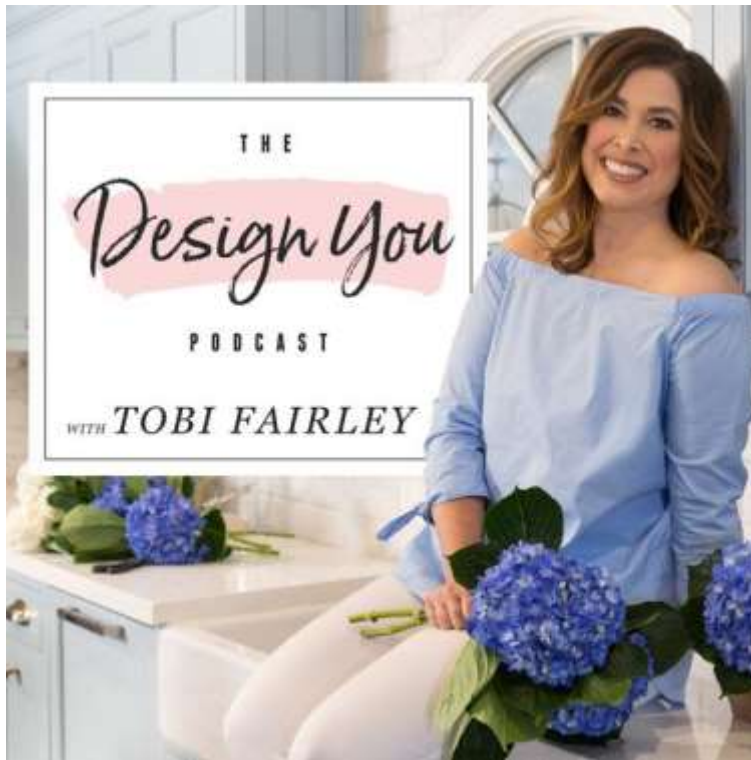


Ep #131: Why You Should Niche with Jill Kalman



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Tobi Fairley

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Ep #131: Why You Should Niche with Jill Kalman

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 131.

Welcome to the *Design You* podcast. A show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth and joy. Here's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey friends. So we're continuing our fun little series that I've loved so much with our *Design You* members. And today we have Jill Kalman. So you're going to love Jill if you are in the process of either building a business, or tweaking your business and doing fun things, because we talk about a lot today, which I'll tell you about in a minute.

But let me first just tell you about Jill. She's an interior designer, was raised in a family owned antique and auction business. And so she grew up like some of the rest of us in these creative industries, constantly surrounded by furniture, and art, and textiles, and décor, which was really great for her. But she ended up moving into other careers, in corporate sales, and marketings and other things, including sales and marketing for brands like Tiffany & Co and Neiman Marcus, really cool.

But her true passion was always interior design. So she went back to school and completed a design program and started her own firm. Now, when Jill and I met about going on two and a half years ago probably, and she came to *Design You*, she was really starting to think differently about her business. And that's what we talk a lot about today. So we talk about how she picked a very specific niche, and wait till you hear it. It's like she had a crystal ball. She picked it – I don't know – 18 months or so before the pandemic but it was the right place at the right time. You're going to love it.

And since then she has created amazing unique services, she started the podcast. She's getting ready to create a scalable course which she's super excited about. And we talk all about her thinking through this whole process and what has really worked for her. So I know you'll enjoy this episode. It's super inspiring. I love Jill's no nonsense approach to just leaping and doing

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things that she's excited about, and allowing herself to succeed there and to be fulfilled in the process. So enjoy my episode with Jill Kalman.

Tobi: Hey, Jill, welcome to the *Design You* podcast.

Jill: Hey, Tobi.

Tobi: This is going to be a fun one. It's going to be a fun one. Yeah, you just started telling me a story that you're like, "I can tell this story." And I was like – you told me one sentence and I'm like, "Wait, wait, wait, tell it on the podcast. Tell it on the podcast." Okay, so first tell everybody a little bit about who you are and then let's get into the story. Because I'm dying to hear the rest of it and I know everybody's going to love the story too.

Jill: Yeah, absolutely. I'm an interior designer in Connecticut, residential. And I had primarily been helping people and families moving from major city to the suburbs. We live in a bedroom community of New York City. So there were a lot of people coming to my area because at the time I was doing full service design where I just only go to your house. So in my area, those were the people that I have been helping. And I've been doing design now for about 15 years and I love it, yeah.

Tobi: Okay. So you were telling me a story that three or four years ago, set the scene and you tell us kind of how that was going, because it was leading you, you were telling me what working with me and *Design You* has kind of shifted for you. And you started telling the story, so get everybody up to speed on the story.

Jill: Totally. So here's the story. About a couple of years ago before I found out about *Design You*, I'm in my office one day. I have three of us working in here and we're working on all these projects. And we're putting in so much time on custom orders and doing all this ordering. And every client, no matter the budget, people who had big budgets, they are still shopping us all over the internet. We're spending so much time on these orders. I

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mean I've got one person just manning the orders all day. Because as you know we've got to follow up with the vendors, babysit the order.

So anyway I look at everybody and I'm like, "What are we doing? Wouldn't it be better if I just charge for the design? And we put the room together and then let them have at it and shop for it. We'll tell them where to go buy everything." And everybody turned to me and looked at me and said, "You are crazy."

Tobi: And this was your team, your team?

Jill: Yeah. They were like, "You're crazy. That'll never work. That's just crazy, why would you do that?" I'm like, "Yeah, but look at where everything's going, look at what's happening. And it's frustrating for the customer and it's frustrating for us." And they were just like, "You're crazy." So of course I thought well, I guess I must be crazy, but something...

Tobi: But maybe Tobi's also crazy.

Jill: But something deep within me was like I knew I wasn't. And then I came across one of your webinars, I think through Instagram. And I think it was about you don't have to purchase anymore, basically was, right?

Tobi: I think it was the one that was about, is this the end of interior design or something like that.

Jill: Yeah, because I had been thinking about it on a lot of different levels for a while. And I was listening to you and I was like okay, I'm not crazy. This lady gets it. She understands. And I said, "This is it, I'm turning right now, I'm making this change now," because as we've discussed, that whole custom ordering and all that, unless it's the right Unicorn client, it doesn't make a lot of sense. And even when it is, you've got to decide that you want to do that, it's a big commitment.

