

EP. 001 - HOW TO MAKE YOUR DESIGN BUSINESS STAND OUT

Kory - Alright, Krista this is our first episode.

Krista - I'm really excited, this is gonna be awesome!

Kory - Today, I wanted to kick us off by talking about something that I feel like a lot of designers are currently struggling with. Even I have been there. It's how to make their businesses stand out among the like 10,000 other designers that are out there right now so that they can start booking more clients and, hey, making more money.

Krista - Yeah, for sure. I've seen so many designers struggling with this. I think it's just because it seems like there are 100 new designers popping up every single day.

How do you set yourself apart from that? So this is a good one. This is something a lot of people struggle with.

Kory - Yeah, that is kind of where this idea came to me. I had two recent coaching calls and both of them were saying, "Hey, I'm putting myself out there but I'm not getting any inquiries and I'm not booking any projects."

It's because the market is super saturated. The main thing that I told both of them is that it's really just about making their businesses stand out. So that's what we're going to be digging really deep into today.

Like you were saying, the market is so saturated. I don't know if you've noticed this, but one thing that I have for sure noticed is it seems like someone will post a request for a designer in a Facebook group and literally, less than 20 minutes later, there's like two hundred people who have commented.

Krista - It is insane. That would feel so sad - like you weren't on Facebook for ten minutes and you just missed this opportunity for a client because 500 people already posted.

Kory - Not only that, but I can't imagine how overwhelming it is for the person looking for a designer. They're like, "There are too many to choose from!"

Krista - Yeah, and with that, seriously how do you make yourself stand out to them and catch their eye? Seems impossible.

Kory - Exactly. So the one thing that I have learned is that it's really about making you and your services both stand out from everyone else. So yes, you may be offering the same exact services as 1,500 other designers, but you are different. Our personalities

are different and we're interested in different things. Usually that means that our services are a little bit different and how we work is a little bit different.

So one of the things that you can start with is thinking about the most obvious, like how what you offer your clients is different.

We may all offer branding, but we may all include a little bit something different. So think about whether you include something that others don't. For example, I like to think you could line up 25 designers and they all offer branding. They say they all offer the same thing, so when you take a deeper look into what they are actually offering, designer #1 may only offer a logo and designer #2 may offer a logo, business cards, social media templates, and everything under the sun. And it's those extra things that you offer in your packages and in your services that really can start to set you apart.

I think a lot of designers forget that, yes I am another designer, but I'm giving you more bang for your buck because I'm including so much more in my packages.

Krista - Yeah, and I'm wondering if something that holds people up from doing that when they're creating packages is when you're offering graphics and whatever else, you have to increase your prices a little bit to account for that. Some people are probably scared that if they do that, they're not going to get any clients just because their prices are higher.

Kory - Yeah, I don't necessarily think that you have to go crazy above and beyond and increase your prices. I think it's about including things like templates or something that may take you literally five minutes to create, but it would take your client five hours to create. You can throw that in there and increase your prices by like five or ten dollars. Something really little so you're adding that extra thing, but you're not increasing your prices by two hundred dollars because you're including business cards, for example.

Another way that I think you can really think about how your business stands apart from other designers is to dig into how your process is different. I know I have talked about this before, probably on a Facebook Live somewhere, but one of those coaching clients that I was thinking about earlier, when I was on Skype with her and going over her questionnaire we were talking about the fact that she presents one logo option to her clients. I follow a ton of designers, but there is only one other designer out there that I have seen that also does that. So this is so different.

Have you heard of anyone else offering anything like that?

Krista - I haven't heard of anybody. I think that's awesome!

Kory - Yeah, exactly. So, let's be honest, that is a huge difference. But even if you have a smaller difference in what you're doing for your clients or your process, you really have to play those things up on your website and on social media. So a couple other examples are, I know that some newer and less experienced designers are probably are

not doing all of the research into your target market and your competitors and that kind of thing.

Another example is, and I'm kind of scared to admit this because I don't want all of our listeners to come and yell at me, but I do not sketch anything before I start on a project. I know there are some designers that do. They swear by picking up a pencil and working out the project on paper before they open Illustrator. Those kind of things really can make you stand apart.

Can you think of anything else that would make a designer maybe stand apart that you know not all designers do?

Krista - I love my designer. She did an amazing job, but something that would have had someone with a similar design aesthetic stand out from her, was if I could tell I would be more involved with the process and it would be more personal and fun for me. Instead of just filling out a questionnaire and then, "Okay, I'll hear from you in two weeks." Even that side of things, it doesn't have to be what's included in your package, but how involved is your client going to be?

Some people would love to be able to chat with you a couple times or, I guess, I don't really know specific examples of where that extra involvement could come in, but when you can make it a more personalized approach some people are going to love that. Some people might not as much, but that's totally fine. I think even differences like that could help people stand out a lot.

