions to, and I was able to find comparable programs to kind of help with some of that stuff. One thing I thought was interesting is that there's an AI writing software for copywriters called Jarvis and Mirjam. How much did you say that as a month, do you remember?

Mirjam: [17:02]

I mean, it's much cheaper than having a writer on staff. Right. But I think it's maybe close to \$100 a month, even. Right.

Maria: [17:14]

Well, so they have one on there now called Rytr, and it's R-Y-T-R. And it will prewrite blog posts, social media, that kind of stuff for you. And it's \$49 or \$39 for a lifetime subscription. So you can have access to some of these business tools. I did not find anything that was construction or interior design applicable on the website. I think, because most companies buy or make their own software, but you can find some of the other things. So if you know for sure, you really like to use Monday, but you are curious as to if there's something else out there that can do the same tasks but not cost as much. Just look it up and see if they have something on there and just check every couple of weeks. I like having my own software programs that I've prepaid for and I don't have to maintain a subscription model just because it ends up costing money and time in the long run.

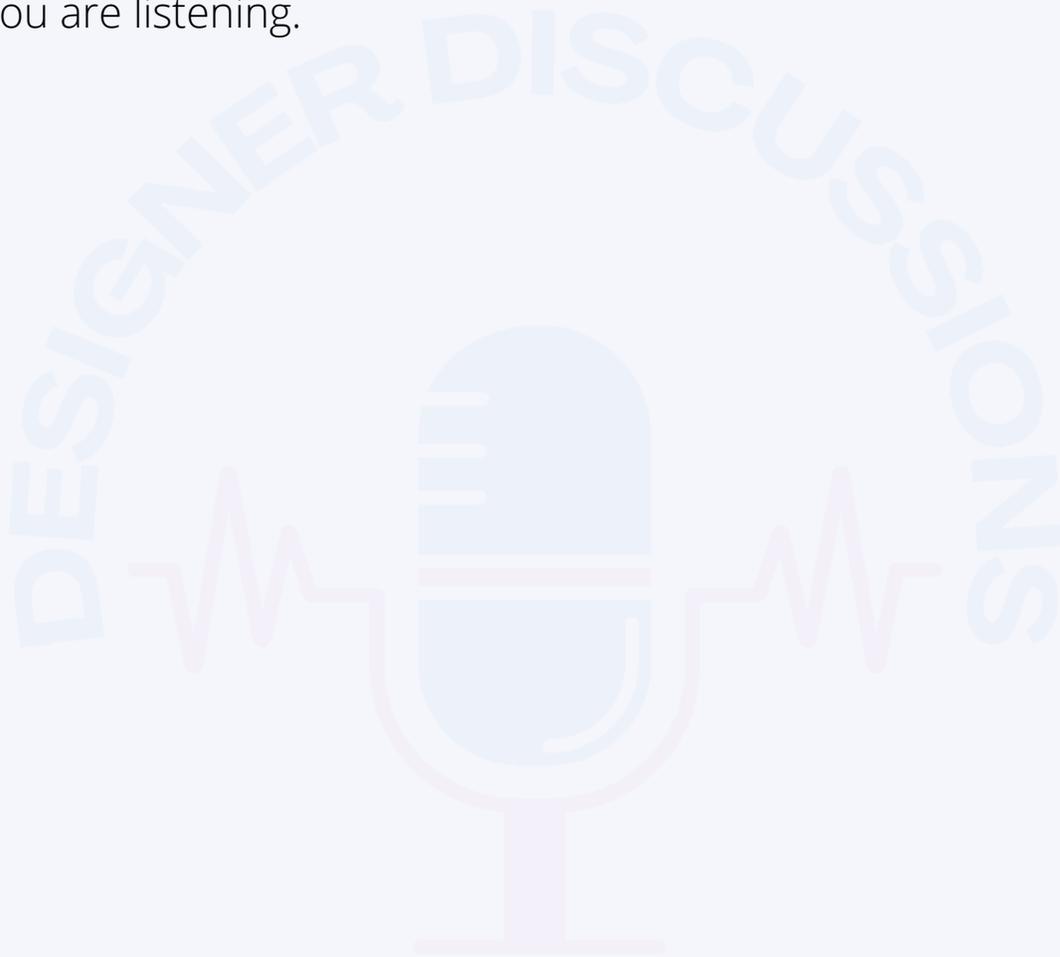
Jason: [18:15]

So hopefully you all gained a lot of good information from this episode and we're going to have a lot of the information that we have talked about today within the show notes. So we hope to see you all next week in design and discussions. This episode is brought to you by designappy a tile drawing app you didn't even know you need it on the ipad. Designappy.com.



Outro: [18:38]

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