Tobi: Yeah. So that was about probably, when I taught that webinar I feel like it was October of 2018.

Jill: I think that's right.

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Tobi: So almost two years ago.

Jill: Yeah, I think that's about right.

Tobi: So I don't remember exactly how long you've been in *Design You*. But you've been here a while, kind of almost from the beginning.

Jill: About two years, yeah.

Tobi: Yeah, almost from beginning. So way before a pandemic, way before a recession, way before all the stuff, you were already onboard, you knew this was right for you. And you a head start on the pandemic, which is beautiful because a lot of people that still are having things now, may be leading them to shift. They're still nervous about it. They're not doing it by choice. The rug kind of got yanked out from under them.

And that's why I love telling this story about you, because you were literally well over a year, like a year and a half prior to the pandemic and you were just saying just like me, "I'm seeing what's happening, I'm seeing where things are going. And I'm going to consciously step off of the traditional method of running my design business and I'm going to start running it in a different way and create other revenue streams. And start showing up in a way that is a little contrary to what I've always been taught about how this industry works," right?

Jill: Yeah, completely. Completely.

Tobi: Yeah. Okay, so what happened? So tell everybody, so – well, first of all, also in *Design You* because it's what we believe, which is so funny. I mean honestly, wait till people here the niche you picked and how also it was – it's literally like you are – I don't know. Anybody that's thinking about betting you might want Jill to pick your numbers for you.

Jill: I'm clairvoyant.

Tobi: You are because your niche, or niche, if you want to call it that, this whole being able to see, and I'm a futuristic thinker as well. So we're similar in that. But you did a really, really clever job of picking both. But is that

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where you started when you got in *Design You*? Was it first I want the scalable product thing? And even if that was the first step we then have you start with your niche. So how did that work for you?

Jill: Yeah. I mean so I feel like the first thing you really do is you start with the niche. And that really is where you do need to start, because you need to think, okay, who am I talking to? Because you want to craft your services around who you're talking to along with a lot of other things. So as we were talking about that, and as you know when you first start *Design You*, that feels like the hardest thing. People seem to be afraid of it. They want to run away from it. I had my hesitations too about just questioning it.

Once you actually put yourself out there and talk about it, and it could just be a simple post on social media. You can't imagine the impact it has when you're actually talking to your audience versus just trying to appeal to everybody. It's huge.

Tobi: Okay. So you had this kind – I remember us going back and forth and you're right. The first thing you do is freak out, it feels scary, I'm going to cut all these other people off as possibilities, which we remind everybody. It's like the world's best client comes to you that's not in your niche, you can always still say yes. But the whole point of it is to really craft a very specific marketing strategy.

So you're pretty much all the time talking to a very specific group of people. And how did that look for you? Did you just kind of know or was this the people – were you saying, "Well, my best clients in the past were these people?" How did you get to the niches that you picked? And then tell everybody what it is.

Jill: Yeah. So it was a combination of like you said who are your best clients, because before I met you I was working with a great web designer. And it was sort of like doing a little bit of psychology for my business. And one of the big things was who have been your best clients and why? And who have been your worst, because it's like who to talk to and that type of thing. So yes, they had been my best. And then when I really thought about

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all the clients I've helped, they were all young families moving from a major city to the suburbs.

And so I thought, I think that could be it, because I really understand the challenges that they face, it's different than just somebody else. They have a different set of challenges they're coming into it with.

Tobi: They're not just buying a house from across town. They literally are uprooting their entire life and moving it to a different way of living, from the city to the suburbs, yeah.

Jill: Yeah, it's a whole other lifestyle. It's a whole other set of fears. It's a whole other set of, oh my gosh, I have to get in my car and drive my kid to this class. Even a simple thing as they're used to pushing the stroller on the streets and walking, having to get in the car and buckling the kids in every time. It's a big change for them. And I knew about all this because I heard all this. And when you're doing full service, I'm doing a whole house anywhere between 18 months and two years, depending on what's happening in the house.

And so you really get to know the family and the kids, and really hear the sound bites of what's happening. So I thought that really is who I've been helping, that's who I understand. That's where I'm going to start. That seems to be the place to start, that's what I know.

Tobi: Yes. So a year and a half pre pandemic you create a business to help people move from the city to the suburb. And then the pandemic hits and everybody is like, "I've got to move from the city to the suburb now." So clairvoyant, right place right time, whatever you want to call it. You literally had been building this for over a year so you were ready to go when – it's kind of like Leap and the Net Will Appear. But what was it, what was the work you did? Maybe what was it about Design You, was it all the mindset stuff we do?

What was it that allowed you to think this thought I think this is my niche? I don't have any evidence now, there's not a mass exodus at the moment

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necessarily, but I just know these are my people and I'm just going to go all in and start talking to them and building this as my business, as my core business.

Jill: Yeah. So two things allowed me to trust that, one was when I was in design school I had an amazing mentor who ran the program. And he even used to say, sometimes you were given a project where you had to come up with the concept pretty quickly, it was for your free project that you were going to do for the end of the year. And he used to say, because even that you would come up with it, and then you'd want to question it and change it midstream. And if you did that you wouldn't have enough time once you had to get up and present it.

And I remember him saying, "Pick it and go with it, make it work. Pick it and go with it." And so that resonated with me. But what helped me overcome all my fears about it and the questioning about it was the mindset work that I did with you in *Design You*. Because it made me realize how we so often say we feel stuck, we feel overwhelmed. We get that feeling of well, why should I do that or what if it doesn't work? I mean 18 million things come into your head to beat you up.

And I realized that that was just a made up story my mind was telling me to keep me comfortable and safe, because that's what our minds want to do.

Tobi: Yes, totally, why would we go do something? Even though we're not necessarily meeting our goals, or hitting our financials, or whatever. And we're here for a reason, to make a change. So often we talk ourselves out of change. And we have all the reasons. We can find all kinds of confirmation bias to stay right where we are, which is crazy. We're like, I'll hire a coach. I'll join a coaching program. I'll read a book. And then I'll not do any of the things because like you said, we won't just pick it and go with it. And we'll second guess it forever, and so many people did that.

We even have had people in *Design You* do that, that saw you start when you started. And then when the recession hit they're like, "Why did I not do

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like Jill and just go with something, because I would already have it rolling now?" And here she is prepared for this shift, right?