Kory - Yeah, exactly. I think that's a really great point. Your designer, she took on the majority of the project for herself and there are other designers who have a call with their clients every step of the way. So that's something else that could make her stand apart in a good way or in a bad way, however your potential clients are looking at it.

So just one last example that I have, and I have to throw this in because I'm talking to you, Krista. If you know strategy when you're working on your websites for your clients, then you also have to play that up. I think you should play that up on social media. Talk about it everywhere on social media, really get into it and explain why you do it that way. Tell people, "Hey, I am way better than all these other people and here's why." So kind of really dig into that, but also play that up on your website.

If you are not telling people that you are different for these reasons, how the heck are they going to know?

Krista - Exactly, it needs to be highlighted absolutely everywhere. Especially your services page. I know a lot of designers focus on things like, "Here's what it's going to look like. It's going to look like this awesome thing." But that's not something you should focus on.

Whenever you want to mention how something's going to look, instead you should be mentioning that one thing that sets you apart. When you mentioned strategy, you know it's going to look great, but your business is also going to grow because of this and you're going to see an increase in conversions because I do it this way. That's what's important. Not the way things are going to look, people can see that in your portfolio.

Kory - That's a really good point. People can see what your work looks like in your portfolio.

In the past, I have had whole process page. Some designers have that, some people don't. I've since gotten rid of mine, but that's another good place to explain what you do, explain how you do it differently, and why it's so much better. Not only can this make you stand out, but it's going to make people want to work with you even more.

They're going to hear about your process and they're going to get really excited. When you are talking about your stuff, be it in written text or facebook live for example, and really talking about what you do and you're getting excited explaining your process, those are the things a potential client is going to say, "Hey, that girl was so different. She did something totally different I'd never seen before, but she was so excited about the project." And that's going to make that potential client remember you and want to hire you.

Krista - Yes that's a very good point, I love that.

Kory - So one other thing is, I have to say I think not enough people do this, is to not forget about you in your business. My heart is like breaking as I bring this up, but I feel like a lot of times people aren't putting enough of themselves into their businesses.

It kind of makes their potential clients connect with their business, but not really connect with them. I think you need to have both of those connections to really build trust and encourage people to reach out to you and want to work with you.

Krista - I think maybe a struggle that a lot of new designers have is they don't know how to do that. That's something I struggled with forever. Everyone saying stuff like, "Infuse yourself into your website and your blog posts" and I'm like, "What the heck does that mean?"

But again I'll go back to my designer for my website. She brought up a lot that she was a circus performer and she does this acrobatic type dance stuff. I was like, "That is awesome, she is amazing!"

She had my attention more than someone would where I don't even see a picture of them on their website. So I think little things like that, where you might not think of including it on your website, make a big difference.

Kory - I have another thing to add on your website specifically. One way you of infuse yourself and make yourself stand out in this crazy market of designers, is to make sure you are writing content from from you. I think a lot of people write blog posts and they write them from this this place where it has to be really professional and rigid and they can't say certain things because it's the internet.

It's your business. If you want to cuss, go on ahead and cuss. You may offend people, but those aren't your people. Like you Krista Rae, if you want to use hot pink everything all over your website - do it, go for it. This is your business.

I always catch myself doing that too. Where I have to go back and say something with a couple extra vowels in the word, something like that. Where it's like "so" or it's "soooooo". Little things like that seems so insignificant, but it is a good way to kind of build your voice and your personality.

Another thing that you can do is show off who you are on Instagram. I know I keep bringing up Instagram, but I think that's where everyone is hanging out right now, aside from Facebook groups.

But don't be afraid to show more than just the perfect flatlay. Show your pet, show you running an errand, show whatever it is you can show. Things outside of just this perfect flatlay. And I have to say, I'm so guilty of that as well. If you go and scroll through my Instagram right now, which don't do it because you might judge me, a lot of my pictures are the perfect flatlay. But when you can share other things that meet and match that aesthetic that you already have going, it is a really good way to say, "Hey, I'm Kory and I care about my dog and I like going to the beach with my husband and like these kind of things."

If it doesn't match your aesthetic, sometimes I'll just throw things like in the Instagram story instead to still get it out there, but not ruin this really beautiful feed that I'm probably too obsessed with keeping perfect.

Krista - I do the same thing with Instagram stories. Like this morning. I woke up to a snowstorm and I was like, "dang I got to get my butt to the gym before this it's really bad and I want to take a picture of it because it hasn't snowed in a couple of weeks." I was like, "Well this doesn't fit my feed at all, so I just threw in a story."

But something I've done before too, if I want it to stick around for more than that 24 hours, is I'll just put it in my feed and then delete it after a couple days. Then it was there, people saw it, and then it's not messing things up.