Jill: Yeah. Now, you have to just win the niche, you can't over-think it too much. And I'm not suggesting somebody pick a niche and then they have to put so much money behind it with all these programs. You've got to even just pave the way to your audience and start talking about, "Hey, guess what I'm working on?" And even from that you're going to find people get back to you and be like, "This is so cool. And I'm a mom," whatever. Or, "I'm moving to the suburbs and maybe you can help me." It doesn't take an investment of money for you to do that.

I'm working on my scalable right now and I feel really behind because of the tech and I'm not sure, whatever. But I've started to put out stuff on my Instagram to say, "Guess what's coming to you soon?" And I've taken polls. And you've got to just put it out there. And once you put it out there too, you feel like, it sort of validates that you're doing it once you say it out loud and say it out loud on social.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that.

Jill: So I just recommend putting up a darned post and saying, "I help busy working moms," whatever, or whatever your niche is. Put it out, put it out and go all in with it.

Tobi: I love it. And I think that that's one of the things you did so, so well, because you did, you're like here you are two years later. You haven't even really finished your scalable thing, although we're going to talk about in a minute. You did create some specific offers and ways of working with these people moving that were design only, which was perfect for the pandemic.

But what I loved about you in watching you is you were like, okay, I decided yesterday. And literally the next day or even that night, I see, I'm following you on Instagram and I see you saying, "Moving to the suburbs? We're blah, blah, blah." And it's so refreshing because so many people will think about it for months, or years, or they'll even put something almost cryptic of

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like, “Any big changes happening in your life, let me know.” Or, “Isn’t this a pretty room in the suburbs?”

And they think you’re going to read their mind or whatever. And you just were like let me be as explicit as possible and connect the dots. And you just immediately started embracing it from literally the day you decided, right?

Jill: Yes. Yes.

Tobi: Yeah, so good. You would make graphics, you would make all kinds of stuff, you jumped right in, speak to that a little bit. How did that work?

Jill: Well, once I just sort of said it, all these ideas came to my mind. And it was like we should do a post about this. I should do a post about that. So much just came to me that was organic. And that’s the other thing, it makes it so much easier to pivot and do this once you say it. So much will naturally come because I’ve found that almost all of these niches that we all have, there is so much you can address with it. There’s so much to talk about. There’s so much you can provide.

And so once you say it, it literally kind of just opens up this door, or it’s like water’s pouring out and you’re like, “Oh wow, I could do this, I could do that.” So the ideas just kept coming to me.

Tobi: Yeah, I think it’s through the taking of the action that they start to come, because we have people also that will sit kind of for a while, and they’ll marinate, and not that you have to be in a huge hurry, necessarily. But I do watch people marinate, second guess too long, and they assume that theirs is not as good as yours say. And they’ll be like, “I wish I had a niche like Jill’s.” And I’m like, “Well, if you’d start talking about it, you would,” because it truly is in the taking of the action that it develops.

So when you started to put those posts out, did people just immediately, did they start either commenting or DMing you? What did that look like? And then all of a sudden you get more and more info and feedback and it actually guides you down the path, right?

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Jill: Yeah. I mean I had a woman reach out to me even last week and she's like, "I've been following you on Instagram forever. And we moved from Brooklyn to the suburbs of New York in Chappaqua, in the country. And I've been here two years but I'm still having challenges. And I'd love to set up a call with you." I had another person say, "I've been listening to your podcast and I think you can help me. I am still feeling a lot of challenges getting my home set up here in the suburbs and with the lifestyle."

So once you put all your communication out there and you really own it, and that's that whole thing about being in authority. You have the knowledge, you have the expertise and you can help people. And I also really love helping people. I love teaching, I love helping, I get a lot of satisfaction of you come to me for something and I'm able to give advice, that's really good for you and it helps you. I get a lot of satisfaction out of that, I feel good that I was able to help.

Tobi: Yeah. I noticed you doing that as well from the beginning, which is what I do too, is you're like, "Let me do some research." Because even before the pandemic hit, you were finding articles and things about the real estate market and other things that were giving you confidence to say, "This many people are moving." Or, "This is how people are thinking about things." And you were just the same way we can find all this confirmation bias that we shouldn't make a change.

Depending on the lens you're looking through you were able to instantly start finding support for the things you were thinking. And that gave you fodder for your Instagram, then you decided to create a podcast, which I love. And you didn't say interior design podcast with an episode about the suburbs. It is literally called Welcome to the Suburbs, right?

Jill: It is. And it covers everything from how to get your baby to sleep once you moved to, you know, it's not just decorating. It's all those challenges, all of a sudden you move into a new house and the kids know it and now

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their sleep cycle's interrupted. And now yours is interrupted and everyone's tired and cranky.

Tobi: Yeah, that's amazing. Amazing.

Jill: Yeah. So it's everything from that to home gardening, to, you know.

Tobi: Yeah. And I love that so much. And that's the other thing that we talk about so often in *Design You* is I try to get people to think differently. Because whether you're an interior designer, or a landscape designer, or a caterer, or a real estate agent, or whatever you are, it's so easy to only identify with the sort of in the box, acceptable version of what that person should be, of what that identity should be. And we get so entrenched in that identity.

And then we start talking in *Design You* of like, "Well, what if people need to know about the dry cleaners locally?" Or like you said, what if their baby can't sleep? And people instantly go, "I'm an interior designer, how could I help people with their baby sleeping?" But of course there's things you could do in their environment. But you can also go out and find other people to come and have a conversation.

And that's what you've done so beautifully is then you become the go to person on all things moving to the suburb and talk about being valuable to your audience. Not just when they need a house but any time that they want information, they're coming to you, they believe in you to be that thought leader in this area, right?

Jill: Yeah. Yeah. I mean I had families; I had two families moving here from the city at once, we were decorating their homes at once. And they both had childcare issues because the moms were both working. And I remember giving them references to get full-time nannies and all kinds of other stuff and help them.

They move, they don't even know – I mean the realtors help to a certain extent. But then they get in and they need someone for the roof or someone for the landscaping and do I know anybody. And because I've

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had my own house here, I can say, “Try so and so, try this.” So it just – there’s so many things. And it’s with any niche, there’s so many things to talk about.

Tobi: Right. That’s the beauty. If you really focus more on the niche of people you’re helping and less being entrenched in just your own identity, because you can get so insecure if you start to say, “Well, I don’t know anything about such and such.” And I’m like, “Yeah. But would you tell your girl friend over a glass of wine, who you used for your yard care, or what spa you went to, or what lipstick you’re currently wearing?” And they were like, “Yeah.”

And I’m like, “Then why wouldn’t you have that conversation with the people that you’re helping with their homes or whatever, why would you not parlay that?” And that’s what I think you again have done so well is you immediately were like, “Oh my gosh, yeah. It’s an endless list of things that I can be of service to these people for.”

Jill: Yeah, there’s a lot. There’s a lot to talk about. And it’s not just because of the pandemic. Families have been moving to suburbs for a while because they find that once they want to grow their family, they just need more space. So it’s been a trend for a while, it’s just, yeah, so Covid has definitely put a minor fire on that because being in a dense city is really difficult to social distance and keep this virus at bay. And of course a city like Manhattan that’s really dense, which we live near, it’s made the suburbs here very popular.

Tobi: Yeah, so good. Okay, so let’s talk a little bit about how you started to think about your services. Because I think this is so fascinating as well. You already knew when you came to me that you’re like, “I think I do want to get rid of this procurement, this buying of furniture for most people, because if they’re not the ideal client for that, it’s such a headache.” And so you’d already bought into that, which was great, because some people have to be convinced of that. But really you were just saying, “Why would we keep making life so hard when it doesn’t have to be?”

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Jill: Right. And why would it be? And it's so frustrating for the client too. I don't want any of my clients feeling like that.

Tobi: Right. We become adversaries because they're not even allowed to buy their own, whatever, if that's the kind of client they are. And we're always as, you know, depending on what industry, and we have this way of trying to shove people into what we think is best for them, instead of actually listening to how much help or guidance they say they need. And we have this kind of false sense of, well, our best clients are the ones that just get out of the way and let us do everything.

But we're not aware that, right, but there's only a handful of those. And what about everybody else, how can we think differently for all of the other people that want a little bit of help or a little bit of guidance, or want to do it themselves, but want to ask a question or whatever? There's legit ways.

And that doesn't mean we have to then help those people on their terms and make ourselves miserable, because people are always like, "Oh my God, you're going to make me go work for these people that have no budget and be miserable answering all their questions?" No, you make a course for them or you make some other thing for them. But you seem to be able to envision this pretty easily from the get go and go, "I get it. I can kind of start to see how I could carve up a few areas of service that would meet people where they are."

So tell us how you did that, how you were thinking and what that looked like for you.

Jill: So I did two things. I took my full service, service and I modified it where it became a lot more streamlined. So it became this, well, you know, we do the architectural floor plan for the room so you know how the furniture should be laid out and measured and all that. And we select the mood board and we select the pieces together. But then you get this very specific shopping list of where to go buy it. Because the advantage is I know the marketplace for 15 years, I know where to get all this stuff. I know what prices are competitive.

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And so I give them the shopping list, I give them their budget. So it shows – they give me a starting budget and then they have a spreadsheet in the back that shows them how all the pieces landed up to meet their budget. So that was nice because that gave me full service but it alleviated procurement. And you could do it in one room or you could do it in your whole house, that program.

But then what I recently – well, not so recently, but started to put into place was a digital program where we meet via Zoom, and this was before Covid. And I've modified it since Covid and now it really is dovetailed to how consumers want to buy it. So it's called the Digital Design Bundle and people are loving it. So one client bought four, another client bought six, another client bought eight, another client bought one, she just needed help with her bedroom. So with that we meet digitally, you get an hour from me. You then get a whole follow-up toolkit and a recording of the call.

But you get a toolkit with all the specifics that we discussed, the highlights outlined. And you even get a small digital mood board that gives you some visuals of what we talked about and you get your own customized Pinterest board. So it really helps you navigate putting the space together with guidance from a pro because you know you're getting a rug the right size. I have given you inspiration of what to shop for. You can shop for the exact one I selected on your board, or you could go and pick out something similar. And so that program has worked really, really well.

Tobi: That's so exciting. And so what made you not afraid, because originally like you said, it was pre Covid that you started doing the Zoom. Because we were kind of saying, "If I'm charging less money and I'm trying to fit into people's schedules, why would I drive all the way out for a consultation when we can just meet on Zoom? It's better for everybody, it makes more sense. It saves more time. It saves them time. Then we can have the recording." So we had all these reasons why you and I both believed it made sense pre Covid.

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But then again it looked like you had a crystal ball because you're like, "Wait, you already have a Zoom service, what is happening here?" But how did you get the courage to believe that that would work? Because so many people that have been offering any kind of full service design or otherwise, a lot of times think, no, but I have to be in the space. I have to see the space. I have to see the wall. I have to see that exact chair. I have to see that fabric in person. And have a lot of insecurities about being open to doing things in these other ways.

Jill: So think about this, when we were all in design school we were given a million projects, were you ever in the room that you designed? Never.

Tobi: That's such a great point.

Jill: Never. And so I was like, I know it can work because I had to do it from zero before. I had to do it from even less information than I have now. Because now, so you – what I'll do is I'll have the client take – there might be a few measurements that I need to guide them. But I mean they can send photographs, you could do a FaceTime. I mean there's a million ways to do it. And the other beauty of doing it through Zoom is I don't have to help people just in my area, I can help people anywhere. It doesn't matter where they live.

Tobi: It's so good. And so then when you have this established business and established reputation. Then you can be like, okay, I'm going to start marketing on Facebook or somewhere else, to other people that are moving out of LA, or that are moving out of DC, or that are moving out of...

Jill: Yeah, could be any city.

Tobi: You could literally pick and start to target or retarget people in the digital space for these digital services. Talk about, wow, having an ideal market, because so many of us are like, "Well, I'm in this small town and there's not enough business and I can't make enough money." But you just created something that you can open yourself up to the entire world literally.

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Jill: Yeah. I mean if you're in a small town all the more you've got to do a digital program. You can help anybody anywhere. I mean I helped somebody in upstate New York a year ago. She wanted to remodel her house and she and her husband were doing it herself. But she wanted me to go over all the floor plans and look at what walls they were thinking of taking down. And we did a whole hour and it really helped her, she's like, "Okay, I get it now, that would work for me." So it's everything from that to there was someone in Chicago that needed my help moving to a suburb.