Kory - Yeah, and not only that but just kind of throwing extra different and new things into your feed is also a really good way to see what your people will respond to. You may think everyone is going to unfollow me if I post this picture of like the snow, but then you post it and you have the most likes ever. That might be something crazy that happens.

And then you're like, "Oh okay, so everyone loves the snow as much as I do. Now I can put this in my Instagram feed like three months out of the year when we get a blizzard."

It's like I was saying, I think there is this stigma online about how your audience and your potential clients don't care about you, the business owner, or you, the actual human being answering emails and doing the work. But I don't believe that at all.

I would probably never hire someone if I didn't at least kind of know them, you know? If I didn't have an idea of who they were as a person. So aside from what we've already talked about, I think you can share your background. Do you have 20 years of design experience? That is freaking amazing. Share that. Show that off.

What causes do you care about? This is something else that I think not enough people talk about. When you share things like if the ASPCA makes your heart melt and you donate money to them every single month, then share that. You may have a potential client who also cries when those depressing commercials come on TV during the day and they'll be like, "Yes we agree on something and I definitely want to work with them."

Or even something back to your business, like why do you work with your niche? Why do you care about fellow business owners or health care professionals or whatever?

I'm curious, do you think there's any other way that we could make ourselves stand out online, other than through the blog post or through these random things we're telling people to post on Instagram?

Krista - Something that's made people stand out to me is people that are extra helpful. I guess I'm thinking of Facebook groups off the top of my head. I'm not a designer, but when I was looking for an assistant developer, the first person I went to was someone I had seen jumping in to help people who had questions in Facebook groups. Same thing for designers. The ones that we all think about when it comes to Facebook groups, they're always willing to give their opinion on something and help people out. Just becoming known for what you do and for being a good, helpful person is another way you can make yourself stand out apart from your website and regular social media postings.

Kory - I definitely agree with that. I think you can really show your expertise and give away value by giving, giving, giving, giving, giving. And one of those things is by answering questions on social media. I don't know about you guys, but the Facebook groups I'm in, I feel like people are asking design questions all day long. That is a really good place to jump in and share some of your knowledge.

No, not every single person will hire you, but that's still a good way to get your face out there. Because if there is one thing I've learned from you in the past six months Krista, it is that the more you have your face showing up out there, the market will know you and the better it works for your business.

Krista - Yup, we tested that out and it's a go, guys! Go for it!

Kory - Yep even I am working on that.

Krista - Even if the specific person you help in the group isn't going to hire you that is totally okay because other people are watching. When they go, "Oh, this looks like an interesting thread" and they go through and see your face in a whole bunch of them, you are sticking out to them. Next time they need a designer, you are one of the first people in their mind too.

So if you feel like answering a question won't do anything for the person you're helping, that is totally ok it can still benefit you.

Kory - I definitely agree with that.

The next part of all this is how the heck do you tell your clientn "Hey, I'm different! Look at me over here with my little sign! I'm out here!"

We've already kind of talked about this, but the number one way that we've both said is your website. Don't forget that at the end of the day, everyone who finds you on social media or in person are landing on your website. You have to take them from landing on your homepage to wanting to work with you.

So a couple of places that I think you can really let your potential clients know how different you are is number one, on your homepage. A lot of people right now have that full-width header with a button to click to go somewhere. It's such a good place to tell people right off the bat who you are and what it is you do. Maybe even who you work with and kind of lead them to your About page or something like that. I have to say, people may not think that that's as effective, but I have noticed over the past couple months of testing out having a couple different things in my header call to action area, if you have something there, people are going to click on it. It doesn't really matter what it is, most people are going to click on it just to see where the heck that button is going to take them.

Krista - Yep, are they being brought to a page? Is it a pop-up form? What are they going to get?

Kory - I know that you're the resident strategist here Krista, so what else can they put on their homepage? Even to make them stand apart from other designers.

Krista - Number one, a picture of your face. Please include a picture of yourself. I actually was just scrolling through a designer's site today and the first picture I came across was with a testimonial. I was like, "Oh, this is what she looks like! Oh wait, no this is some totally random person that has nothing to do with this designer."

Kory - Awkward.

Krista - Please make sure the first image of a person on your website, especially your homepage, is you. It's such a great way to draw people in to you and your personality and the fact that you're a person and not a website right off the bat.

Kory - The other page that I would say is your Services page. Explain why your services are better than everyone else's. Explain why you are better than everyone else. Why is your process cooler and more beneficial to your clients?

I don't know about you guys, but sometimes that feels really uncomfortable to me. I am not naturally comfortable shouting from the rooftops about how cool and awesome I am. So I can probably guarantee most people aren't uncomfortable doing that normally. But you have to remember that if you don't tell your clients these things, then otherwise they legitimately are not going to know.