So I mean and I would like to do more of that, I mean I happen to be in this hot area right now because there are so many people leaving New York City. But I think there are people leaving other cities too. And the same thing applies. Whatever your niche is, it doesn't matter if they live in Texas or Connecticut, they're facing the same challenges.

Tobi: Yeah, totally, yeah. Love it. Love it. Okay, well, let's talk a little bit about podcasting. And then we can also talk some more about your scalable service then if you want to, that you're thinking about and moving towards. And you don't even have to get into the details of it if you don't want to, but even just your mindset about that because what you were just saying leads into both of those things. But I love that you're a podcaster because again, clearly you're not afraid to leap into things. And podcasting, it was hot, is hot, will continue to be hot.

And I think you were just thinking I have so much to say, I want to hop on and do that. And I know it's worked really well for you. So talk to us about that process of kind of your thinking around your podcast and then what it's done for your business to have a podcast.

Jill: Yeah. And for me this is – so I never had a blog, and I didn't want one, and I don't know why because I liked writing, I had things to say. I found them cumbersome to write. I thought when people read them, I know when I look at them you scroll through and then you stop at a certain point. I don't know. It didn't ever turn me on. And over the years people are like, "You should have a blog. You should have a blog." And it just wasn't my thing.

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And I started listening to podcasts and they were so convenient. I could listen to them in the car. When we used to travel by air they were great to have on an airplane or in an airport. I would listen to them at the dentist office. I had a lot of long dentist appointments last year for something. And it really helped distract me and having to be in the chair for two hours, it really helped me out, so even getting dressed in the morning. And I found while you can get such great information so easily just having it on in the background or taking up time in the car while traveling.

And I thought, you know, and then being part of *Design You*, just learning about mindset and how it's possible. So I thought this is really – I kind of felt it in my gut, this is something I want to do. This is really something I want to do. So I went ahead and I got it ready to launch. And it's funny, I might have told you the story, I don't remember. I told some other people in the group. But the day I had to just record the first episode to get it done and in the bank because you record three.

I sat in this office and I'm like who are you to do this? You are going to sound dumb. I mean it went on, and on, and on, and on. So I got the first three out and all I have to say is you learn so much about yourself too when you take a leap and you do something that you're afraid to do if you just do it. Because a lot of people came back to me and they were like, "You sound like you're a natural radio host. Have you done this before?" And I don't like public speaking, this is not my thing.

And I mean this is the favorite thing I'm doing in my business right now. And it also showed me all the different things I can talk about, all the different things I can explore with my audience. And I also love it. I love the people that I'm meeting. I love the people I'm bringing on. I love what we're talking about. I just love doing it. And I really went from – when I tell you, beating myself up so hard, your voice sounds terrible, you can't do this, the whole thing to I just love this. And I'm at a point where now if someone thinks my voice sounds terrible, I don't really care, I love what I'm doing.

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Tobi: I agree. I feel the same way about my podcast. I mean it's so fun to connect with other people when you have guests like you. But even sometimes just doing your own shows, I don't know if you ever do your own show.

But there are times when I'm like, okay I'm ready, I've got some stuff to say and I want to do another solo show. But it's amazing how much it really does for your business. So has it yet? Because I mean it has and it will, especially when you have a scalable thing. But have you seen it becoming one of the main drivers of business for your design business or your services?

Jill: Yeah. It's had a lot of traction, like I said recently, there were at least two people that said, "I've been following your podcast and I really would like to talk to you about my house now." A lot of my guests that I've had on, they came to me and asked to be on, which was really cool. And they were all people I really wanted to talk to. So that was really fun because they came to me, I didn't have to hunt people down. It has a lot of positive momentum in a lot of ways. And it just made me discover something about myself and that you can do this.

And you can be a public speaker if you want to be, don't be so afraid of it. So it helped me get over some of my fears also.

Tobi: I think it also has some way of solidifying in your mind that you have an audience in a different way than social media does. I think sometimes our brain sees social media as like friends or peers. And we're like, I know I should have a niche, or I should have a following, or a tribe, or an audience, whatever we want to call it. But we don't really see them that way. And in fact I see people fail to get traction sometimes in their social because you don't get instant growth when you start talking about something.

And there's something about a podcast that just to me it has me think differently. I'm like people are listening. It's like a specific group of people. I know they hear it. I can look at the number of people that listened or

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downloaded, not in a vain way, not like I judge myself if it's only four people at the beginning. But I don't know. There's just something about it to me as a podcast that feels different and seems different as far as your audience goes than just your social following. Do you feel the same way?

Jill: Yeah, I feel very much like I am connecting with them very differently and in a good way. I think that when somebody hears your voice week after week and they hear you speak, even though you can write what you say. When they hear you talk I feel like there is a connection there that's very different.

Tobi: Right. And I think you just nailed part of it when you said week after week, because that is the other thing. We're not sporadically doing a podcast here or there. You committed the same way I committed to using a specific podcast editor that is going to expect your show to go out every single week, the same day of the week, same time, whatever. And you're building an audience that they will notice if you don't show up. They literally plan their weeks around, it's Thursday for Tobi, I've got to turn on the *Design You* podcast, or I listen to it on my walk or whatever.

And so I think that relationship we build with people where they depend on us, and they trust us, is even at a whole other level than the social [crosstalk].

Jill: It's a totally different level. And it's nice to combine the two. And of course you're going to promote your podcast on social media and stuff and through other channels. But I mean for me it's just been life changing. I love it more than anything I'm doing in my business. And it's not a product that I'm selling and making money off of directly. It has a life to it that will help me make money but it's not a single product. And I love it the most.

Tobi: Yeah. I feel the exact same way. And I think I feel so much pride. At some level it allows me to feel even better about the products I sell because I don't judge myself as just being about the money, or just being about myself. Because I know I'm giving so much free content to so many people. And I know you probably are the same way. I get emails, or

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messages, or direct messages every single week of people just saying, “I want you to know how much I appreciate the value of the free stuff you put out in the world for us.”

And I feel a lot of pride about that and I feel – I mean it creates a lot of goodwill. It creates a lot of connection with people. It creates a lot of, they are grateful for me, I’m grateful for them. And it’s a different level of – I don’t know – I mean it’s for sure, gratitude, but yeah, connection too I think. It’s just hard to explain unless you’ve done it. But I love how you’ve done it.

And I wanted people to hear from you because in the same way that there’s people sitting out there going, “Should I create? Should I have a niche? Should I create scalable products? Should I stop procuring products? Should I have a podcast?” You’re kind of saying yes to all of these things, lean into these things because they’re really working for you.

Jill: And even if you’re scared, do it, just do it through the fear because like I said, then it’s so rewarding.

Tobi: I love it so much. So everyone listening, you’re putting two and two together, in two years, Jill has literally transformed all of her business, how she works with people, created this niche, created a podcast, has all these people calling her, people following her, her social media. Life just got so much easier because you decided to constrain, to really zone in to this one group of people and really just level on them at a whole other level.

Jill: Yes. And I’ll tell the listeners too, like you had said too, it doesn’t isolate other people from contacting you. I’ll get contacted from various other kinds of projects. What’s nice is you can decide if that’s a fit for you anymore. What you will find is that once you really get on this track, there’s some things that they’re not going to interest you anymore, that might have years ago. But I had a couple of things come my way and I’m not interested because I’m...

Tobi: That’s so good, because maybe the only reason you would have taken them before is because you felt like you had to or you needed the

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money. And it gives you so much freedom to be like, no, I'm going to regret that. I'm going to feel fatigued by that, or I'm going to feel disconnected to that audience or whatever at this point, right?

Jill: Well, right now I say, "Well, that's going to take time away from me getting the scalable that I really, really want." I want it as much as I wanted the podcast. So I know that in the end it'll be good. But yeah, I want something scalable for sure because that's the next step and that's really the way to kind of pull the pin.

Tobi: I love it. And I love that you're saying this too because one of the things you joined *Design You* for potentially is to create a scalable business. But just like with anything else what you've found is here you are two years later and you're not feeling like you're necessarily behind on that. It's just you had to lay a lot of other groundwork, which we all do, to really be ready to create the right thing that's going to really be successful for you.

Because had you just rushed out on day one and been like, "Well, I'll think about a niche later, I'm just going to get some scalable, or virtual design thing up that's generic and stuff," that's a waste of your time I really think [crosstalk].

Jill: Total, yeah, the niche is it. And like I said, whatever your gut is, just go with it. Go put it out there.

Tobi: Put a niche, yeah.

Jill: Yeah. And even if you put it out there just on social repeat it, and repeatedly, I don't mean just one post. You're out there a few times a week talking about it, you'll start to get some feedback and that'll kind of give you a little bit of a temperature too about how interested people are. And usually they are going to be, once you're speaking. And I mean the big thing was story brand, where we talk about the escape and arrival. Knowing the escape and arrival of your client and using wording and really talking to them, that's how you will get the feedback, I think.

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Tobi: Yeah. So one thing that's on my mind today is I see a lot of frustration at times for people in *Design You*, not with the program, thankfully, maybe with the program. But this is more about the frustration we create for ourselves because we do this thing where we decide that there's a certain timeline. And if we haven't met it, we're failing. And if we haven't had enough sales, we're failing, or if we don't have enough listeners, or if we haven't grown our social.

We create these arbitrary markers of success for ourselves and then we use them as I call it, to punch ourselves in the face with it. We make ourselves miserable. And we're like, "Well, I have launched this thing and I've not sold any of them yet." And although I know you are having success, you don't seem to be super prone to get super depressed, or be creating these kind of maybe unrealistic, or at least, arbitrary deadlines for yourself that you're weaponizing against yourself. Because you did say, "I had this moment with my podcast that I sort of were judging myself."

But in general I don't see you getting super bogged down and in the weeds about this isn't happening fast enough. But that's what I do see certain people, and quite a few people doing often. And I think it comes from a scarcity mindset. It may come because they need money. But what are your thoughts about that? Have you struggled with that at all or have you just kind of been willing to go, "I'm building this. It'll take however long it takes and I'm going to enjoy?" What does that look like?

Jill: Yeah, I kind of have an attitude, I mean certainly we all have our moments, I had that moment. But that was a moment. It didn't suck up my day. It was like that was a moment and I was like, "Alright, pull up your pants here and record that damn episode." So I did and it was so rewarding.

But yeah, with the other stuff too, it's also an organic process. My digital service was going to be one thing. But then once I got on the phone with some new potential clients and I kind of heard what they wanted, I tweaked it and I changed it. And then what I've changed it to now is really what

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everybody wants and is loving. And it's okay, I think people thinking that they have to have it all perfect and set up and it rolls out and that's it, it's not going to work.

You have to at least put it out there and get feedback. And you can be selling while you get that feedback. I sold a couple the way they were. But then when I kept hearing on the phone, "This, this." I was like, "Okay, yeah, we can do that." And then I changed the whole thing. And it wasn't a huge change. The base of it was there. But it's like doing design for your client and I always tell my clients, "It's a process." Remind yourself, this is a process and it's organic. And I kind of have that attitude.

It's sort of like with Covid, people are saying, "How are you doing," and all that. I really, again, I have my moments, but for the most part I take it each day. And most days I'm working, I get out in the fresh air, I take a walk, I have my dogs, my kids are healthy. And I just try to focus on that because I can't change that the pandemic is here, I can't. So it's how you react to things, it's not what's happening. It's how you react to things. So with that, yeah, understand it's a process, the same way we tell our clients, it's a process when we're doing the design work for them.

Tobi: And the alternative is if you quit you have nothing.

Jill: Nothing.

Tobi: That's what's always so funny, it's like well, if this isn't making money by whatever, by December then I'm quitting. And I'm like, "But that doesn't make any sense because then you're going to for sure have no money."

Jill: And you'll have no money.

Tobi: Yeah. Why wouldn't you just be open to saying, "Who knows when this will be in its best form but I'm just going to keep working at it until I tweak it and it lands. And then once that happens then I can go onto the next thing." And it seems like that's what you do because when you're now talking about it, you're like, "Well, yeah, I've wanted the scalable thing for two years. But I got these other things in place first."

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And it really is a trade-off because we can't change all our services, get a new niche, start a podcast, start a scalable thing. We cannot do all of that in a year or even in two years or maybe even in five years necessarily. It takes time to let each one of these things start developing and growing.