Krista - I would actually challenge anyone listening to take a look at your Services page and make sure you're talking more about how you and your services are different than what they're going to be getting. People know what a logo means, you don't need to sit and explain all of that. Tell them why they should be booking you and what's making you different. That's what you want to be highlighting.

Kory - For sure. So if you go and do that be sure to come back and tell us so we can check it out and we can shout about you from the rooftops about how awesome you are.

The other place you can talk about how different you are and let your potential clients know is definitely social media. I touched a little bit on this before, but one way to do this is to literally give them a glimpse into your process.

I know the majority of the designers that I follow show off the finished product or sometimes they show off a moodboard. But rarely, if ever, do you see the steps in between those two places. And that's the very beginning and the very end of the project. There is a lot that goes into these middle steps, especially if you are pulling out a piece of paper and sketching stuff. So show that off.

You don't even have to necessarily show pictures of it. Sometimes I think we're like, "But my sketches are so ugly no one is going to like this." You can even just talk about it in your captions and say, "Today I am researching this potential client's competitors and this is why it's so important to do in my process. And hey, by the way, if you think this is something you want me to do for you and you also need design work, here I am. I'm different. Hire me."

Krista - I think that's probably just as, if not more effective than, say, showing the sketches. If someone was out there saying something like, "Hey, I'm sitting here researching competitors for a client today", that stands out to me. You don't see people doing that. You don't hear about them doing that. So things like that definitely stand out.

Kory - I don't hear people talking about researching color or target markets or even literally sketching. You don't have to show your ugly sketches. Talk about how you're sketching. That is a really amazing thing that we were forced to do in my design program that I went to in college. Because I hated it so much I don't do it anymore, but I saw the value in it.

And if there is a design professor out there of mine that somehow is listening to this, I am begrudgingly admitting that I see the value in doing that. There is value in doing that and your clients want to know that. Sharing these things, that you're researching or sketching or all this other crap that you're doing, it really is showing your potential clients that you care. It is saying, "I am not just putting together a logo and hoping that it works for you and the people you're trying to attract to your brand." You're saying, "I really care about your brand and your success and so here is how I am helping you."

Krista - That is such a good point. Something else I just thought of is when you're sharing stuff like that on social media, the client you're doing it for is also watching and that is super fun for them to see. Seeing you talking about their project on social media. They feel like they're so cool, they're such a fun client for you to have, and they love working with you. So it is good for your current client as well as people who could hire you in the future.

Kory - The other thing that I went ranting on a little bit earlier is to share you. Share yourself. Share what you like.

You don't have to get super personal. I am not telling you to take a picture of yourself unshowered, in pajamas, and post it on Instagram and say how you're feeling that day. That might be a little bit too personal for all of us.

But give your audience a real idea of who you are and what you really care about. Like I was saying earlier, share pictures of your pets. Share pictures when you go somewhere with your spouse. If you're reading a really good book that will somehow relate. Little things like that.

I really love seeing this, especially from people who I admire from afar and I've been following them for a while. I like to eat those things up. I'm like, "Whoa that's so cool" or "Oh my gosh, they recommended a new book, I have to go to Target right now and buy that."

Krista - Yeah, totally. I love seeing stuff like that too. It's so fun to have a new way to feel connected to someone. It's fun to see those little things that shouldn't matter, because they really do.

Kory - Yeah, I think it can really help you build a good connection with these people. When you have a connection with your audience, with your potential clients, they are

going to be more likely to come to you than any of the other random designers who are commenting on their Facebook posts.

So just to wrap everything up that we've talked about today, remember that to make your design business stand out and help you book more projects and make more money (because we all care about that even if we pretend that we don't), you really have to play up that difference.

Really examine what you do differently. Take a look at other people's Services pages.

Even if you don't think you do something differently, I can almost guarantee you that you do. There is something about you, yourself, or your business and process that you do differently.

People will be more likely to remember you, want to work with you, and want to hang out with you online. Even if they don't need you, they will be more likely to refer you if they know more about you and if they know that your business is really stellar.

So homework from this episode. Did anyone else groan in school when their teacher said something about homework? Because that was definitely me.

Krista - You would hate me, I loved homework.

Kory - Oh my gosh you're such a nerd.

Okay so homework. Number one, really take a look at your business and figure out what makes you different. I challenge you to do this. List out the steps that you take in your process. List out what you offer to your clients and how you go above and beyond. That really matters to your potential and current clients as well.

Step number two, start letting people know. Put it on your website, start talking about it on social media, whatever is your thing. Share in blog posts, in your newsletter, whatever it is - start letting people know in a non-icky way that you are different and why you are so cool and so awesome.

Once you start doing that definitely feel free to let us know because I would love to shout out from the rooftops about how awesome you are.

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