Jill: Right. But you have to start, you have to put it out there and you have to start, you just have to.

Tobi: And that's why people don't want to because they're afraid to fail.

Jill: And by the way, if you start in one niche, and I mean I think there's even someone in our group and she's switching over. And the world's not falling apart over it. Something organic happened that led her in another direction where she is really understanding herself more in how she can service people. And that's amazing. So it's such a growth process too. No matter what, you're going to learn amazing things.

Tobi: And that's totally different than second guessing 12 times before you start and change back and forth. But if you start and then you have all this information or feedback and you're like, "I actually would be better doing this than that." It's not like you wasted that year and a half. That was your path to discovering the thing you're supposed to be doing all along. It all happened exactly the way it was supposed to happen for you to show up at the moment that person did or any person did.

And that's totally different than being like I'm going to change my mind 12 times but never really put anything out in the world, which I see other people do because they're afraid to get it wrong. This was like you said, having the guts to just pick it and go with it, knowing that a year from now or two or five years from now, it might literally not even look like the same business.

You may forget that you were going to start out doing interior design for toddlers and now you're doing podcasting for Aging in Place, who knows. But who cares because it was the path that led you to that point, that purpose, yeah.

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Jill: Yeah. And I mean if something happens with mine and organically it means it leads me to another place and it's different than this, great. Great.

Tobi: Or if it leads you to supporting people moving to the suburbs but at some point you stop doing the design work itself and you're doing other things. You're just open to the fact that I'm serving this audience, I'm going all in and I'm listening and I'm willing to move and kind of meet them where they are, [crosstalk].

Jill: Super open to it, yeah. You do, you have to be open minded and just know it's a bit of a – it's a process. And I think having it somewhat organic is really what helps you be successful because you're not pin-holing yourself to like it's got to be this. Because that's what we were doing before and if clients didn't like it or if it was making them frustrated, then no, it's got to be that, not this. It's got to be what they want.

Tobi: Right. And if we have too rigid of a hold on what we envisioned it to be and it didn't turn out that way then we get into that whole kind of mindset of I'm failing, or this isn't working, or I'm doing something wrong. Instead of just saying, "How funny, how interesting, how fascinating. I had no idea it was going to go in this place." And those are kind of two totally different mindsets.

Jill: So I say have your moments with it, have your doubts, have the few minutes you're going to beat yourself up. And then stop and go, "Okay, that's enough, we did that. We got that out of the way, now let's..."

Tobi: Yeah. Okay, so before we wrap up let's talk a little bit about your next kind of where you're going with your scalable thing. So are you now going to create a scalable interior design service? Are you doing something else for this? You don't have to tell us. I don't know if it's a secret or not a secret. But just kind of talk us through a little bit of what that's going to look like as you start to create something that...

And by scalable, everybody, in case you don't know, we mean something that you create once and sell over, and over, and over again. So it's not a

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custom thing. It's like a course, or a membership, or a program, or something that you can sell multiple times, make money while you sleep, that whole thing. So what do you think, even though you have no idea what it'll look like? And as we just said, where do you think you're headed on this process?

Jill: I know, and I keep changing it a little, because I was going to do just like a big signature course. And now there's so much information that I have to talk about that I'm considering just putting out a starter course, what I'll call a starter course. It's a little bit smaller. It focuses on some of the initial challenges. And starting there and then building on that because that could be something that even when the other services are built, this could be an add-on to it, and it gets it out there. It gets me out there doing scalable.

And from that we just go from there. I do think yeah, and I don't know for sure yet but like you said, I'd also like something that maybe just isn't – it might not be all design, it might be lifestyle, and a bit deeper than just the design.

Tobi: That's so fun. And what I love about what you're saying about a starter course is what I've learned it's just exactly like everything we've talked about today. I think so often, when people start this process of I want something scalable, I want this course, or this membership, or this thing, it's going to make me so much money. They're thinking the end all, be all last amazing revision of this thing that's perfection in their brain. And it's really, really difficult to think that way because it stops them from moving forward.

And what I love about something like the starter course is what I know about courses and I know about people that have created courses. Is that once you – just like with a podcast, once you go down this path, you're going to probably do many, many, many things with this. Maybe there's going to be revisions, there's going to be other courses, there's going to be other things.

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But the first one, its real purpose is not necessarily to go make you a ton of money. It's to teach you the process. It's to teach you how to show up. It's to teach you as the maker of the course how not to be afraid, or how to be willing to go on video, or how to not be too perfectionist that you never complete it, or to learn about like...

Jill: The tech, or how it operates, how it launches.

Tobi: Yeah, the tech, all of it, all of it, the tech.

Jill: A launch.

Tobi: It's all the stuff that has to go with it, am I going to do a webinar? It's just the learning process for you. To me, I love the idea of a starter course or a mini course because instead of making this elaborate, your kind of thesis, or your signature of work, that's too much pressure.

I'm like just make something, I don't even care what it is, just make something and show yourself that you can get it done, and you can get it out there, and you can try it, and market it, and test it, and try Facebook Ads, and the tech and all the things. Because you've got to learn those things anyway, and it's a lot less pressure and the stakes aren't so high when you're not making so much ride on this, your – what's it called? Your signature work, or your monograph, or your, like whatever terms you want to use, whether it's a writing a novel or something else.

The first one is never that, it's just literally getting your feet wet. And I love what you're saying because you'll learn so much in the process of just doing it, which is that in and of itself, that journey is worth so much.

Jill: And I thought it could be something that's valuable to people and that it's – because it's smaller it's easy to digest. And it could, you know, it's a benefit both ways, to the customer too. So I really kind of came upon that decision about two weeks ago, which is good, because I feel really good about it. And I'm just going to start there and go for it.

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Tobi: Yeah. It's so fun, I love it. And I love talking about this with you now on the front end because people, I think also tend to think, like they look at somebody like you who's already done all these other things. And they think you have it all together and they think you have it all figured out. They think that about me, they think about other people that they see with courses. And it's just like anything else.

We don't know what's going to work when we start. We take a chance on an idea, like you said, we pick it and then we go for it, we go with it. And we just figure it out as we go. And I love that people are hearing that from you, because they'll be able to turn around a few weeks, or a few months, or a year from now, however long it takes you to end up getting something out. And see that's what that looked like, or that's how long that took. And it just takes a lot of the, I think, fear away from it, and the pressure off of it to just say, "It's not that hard, you can figure it out."

And a lot of the stuff people are most afraid of, like you saying, "We're worried about the tech," or whatever. That's the easy part. There's a million YouTube videos. There's a million coaches. There's a million courses. We can figure that part out. But getting out of our own way and getting started, that's for sure the most important piece I think, don't you?

Jill: Definitely. I heard Carson Kressley say something in an interview where somebody asked him about when he gets approached for projects and stuff. He goes, "You know what, first I say yes then I figure it out." And you know, because someone asked him about something, he's like, "I'm not sure what we're going to do, I just say yes and then I figure it out." And I think when he asked to be on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, it was the same thing. He's like, "I just said yes, I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I knew I would just figure it out."

And sometimes that's not a bad way to look at it, because like you said, you could sit and analyze and think about this stuff forever and then never make a move. Sometimes just go in and say yes and just figure it out.

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Tobi: Yeah. And that's what I love about *Design You* because for those of you and me too, who are also doing things all the time, we know that we always have a place to go if we feel stuck, or if we have a question, or somebody in there is always doing some portion of this. And if they're not, we will find the answer for you, yeah.

Jill: It's a huge support. The other part about this, it's a bit of a sisterhood and you have people there to lean on, which I love. And you really connect with other people. There's so many people I've met through the program that we stay in touch through social and I love all of them. Yeah, you build these friendships, even though they're virtual, I feel like I know everybody. So yeah, you always have somebody to lean on in *Design You*, which is great.

Tobi: Yeah. And you have people to test your stuff, you have podcast guests, you have Instagram Live and Facebook Live guests. You have literally whatever you're looking for, they're kind of all built in there together, which is so fun to watch you guys. There are certain people, I think of one of our members who's done such a beautiful job with Instagram Live. And literally I think she's had 90% of her audience has been *Design You* members. And I'm like, why not?

They're all there, they know what it is. They have been hearing the message about how they should be going live and so they're game. And it's just so fun because it's like we have our own little, like you said, a sisterhood. But almost also like a little laboratory at any given time, that somebody's testing the different parts. We've had multiple people start podcasts. We've had multiple people get really good at Instagram or Facebook Live. We've had multiple people have courses or programs, people are starting memberships.

It's really fun to watch and be doing this work in real time around other people who are also doing the work.

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Jill: Yeah, because we all cheer each other on and genuinely so, very sincerely. So we're really rooting for one another and I think that, like truly rooting for one another and I think that makes a big difference.

Tobi: So good. Okay, so anybody that's listening that is not even about *Design You*, yeah, come on and join us in *Design You* because we just get pitched for that. But just if they're like, okay, I want that kind of business. I want to finally stop feeling like I never can feel my pipeline, I can never find my ideal client, I don't ever know what to say or who to do, and life feels hard. What's the one piece of advice you would give them to move in this direction?

Jill: Be really open minded and know that the design industry, we did learn it one way, but it's no longer the way. And be really open minded to that because you can be so creative with so many other offerings and be really successful and really tune into what you like to do. Because oftentimes in that traditional model we all took on a lot of tasks that we didn't like to do, or maybe it wasn't even our strongest skill set. So focus on your thing, what's your super power? We all have one.

Tobi: I love that. And just be willing to release the parts that don't align with you, yeah, that's so good.

Jill: That's all.

Tobi: And that's true in any industry, I think, don't you think?

Jill: Any industry at all, for sure.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that. That's such good advice. So be open minded and just be willing to let your business evolve into something that they couldn't have imagined really before.

Jill: Yeah. Yeah. And if you think about it too, because when I started my design business it felt a little bit like jumping off a cliff, because I was working for another designer. So to leave that and go on your own, that's pretty scary. So if a lot of us have our own businesses, if you take yourself

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back to that. Well, you dared to do that and that was a pretty big thing. Just do that again, because it's very rewarding. The podcast it was, I wanted it and then I got a little bit scared. And then I took the jump and it's the most rewarding thing I did.

Tobi: Yes, totally, 100%.

Jill: So it's all worth it.

Tobi: Yeah, and when we stay in our comfort zone we don't feel that level of reward. It's only when we follow that kind of yearning or that gut instinct and go through it that we get that biggest piece of fulfillment, don't you think?

Jill: Yeah, totally. You've got to be really just open minded and receptive to other things.

Tobi: So good. Well, thank you so much. So if people want to find you, if they want to see your business, if they want to see all the amazing things like we've been talking about it, how you talk about it all on social. And for sure if they want to listen to your podcast, where do they find you?

Jill: Sure. So, Instagram is probably the best place because in my profile it links to my podcast, my freebies, my services. So at Jill Kalman Interiors is my Instagram. I am on Facebook at Jill Kalman Interiors. And my website is jillkalmaninteriors.com.

Tobi: Okay. And your podcast is called?

Jill: Welcome Home to the Suburbs. And you can link to it from the Instagram page or you can find it wherever you get your podcast.

Tobi: Awesome. Okay, thank you so much, Jill, it was so good.

Jill: Thanks Tobi, I loved being here.

Tobi: I loved it too.

Jill: Alright, thanks so much.

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Tobi: It's so fun.

Okay, so are you ready to go out and do this yourself? I mean I just love how Jill embraced this niche of moving to the suburbs at the exact right time. And I know it's no accident. She did not have a crystal ball, even though it looks like it. She just really leaned into what she knew was right for her. And so often when we do leap the net appears. And so I hope that you will leap and really dig into a business that you absolutely love.

And you know if you need help doing that, *Design You* is the place to be. So head over and join us in the *Design You* program. We will hold your hand. We will help you in those moments that you're excited or that you're scared to death, all of those moments. As Jill said, the sisterhood, we've got a few brothers in there too, but mostly sisters. The sisterhood of *Design You* is the place to be if you want to build a business like Jill. That is the business for you.

So I'll see you in *Design You*, and I'll see you here next week with another episode of the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now.

Thank you so much for listening to the *Design You* podcast, and if you are ready to dig deep and do the important work we talk about here on the podcast of transforming your mindset and creating a scalable online business model, there has never been a more important time than right now. So join me and the incredible creative entrepreneurs in my *Design You* coaching program today. You can get all the details at TobiFairley.com.